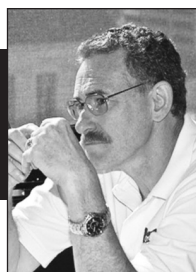


Who's On Our Side?

By Tom Chamberlain



I have run, paraded and marched countless times on the streets of Portland. I have marched against wars and for jobs. But never have I experienced the interaction between those marching and those in stalled cars, watching from parking garages, doorways, and apartment balconies as I did on Oct. 6, when I joined 10,000 Oregonians marching down those familiar Portland streets.

Bystanders in Portland always cheer a parade or demonstration, but not to the level they did on the 6th. Those folks were and are engaged. They are paying attention to what is and isn't happening in Washington, D.C., and on Wall Street. They understand that our nation's high unemployment is tied directly to tax cuts for the top 1 percent of Americans. They know that millionaires and billionaires who refuse to pay their fair share are blocking programs that could not only put millions of American's back to work, but at the same time update our crumbling infrastructure and make America more competitive in global markets.

The 99ers aren't a rag-tag movement without a message as portrayed by the corporate media. Their message is simple: 1 percent of Americans have too much wealth, and 99 percent don't have enough. It is an economic message that seems to resonate with millions of Americans

who have believed for too long that the dream of a middle-class lifestyle is like a fading vision from the rear window of America — a vision of owning a home and a car; a vision of spending time with your family, who were clothed and fed; a vision of saving for college, for your children's future or for a much needed vacation.

The 99ers give us hope. The 99ers give us a vehicle to vent our rage against a government that has turned its back on the poor and middle class in order to advance a political agenda that will keep politicians in power.

It is so easy to be fooled by the media. They'd like us to believe that the 99ers are limited to those few tens, hundreds or thousands who are sleeping in tents throughout our nation. But we are the 99ers, we and our families and friends who are losing economic ground each day. The 99ers give us a chance to join what could be a transformational movement. It's a movement that is apolitical, a movement that brings attention to the plight of shrinking middle class. It shines a spotlight on unemployment, lack of healthcare, and homelessness. It concentrates our anger on financial institutions whose focus on making the quick buck has put our people on the path of ruination.

For poor and middle class Oregonians and Americans, now is the time to engage. Now is the time to lend our support to those 99ers who occupy our cities and have the corporatist elite shaking in their boots. Without our help, in a few days or weeks this movement may end. The status quo will force the 99 army from our streets in hopes of stopping a movement that may well be our best chance to create a balanced economic system that rebuilds the middle class.

By the time this article is published, placards and signs will be printed and distributed to show the depth of support for the 99ers in our community. Tune into the various union and occupy Portland websites for updates. As the media attempts to destroy this movement by focusing on their lack of message, understand that there is a message — an economic message about sharing the wealth that too few enjoy, putting Americans back to work, and holding our financial institutions accountable for the recession they created.

We are the 99. We are the ones who have lost the America dream and are willing to fight to get it back.

Tom Chamberlain is president of the Oregon AFL-CIO.

NLRB postpones final rule for posting notice of employees' rights

The National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) has postponed the implementation date for its new rule requiring all private-sector employers to display an 11-by-17-inch poster informing workers of their rights under the National Labor Relations Act, including the right to unionize.

The rule was set to take effect on Nov. 14, 2011. However, the NLRB pushed it back by two months — to Jan. 31, 2012 — “in order to allow for enhanced education and outreach to employers, particularly small and medium sized businesses.”

As reported in the Sept. 2 Labor Day edition of the Northwest Labor Press, the business world flipped out after the NLRB made the proposal, claiming the federal agency was unfairly promoting unionization. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce went so far as to file a lawsuit seeking to block it, alleging it oversteps the NLRB's authority.

Said AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka: “Just as employers are required to notify their employees of

their rights around health and safety, wages and discrimination on the job, this rule gives clear information to employees about their rights under this fundamental labor law so that workers are better equipped to exercise and enforce them.”

It's just a poster — similar to the ones the U.S. Department of Labor requires the thousands and thousands of federal contractors to post.

Employers will not be required to distribute the notice via e-mail, voice mail, text messaging or related electronic communications. They simply have to hang the poster (provided for free of charge by the NLRB) where they usually post notices to let workers know what's going on.

The NLRB says the decision to extend the rollout period followed queries from businesses and trade organizations indicating uncertainty about which businesses fall under the Board's jurisdiction, and was made “in the interest of ensuring broad voluntary compliance.” No other changes in the rule, or in the form or content of the

notice, will be made.

But since establishing the new regulation, NLRB Chairwoman Wilma Liebman departed after her term expired Aug. 27. Liebman served on the Board for nearly 14 years under an appointment from President Clinton. Board member Craig Becker's term expires at the end of this year. The former union attorney is serving under a recess appointment from President Obama. Republicans in the U.S. Senate have refused to confirm Becker's appointment.

There is one other Board nomination currently pending before the Senate for Terence F. Flynn. Another seat is vacant with no pending nomination.

In addition to Becker, the other Board members are Chairman Mark Pearce, and Brian Hayes.

Without new appointees to fill those seats, the five-member Board will be down to just two — which does not represent a sufficient quorum to decide disputed cases, according to a 5-4 U.S. Supreme Court ruling in 2010.

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