



NORTHWEST LABOR PRESS

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Locked-out workers seek support in ATI struggle

The nationwide lockout of 2,200 steel workers by Allegheny Technologies Inc. (ATI) entered its fifth week Sept. 12. The lockout includes 180 workers at ATI's Oremet titanium plant in Albany, Oregon, who are members of United Steelworkers (USW) Local 7150. (Members of USW Local 6163 at ATI's nearby Wah Chang plant have a separate contract that runs to 2017, and aren't part of the lockout.)

Steelworkers met with ATI Sept. 11 with the assistance of a federal mediator. The union made a proposal to end the lockout, but the company failed to respond, holding fast to its last, best and final offer. It was the first meeting between the sides since July 2.

ATI began the lockout Aug. 15 after union members refused to accept its final offer, which would significantly cut health insurance benefits, give greater latitude to contract out work done by union members, substitute annual lump sum payments for hourly wage increases, and end pension and retiree health insurance for new hires. The



LABOR DAY SOLIDARITY: At the Labor Day picnic in Portland, locked-out Albany steelworkers sell raffle tickets to raise support funds. ATI locked out workers across the country when they refused contract concessions.

previous union contracts — which cover 12 ATI mills in six states — expired June 30.

ATI is attempting to produce metal at its plants using replacement workers provided by Strom Engineering, the same company that American Crystal Sugar em-

ployed during a 22-month lockout of 1,300 members of Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers that ended in 2013. In the ATI dispute, Strom has advertised replacement worker wages of \$1,700 — \$3,000 a week for those willing

to work 12 hour days and 84 hours a week.

Ron Rodgers, USW staff representative for Local 7150, said replacement workers showed up at ATI's Oremet Albany plant

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IBEW Local 125 authorizes strike at Pacific Power

Workers across Northern Oregon and Southeastern Washington voted overwhelmingly Sept. 1 to reject a contract offer and authorize the union bargaining committee to call a strike at Pacific Power.

IBEW Local 125 represents 320 linemen, meter readers, substation wiremen and other workers at the electric utility, in a service area that extends from Astoria to Bend to Walla Walla. Pacific Power and parent company PacifiCorp are owned by Warren Buffett's Berkshire Hathaway Energy.

Local 125's most recent contract with Pacificorp, which ran through Jan. 25, contained raises of just 1 percent — lower than inflation. The one before that terminated workers' pension plan and substituted a 401(k).

"We're not wanting to have anything further taken away," said Local 125 Business Manager Travis Eri.

Eri said that explained why turnout for the vote was 95 percent, and so was the margin of votes against the company offer — even though the difference between the union and company positions appears slight. The two sides agree on annual raises of 2 percent, and other terms, but disagree on the split of health insurance premiums. Local 125 is holding fast to the current split in which workers pay 22 percent of the premium — which is already \$400-\$600 a month out of their paychecks.

Pacific Power wants a four-year deal in which the employee share rises to 25 percent in the fourth year — the same percentage it got in hard bargaining from IBEW Local 57 in Salt Lake City. Pacific Power workers in Southern Oregon are represented by IBEW Local 659.

Local 125 plans to picket Pacific Power's Lloyd Tower headquarters in Portland starting at 8 a.m. Sept. 23, and is considering an ongoing picket there.

Unions are key to reducing income inequality

The report examines how unions raise wages for all workers — and reduce inequality

Union membership has a direct impact on income inequality in Oregon, according to a new report by the Oregon Center for Public Policy (OCPD).

According to the report, as unionization in Oregon declined by more than half between 1979 and 2013 — going from about 33 percent to 15 percent (and just 9 percent in the private sector, which employs over 80 percent of Oregon workers) — the hourly wage of the median Oregon worker declined from \$17.79 to \$17.02 when adjusted for inflation. The lowest paid workers (those at the 10th percentile) experienced a drop in hourly

wages from \$9.48 to \$9.18.

Meanwhile, in 2013, the wealthiest 1 percent of Oregonians made \$770,000 on average (from work as well as unearned income, such as profits from investments), more than double their inflation-adjusted income in 1979.

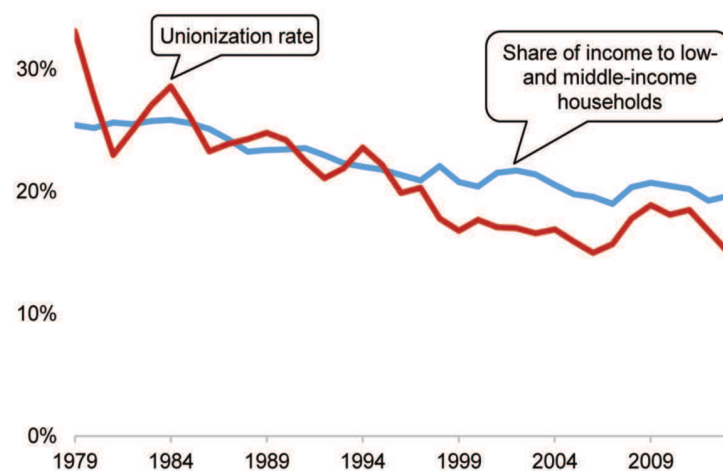
"By bargaining together for better pay, workers can reduce inequality and create an economy that works for everyone," the report said. "Increased unionization would ease inequality and help low- and middle income Oregonians prosper."

ONLINE EXTRA

To read the full report, go on line to <http://www.ocpp.org/2015/09/02/20150902-unions-income-inequality-oregon/>

Share of income going to low- and middle-income Oregonians shrinks as unionization declines

(Share of income going to bottom 60 percent of households; unionization rates; 1979 to 2013)



OCPD analysis of Current Population Survey obtained at UnionStats.com and Oregon Department of Revenue data.

Oregon Center for Public Policy | www.ocpp.org