

THE REST OF THE STORY

A look back at some of the stories we reported in 2018 . . . and what happened afterward



THE HISTORIC MACHINIST UNION ELECTION WIN AT PRECISION CASTPARTS

In May we reported a legal win for a union campaign among 100 highly skilled welders at Precision Castparts. A subsidiary of Berkshire Hathaway, Precision makes cast parts like jet engine components for aerospace and other industries. Precision's Portland-area welders voted 54 to 38 to join Machinists District Lodge W24 in Sep-

tember 2017, but the company refused to recognize their union and filed a legal appeal with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) arguing that a welders-only bargaining unit wasn't appropriate because the welders work in 18 departments on three campuses. The only appropriate unit, Precision argued, would consist of all

2,500 Portland-area workers (a group that previously voted no on the union question). As we reported, in May the NLRB dismissed the company's arguments.

But Precision has continued to file legal appeals since then. Its latest appeal was denied Nov. 28. After that, the Machinists again contacted the

company to set up dates for collective bargaining and get union reps the customary access to the job site.

As of Dec. 18, they'd heard nothing back.

Don't be surprised if Precision continues to scoff at the law by filing more frivolous challenges.

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE UNION CAMPAIGN AT NEW SEASONS?

We haven't reported on the union campaign at New Seasons Market since May. At that time, a pair of newly installed company co-presidents were pledging their willingness to meet with the group New Seasons Workers United, and told the *Labor Press* by email that New Seasons no longer employs union-busting consultants.

It took a while, but that meeting did happen. In August, three company executives came out to Cider Riot pub in Northeast Portland for a courteous half-hour exchange with pro-union workers from five stores. Workers say the executives committed to at least three more meetings.

But by then the union campaign had suffered some setbacks. Not long after

the campaign's public debut in November 2017, support for the union flat-lined when the company brought in anti-union consultants for weeks of store-by-store anti-union meetings. By late spring, United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 555 had laid off all but one of the organizers it devoted to the campaign. On July 4, New Seasons Workers United announced a decision to continue on its own, independently of UFCW.

The group has been less active since then, and has suffered from employee turnover as union supporters quit the company. New Seasons Workers United continues to meet semi-regularly however, and enjoys the support of Portland Jobs with Justice and other organizations.



TRUMP'S INFRASTRUCTURE NEVERLAND

As we noted in February, Donald Trump campaigned for over a year on a plan to spend \$1 trillion on America's neglected infrastructure, but did nothing whatsoever about it his first year in office; then in his January 2018 State of the Union address, he increased the promised sum to \$1.5 trillion. Psych!

Two weeks later, the White House released a 55-page legislative outline pledging to spend at most \$200 billion in federal money over 10 years. The suggestion was that such a figure — the federal budget equivalent of pocket lint — would somehow incentivize cash-strapped cities and states to dig deep and spend big. [That's not all: To come up

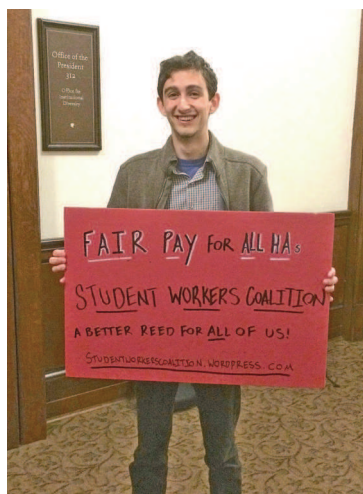
with that \$200 billion, the outline proposed to sell off existing publicly-owned infrastructure to investors — including "transmission assets" belonging to federal agencies like the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA), Ronald Reagan and Dulles International Airports, and the Washington Aqueduct, which supplies Washington, D.C., with fresh drinking water. That was about the last anybody heard

of what we at the time called Trump's amazing infrastructure "bait-and-switch."

As the *Politico* news site concluded in late October, the proposal "promptly sank without a trace in the Congress his party controls."

But hope springs eternal. With Democrats coming into control of the House in January, there could be room for a deal on infrastructure if Trump is prepared to honor his cam-

campaign pledge. Oregon's Peter DeFazio will be in charge of the U.S. House Transportation Committee, and he has a plan to raise half a trillion dollars just by updating the gas tax for inflation. The gas tax, the chief funding source for highway infrastructure, hasn't gone up in 25 years (since 1993) — unlike the price of concrete, asphalt, and wages.



WHAT HAPPENED TO THE UNION CAMPAIGN AT REED COLLEGE?

In March, we reported that a group of 52 resident advisers who live and work in the dorms at Reed College voted 34 to 14 to unionize as Local 1 of a newly formed independent union, the Student Workers Coalition.

What happened after? The college refused to recognize the union, and instead filed a legal appeal with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) argu-

ing that the resident advisers weren't workers, but students. If that sounds familiar, it's because the question of whether student employees are just students — or workers with the right to a union — has been the subject of decades of federal litigation.

Union supporters at Reed thought the question had finally been settled, for private colleges, with a pro-union NLRB decision involving grad student

workers at Columbia University. But administrators at Reed College, that liberal bastion, thought they could maybe take advantage of a Trump-appointed majority to overturn that decision.

In mid-June, Reed's resident advisers filed papers to "disclaim interest" rather than go before a Trump-majority labor board and risk overturning the Columbia decision. [Of course, if colleges

like Reed don't feel they need to abide by Columbia, that's not much different from Columbia being overturned, but it's possible the decision could stand until a Democratic president enters the White House in January 2021.]

"It highlights the weakness of labor law in general right now," union supporter Seth Douglas told the *Labor Press*. Douglas, who studied labor history at Reed, graduated in May with a history degree and is now working construction.