

NWREL On Strike!

Union security is the most basic building block for workers to have a real voice on the job.



Oregon AFL-CIO President (L) Tim Nesbitt joins striking NWREL workers on the picket line.

SEIU Local 503, Oregon Public Employees Union has been bargaining for a first contract for the employees at Northwest Regional Education Laboratories (NWREL) in Portland since February, 2001. SEIU members at NWREL are the people who analyze K-12 education programs across this country to ensure that quality education is delivered in our public schools. The 160 employees of NWREL voted 2 to 1 last week to strike if an agreement could not be reached by the end of yesterday's bargaining session.

Bargaining concluded at 4:00 a.m. November 9 with no settlement. The last issue to be resolved is union security. The employer insists on an "open shop" allowing workers the rights and benefits under the union contract, including union representation, but without union membership. The clients of NWREL are public schools. Teachers' collective bargaining agreements across this country operate under the "agency shop" rule, known as "fairshare" in the public sector. To deny this to the employees of NWREL sets up an atmosphere of divisiveness and resentment. "We could reach agreement on all the economic issues but the employer has been unmovable on the union shop issue. They are refusing to negotiate the most basic of union contract provisions" said SEIU negotiator Lisa Siegel.

The significance of this issue is huge. Union security is the most basic building block for workers to have a real voice on the job. Having meaningful input into how their work is done is why these employees organized. The law requires all unions to negotiate on behalf of all workers in the bargaining unit, regardless of whether a particular worker supports the union or not. If there is a contract violation, the union must equally and fairly represent all workers, again whether the employee is a member of the union or not. Management's position is designed to divide and weaken the union. They know that unions derive their strength through their collec-

tive activity. In democratic institutions, like unions, we all live with a majority vote. In this bargaining unit, the employees overwhelmingly voted to support union security in their collective bargaining agreement.

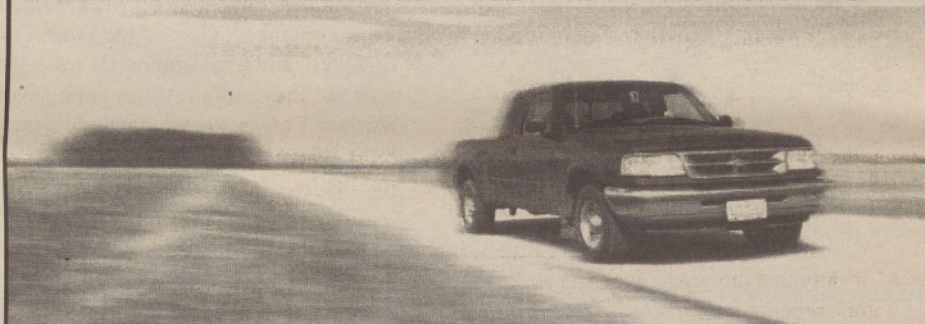
The strike began November 9 at 8:00 a.m. Siegel said, "We have strong support from our members, we urge management of NWREL to come back to the bargaining table to reach a settlement."



The Bargaining Team addresses their NWREL co-workers on the picket line.

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