

NLRB says the rat is legal

WASHINGTON, D.C. (PAI) — The labor movement's giant inflatable rat balloon is legal — even at demonstrations in front of secondary employers, the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) ruled last month.

In a case involving Sheet Metal Workers Local 15 and Brandon Regional Medical Center — which years ago hired nonunion temps at below area standard wages to build an addition — the Board voted 3-1 that use of the rat on a flatbed truck parked in public more than 100 feet from the hospital entrance was legal, as was leafleting passing patients.

When the case first came up in 2006, the Board ruled that other parts of the union's demonstration (a mock funeral with coffin and skeleton) was illegal. The union appealed the decision to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit, which in 2007 reversed the NLRB's decision, determining the union's mock funeral was not picketing or otherwise coercive. The court sent the case back to the NLRB to finish the job.

"The determinative question as to whether union activity at a secondary site violates (labor law) is whether it constitutes intimidation or persuasion," said the Board. "Union protest activity that is merely persuasive is lawful even when the object of the activity is to induce the secondary to cease doing business with a primary employer." In this case, the primary employer was the contractor that brought in the temp workers to help build the hospital addition.

"Protest whose impact on a secondary employer owes more to intimidation than persuasion" is not lawful, the Board warned.

The rat, it said, is not intimidating.



Steelworkers #1097 ratifies pact at G-P

CLATSKANIE — At Georgia-Pacific's paper mill in Wauna, Oregon, members of United Steelworkers Local 1097 ratified the company's final contract proposal dated May 24.

Local 1097 members had voted down an earlier company contract offer in January and in April authorized a strike.

The new agreement provides across-the-board increases totaling 6 percent over four years for the plant's roughly 800 members, but that is likely to be offset by increases in employee health care contributions.

Raises in the contract include a 2 percent wage increase retroactive to April 2010; 1 percent in October 2011; 2 percent in October 2012, and 1 percent in August 2013. Wages depend on work classification; in the previous contract they ranged from \$17.49 for laborers to \$34.44 for some machine tenders.

The mill makes tissue, paper towels and toilet paper.

Members pay 25 percent of their health insurance premium. The new agreement also contains a Georgia-Pacific proposal that members opposed during bargaining: Starting January 2012, the employee portion of the health insurance premium will be calculated on a per-dependent basis, meaning that workers with larger families will pay more. Members also agreed that Georgia-Pacific will drop Kaiser Permanente and switch to a health plan managed by United Healthcare, a for-profit insurer.

Some other changes:

- Georgia-Pacific will increase

monthly pension contributions and remove a pension cap that limited payments to long-serving workers.

- Effective Sept. 1, no smoking will be allowed anywhere on company property, including parking lots.

- New language in the no-strike clause (a pledge of no strikes while the

contract remains in effect) spells out specifically that it includes "sympathy strikes," in which one group of workers honors the strike of another group.

The new agreement will run through March 31, 2014.

Georgia-Pacific is owned by Koch Industries.

IN MEMORIAM

JOE THOMPSON, a retired officer of the defunct Aluminum, Brick and Glass Workers International Union, passed away June 6 at the age of 81.



Thompson retired as a vice president of the Aluminum Workers in 1986 following the union's merger with United Steelworkers of America.

After retirement he was instrumental in founding the Labor Roundtable of Southwest Washington and was its chairman for nearly a decade.

Joseph Eugene Thompson was born on May 16, 1930, in East St. Louis, Illinois. After graduating high school, he enlisted in the Air Force. Following two years of active duty he entered the Air Force Reserve and went to work in the Aluminum Company of America

(Alcoa) plant in East St. Louis. Shortly after that he was called back to active duty, serving as an airplane mechanic in the Korean War.

Thompson became active in Aluminum Workers Local 100 as a shop steward at the Alcoa plant. In 1956, he moved to Gramercy, Louisiana, to work in a Kaiser Aluminum plant. His next move took him to Duffy, Ohio, where he worked at an Olin Mathieson Aluminum plant and helped organize it. In March of 1959 he went to Terre Haute, Indiana, to organize an Anaconda Aluminum Co. plant. There, he served for five and a half years as president of Local 103.

Thompson was elected an international vice president of the Aluminum Workers in 1969.

In 1976 he was transferred to Denver, Colorado, and from there was transferred to Vancouver, Wash.

He is survived by his wife of 51 years, Carol Etta; a daughter, Elana Torres, and a granddaughter, Aspen.



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