

Nabisco strike: Week 4

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drivers are refusing to make deliveries or pick up product. And railroad workers have so far declined to make deliveries of raw ingredients.

Meanwhile, Portland DSA and Portland Jobs with Justice have organized spirited strike support rallies every Saturday morning since the week the strike began. The rallies have drawn hundreds of union members and community supporters, including elected leaders like Oregon House Speaker Tina Kotek and Multnomah County Commissioner Susheela Jayapal.

At the Aug. 28 rally, over 100 supporters peeled away from union picketers and marched to a nearby Fred Meyer grocery store, which they briefly occupied, chanting "Support the strike! Boycott Nabisco!" to cheers and fist pumps from some shoppers.

Some supporters have even formed a crew of about two dozen to take action beyond support rallies—including surveilling and interfering with the company's hired strikebreakers. Some scabs are being lodged at Marriott Courtyard Portland North. Others have been gathering early mornings at a parking lot at 7600 NE Killingsworth to board buses chartered from the Blue Star bus company. Starting at 5 a.m. Aug. 20, members of the strike support crew used their cars to block the entrances to that parking lot, delaying the scabs departure by several hours. Police drove by several times but did not intervene.

Later, tipped off by railroad union members about a scheduled train shipment of sugar and flour, the strike supporters also blocked railroad tracks outside the bakery, until the train left without making a delivery. Since then the strikers themselves have maintained a picket down by the tracks.

Then on Aug. 24, members of the strike support crew used their cars to block the exits from the Portland Nabisco bakery. After more than an hour, the scab bus made a run for it across the company's grass lawn, crashed through the temporary orange fencing the company put up to inconvenience picketers, and drove over the sidewalk onto Colombia Boulevard to hoots from strikers. After midnight, members of the strike

support crew warned the Marriott that they'd face a disruption for housing scabs, and awakened guests by setting off car alarms and blasting loud music in the parking lot.

Support has come in lots of other forms. A GoFundMe page to help the Portland strikers had raised over \$60,000 as of Aug. 31. On Columbia Boulevard, motorists and truck drivers passing by the picket line produce near-continual honks of support. And actor Danny DeVito and political figures like Bernie Sanders, Oregon Senators Jeff Merkley and Ron Wyden, and Oregon Gov. Kate Brown have made online statements in support of strikers.

"All of our community coming together for this fight means a lot to us," said striker Regina Klavano, a 21-year Nabisco employee, at the Aug. 28 rally.

For Mondelez to be asking for concessions at a time of record profit (since April, its stock has been trading at an all-time high) suggests it's not really trying to reach an agreement, the union says. The National Labor Relations Board is investigating over a dozen unfair labor practice charges filed by BCTGM against Mondelez, mostly accusations that the company is refusing to bargain in good faith, but also for making changes without negotiating, and unlawfully disciplining employees because of their union activities. Mondelez in turn has filed a charge saying the union isn't bargaining in good faith.

In an official statement, Mondelez said it's "disappointed" by the decision of the unions to strike. "We have activated our robust business continuity plan and are committed to continuing to supply our delicious snacks to retailers and consumers."

The statement is a model of dishonest communication, full of misdirection. For example, its list of contract proposals includes "no change to healthcare benefits for current employees," which is a pretty clumsy way to say they're proposing to slash benefits for new hires. Mondelez also says it wants to "modernize some contract aspects, which were written several decades ago." This appears to refer to the premium pay that's meant to discourage long shifts and weekend work, or compensate workers when they make that sacrifice.

"THEY DON'T KNOW THEIR WORKERS"

David Woods is BCTGM's lead negotiator in Nabisco bargaining. The Labor Press spoke with him by phone Aug. 26.

How can a company that's at record profitability be asking you guys to go backward? What do you make of it?
The company don't know their workforce. They don't appreciate what they've done for the company. They don't appreciate their longevity, doing the work and standing on that concrete and breaking their backs and taking time away from their families. They don't appreciate any of it.

Is there reason to worry this may be an attempt to bust the union?
I don't believe so. I believe it is just greed. When Mondelez took over Nabisco, from the first negotiation in

2016, they were after concessions. And they ended up taking the workers' retirement pension plan. All this stuff they're asking now they were asking for then. But then they were satisfied with stealing the pension from the workers.

Do you have any information as to whether product is starting to disappear from the shelves?
It's gonna take a little while. There's a lot of product out there, and obviously they're still pumping it out of Mexico. They can say they got contingencies and they're running, but you can't just walk up one day and do those jobs. These are high skill, high production jobs, and that's why they're paid and compensated at a good rate.

To see the complete interview, visit nwlaborpress.org/wood



BCTGM secretary-treasurer David Woods says Nabisco is not the company it used to be.



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