

Who's on our side?

By Tom Chamberlain Oregon AFL-CIO President



Trump says he wants to make America great again — but for who?

What many thought was unthinkable has become reality: Donald Trump is the presumptive presidential nominee of the Republican Party. With both Sen. Ted Cruz of Texas and Ohio Gov. Tom Kasich out of the race, the path to Trump's nomination now appears inevitable.

There's a disturbing trend emerging from the endless news coverage of Trump's ascent to the top of the Republican ticket: More and more, the media is painting Donald Trump as a candidate supported by working people, in particular "blue collar" workers. The labor movement isn't fooled by Trump's tough talk, because his record as a businessman and a quick glimpse at the statements he's made to voters make it clear where he allegiances are.

He mistreats workers, and will send jobs overseas to make a quick buck. When the Trump Tower was demolished, Mr. Trump exploited foreign workers who were paid as little as \$4 a day, and even offered vodka as payment. And he's not just importing cheap labor, he's exporting it. Nearly all of his "Donald J. Trump" clothing line is made overseas, and before he decided to be a politician, he claimed outsourcing "creates jobs in the long run."

In Oregon, where we've seen tens of thousands of jobs lost due to offshoring, we know that Mr. Trump is once again blowing hot air. Trump has made his views on wages clear. Last November he told voters: "Taxes too high, wages too high. We're not going to be able to compete against the world." How can anyone who works for a living support a candidate who thinks our wages are too high?

Trump does not side with working people when it comes to our right to stand together and form unions. His company has run an aggressive anti-union campaign against the employees in his Las Vegas hotel, where alleged incidents include physical assault, verbal abuse, intimidation, and threats by management. Complaints with the National Labor Relations Board are ongoing. Last December, hundreds of workers at his hotel in Las Vegas voted to form a union and were certified in March. Since then, Trump's company has refused to honor the results of the election and to negotiate a first contract with the workers.

It should come as no surprise that Trump is outspoken in favor of so-called "right to work" laws which diminish the ability of working people to negotiate together. He's praised Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker's attacks against unions and has said he prefers to build new properties without union contracts. This is a man who consistently puts the profits of himself over the prosperity of the people whose work creates his wealth. If he treats the people working for him with such little respect, imagine the kind of short-sighted policies he'll push for as president.

We have work to do to keep Mr. Trump out of the White House. I believe in a country where immigrants have a pathway to citizenship, where women are paid and treated equally, and where workers can stand together, without fear and harassment, to join unions. We're going to hear a lot of rhetoric over the next few months as the November election draws close. I hope that you consider the facts when you vote for president: Mr. Trump says he wants to make American great again, but for who? Clearly, it's not working people.

Tom Chamberlain is president of the Oregon AFL-CIO, a 120,000-member-strong federation of labor unions.

Stronger unions could reduce income inequality in Oregon

The long-term decline in union representation in Oregon has contributed to the rise in income inequality — which now stands near record highs, according to a new report by the Oregon Center for Public Policy.

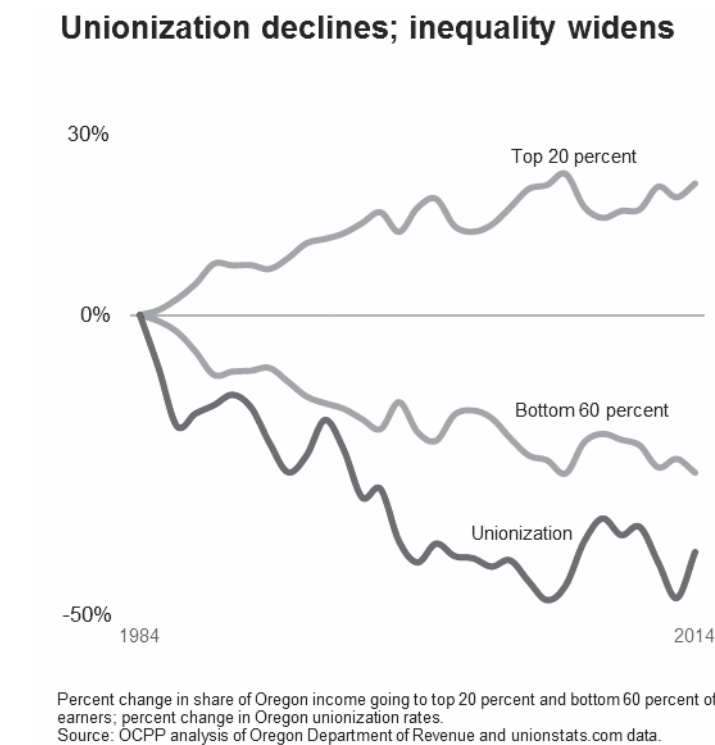
"Greater levels of union representation could not only help narrow income inequality, but could support economic growth," the report said.

For decades, top income earners in Oregon have garnered an ever-larger portion of the state's economic benefits, while the broad group in the middle and below have lost ground.

Between 1984 and 2014, the share of Oregon income going to the top 20 percent of earners grew by 22 percent, while the portion going to the bottom 60 percent shrunk by 26 percent.

These trends have occurred at the same time unionization in the state has declined. Between 1984 and 2014, the share of Oregon workers represented by a union declined 40 percent.

The decline in the unionized workforce helps explain the widening income gap. Research shows that erosion of unions na-



tionally accounts for about a third of growth in wage inequality among men and about a fifth among women. A growing body of research also suggests that increased income inequality undermines economic growth, especially long-term growth. Analysts have found that large income

gaps reduce consumer demand, hamper acquisition of skills and limit private investment.

"Thus, a resurgence of union representation in Oregon could not only benefit workers and reduce income inequality, it could also promote economic prosperity," the report concludes.

FREE CLASSIFIED ADS

A message to our readers

Starting with this issue, the Northwest Labor Press is discontinuing the free classified advertising section. Over the past several years we have lost a number of our regular paid advertisers. Fewer advertisers means fewer pages. Fewer pages results in less space for news.

Besides, the classified ad section has shrunk as well. If it wasn't for the half dozen "Wanted" ads that have been running each issue, the classifieds would consist of only a handful of ads from subscribers with something to sell.

Discontinuing the classified ad section will free up space for more labor news.

After announcing this in the May 6 edition, we have received calls from several subscribers who regularly run classified ads, asking us to reconsider.

We will continue to monitor the feedback to the cancellation, and will revisit the decision in a few months. Send emails to editor@nwlaborpress.org.

And thanks for reading the Northwest Labor Press!

—Michael Gutwig,
Editor

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