

# ...Nabisco signs IAM and IBEW contract, but still no deal for Bakers

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turnover that of the six original management negotiators, only one was still there at the end. The final session, brokered by federal mediator Darrell Clark, lasted 9 a.m. to midnight.

What made the difference? Machinists chief steward Jeff Obermiller says without question it was members demonstrating to the company that they were ready to strike. When Mondelēz said its offer wouldn't get any better, the two unions took it back to members. They rejected it, and voted unanimously to authorize a strike. In the weeks that followed, workers blew whistles on the way in and out of work, and arrived at work wearing union T-shirts. Machinists' shirts pictured a coiled cobra over the union logo along with the words: "If provoked I may strike." Electricians' shirts said, "Lightning makes no sound ... until it strikes!" Machinists also ended their shifts by lining up their massive wheeled tool boxes near the building exit, to make it clear they were ready to roll on out if a strike was called. The unions also sought support from the rest of the labor movement ... and got strike sanction from the Metal Trades Council of



**READY TO ROLL ON OUT:** At the Portland Mondelēz-Nabisco plant, union machinists lined up their toolboxes near the exit in preparation for a strike.

Portland and Vicinity and the Northwest Oregon Labor Council. That support meant that if and when they struck, not only might the machines begin to sputter, but product might have trouble getting out of the plant with picket lines turning back Teamster drivers.

## What they won

For the Machinists, the new contract contains an immediate wage increase of 9%, bringing the base wage from \$30.30 to \$33.12 an hour. They'll also get backpay checks of over \$4,000

for wage increases that should have taken place earlier—2% annual raises dating back to Jan. 1, 2018. The new contract also maintains the existing Monday-to-Friday schedule of eight-hour shifts with paid breaks, plus time and a half for Saturday work, double time on Sunday, and the right to choose up to 26 weekends a year when they can't be scheduled. And it maintains current health benefits, commits the company to continue full participation in the union-sponsored Western Metal Industry Pension Fund, and

commits to a set timeline for responding to union grievances. Machinist members did make one concession, ceding the work of lubricating equipment to their somewhat lower-paid co-workers in Bakers Local 364. But that shift won't result in layoffs, and Mondelēz also committed to hiring a new machinist to go through an apprenticeship program that has had no new entrants lately.

Machinists rep Bob Petroff, himself a former Nabisco machinist, says Mondelēz has had a hard time finding outside machinists who are qualified to maintain and repair bakery equipment.

For electricians, the new contract locks in a \$10,000 wage increase that was agreed to earlier in bargaining. Bridges says the union repeatedly warned Mondelēz that its \$30.30 hourly wage for maintenance electricians had fallen way behind the market, and would lead to the loss of electricians. When the plant's electrical workforce plummeted from nine to two, the company got the message.

Machinists and electricians together ratified an interim memorandum raising the wage to \$40.80 for maintenance electricians. That's still much lower than construction electricians

make, but Mondelēz electricians get paid vacation and year-round indoor work.

The new contracts expire Dec. 31, 2020.

## Bakers still in contract limbo

Meanwhile, about 210 members of Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco and Grain Millers (BCTGM) Local 364 at the Portland plant are still working under a mix of expired union contract language and terms imposed unilaterally by the company. BCTGM's most recent national contract—covering 2,000 Mondelēz employees at five U.S. plants and three distribution centers—expired Feb. 29, 2016. In May 2018, Mondelēz declared impasse in negotiations and unilaterally implemented parts of its own offer: raising wages 2.25% a year, halting contributions to the union-sponsored pension fund, and starting contributions to a 401(k) instead. Mondelēz is still honoring some of the old contract's terms, and it hasn't implemented other parts of its final offer such as less generous health insurance terms or ending premium pay for weekend work. The contract the two sides were supposed to be negotiating would have been set to expire March 1. It's not clear what will happen after that.

## As presidential contenders battle for the nomination, a few unions are weighing in

With so many Democrats — including a number of union allies — seeking the Democratic presidential nomination, most labor organizations haven't taken sides so far. But two candidates have gotten at least a few endorsements:

### AFL-CIO TOWN HALL

The AFL-CIO will host a 2020 presidential candidate forum on March 12, 2020 in Orlando, Florida.



### JOE BIDEN

- Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU)
- International Association of Bridge Structural Ornamental and Reinforcing Iron Workers (IWR)
- International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF)
- International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW)
- American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE)



### BERNIE SANDERS

- American Postal Workers Union (APWU)
- National Nurses Union (NNU)
- National Union of Health Care Workers (NUCHW)
- United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers (UE)

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