

A LOOK-BACK AT THE ALMOST-STRIKE

Behind the startling reversal at Portland Public Schools: As strike neared, district faced unified teachers backed by broad public support

By DON McINTOSH
Associate Editor

On Feb. 18 — two days before a strike by the Portland Association of Teachers (PAT) was to begin — 10 months worth of concessionary demands by Portland Public Schools (PPS) melted away. Though teachers made one significant concession, it was the district's position that wavered in the final hours, and teachers are calling the resulting contract an unmistakable union win. To assess how that happened, the Labor Press talked in the weeks following the settlement with Gwen Sullivan, PAT president; Adam Sanchez, Madison High School social studies teacher and PAT's lead external organizer; and Steve Buel, PAT's one consistent ally on the PPS school board.

Portland Public Schools — Oregon's largest school district — took a hard line in bargaining from the very beginning. Starting April 2013, the district demanded concessions, and offered no improvements in exchange. The district insisted on eliminating the previous contract's workload provision, which limited high school teachers to 180 students. It proposed to eliminate step pay scales that rewarded additional training. It proposed to require teachers to pay 100 percent of health insurance premium increases above a certain cap. And it offered a wage increase of 1 percent (well below inflation), increasing its offer to 1.5 percent after six months of bargaining. Meanwhile, PPS refused to consider proposals to reduce class size, which PAT members considered their top priority. PAT proposed that the district reduce class size by 5 to 10 percent, which would require 175 additional teachers be hired. PPS said it didn't have to negotiate about class size, under Oregon law, and even threatened legal action when teachers would bring it up at the bargaining table.



And yet 48 hours before 2,900 teachers were to walk out, the district dropped all those demands.

Instead, PPS committed to hire at least 150 new teachers (50 in high school, 70 in the lower grades, and 30 in special education). It agreed to increase prep time for elementary school teachers from 185 minutes to 260 minutes per week — which also means additional librarians and other support staff will be hired. It committed to consult teachers first before adopting new textbooks, and to give teachers greater academic freedom to determine which support materials and methods to use in day-to-day instruction. Rejecting the

methods of corporate-styled education “reform,” PPS agreed that student scores on standardized tests will *not* be considered in transfer, layoff, salary or discipline decisions. The district will continue to pay 93 percent of health insurance premiums. And keeping up with inflation, it agreed to three annual raises of 2.3 percent, retroactive to July 2013.

“These are really significant victories,” said Sanchez, the Madison High School teacher. “And I don’t think they would have been won without us preparing to go on strike and without immense community and student support.”

Teachers did make a couple of concessions. They’ll have a little less discretion in transferring to different schools — one round of internal hiring, compared with two in the past. And more dearly felt, teachers with less than 15 years in the district will give up an early retirement incentive after September 2016, in which the district pays up to five years of health insurance before retirees become eligible for Medicare at age 65.

“Our membership knows loss of the early retirement incentive is a significant concession,” Sanchez said, “and I don’t think anyone in PAT is tiptoeing around that.”

And yet, Sanchez and Sullivan say, the contract in its entirety is a significant win for teachers, at a time of few union victories.

“The district asked for 75 concessions, and wanted to erase 30 pages of our contract,” Sanchez said. “That strategy totally and utterly failed.”

“They underestimated the unity of our teachers coming together,” said PAT president Sullivan. Sullivan said the union wouldn’t have taken a strike vote unless its leaders knew there was broad support.

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UAW MADE VEHICLES

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- Cadillac ATS Cadillac CTS
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- Chevrolet Corvette
- Chevrolet Cruze
- Chevrolet Cruze (Diesel)
- Chevrolet Impala
- Chevrolet Impala (Police)
- Chevrolet Malibu
- Chevrolet Sonic

- Chevrolet Volt
- Chrysler 200
- Chrysler 200 Convertible
- Dodge Avenger
- Dodge Dart
- Ford C-Max (Full Hybrid/Electric)
- Ford Focus
- Ford Focus (Electric)
- Ford Fusion* (Gas Powered Only)
- Ford Mustang
- Ford Taurus
- Lincoln MKS
- SRT Viper

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- Ford F Series
- GMC Sierra**
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- Ford E Series
- Ford Transit Connect
- GMC Savana

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- Buick Enclave
- Cadillac Escalade ESV
- Cadillac Escalade/Hybrid
- Chevrolet Equinox
- Chevrolet Suburban

- Chevrolet Tahoe
- Chevrolet Tahoe (Police)
- Chevrolet Tahoe (Special Service)
- Chevrolet Traverse
- Dodge Durango
- Ford Escape
- Ford Expedition
- Ford Explorer
- GMC Acadia
- GMC Yukon/Hybrid
- GMC Yukon XL
- Jeep Cherokee
- Jeep Compass
- Jeep Grand Cherokee
- Jeep Patriot
- Jeep Wrangler
- Lincoln Navigator
- Mitsubishi Outlander Sport

These vehicles are made in the United States or Canada by members of the UAW and Canada's Union union, formerly the Canadian Auto Workers (CAW). Because of the integration of United States and Canadian vehicle production, all the vehicles listed that are made in Canada include significant UAW-made content and support jobs of UAW members.

However, those marked with an asterisk (*) are produced in the United

States and another country. The light duty, 1500 crew cab versions of the vehicles marked with a double asterisk (**) are manufactured in the United States and Mexico.

When purchasing one of these models, check the Vehicle Identification Number (VIN). A VIN beginning with "1" or "4" or "5" identifies a U.S.-made vehicle; "2" identifies Canadian-made vehicle.

UNIFOR SUVs/ CUVs

- Chevrolet Equinox
- Ford Edge
- Ford Flex
- GMC Terrain
- Lincoln MKT
- Lincoln MKX

UNIFOR CARS

- Buick Regal
- Cadillac XTS
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- Chevrolet Impala
- Chrysler 300
- Dodge Challenger
- Dodge Charger

UNIFOR VANS

- Chrysler Town & Country
- Dodge Grand Caravan

USW MADE TIRES

The U.S. Department of Transportation requires that all tires sold in the United States carry a code which shows, among other things, the company and plant that made the tire. The code would look like this: DOT BE XX XXX XXX. The two symbols (either two letters or a letter and a number) which follow "DOT" indicate the company and the plant where a tire was manufactured. For example, the above code indicates a tire made by B. F. Goodrich in Tuscaloosa, AL. The following is a listing of all U.S. and Canadian unionized tire plants and their DOT codes. By comparing this list to the code on the tire you are buying, you can be certain you are getting a USW-made tire.

Code	Company • City
BE	B. F. Goodrich • Tuscaloosa, Ala.
BF	B. F. Goodrich • Woodburn, Ind.
VE, YE, YU, 8B	Bridgestone/Firestone • Des Moines, Iowa
D2, E3, W1, Y7	Bridgestone/Firestone • Lavergne, Tenn.
2C, 4D, 5D	Bridgestone/Firestone • Morrison, Tenn.
UP	Cooper • Findlay, Ohio.
UT	Cooper • Texarkana, Ark.
JU, PC, UK	Goodyear • Medicine Hat, Alberta
JJ, MD, PU	Goodyear • Gadsden, Ala.
DA	Dunlop • Buffalo, N.Y.
JN, MI, PY	Goodyear • Topeka, Kan.
JE, MC, PT	Goodyear • Danville, Va.
JF, MM, PJ	Kelly-Springfield • Fayetteville, N.C.
CF	Titan Tire • Des Moines, IA
JH, MN, PK	Titan Tire • Freeport, IL
B, plus, serial #	Titan Tire • Bryan, Ohio
CC	Yokohama Tire • Salem, Va.

Not all vehicles made in the United States or Canada are built by union-represented workers. Vehicles not listed here, even if produced in the United States or Canada, are not union made.

Firestone racing tires for the Indy Racing League (IRL) are USW-made tires. Goodyear racing tires made in the United States are USW-made tires.

Goodrich racing tires or off-the-road tires made in the United States are USW-made tires.

In addition to company brands, these codes will also appear on "Associate Brand" and "Private Brand" tires manufactured at the above plants. The key, then, to being sure of getting a USW-made tire is the DOT code. Be sure and check it with this listing.