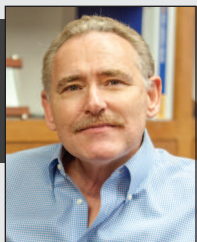


Who's on our side?

By Tom Chamberlain Oregon AFL-CIO President



Labor Day: It's about solidarity

Labor Day means different things to different people. For some it's the end of summer. To others it's a day off, perhaps a barbecue with family and friends. To many union members and leaders, it's a day to come together and celebrate the rich culture of the labor movement and the impact it has had on the American economy.

For me, Labor Day is about solidarity. It is about working people and unions standing together in solidarity. When unions stand together to move an agenda, great things happen for workers.

For example, in 2015, the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) appeared to be a done deal. President Obama and many Congressional Democrats were moving forward with the largest trade agreement in history, representing 40 percent of the world's economy. The American union movement stood united with our anti-free-trade allies and stopped the agreement dead in its tracks. We did our part in Oregon: anti-TPP radio and TV ads, rallies and canvasses to turn up the heat on pro-free-trade Oregon Congressional Democrats. Finally, President Obama came to Oregon to cool things down. He failed. Hundreds of us gathered outside a fundraising event to greet the president. Our work turned the tide of public opinion against the TPP. The agreement was radioactive long before President Trump used it as a campaign issue.

When our union movement is united, great things happen for workers.

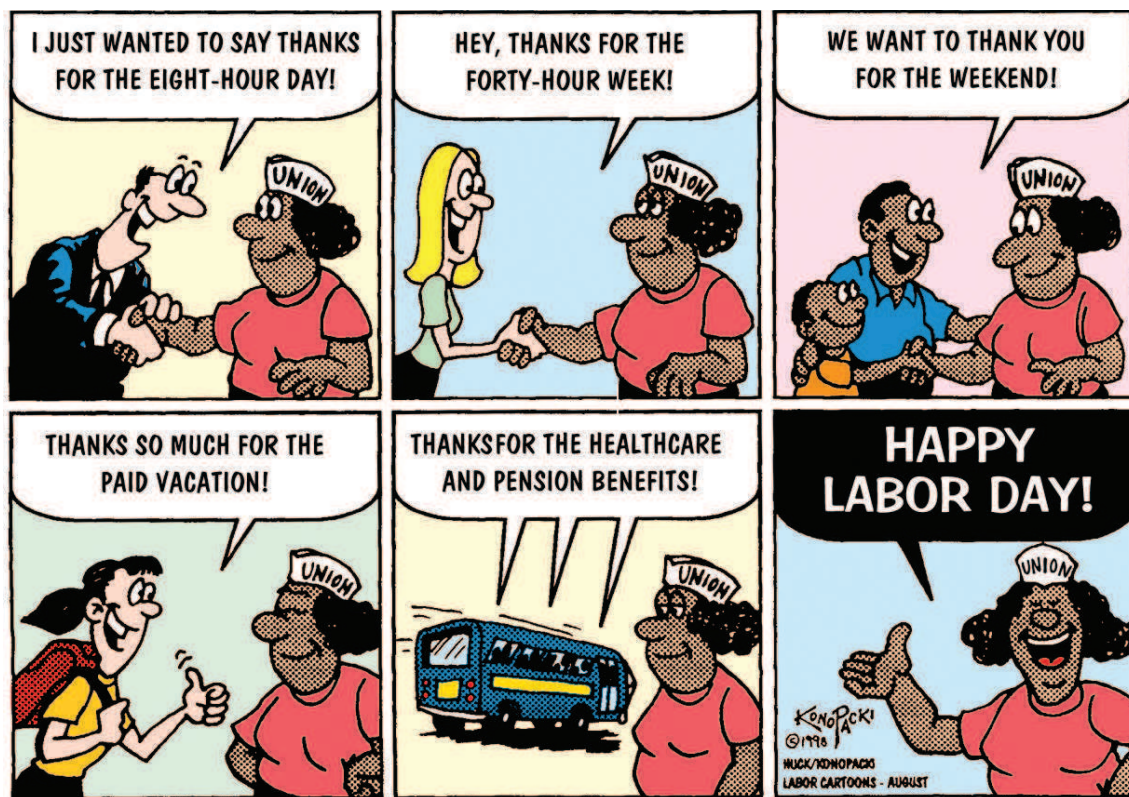
After 30 years of false starts, construction began on the Oregon Convention Center hotel August 4. Again, Oregon unions were united in our goal that the hotel be built union and that the 950 hotel employees would have an unobstructed choice whether to join a union or not. Both goals were accomplished because the Building Trades and UNITE HERE stood in solidarity throughout negotiations.

The union movement is growing in Oregon. In 2015, the membership of the Oregon AFL-CIO was 121,000; today our membership stands at 138,000. Whether through the increase of construction projects for the Building Trades or organizing by AFSCME, almost every affiliate is growing.

While our movement is growing, "right to work" has spread to 28 states. We have a president who supports national "right to work" legislation. *Janus v. AFSCME* would implement "right to work" for all public employees and is headed to the U.S. Supreme Court. Prevailing wage is being repealed in many "right to work" states. It is more important now than ever before that unions stand together in solidarity to share best practices and technologies, and to continue developing strategies that improve the lives of all working people and build stronger unions.

Labor Day means different things for different people. Some look back on the glory days of high union membership when a third of Oregon workers belonged to a union. This is an exciting time to be in the union movement. Our movement is rapidly changing. National and international unions are breaking out of the beltway to divert their resources to state and local battles, with the understanding that strong state federations and strong, large central labor councils increase the effectiveness and power of our movement. Our foes do not understand solidarity, where working people stand together and push an agenda for the common good. That is strength and that is power, and that is how we get this country back on track. For me, our best days of the American union movement lie ahead.

Tom Chamberlain is president of the Oregon AFL-CIO, a 138,000-member-strong federation of labor unions.



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