

# Unfair labor practice charges piling up against Instafab

VANCOUVER, Wash.—Unfair labor practice charges are piling up against Instafab, a steel fabrication and erection company based in Vancouver, Wash.

A group of construction ironworkers launched an unfair labor practice strike Feb. 27 and sought union representation from Iron Workers Local 29 after their employer refused to listen to their list of grievances regarding working conditions. All of them were fired. (See Northwest Labor Press, May 15.)

On May 18, four workers from the fabrication shop presented their boss with a list of demands similar to those of the field workers. When they too were ignored, they went on strike and are seeking representation from Iron Workers Shopmen's Local 516.

Another field ironworker joined the picket line May 18, bringing the number of Instafab's employees on strike to 14—including a job superintendent and a foreman.

Locals 29 and 516 have joined with several community

and religious organizations, including Portland Jobs with Justice, to form the Instafab Workers Coalition for Justice.

The coalition has filed numerous new unfair labor practice complaints with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB). The most recent filing was June 8. The coalition alleges the company fired employees for engaging in protected union activity; threatened to fire employees if they talk to striking ironworkers or any Local 29 union reps; threatened to fire or discipline an employee if he didn't remove a pro-union decal from his personal automobile; interrogated a new hire about his sympathies toward the union; granted pay raises to discourage employees from engaging in union activity; and told a new hire the company would close before it ever signed a collective bargaining agreement with the Iron Workers Union.

The charges are currently under investigation by the NLRB.

"The employer is retaliating against these workers for engag-

ing in protected, concerted activity; it's as simple as that," said coalition spokesperson Diana Pei Wu, who is executive director of Portland Jobs with Justice, a coalition of more than 90 labor organizations and community groups dedicated to protecting the rights of working people and supporting community struggles.

The coalition is planning several actions in the coming weeks and months, Pei Wu said.

Robert Camarillo, a business agent for Iron Workers Local 29, said Instafab also is under investigation by the Washington Department of Safety and Health over striking worker complaints about safety training certification.

Instafab is a primary subcontractor for Anderson Construction and Skanska USA Building. Coalition members have picketed and leafletted several projects, including Block 67—the Burnside Bridgehead apartment project in Portland; an apartment project in the Pearl District's Block 17; at The Landing

Drive Project in Southwest Portland; and at the Pringle Square project in Salem.

Several organizations with the Instafab Workers Coalition for Justice have sent letters to the general contractors asking them to look into the labor practices of Instafab, and to cut ties with the company until the labor dispute is resolved.

Striking ironworkers William

Russell and Laramie Lexow say they feel bolstered by the strong showing of support from labor, community and religious organizations.

"It is incredibly powerful to see so many people coming together to help us get a union so that we can have a voice at work," said Russell.

"We're really gaining momentum," Lexow added.

## Outsourced school bus drivers vote to rejoin Oregon School Employees Assoc.

A group of 15 school bus drivers and bus aides in Dillard, Oregon, joined Oregon School Employees Association (OSEA) Local 6732 in a unanimous 10-0 vote held June 9—the day before the school year ended.

The workers are employed by for-profit First Student, which got the contract when the Winston-Dillard School District outsourced its student transportation in mid-2013. The district,

southeast of Roseburg, serves over 1,400 K-12 students in rural areas of Douglas County.

OSEA, an affiliate of the American Federation of Teachers-Oregon, previously represented the workers when they were employed by the district, and fought to oppose the outsourcing. Representatives of OSEA said pay fell as much \$500 a month after the outsourcing, due to cuts in hours.

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