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NATIONAL

Uber recognizes a quasi-union of NYC drivers

Uber announced May 10 that it has a five-year deal with the International Association of Machinists to create a kind of quasi-union for New York City drivers. Uber sets rates and terms for its drivers, but labels them as independent contractors who lack the right to unionize. Members of the new Independent Drivers Guild won't get a union contract, but they'll be able to attend monthly discussions with local Uber management, and they'll have the right to representation in disciplinary appeals. The Machinists union

agreed not to encourage drivers to strike, try to have them recognized as employees, or try to unionize them for five years.

Is an AFSCME/SEIU merger on the horizon?

A committee of leaders from Service Employees International Union (SEIU) and American Federation of State County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) has spent more than a year discussing a closer partnership. The two giant unions represent public sector workers, and have long competed, but they're increasingly collaborating and are even discussing the

possibility of a merger at some point.

On May 5, the board of 2-million-member SEIU approved a resolution that calls for close cooperation with 1.6-million-member AFSCME across the United States — in political campaigning, organizing and bargaining. The two unions would take part in joint organizing drives and joint lobbying efforts, and would try to prevent politicians from playing one union against the other. AFSCME'S board will consider a similar resolution in June; both would need to be ratified at conventions later this year.

OREGON

Burgerville opposes union, Bernie Sanders supports it

On May 6, a letter went out to Burgerville workers with their paychecks: CEO Jeff Harvey is worried that a union effort would disrupt the low-wage company's "special culture." The letter is full of standard anti-union boilerplate about interference from "outsiders." Harvey seems unaware that the Burgerville Workers Union, launched April 26 in Portland, is a grass-roots effort by workers themselves. But on May 10, the campaign got a statement of support

from presidential candidate Bernie Sanders: "The Burgerville Workers Union is a perfect example of the type of political revolution that we need," Sanders said. Burgerville worker Mark Medina spoke at a May 10 Sanders rally in Salem.

AFSCME 88 says Multnomah County Sheriff must go

The AFSCME Local 88 Executive Board is calling on Multnomah County Sheriff Dan Staton to resign. Local 88 represents 3,500 Multnomah County em-

ployees, including 133 civilian employees in the Sheriff's Office. Two years ago, Local 88 endorsed Staton's unopposed reelection campaign, but he's been plagued by scandal since then. "It is common knowledge across the County that Sheriff Staton has practiced vindictiveness, disrespect and retaliation against anyone who disagrees with him," the union said in a May 10 statement. "It has played out in his brash and boorish treatment of other elected officials, women, people of color, judges and others in law enforcement."

TriMet wants ATU contract extended (or does it?)

TriMet management likes the agency's union contract so much that it's proposing to extend it two years, along with two 3 percent raises.

On Thursday, May 12, TriMet labor relations director Randy Stedman faxed that proposal to Amalgamated Transit Union Local 757 President Shirley Block

"In the spirit of labor-management cooperation and partnership, we would like to discuss an extension of the collective bargaining agreement for two additional years through November 30, 2018," Stedman wrote.

The professed cooperative spirit lasted all of two business days: Monday morning, May 16, with no heads-up to Local 757 and before having heard back from the union, the transit agency issued a press release touting its offer to the public. Is that how TriMet management thinks trust is built?

Returning a call from the Labor Press, TriMet spokesperson Mary Fetch suggested that two days was enough time for the union to have notified its members about the offer.

The current TriMet union contract expires Nov. 30, and negotiations are expected to begin this summer.

But the current contract was the product of negotiations led by Bruce Hansen, Block's predecessor as Local 757 president. Block ran on a platform that criticized that contract, and defeated Hansen last June, and again in an April 25 re-run election.

"Congratulations, again, on your re-election as president," Stedman opens in his letter to Block.

Block, reached by phone, said the union can't take a position on TriMet's offer until the offer has been thoroughly reviewed and presented to the membership. Though they voted to ratify it, many union members were unhappy with health insurance concessions in the current contract that TriMet is proposing to extend.

ONLINE EXTRA

See TriMet's letter to the union at bit.ly/1TWepZq

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