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Office location:
4275 NE Halsey St., Portland, Oregon

Mailing address:
P.O. Box 13150, Portland, OR 97213

Phone: (503) 288-3311

Web address:
<http://nwlaborpress.org>

Editor & Manager: Michael Gutwig
Associate editor: Don McIntosh
Office manager: Jill Lukens

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...Walk-out at Nabisco

From Page 1

even after upping pay with a temporary \$2 an hour “COVID-19 Appreciation Bonus.” Just outside New York City, the Mondelēz bakery in Fair Lawn, New Jersey, reportedly had nearly 200 workers stay home.

As part of the contract settlement, a temporary side agreement addresses employee absenteeism during the COVID-19 crisis: It allows Mondelēz to bring in nonunion workers employed through a temp agency until the end of July, at a wage of at least \$19.50 an hour, roughly the union starting rate, though without the union benefits. After that, the company can offer the temps permanent positions, and the usual probationary period would be waived. Union members would still get opportunities to work overtime before temps could be assigned the work. The side agreement ratifies what Mondelēz had begun to do anyway — bring in temps to replace union members who stayed home because of the pandemic.

Unofficial strike

At the Portland plant, Mondelēz had begun advertising on Craigslist and bringing in nonunion temp workers. Union

members responded with an unofficial strike. On April 3, graveyard shift workers started leaving early, and a majority of day and swing shift workers stayed off the job, shutting down all five snack production lines. The next two days, enough workers stayed home that only one line was able to restart.

When the nationwide deal was presented the following week, only two of the 210 members of BCTGM Local 364 at the Portland bakery voted to approve the agreement. But it took effect anyway after passing narrowly at the other locals. Normally, the union would have a meeting to go over the agreement line by line, but that wasn’t possible during the pandemic. The vote took place in the workplace on April 13, and local and national results were announced April 14, with the agreement passing by several hundred votes.

The new agreement runs through February 28, 2021, and covers about 2,000 members of six BCTGM locals at Mondelēz-Nabisco bakeries in Portland, Oregon; Fair Lawn, New Jersey; Richmond, Virginia; Chicago, Illinois; and Atlanta, Georgia, as well as distribution centers near Chicago and Atlanta and in Nor-

cross, Colorado. It’s basically an extension of the contract that expired Feb. 29, 2016, except that it no longer obligates the company to participate in the union pension. Employees will receive a 2.25% wage increase retroactive to March 1, 2020, bringing the typical wage up to \$28.76 an hour. They also get a \$1,000 ratification bonus. [In 2016 and 2018, the company had offered ratification bonuses of \$5,000 and \$15,000, but the union didn’t submit those offers to members for a vote.] The new agreement also outlines a process for settling all remaining grievances and unfair labor practice charges: The two sides commit to good faith efforts to settle them within 60 days.

“We can’t figure out why the other bakeries would vote for this,” said Eddie Mayagoitia, a shop steward at the Portland bakery.

“This is a temporary agreement,” said Local 364 business representative Cameron Taylor. “This is definitely not labor peace.”

Now, the Portland workers are supposed to train the temps to do their jobs, but it’s unclear how that can happen in a noisy environment with workers wearing face coverings and trying to maintain 6’ of distance.

“The members are so angry

about this,” Taylor said. “The company is training a work force to take our jobs should we decide to strike in March of next year.”

The new agreement also came after longtime BCTGM international president David Durkee died March 30 at age 66 following a long battle with cancer. On April 16, the union’s General Executive Board unanimously elected Anthony Shelton to serve the remainder of his term.

The national union did not respond to an email to its spokesperson. By text, an organizer for the national union said the BCTGM International Union doesn’t have a comment at this time.

Boycott continues

Despite the agreement, the union’s boycott of Mexican-made Nabisco products continues. BCTGM called the boycott in March 2016 after Mondelēz installed four new production lines at its Salinas, Mexico, bakery, and shut nine of its 16 production lines in Chicago, laying off hundreds of BCTGM members there. The boycott is endorsed by the national AFL-CIO. American consumers are asked to check the label and not buy any Mondelēz-Nabisco products that say “made in Mexico.”

CORRECTIONS

Portland is expected to get \$114 million in federal CARES Act relief. In our April 3 issue, we reported \$736 million. We arrived at that figure based on a misunderstanding of information at a briefing by U.S. Senator Jeff Merkley’s office. **Construction work building publicly-funded housing is exempt from the State of Washington’s stay-at-home order, but not work on other housing projects.** In our April 17 edition, we reported housing construction was exempt without making the distinction.

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