

ATU and TriMet reach deal

TriMet and Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 757 reached tentative agreement Sept. 30 on a new union contract, but neither side is releasing terms of the deal to the public until members have had a chance to see the agreement and vote on it.

Details were made available to Local 757 members at TriMet on Oct. 14. They will vote on it by mail, with ballots to be counted Oct. 24. The agreement covers about 2,000 workers and 1,200 retirees, though only active members vote on it. The TriMet Board is expected to vote on the agreement at its Oct. 22 meeting.

The four-year agreement comes nearly two years after the old union contract expired. That contract was the result of binding arbitration: The arbitrator had to choose one side's final offer, and chose TriMet's.

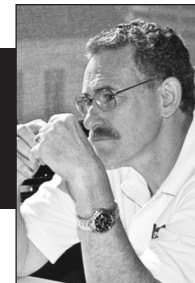
Before the tentative agreement was announced, it looked like this contract too was headed for binding arbitration. TriMet declared an impasse in negotiations on May 14, but the two sides continued to meet with the assistance of state mediator Janet Gillman.

If the deal is ratified, the two sides have also agreed to drop all pending unfair labor practice cases. Local 757 had challenged the arbitrator's award on the grounds that elements of TriMet's final offer were unlawful.

If approved, the new agreement would be retroactive to Dec. 1, 2012, and would run through Nov. 30, 2016. The two sides got off to a late start negotiating due to a legal dispute over whether bargaining should be open to the public, and made slow progress once face-to-face bargaining began in September 2013.

Who's On Our Side?

By Tom Chamberlain



Recently, U. S. Speaker of the House John Boehner was caught on tape expressing his true opinion of the unemployed: "Unemployed people just sit around and don't think they have to work," he said.

Speaker Boehner must be unaware that there are two job applicants for every job opening. He must be unaware that unemployed workers are listening to the hollow promise that education is the key to a better life, going back to school, racking up debt to pay for their degree or certificate, only to find a minimum wage or sub living wage job with no benefits awaiting them. Mr. Boehner must be unaware that his drive to further corporatize our economy has resulted in colleges — especially some for-profit private colleges — becoming more focused on their bottom line than on providing an education to lift Americans out of the grips of poverty.

For-profit colleges such as the University of Phoenix have been the subject of many news articles. There's reason for that. In 2011, 88 percent of the University of Phoenix's income came from federal programs, most of it from student loans that equate to \$3.2 billion. Almost a quarter of their students default on their loans. According to the *Washington Post*, in 2013 the University of Phoenix graduation rate was 16 percent.

Three out of every 20 students graduate. Seventeen don't.

We have turned into a society that is quick to blame the victim rather than find solutions. Speaker Boehner's comments on the unemployed reveal some insight into the thinking of those with wealth and power.

If we can blame those who work minimum wage jobs or the unemployed for not working hard enough to better their lives; if we can destroy economies with out-of-balance trade agreements that exploit workers and force those same workers to flee their homelands in search of work to feed their families; if we can shift the responsibility of health care and pensions from the employer or government onto the backs of the workers, then it becomes much easier to dismantle America's tattered social safety net.

Unemployment insurance, Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid, food for the hungry, housing, education and a host of other programs from the New Deal of the 1930s and the Great Society of the 1960s are being transformed into for-profit, private sector, programs that put the expense squarely on the backs of workers.

Good job creation is just another example of blaming the worker. We all talk a good game about good job creation. Everyone seems to be aware of the shrinking middle

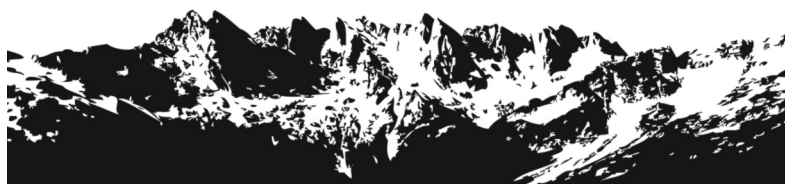
class. The loss of jobs is undeniable. But the blame is placed on the worker. The say more skilled and educated workers are needed, or we can't compete. I am always in favor of a highly trained workforce. But manufacturing jobs or other types of occupations that historically fit the definition of a middle class job don't necessarily translate into a good paying jobs. There are thousands of manufacturing jobs in Portland that pay sub-middle class wages with few or no benefits. Those who promote good jobs, the need for increased job skills, the need for greater individual responsibility, apparently believe that good paying jobs with benefits just happen.

Good jobs don't just appear. That strategy will continue to fail because the thirst for increased profit will continue to come at the expense of workers. The fact is the only way to counter the blame game and to ensure that we do create good-paying jobs is to ensure that workers have power.

And that requires having a union card in their hands.

Tom Chamberlain is president of the Oregon AFL-CIO.

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Local Motion

September 2014

A list of Oregon and Southwest Washington workplaces deciding whether to be union-represented — as reported by the National Labor Relations Board and the Oregon Employment Relations Board.

Voting in union elections

Date	Workplace (Location) Union	Yes	No	
9/11	Providence Portland (Portland) Operating Engineers Local 701	4	11	☞
9/5	City of Cannon Beach Police (Cannon Beach) CB Police Officers Guild	6	0	☞

Requesting a union election

Workplace (Location) Union	Number of workers in unit
Klamath Housing Authority (Klamath Falls) Oregon AFSCME	DECERT 7

LEGEND

☞ : workers will be union-represented ☞ : workers will be on their own

DECERT : A decertification election occurs when some union-represented workers declare that the union no longer has majority support. A 'yes' vote is a vote for the union.