



NORTHWEST

LABOR  
PRESSVolume 112  
Number 21  
Nov. 4, 2011  
Portland, Oregon

# Labor marches in solidarity with Occupy Portland

By **DON McINTOSH**  
Associate Editor

Organized labor was back in the streets Oct. 26 to show support for Oc-

cupy Portland. In a 1,000-strong rally and march organized by the Oregon AFL-CIO, Oregon AFSCME and others, the message was of solidarity and

gratitude — for the protesters who have camped across from City Hall since Oct. 6.

Occupancy Portland is one of hundreds

of occupations around the country inspired by Occupy Wall Street.

In recent days and weeks, news outlets that ignored earlier labor marches of thousands have swarmed all over the Occupy Portland camp, but sometimes have reported more on what protesters wear and what they smoke than what they have to say or why they're there. Much of the reporting has focused on homeless and mentally ill people who've joined the encampment, concerns about damage to the park, criticisms of the "illegality" of camping in parks, and details of internal disputes and disorganization.

Labor's Oct. 26 march was intended to demonstrate that the Occupy cause has broad popular support, and to insist that the focus return to what motivated the protests to begin with — anger over the capture of the U.S. political system by a financial elite, and the wreckage they've made of the economy which the other 99 percent of Americans rely upon.

"Some people in the media say that there's concerns about safety, about this, that and the other thing," Toby Green — an organizer for Laborers Local 483 — told rally-goers. "I want to applaud the occupiers, because they have made everyone down there feel welcome."

Green, echoing a call his national union has been making since 2008, said America needs a national jobs pro-

gram to put people back to work — and should pay for it by taxing the rich investment firms to pay their fair share.

"I'm proud of you, Occupy Portland," declared Ken Allen, executive director of the 25,000-member public sector union Oregon AFSCME Council 75. "If we're going to take back our future, our first step is to show that we're pissed off."

While several local union activists have camped at the Occupy Portland site, the encampment's labor liaison is Toby Zilka, a 20-year-old singing busser on the Portland Spirit river cruise ship. Zilka told ralliers that the union example is one of the inspirations of the Occupy movement.

"We're a coalition of freedom fighters," Zilka said. "We are here to fight for you."

Tom Chamberlain — president of the 112,000-member labor union federation Oregon AFL-CIO — said the energy of the Occupy movement brought to mind memories of the 2008 presidential campaign.

"We were promised change we could believe in," Chamberlain said. "We fought hard. We got people elected. We were told things were going to change. They didn't change, did they?"

"What's exciting about this movement is this: We're scaring the hell out of those elected leaders today," Cham-

(Turn to Page 3)



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## Daimler Trucks to add 350 union jobs at Swan Island

*It seems the union workforce at Portland's former Freightliner truck plant is competitive after all*

Daimler Trucks North America is hiring again at its Portland truck plant, after laying off 1,000 union members there in 2007 and 2009.

The company announced Oct. 20 that its Portland plant will hire 350 shop workers by the end of 2012, as well as 20 engineering and support workers. Its plant, located in the Swan Island Industrial Park, produces heavy-duty Western Star brand trucks for use in mining, logging, oil field and construction, plus on-highway trucks and specialized vehicles. It currently employs around 700 unionized shop workers and 50 nonunion engineers, managers and support staff, plus nearly 2,000 nonunion white-collar workers at Daimler's nearby headquarters.

Daimler began taking online applications Oct. 21 at [dtna.jobs](http://dtna.jobs). The largest group of new hires — assemblers — start at \$12 an hour

and rise to \$23.25 over four-and-a-half years.

Daimler is filling 190 assembler positions and an unspecified number of maintenance mechanic positions; these will be members of Machinists Lodge 1005. Daimler is also hiring 38 material handlers, who are represented by Teamsters Local 305. [For painter and janitor positions, represented by Sign Painters and Paint Makers Local 1094 and Service Employees Local 49, the company has been recalling laid-off workers.]

All the jobs come with health and retirement benefits.

This first round of hiring is expected to be completed by mid-December. Once new hires are trained, the company will start a second shift at the plant, likely in January. A second wave of hiring is planned for next summer.

"This decision [to hire] is a credit to the quality of the work our members do," said Machinists District Lodge W24 business representative Joe Kear.

It's also quite a comeback for a plant that Daimler, less than three years ago, said it was planning to close. Daimler learned it would incur substantial "legacy" costs to its union workers if it closed, and

subsequently decided to keep the plant open.

This year, the company reports, Western Star orders have risen steadily, and forecasts are for continued growth in 2012.

Daimler first recalled laid-off workers, then announced in June that it would add 155 jobs starting September. That timetable may have been delayed, Kear said, while a consultant firm worked to find production efficiencies using "lean manufacturing" methods. Now, it appears Daimler is racing to catch up with orders: Since early October, Daimler has instituted mandatory overtime: nine hour days, and one Saturday a month.

The addition of jobs in Portland is part of a global expansion recently announced by the German-based company. Daimler's truck manufacturing plant in Mount Holly, North Carolina, will take on a second shift as it adds 535 unionized (United Auto Workers) manufacturing jobs and 37 administrative jobs. A plant in Saltillo, Mexico, will add a third shift as it hires 479 nonunion manufacturing workers and 32 staff workers, and a truck parts plant in Gastonia, North Carolina, will add 124 workers who will be represented by UAW.