

The Strike: U.S. labor's long-lost weapon

Every February, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics releases its annual report on the number of work stoppages — strikes or lockouts — involving more than 1,000 workers. Since the annual report began in the late 1940s, the annual incidence of major work stoppages has declined over 95 percent. Last year, there were 15 major work stoppages, involving 99,000 workers.

The largest was the 33-day

strike at Verizon's East Coast landline operations by 36,500 members of Communications Workers of America and IBEW.

The second largest was a one-day strike by 27,000 members of the Chicago Teachers Union at City of Chicago Public Schools.

Three other stoppages lasted just one or two days, including a walkout by 1,500 teachers at Detroit Public Schools and a walk-

out by 1,000 members of International Longshoremen's Association at the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey.

The year's longest strike was at Allina Health in Minneapolis-St. Paul, where 4,800 members of Minnesota Nurses Association (National Nurses United) stayed off the job for 38 days.

Nurses also struck at Kaiser Permanente Los Angeles Medical Center for six days.

...UNDER THE BRIDGE

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Svoboda was in charge of a \$21.8 million renovation of the Hawthorne Bridge, the Painters and Iron Workers unions collected evidence showing that lead-contaminated debris was falling into the Willamette River and grounds near the jobsite, and the Columbia-Pacific Building and Construction Trades Council sued the company for failing to hire local construction workers and for not being a registered training agent, as required by a Multnomah County ordinance.

On Feb. 1, 2017, Oldham emailed an ODOT manager with details and photo evidence of his concerns about paint, environmental, safety, and work culture problems on the Ross Island

Bridge project. ODOT's Metro East Area Manager Rich Watanabe responded by email Feb. 8, addressing the concerns point by point. Any performance problems will be caught by qualified ODOT project inspectors, Watanabe said.

"ODOT makes special efforts to ensure projects are being constructed safely and in a manner that meets our requirements to deliver a quality product for our stakeholders," Watanabe wrote.

That was six hours after the accident.

Oldham felt that wasn't good enough, and wrote back: "I stated in previous emails that we have additional information, daily logs from workers on the site, statements, pictures, video documentation and direct contact with the

painters onsite. I am disheartened by your choice to not take these sources into consideration."

As for the accident itself, Oregon-OSHA spokesperson Aaron Corvin told the Labor Press he couldn't discuss details of the agency's active investigation, but promised to share the results when the investigation is complete.

In fact, OSHA had been out to the Ross Island project at least once before, on June 8, 2016, but found no violations and issued no citations. The complaint they were investigating? That there were holes employees could fall through while sandblasting and painting the bridge.

Abhe & Svoboda did not immediately respond to a call from the Labor Press.

Who's on our side?

By Tom Chamberlain Oregon AFL-CIO President



It's been four weeks since Donald Trump was sworn into office. America is in shock as Trump tries to run the country like a corporation. He's appointed a Cabinet reflecting his vision of America — one that is white, rich and privileged, that believes what is good for big business is good for our citizens. An America without a social safety net, from the Affordable Care Act (Obamacare) to defunding Medicaid and denying benefits to the poor and disabled. An America that is very conscious of the color of one's skin, the God we choose to pray to, and an America that turns its back on the notion that we are a nation of immigrants, denying tens of thousands who come to our shores in a thirst for justice, dignity and opportunity. His is a white man's America that turns back the clock to a time when women are denied opportunity and are objectified; an America that rolls back programs and policies that eliminate barriers to the LGBTQ community.

What a turnaround from just eight years ago, when President Obama was handed an America in the grips of a great recession, with millions without healthcare. His presidency focused on lifting Americans up: Creating infrastructure projects to rebuild America, providing tens of thousands of jobs driving America out of an economic ditch to the road to recovery while providing healthcare to millions. His policies and advocacy provided greater opportunity for women and communities of color, took major strides in bringing undocumented workers out of the shadows, and broke down barriers for the LGBTQ community.

For too many, electing America's first black president and implementation of programs and policies that were in stark contrast to their beliefs, gave rise to a new movement, the Tea Party. State by state, their movement grew, passionate and aggressive in their tactics. Their agenda is small government and turning back the clock to the 1950s where women were in the kitchen, communities of color "knew their place," and if you were LGBTQ, your voice, rights and identity were stifled by a closet door. They gained power, dominating the 2010 election by defeating establishment Republican candidates in primaries, and electing them to the 2011 Congress.

What we see today in the streets, on the steps of state capitols, and in Washington, D.C., is an insurgency of epic proportions. People from all walks of life have created a grassroots movement that within one day of Donald Trump being sworn in as president, marched in millions through the streets of America.

When Trump issued an executive order banning immigration from selected countries, thousands of people expressed their outrage at airports across America. When a federal judge issued an injunction halting the executive order, thousands went to airports again — this time welcoming immigrants and refugees.

This new movement is the opposite of the Tea Party, which wanted to restrict government and limit human rights. This is a movement of compassion and love, strong, powerful, and quick to react.

If this grassroots movement can be maintained and grow, the 2018 election will bring change. We will elect candidates to local, state, and federal offices who share a vision of an America that takes care of its people, welcomes immigrants and refugees as an American asset, and eliminates barriers to women, communities of color and the LGBTQ community; an America that provides a quality education for our children and grandchildren, and reestablishes the American Dream, where each generation achieves greater prosperity than the last.

It is within our grasp if we seize it.

Thank you, President Trump. You have accomplished in a few days what others couldn't have accomplished in a lifetime when you awakened the American Peoples' Movement and filled us with resolve and purpose.

Tom Chamberlain is president of the Oregon AFL-CIO, a 130,000-member-strong federation of labor unions.



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