

...ATI's PacCast plant stays nonunion

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nologies Inc. (ATI) — a \$3.5-billion-a-year specialty metals manufacturer headquartered in Pittsburgh — took ownership of PacCast in 2011 when it bought Ladish Co.

PacCast is a high-turnover workplace where employees work a grueling rotation of 12 hour shifts and make as little as \$13 an hour. Pay, benefits, and work conditions are worse at ATI Cast Products than at Albany's two unionized ATI plants. Their health insurance has been steadily deteriorating, going from a \$250 deductible 15 years ago to \$3,000 today. So why did most workers vote against the union?

Mandatory paid-time anti-union assemblies are a big part of the answer, says Nick Gaitaud, a millwright at ATI's Oremet plant. Gaitaud led a group of USW members — volunteer organizers — who helped PacCast employees on their union campaign. On Jan. 25, when USW filed a petition with the National Labor Relations Board seeking an election, a majority of PacCast workers had signed union authorization cards, Gaitaud said. Then ATI managers led nearly a month of mandatory 30- to

90-minute long anti-union meetings, as often as two to three times a week. An Oregon law supposedly makes those meetings illegal, because it prohibits employers from disciplining workers who refuse to attend. But at PacCast, no workers refused to attend the meetings.

At the meetings, management stuck to the standard anti-union script, harping on the burden of union dues, the union's inability to promise specific gains, and the supposed fees and fines that unions levy against members who cross strike picket lines. As ever, the union was portrayed as a "third party" that would come in and speak for workers, robbing them of their ability to speak for themselves. Anti-union workers began wearing T-shirts that said "I'll speak for myself" Never mind that this particular campaign didn't even deploy paid staff organizers — all the union organizers were PacCast co-workers or USW members at nearby ATI plants.

"Our union isn't someone from back East," said Gaitaud. "It's someone with a baseball hat and Carhartt jeans, people you see in your community, at your kid's game."

USW says ATI management also violated labor law during the campaign. In 12 separate "unfair labor practice" charges, USW alleges that ATI threatened, surveilled, interrogated, and disciplined employees to squelch the union. The National Labor Relations Board is investigating the charges, and the cases are pending.

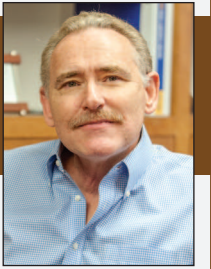
One of the charges was over a discipline Hoskins received. He was talking in the restroom about a company policy, and later gave a co-worker a print-out of a company email. Management said that was campaigning on company time. A supervisor marched Hoskins through the plant to the office — to send a message to his co-workers, Hoskins says. There, the company vice president and human resources chief confronted him and issued a written warning.

Hoskins said managers made it personal, but missed the point.

"I think they thought our problem was we were mad at the company, or didn't like them," Hoskins said. "This wasn't a bunch of angry employees. This is a bunch of people who want a better workplace and a better company."

Who's on our side?

By Tom Chamberlain Oregon AFL-CIO President



Women of labor

As we celebrate Women's History Month during March, it is important to honor the women who forged and led the American labor movement throughout history, and those women who have fought and continue to fight to protect workers' rights today. They have raised the standards for all of us. Our movement is built on generations of workers standing up to demand change, and each step of the way women have inspired, led and organized so that we can have a better today than our forebears had yesterday.

Today's labor movement and the rights working people enjoy would not be what they are without the contributions of strong, fearless women. They blazed the trail, and some of the most inspiring acts of courage and determination have come from women fighting for working people to have dignity and a bigger piece of the economic pie. Two examples stand out when I think about women building a better tomorrow for working people:

The forming of the Lowell Female Labor Reform Association in the 1840s was one of the first labor organizations in our country. Led by the intrepid Sarah Bagley, these hardworking women testified fearlessly before the Massachusetts legislature to speak out about dangerous working conditions. We still have a long way to go as a country to ensure workplace safety, but we can look to the women of Lowell as a testament to the power of collective bravery. Workers today do enjoy some things that our not-so-distant ancestors did not, and some of the biggest changes have been because of women leading the charge.

Frances Perkins has inspired me and many others. As Secretary of Labor during Franklin Delano Roosevelt's presidency, she was behind some of the most critical pieces of the New Deal like the Public Works Administration and the Civilian Conservation Corps. You can see the impact of her programs at some of Oregon's landmarks like Timberline Lodge which was built as part of the New Deal. You can also see her legacy in Social Security, because she pushed through the law in 1935 to establish it. History is full of strong women as advocates for the worker, and it's a topic I encourage you to research, not just during Women's History Month but year-round.

I have been fortunate to be a witness to history as well, and even more fortunate to call some of the fiercest leaders in our movement my friends. Liz Shuler, an Oregonian, is the first woman and youngest person to hold the position of national AFL-CIO Secretary Treasurer. She's the highest-ranking woman in AFL-CIO history, has done incredible work to bring younger people into our movement, and recently gained national attention for calling on video game developers to treat workers fairly and recognize industry unions.

Liz is part of a tradition in Oregon which I am incredibly proud of, one where women are taking the reins of powerful organizations to make all workers' lives better. Over the past several years a group called the Oregon Women Labor Leaders (OWLL) formed to foster the growth and development of women as leaders in our state's movement. Oregon AFL-CIO Secretary Treasurer Barbara Byrd is very involved in facilitating this emerging group. From supporting each other and women candidates for elected office to testifying on critical legislation, I am so excited to see where this group is headed. I encourage you to be a student of history, to understand how women are the reason unions are thriving today.

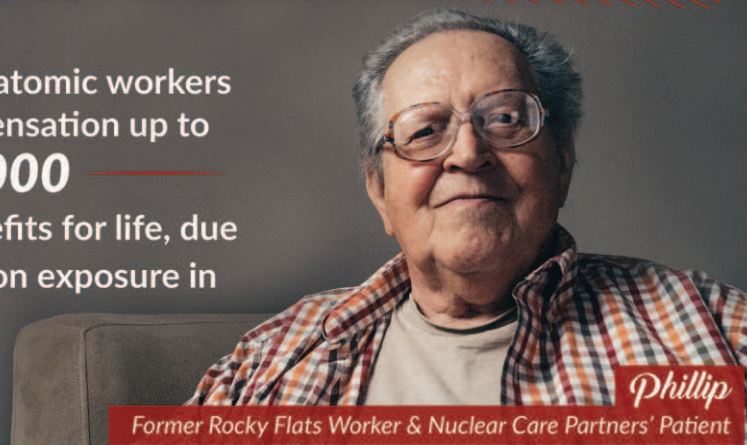
I am inspired by everyone involved in OWLL, by seeing my friend Liz Shuler fight every day for workers, and by being a part of this movement that is critically focused on fighting to create an economy where prosperity is universal for all of us. We see far today because we stand on the shoulders of women who forged a path through uncertain terrain.

The Oregon AFL-CIO is a 138,000-member-strong federation of labor unions.

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