

NORTHWEST LABOR PRESS

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VOLUME 117, NUMBER 4

PORTLAND, OREGON

FEBRUARY 19, 2016

Nabisco recruits strikebreakers — before union bargaining even begins

By Don McIntosh
Associate Editor

There may be signs of labor strife ahead for about 2,200 workers at Nabisco's six remaining U.S. plants (including about 200 workers at Nabisco's Portland Bakery) and two distribution centers.

National bargaining began Feb. 16 between Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers International Union (BCTGM) and Nabisco parent company Mondelēz International. But already in late January, online ads began appearing, offering temporary jobs at \$28 an hour to workers with experience operating dough machines, continuous bake ovens, salters and spray oil machines, "for a possible labor dispute that may occur on or about February 29, 2016." Feb. 29 is the date BCTGM's existing union contracts expire at the eight Nabisco facilities.

The ads were posted by Michigan-headquartered Huff-



ADD PICKETERS HERE? Seven of these strange tombstone-like engraved stones appeared last fall outside the Portland Nabisco bakery. Is it a preparation for picketers? Company spokesperson Laurie Guzzinati wouldn't say precisely, saying only that the signs were installed to delineate property boundaries after a periodic safety and security review.

master Crisis Response. The company, which calls itself "the leading provider of strike management solutions," provides replacement employees and strike security. The ads don't mention Nabisco or Mondelēz by name, but they're for jobs in

the same cities as the Nabisco plants. Those are: Charlotte, North Carolina; Fairlawn, New Jersey; Richmond, Virginia; Chicago, Illinois; Denver, Colorado; Atlanta, Georgia; and

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Oregon minimum wage raise speeding to passage

SALEM — A bill to raise Oregon's minimum wage is moving quickly through the short 2016 session of the Legislature. Unlike two pending union-backed ballot measures that would create a statewide minimum of \$15 or \$13.50, Senate Bill 1532 would divide the state into three regions.

By July 2022, the minimum wage would rise to \$14.75 in the Portland metro area (inside the Urban Growth Boundary), \$13.50 in 16 Northwestern Oregon counties plus Josephine and Jackson counties, and \$12.50 in the rural "frontier" areas of the rest of the state. The raises would

take place each year on July 1, starting this year, and would rise with inflation after 2022.

The bill passed the Senate Feb. 11 by 16-12. No Republican voted for it, and Betsy Johnson (D-Scappoose) was the only Democrat to vote against it.

It passed the House Business and Labor Committee by a 6-5 party line vote Feb. 15.

As of press time, it was awaiting a vote on the House floor, where it was expected to pass. Gov. Kate Brown announced she will sign it if it passes, though it differs from an earlier version she proposed.

Union campaign crushed at Portland Specialty Baking

In three weeks, union support went from 61 percent to 23 percent. Here's what happened.

At a large industrial bakery in Gresham, an intensive anti-union blitz by company management turned a pro-union majority into an overwhelming "no" vote in just 24 days.

When Bakers Local 114 filed Jan. 11 for a union election, 102 of the 167 workers at Portland Specialty Baking had signed cards saying they wanted a union. By the time the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) conducted an election on Feb. 4, just 38 voted for the union, and 123 voted against.

Local 114 officials and AFL-CIO union organizers were very surprised by the result, and struggled to figure out what happened.

"We blindsided the company when we filed, then we got blindsided three weeks later," said Local 114 Secretary-Treasurer Terry Lansing.

In the week before the election, 75 workers had signed a "vote yes" petition. But Portland Specialty Baking used every advantage at its disposal, starting

with access to workers.

The company brought in a professional union-buster from Illinois, who led presentations at the beginning of nearly every shift, for two weeks. Workers were then called in one by one for individual meetings with two or three managers at a time, and most workers were called in multiple times. Lansing says Local 114 plans to file charges with the NLRB accusing the company of breaking federal labor law in those meetings — interrogating workers about their views on the union, promising (and making) improvements to wages and schedules in order to buy support, and threatening that those improvements would vanish if the union won.

If company managers neglected workers before, after the surprise arrival of the union, they turned on the charm. For the first time, company communications were translated into workers' own languages. A manager no one liked disappeared from the plant without explanation. An unpopular supervisor was transferred to a different production line. An open

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PART ONE OF A SERIES

Jail time for wage thieves?

Will Oregon legislators get tough on wage theft? Not this year. Not really.

By Don McIntosh
Associate Editor

To an out-of-work union tile-setter from Las Vegas, the promise of four months of work at a Tigard, Oregon, Embassy Suites sounded enticing. Las Vegas construction work had all but dried up for Bricklayers and Allied Crafts Local 13. So Johnny Hilditch drove to Oregon on his own dime last August to work nonunion for Residential Commercial Interiors (RCI), at \$18 an hour plus free lodging in the hotel. But in October, the paychecks stopped coming. Some RCI crew members stopped working. Hilditch and several others stayed, hoping for



Johnny Hilditch

a lump-sum check when the room-by-room remodel of the Washington Square Embassy Suites was complete. The work ended in December, but the pay never came. Company owner Joe Rogers — seldom seen on the work site — stopped returning phone calls. Hilditch estimates he's owed \$6,500. And there was worse to come. Hilditch says when he went to apply for unemployment, he was told there was no record of his employment in Oregon. That may be because RCI hadn't paid unemployment insurance.

Hilditch wasn't the only one. Eugene resident Lex Sanderson is a journeyman floor installer and former member of Seattle-based Painters and Allied Trades Local 1238. He says RCI promised him \$25 an hour to lay carpet in the Embassy Suites remodel, but only ever paid him \$20 an hour. Problems began with his very first paycheck, which was late. The company paid straight time for overtime, not time-and-a-half as required by law. When

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