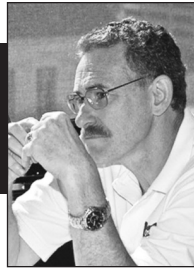


Who's On Our Side?

By Tom Chamberlain



Thousands of Oregonians who believe in the message of the 99% flooded downtown Portland Saturday and Sunday in support of maintaining the Occupy Portland encampment.

For many, the camp itself was the movement. For others, the camp was an important symbol of a larger movement that has captured the imagination and the promise of hope for Americans who believe that their government has failed them, who lost confidence in elected officials when they close their eyes to the lack of jobs and the loss of homes, in favor of deep-pocketed supporters from Wall Street.

For others, the closure of the camp is positive, unshackling the movement from the camp that had become a magnet for the homeless, mentally ill, and those in the grip of alcohol and drugs — the people most failed by the system the 99% is protesting but, unfortunately, also those whose presence brought a growing need for services and growing public safety concerns.

Over several weeks I have met with various members of the encampment's committees. They all had the symptoms of weariness about their eyes, but all were fearless, and have a true belief in their

message and mission of social and economic justice.

Pundits have tried to define the 99ers as a political movement. They are not, and they may not evolve into one. Remember — in large part, these are the folks who dove into the 2008 election of change and expected a new America, where we all shared in wealth and prosperity. Instead, they have witnessed more wealth transferred to the über-rich. They are disenfranchised from the political system and believe that change can only occur from social activism.

The strength of the 99% is not in their political ambitions, and it is not dependent on an encampment.

Physically occupying a park long-term isn't sustainable. But such a strategy was essential, bringing attention and focus to the movement and the problems inherent with an economic and social system that has forgotten about the vast majority of Americans.

For the 99% — at least in Portland — to survive will require it to evolve into a sustainable movement. To do so they must maintain their unique identity. They must continue to deny any group the power to co-opt them.

As union leaders we need to un-

derstand that while we are part of the movement, we are not the leaders of the movement. Much like the relationship between the Civil Rights and union movements, our movements will often complement each other.

We have similar goals and objectives, and we can fight shoulder-to-shoulder to restore American social and economic justice. But we must treat the 99% leadership, whether it is the general assembly or committees, a new governance structure or a continuing evolution of leadership, as equals.

Our best chance for change in America is ensuring that the 99% movement survives and evolves — beyond the park encampments — and into the future. They will need funds, supplies and support. We will need to develop a relationship with them where we all listen and respect each other's ideas and perspectives.

The 99% is on our side. It is a moment in history that will not be repeated for generations. We must continue to be on their side. Let's not waste this moment.

Tom Chamberlain is president of the Oregon AFL-CIO.

CWA #7901's Elder to co-chair group promoting greater access to broadband

Citing broadband's ability to spur economic growth and improve the quality of life among many communities, a



MADELYN ELDER

coalition of businesses, unions, and non-profit groups have formed an Oregon chapter of the Internet Innovation Alliance (IIA) to promote broadband access and adoption throughout the state.

IIA is a national coalition that includes companies such as AT&T, OneEconomy, and Connected Nation.

"Broadband drives opportunity in everything, from our economy to education and entrepreneurship to health care," said Madelyn Elder, president of Communications Workers of America (CWA) Local 7901. Elder recently was named co-chair of Oregon IIA, along with Brad Hicks, CEO of the Medford/Jackson County Chamber of Commerce.

"High-speed Internet helps businesses connect to new markets and students connect to classrooms anywhere in the world. Those opportunities

should be available to every family and business person in the state, no matter where they live," Elder said.

Oregon IIA will spend the coming months educating state leaders and others about the importance of mobile broadband and its many benefits. The state ranks 27th in the country in Internet access, according to the National Broadband Map.

IBEW Local 970 in Longview merges with Portland-based #48

Two local affiliates of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) have merged as of Nov. 1 — 191-member IBEW Local 970, based in Longview, Washington, will now be part of Portland-headquartered IBEW Local 48, which had 3,647 members prior to the merger.

Members of both unions approved the merger in voting held in September. Local 970's business manager and president become members of the Local 48 Executive Board.

Wages and benefits are slightly lower in Local 970's jurisdiction — Washington's Cowlitz and Wahkiakum

The Internet Innovation Alliance supports reforming the Universal Service Fund to include broadband. It also supports the more efficient use of spectrum, as well as the proposed merger of AT&T and T-Mobile, which it says is a key way to achieve broadband availability to more than 97 percent of the U.S. population. For more about IIA, go to www.internetinnovation.org.

counties — but those are slated to increase incrementally until Jan. 1, 2014, when they will equal Local 48's wage and benefit package. Members who were on Local 970's out-of-work lists were added into Local 48's lists based on the date they registered.

Local 970 business manager Mike Bridges joins Local 48's staff as a business representative for Southwest Washington, and Local 970 office administrator Sue Harris will join Local 48's staff in a similar capacity.

The Local 970 business office will maintain office hours until January, and will be closed thereafter.

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