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STRIKE PICKET LINE, DAY ONE: At the Portland Nabisco plant, spirits were high as workers walked out.

Nabisco workers strike nationwide

By Don McIntosh

It's been a long time coming. Provoked by round after round of demands by Nabisco for concessions, the Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco and Grain Millers (BCTGM) union reached a breaking point. At noon on Aug. 10, members of Bakers Local 364 walked off the job and began a 24-hour-a-day picket line on the sidewalk outside the Portland Nabisco bakery at 100 NE Columbia Boulevard in Portland.

"They walked out of there with huge smiles on their faces because they've been wanting to fight back against this company for a long time," said Local 364 business agent Cameron Taylor.

Members of Bakers Local 26 at a Nabisco distribution center in Aurora, Colorado, joined the strike Aug. 12. On Aug. 16, the strike spread to Local 358 at the Nabisco bakery in Richmond, Virginia. The flagship Chicago bakery could be next.

At the core of the dispute is a shameless demand for worker concessions by a highly profitable company that paid its CEO \$18 million last year. Mondelez-Nabisco earned over \$1 billion in the second quarter of 2021 on \$6.6 billion in sales. But instead of inviting produc-



tion workers to share the good times, the company is demanding sweeping cuts in pay and benefits. In contract negotiations in Nashville in May and again in Baltimore in July, the company proposed to eliminate premium pay for work on weekends, end bonuses for perfect attendance, and get rid of daily overtime pay after eight hours. It also wants to stop providing supplemental health care for retirees, require workers to start paying part of the health insurance premiums, and increase the use of nonunion temps.

"Last year they made record profits during a pandemic, and now they're coming for more,"

Sharon Evans, at the age of 74, operates a packing machine at the Portland Nabisco bakery, where she's worked for 53 years. The last time workers at the bakery struck, Evans was 22 and just a year on the job. It was 1969, and the company was called the National Biscuit Company. [That's where Nabisco got its name.] Back then it had a dozen bakeries around the country, employing 8,900 workers total, including 550 at the Portland plant. Today only 1,000 production workers remain employed by Nabisco in the United States, at three bakeries—Portland, Chicago, and Richmond—and the company makes much of its product at a plant in Mexico. The 1969 strike lasted 56 days. As reported in the Labor Press, it was a win for workers.

Taylor said. "We had to take a stand. If we didn't take a stand, there'd be nothing left worth fighting for."

Over union objections, the company stopped contributing to the pension in 2018 after bargaining halted over the current contract. Now Mondelez-Nabisco is even more profitable, and is demanding further concessions. On the picket line, workers say they got the company's message loud and clear.

"They couldn't care less about us," says Donna Marks, a strong union supporter and 17 year employee at the plant. "They want us to work more,

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IN MEMORIAM



Richard Trumka, head of the AFL-CIO, dies at 72

America's top labor union leader, Richard Trumka, died Aug. 5 of a heart attack at age 72. Trumka was president of the AFL-CIO, the 12.5-million member federation that pools the efforts of 56 affiliated unions.

President Joe Biden called Trumka "a dear friend, a great American, and a good man," in a statement on his passing.

AFL-CIO secretary-treasurer Liz Shuler, the federation's number two officer, will serve as acting president pending an official appointment by the AFL-CIO executive council of an interim president until the national AFL-CIO convention next year. Shuler, a native Oregonian who got her start at Portland-based IBEW Local 125, becomes the AFL-CIO's first female president.

Born July 24, 1949, Richard Louis Trumka grew up in Nemacolin, Pennsylvania, a small town near Pittsburgh. His father and grandfather worked in the mines, and so did he while he was in college at Penn State, becoming a member of United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) 6290. After getting a law degree from Villanova University in Pennsylvania, he worked for the UMWA as a staff attorney from 1974 to 1979. Trumka got involved in a movement to reform the UMWA, and in 1982, at the age of 33, he was elected president of the national union.

As UMWA president, he established a solidarity program with Black mine workers in South Africa, and helped pro-

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2021 OREGON VIRTUAL LABOR DAY CELEBRATION MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 6 AT NOON

COVID-19 is forcing the cancellation of in-person Labor Day picnics for the second year in a row, but labor organizations still plan to celebrate—online.

Oregon's Virtual Labor Day Celebration, hosted by the Oregon AFL-CIO, starts at noon Sept. 6 on YouTube and Facebook Live.

Visit orafclcio.org for details.