

Nabisco

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fore you read this. [Visit nwlaborpress.org/nabisco-strike for the latest updates.] But the company's aggressive posture made an easy settlement seem unlikely.

In a Sept. 9 investor conference call, CEO Dirk Van De Put said the company planned for a potential strike, and increased inventories before union contract negotiations started.

On Aug. 31, Nabisco communicated a take-it-or-leave-it settlement offer directly to workers via its web site, without presenting it to the union, which violates the company's obligation to bargain in good faith. The proposal added a \$5,000 ratification bonus, but kept the two-tier and premium pay concessions, and Nabisco said the offer was only good through Sept. 7, a week before the two sides were next scheduled to meet. BCTGM ignored it.

On the morning of Sept. 13, a group of strike supporters operating independent of the union and strikers tried to block striker replacement workers from entering and leaving the Portland bakery. They were shoved by Huffman security guards, and at least one was punched by a scab. The week before, a picketing striker was struck from behind by a van bringing in scabs, but was unhurt.

Replacement workers aren't just taking striker's jobs; they're wearing their clothes too: Strikers have seen them wearing uniforms with their own names on the patches.

Nabisco has increased the number of scabs at the bakery in recent weeks and is attempting to operate 24-7, but strikers say it doesn't look like much product is leaving the bakery.

Strikers say just two or three Local 364 members have crossed the picket line. And two crucial groups of skilled maintenance workers are honoring the picket line: nine electricians in IBEW Local 48 and 33 maintenance mechanics in Machinists Local 63.

"I'm very proud of our members and the solidarity that's being demonstrated," said Bob Petroff, union rep for the Local 63 members. Petroff, who was a maintenance mechanic at the Nabisco bakery before joining the union staff, has been working behind the scenes to support Lo-



SOLIDARITY STARTS WITH 'SOLID.' Eight members of Operating Engineers Local 701 honored the strike picket lines for three weeks, but on Aug. 31, after the company notified them their health benefits would expire if they stayed out, seven of them went back to work at the Portland Nabisco bakery. Not Brian Nissen, above. Nissen, with his wife Bella, turned up at a Sept. 11 picket line support rally and was greeted as a hero, thanked repeatedly by striking Bakers union members and others. Nissen had helped bargain his own union contract four years ago, and he took to heart its Article 22, which recognizes Local 701 members' right not to cross another union's strike picket line. "I decided not to go in, because I want to support the people here," Nissen says. Bella said she backs that decision 100%, even after their insurer sent them a "nastygram" demanding \$2,500 in payment for each of the monthly treatments she needs in her recovery from cancer.

cal 63 members in their decision to honor picket lines. Members are getting a \$80 a week from Local 63, and \$150 a week from the international. Under Oregon law, they're also eligible to collect \$733 a week in unemployment benefits, because Nabisco locked them out. Petroff said Nabisco contested the machinists' unemployment claims, saying they had voluntarily chosen not to work. But in fact they were quite literally locked out: Videos taken by the union show that key cards were deactivated and members were unable to enter the bakery to retrieve personal belongings.

The Portland bakery is a six-story tower of machines, all of which need skilled maintenance: sifters, mixers, dough dumpers, oven rollers, laminators, conveyor belts, mechanical baggers and cartoners, and many more. Five production lines there turn out Ritz, Premium, and Chicken in a Biskit crackers and Chips Ahoy and Oreo cookies that are ground for use in products like McDonald's Oreo McFlurry.

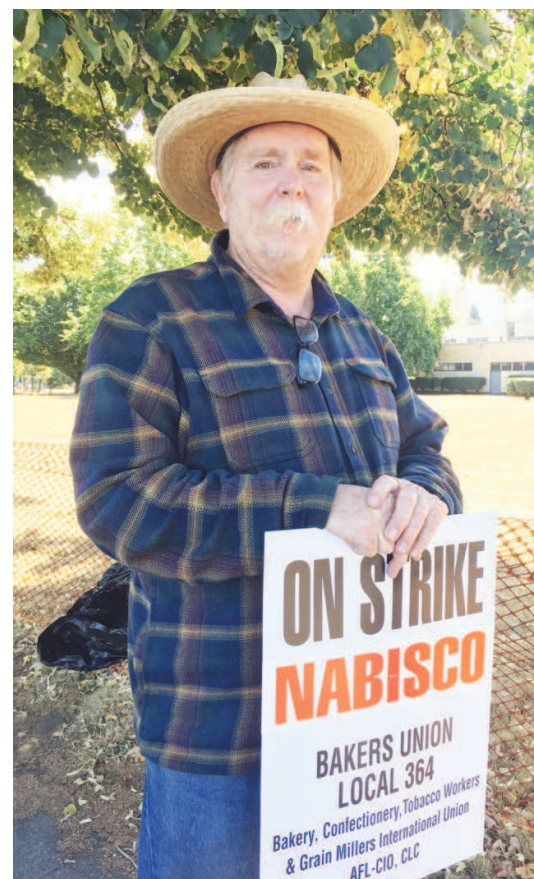
"We feel fairly confident that they don't have qualified people taking care of that equipment," said Jeff Obermiller, Machinists Local 63 shop steward at the Portland Nabisco bakery.

If the Bakers win their fight to keep what they have and not give costly concessions to a profitable employer, it will be because of solidarity—their own, their union co-workers, and the broader community. Something

about their struggle seems to be galvanizing others to support them.

A strike support GoFundMe for Local 364 had raised over \$80,000 as of Sept. 13, which the union was using to double weekly strike benefits.

On the picket line at 100 NE Columbia Boulevard, honks of support from passing vehicles are near continuous, and individ-



"We're trying to keep what we got," says Bill Bates, on strike after 20 years working at the Portland Nabisco bakery. Like other strikers, Bates is scheduled for four hours of picket duty per day, but most days, he's there for eight, arriving at 3 a.m. "Somebody last week asked if we have community support. My feeling is we have 100% community support. All these good people out here. And the ones who don't support us aren't part of my community."

uals and union delegations are showing up to walk the line and bring donations. One day it was a group of PSU professors in the American Association of University Professors union. Other days it's Oregon AFSCME or Oregon Nurses Association. On Sept. 14, it was members of the Portland Thorns soccer team, represented by a players' union.

Lots of elected leaders are also making their way to the picket line and to support rallies. At a Sept. 11 rally, Oregon lawmakers

Dacia Grayber, Andrea Valderama, and Wlnsvey Campos were there, along with Multnomah County chair Deb Kafoury and commissioner Lori Stegmann.

"The number of people in this community who are behind you is growing," Kafoury told strikers. "We have on one side corporate greed, and on the other side we have family wages, economic justice, and people power.... Your conviction is spreading across this country."

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