

Shipbuilding firm employs out-of-state strikebreakers

by Robert Lothian

Three hundred workers at FMC Corporation's barge and shipbuilding operation on NW Front Avenue have been on strike since August 12th, fighting an uphill battle against a union-busting management, according to strike leaders.

"Reagan started it," said picket captain Joseph Chavez, referring to what he describes as an anti-union atmosphere in which strikers are trying to negotiate a new contract. Chavez and fellow picket captain Larry Zarb, both welders and members of Boilermakers Local 72, say that FMC management is offering the strikers a "take it or leave it" final offer of a \$4/hr. wage cut, a 50 percent cut in health and welfare benefits and a 67 percent cut in pension benefits.

The strikers, according to Chavez and Zarb, are asking for a three-year wage freeze to hold onto what they have, and a contract similar to that won recently by shipyard workers up and down the west coast.

FMC was hit hard by the recession, with its rail car division losing so much work that the workforce dropped from 1500 to a skeleton crew. "We are so far below survival levels it's not even funny," said Bruce Harman, FMC public relations representative. "We're using the word depression."

FMC industrial relations manager Jim Johnson says the company has made union members a final offer which includes "adjustments in wages and benefits that would help to make us more cost competitive."

"Other people in this business are

able to get business because they have lower labor costs," said Johnson. And without business, he said, there's no jobs. Adjustments in management's contract offer include reductions in "some of the costs of wages and benefits," he said.

"We're aware of the economy, we don't want to price ourselves out of business," said Zarb. But he contends that management isn't serious about signing the contract. "You can see they're trying to break the union when they offer something like that," he said.

In July, FMC's remaining ship shop employees voted to decertify the union, "turning the clock back

at least ten years" with a \$3/hr. wage cut, for welders, according to Boilermakers Union representative Carl McLemore.

Now, say Chavez and Zarb, management would like something similar to happen in FMC's marine division. Over 100 strikebreaking workers have been hired through ads in *The Oregonian* and *Columbian*, they say, and cars with Arizona, Texas and New York license plates have been observed in the parking lot.

"I don't think it's right that they are taking our jobs," said Zarb. But in spite of the pressure, he said, strikers have been maintaining an orderly picket line with six to twelve

pickets on duty daily. "There's been no violence on the picket line. We don't allow that," he said.

According to McLemore, FMC management's strategy is to "load up" the workforce with anti-union workers, hiring them into the shop area and then shifting them later into the marine division. "They promise them permanent employment only if they vote against the union," he said.

"That's just pure nonsense," FMC's Johnson responded. "Any voting that goes on is in a free and private election," he said.

McLemore also charges FMC's supervisors with using psychological warfare on the picket line, threaten-

ing workers with loss of their jobs if they continue the strike.

The bottom line is, they're just union busting," said Chavez. "They're using the same tactics that brought unions into existence—low wages, low benefits and unsafe working conditions."

Both Chavez and Zarb charge the company with turning out a shoddy product with strike-breaking workers who don't have near the skills and experience the regular workers have. "We had the best crew on the west coast," said Zarb, "like one big family."

Now, according to Chavez, "They don't care about quality. There's nothing but production

problems." Also, says Zarb, the injury rate among the new workers is up since the strike began.

"Basically, we're just letting them hang themselves," said Zarb. "Eventually, there's going to be a fatality. We're not hoping for that, but..."

But according to Johnson, "We have the best safety record in the industry on the west coast. Our safety is improving," ever since the strike began, he said.

Both Zarb and Chavez say that in the face of what they see as management's hard line, the strikers are prepared to stay out "until hell freezes over, or the day after," to win their new contract.

Schools seek HOSTS

Twenty-four Portland Schools are seeking volunteers to help elementary students improve their reading skills through a program called HOSTS (Help One Student to Succeed).

HOSTS is a special reading program which targets a student's reading deficiencies and then provides daily, half-hour tutoring sessions to improve those skills. A child's self concept is also improved through working one-to-one with a caring helper.

A volunteer comes to the school and tutors a child for one-half hour using the easy-to-follow reading lessons prepared by the teacher. One half-hour, one day a week, would help (every day would be better).

Tutoring for elective credit or on free time can be arranged. Your high school counselor can help. Parents, friends, and relatives are encouraged to call a school and sign up to tutor, also.

Schools where volunteers can tutor in our area are: Humboldt, 281-8797; King, 288-6391; Beach, 285-4569; Sabin, 288-1198.

For more information about the program, please call the HOSTS Teacher at the school of your choice or Marsha Farrow, Portland Public Schools HOSTS Coordinator, 249-2000, ext. 381.

Eye clinic opens doors


Pacific University College of Optometry and the Portland Community College Optical Technology Department now run a newly opened health clinic to serve the visual needs of the general public.

Complete eye examinations including glaucoma testing and ocular health evaluations are offered by optometric interns under supervision of a Pacific University staff optometrist. Reasonably priced frames and lenses are available through the optical dispensary staffed by faculty and students from the PCC Optical Technology Program.




The vision clinic is located at 705 N. Killingsworth in the PCC Cascade Campus Bookstore.

The clinic honors those on medical assistance and offers a 25 percent reduction in fees on diagnostic services to senior citizens and full-time college or vocational students. Appointments can be made by calling 240-5319.

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