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IBEW Local 48 celebrates 100th anniversary

Clif Davis (right), former business manager of IBEW Local 48, and Tim Gauthier, executive manager of Oregon-Columbia National Electrical Contractors Association, check out electrical artifacts at the May 13 opening reception of the “NECA/IBEW Local 48: 100 Years of a Powerful Partnership” exhibit at the Oregon Historical Society. The display includes a 100-page research book broken down decade-by-decade, as well as a Douglas fir presentation board connected with knob and tube wiring that summarizes the historical highlights. There are interactive tools, displays of equipment from days gone by, and the artistry of conduit bending. In conjunction with the 100th anniversary, the IBEW 9th District Progress Meeting is being held in Portland May 13-17. A gala dinner is slated at the Oregon Convention Center May 17. The Oregon Historical Society is located at 1200 SW Park Ave., Portland.

Machinists get election at Precision Castparts

By **DON McINTOSH**
Associate Editor

On June 6 and 7, a group of 2,306 employees at Precision Castparts Corporation (PCC) will vote on whether to join the International Association of Machinists (IAM). It will be Oregon’s largest private-sector unionization vote in decades — in fact, the largest since 1996, the last time PCC workers voted on unionization.

PCC is a big supplier to the aerospace and power generation industries. It makes complex metal components for General Electric, Boeing, Airbus, Rolls Royce and United Technologies, and is the world’s leading manufacturer of airfoil investment castings used in jet aircraft engines. While the company has operations worldwide, the union vote will take place in 12 buildings at five locations in Portland, Milwaukie, and Clackamas, Oregon.

IAM represents workers at Boeing, a key PCC customer, as well as at PCC subsidiaries like Wyman-Gordon Company in Texas.

“The power to change your life is in your hands,” union leaders tell about 50 PCC workers at a May 10 union organizing meeting. For a month, the union hall has been humming with activity, its parking lot full, as the union revs up its

election campaign. This meeting, at 3:30 p.m., is the third such session held at the Machinists hall in Gladstone that day — one for each shift.

In the course of an hour-long discussion at the meeting, hope for something better is unmistakable, even if workers don’t agree on every detail. Workers have questions. How much would dues be?

That would depend, union leaders reply. Boeing machinists can pay \$80 a month or more in union dues. But then, they can also earn \$42.36 an hour, and a portion of those dues goes to a strike fund that they’ve used to protect some of the highest pay and benefits in the aerospace industry.

For workers unaccustomed to unions, the meeting is an introduction to strange customs, like calling each other “brother” and “sister,” and talk of “solidarity.”

How can we be sure that smaller locations will get as a good a deal in negotiations, asks a worker from PCC’s Deer Creek annex in Milwaukie. “Solidarity,” a co-worker answers. “We’re all going to have to be our brothers’ keepers.”

“And sisters,” pipes up someone

(Turn to Page 4)

Second foreign grain handler locks out longshoremen

A second foreign-owned grain handling conglomerate operating at taxpayer-supported ports along the Columbia River has locked out its local workforce and replaced them with out-of-state workers.

On May 4, Columbia Grain, owned by Japan’s Marubeni Corporation, locked members of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) Local 8 out of their jobs at the Port of Portland’s Terminal 5. The company accused the longshore of “working to rule” and demanding too many equipment safety inspections, which was taking too much time. As many as 75 jobs daily are impacted.

The action follows the Feb. 27 lock-out of members of ILWU Local 4 by Matsui-owned United Grain at the Port

of Vancouver. Local 4 represents about 200 longshore workers, all of whom rotate to fill 44 jobs at the grain terminal. The company claimed its action was justified because an individual union member allegedly damaged equipment at the grain terminal two months earlier. The company says it has video evidence of the sabotage, but has yet to release it. The individual they accused was dismissed prior to the lockout.

“There is no justification for locking out the entire ILWU workforce — aside from anti-union retaliation, which is illegal,” union officials said.

ILWU Local 4 has filed unfair labor practice charges against United Grain for retaliation.

Both United Grain and Columbia

Grain are part of an employer bargaining group — the Pacific Northwest Grain Handlers Association. The ILWU has worked under the agreement dating back to the 1930s. The agreement also covers grain terminals owned by Netherlands-based Louis Dreyfus Commodities in Portland and Seattle, and U.S.-based TEMCO elevators in Portland, Tacoma, and Kalama.

The Grain Handlers’ collective bargaining agreement expired Sept. 29, 2012, and all of the employers except TEMCO imposed a concessionary agreement in December. Despite having rejected the proposal by a 94 percent margin, longshore workers decided not to strike, and continued working under terms of the imposed

contract

TEMCO, on the other hand, continued to negotiate with the union and reached an agreement that was ratified by the membership in February 2013.

The ILWU says rather than bargain to reach a fair contract, the foreign-owned grain terminal operators are locking out workers.

Bruce Holte, president of ILWU Local 8, said Columbia hired replacement workers last fall, when talks were in the early stages, indicating that the company never intended to reach agreement.

“Unfortunately, Marubeni-Columbia Grain has done what it’s wanted to do all along, and locked out local workers who have made this company profitable for decades,” said Holte,

who also is a Port of Portland commissioner. “Rather than reach a fair agreement, the company has hired an out-of-state strikebreaking firm, attorneys and a publicist to make allegations against local workers who simply want to do our jobs and support our community.”

Pickets at both the Port of Portland and Port of Vancouver are hammering on how the foreign-owned companies are profiting from local taxpayer investments while ruining local union jobs that pay good wages and benefits.

A flier handed out at Port of Vancouver picket lines says Mitsui, owner of United Grain, “makes huge profits by using Washington’s public ports, highways and railroads.” It points out

(Turn to Page 9)