

EDITORIAL/OPINION

Supreme Court scraps workers

A severe blow was dealt to workers by the U.S. Supreme Court which ruled that it is legal to avoid adherence to a union contract. The ruling allows businesses filing for bankruptcy under Chapter 11 to scrap the contract, cut wages and benefits, without proving that wages contributed to the bankruptcy.

The union has no right to charge unfair labor practices before the National Labor Relations Board. Only if a judge eventually finds that the company really is not facing bankruptcy can he order restoration of the labor contract and back-pay.

Even the Wall Street Journal said the ruling "lends comfort" to those companies that file for bankruptcy "largely to avoid their labor contracts." Even the "normal" bankruptcies (25,364 in 1982 and 30,794 in 1983) jeopardize workers and their unions. Now companies can blackmail their employees, threatening bankruptcy if employees do not accept wage and benefit cuts.

Examples already exist: Continental Airlines cut wages in half, saying the wage scale "may" force it into bankruptcy; Braniff Air, after two years under bankruptcy "reorganization" is to renew operations with wages imposed by the bankruptcy court. In 1982, the Manville Corporation, with more than \$1 billion in assets, filed bankruptcy to avoid suits based on asbestos health hazards.

The Supreme Court decision was based on the case of New Jersey's Bildisco Co., which filed bankruptcy in 1980 and refused to pay wage increases, health and pension benefits required under a contract with its Teamsters Union employees.

This ruling allows any company to blame its problems—which might come from competition, mismanagement, technology or other reasons—on its workers and to force them to accept sub-standard wages or become unemployed. The company then reorganizes and hires new personnel or lowers wages; an easy task with today's high unemployment.

Congratulations, Jesse

Jesse Jackson proved his viability on "Super Tuesday", winning the 20 percent in Georgia that is necessary to receive federal matching dollars. He placed third in three of the five primaries, bettering Glenn, McGovern and Aske.

Jackson admonished the Black leaders who threw in their chips with a losing Mondale, saying they missed an opportunity to demonstrate the power of the Black vote and to address issues crucial to Black and poor people.

It's a long road to the convention and there is much to do, even here in Oregon. The next Jackson voter registration drive is March 31st, St. Andrews School, 10-2 and 1-5. Call 281-1364 (Terry) days or 286-2112 (Pam) nights. Stop by the office at 3606 N. Williams and see what you can do to help.



Washington hot line

by Congressman Ron Wyden

It's ironic that we have a President who consistently expounds the idea that we can't spend our way out of problems. Yet that is exactly what the Administration is trying to do with our national defense. After three years, it's evident that the Reagan Administration's defense policy is simply more is better.

And more is what we have been getting. Last year's defense budget was \$249 billion. The proposal for next year's budget is more than \$300 billion. The Administration maintains that this is what is necessary to modernize our forces and make our nation secure. Any suggestion that the defense budget be cut is inevitably met with the cry that the safety of the nation would be imperiled.

Yet a prestigious group, made up of former defense department of-

ficials, has reported that \$28 billion could be cut from the defense budget this year without harming our security.

The report, issued by the Committee on National Security, suggested first of all that the defense budget could be cut by slowing the rate at which we buy new weapons. The report's authors pointed out that we are buying them so fast we don't even have the personnel and the equipment to use them.

One of the report's authors, William Kaufmann, said at a news conference that unless we scale back on the number of new weapons we are buying, we will have a "very shiny, bright force that's all tied up at the docks and grounded, very modern equipment that won't work."

I think this correctly points out

that new weapons don't necessarily translate into greater national security. Unless they work and unless we have enough people trained in how to use them and repair them, then they are just so much gold-plated machinery.

The report also points out that we can save money in the defense department by making sure that the four armed services don't duplicate missions. "Each service is trying to prepare for its own war," said Kaufmann.

With the country facing a string of \$200 billion deficits and social programs being asked to shoulder the brunt of the cuts, we have got to bite the bullet and come up with some savings in the defense budget. I think this report shows that it is not a mission impossible.

Chicago workers win suit

Chicago—A major civil rights victory for the State, County & Municipal Employees not only means \$15 million in back pay awards to hundreds of Black workers in the Chicago area, but also reinforces the union's sex discrimination case against the State of Washington, AFSCME declared.

"Having fought hard for the U.S. Civil Rights Act, working people should benefit from its protection," AFSCME President Gerald W. McEntee said. "These two cases, similar in fundamental ways, are part of AFSCME's commitment to civil rights."

The \$15-million back pay award, the largest such award involving public employees, will go to a group of current and former Black welfare workers found by a federal court to have been victims of discriminatory employment practices by the Illinois and Cook County Public Aid Departments. At least 1,000 people will share the award.

The case stems from a 1973 federal court suit in which AFSCME Local 2000 charged the state and the county with race discrimination in their employment practices.

In the lawsuit, filed under Title VII of the U.S. Civil Rights Act, the union charged that the two departments shunted Blacks into low-paying jobs that had the same duties as higher paying jobs held mostly by whites.

The union's action was brought in behalf of workers in two job classifications—case aide and case aide trainee—which were held almost entirely by Blacks. These positions required the same duties and responsibilities as the job of caseworker, the union held.

At the time of the lawsuit more than 80 percent of the case aides and trainees were Blacks. Starting pay for caseworkers was \$742 a month, while case aides were paid \$583 and trainees \$472.

Through the efforts of Local 2000, the Illinois Dept. of Public Aid promoted the case aides and trainees to caseworkers in 1975, and instituted a career ladder program for its employees.

In 1979, Judge John P. Crowley of the U.S. District Court for Northern Illinois ruled the state and the county were guilty of racial discrimination in the case. Two years later, he ordered a formula to be used to calculate damages. That decision was upheld last year by the U.S. 7th Circuit Court of Appeals here. The newly announced \$15 million award represents the state and county application of that formula.

Under the court order, the county must pay its share of the award—about \$4 million—by February 29th. The state will have to pay the balance through a legislative supplemental appropriation this spring, the court

declared. The back pay awards will be collected by Black public aid employees who have worked as case aides or trainees since March 1972.

Sharing the award

"Their day is at hand," Local 1000 President Max Liberles said of those standing to receive a share of the award, "They will finally be getting these large sums of money they rightfully deserve."

In AFSCME's case against Washington State, the union charged the state government violated Title VII by underpaying workers in female-dominated jobs requiring the same or less skill, effort, and responsibility.

AFSCME won that case and approximately \$700 million in back pay and future salary increases last fall. The state has said it will appeal the decision, but no hearing date has been set.

Diana Rock, head of AFSCME's Women's Department said, that in both cases "what appeared to be a non-discriminatory system on the surface actually resulted in separate treatment, separate salaries and separate career tracks."

AFSCME's lawyer, Winn Newman, said he referred to the Chicago case many times in his presentation of the Washington case.

Tri-Met plan restores Owl

General Manager James E. Cowen announced revisions in the June, 1984 service reduction proposals which include retention of Owl and late evening service. Cowen also announced his decision to stop the Self-service Fare Collection Demonstration Project on June 16, 1984 and to reinstate the driver monitoring of fare collections beginning April 8th.

"While the staff used a rider-per-service hour criterion for proposing the service reduction," Cowen told reporters, "those riders whose lives and jobs depend on being able to use public transit late in the evening and even all night, came in force to three community workshops and other neighborhood meetings last month."

"The staff has come back with more than two dozen changes to the original plan responding to the more than 1000 residents who attended those meetings, made phone calls and sent letters," Cowen said.

Topping the list of revisions is restoration of Owl Service to the June schedules. Also labeled "vital" by those attending the meetings was the late evening service which allows swing shift employees to get home. Senior citizens at King City and

residents of the Northeast neighborhoods were also heard.

Cowen cautioned, however, that work is already underway for the reductions planned to take effect in January, 1985.

"In order to accomplish a 3,000 hour weekly service cut, it will be necessary to look again at the service we've retained," Cowen noted. The major difference will be that the January cuts will be done on a trip-

by-trip basis instead of proposing to eliminate all service on a certain line during certain hours.

In order to move the agency back to the traditional fare collection method, Cowen announced a program of driver monitoring which will begin on April 8th and is intended to improve farebox revenues between now and the June ending of Self-service Fare.

Letters to the Editor

To the Editor:

Over the past several weeks, I have had the great pleasure of working with some 400 high school students and teachers from across Oregon who have been in Washington, D.C. to participate in the Close Up Foundation government studies program.

For a full week each of the participants had the opportunity to question members of Congress, reporters, lobbyists and leading Washington experts and policy makers. Without exception, the students were well prepared, showed

genuine enthusiasm and their conduct was flawless.

The experience for the students is the result of efforts put forth by many people. The school, their teachers and parents, in fact the entire community is to be commended. For the teachers and many of the students, their participation was possible through fellowships supported by Burlington Northern Foundation and R.J. Reynolds Industries, Inc.

Students and teachers of Oregon, I for one salute you for your efforts.

Kevin Neil
Community Coordinator
CloseUp Foundation



Don Wright
The Miami News
Tribune Company Syndicate

Schools deny draft registration

by Chuck Goodmacher

"If it was up to the Selective Service, they'd register you at the hospital right after you were born," says Michael Stoops, director of the Northwest Draft Counseling Center. Stoops told the *Observer* that court action is being considered to stop the Selective Service from being allowed to register people on high school campuses throughout Oregon. Every Portland high school principal recently denied Selective Service entry onto their campuses under a school district policy leaving the decision to individual principals.

Any Portland school which did allow Selective Service on campus would have to allow equal access for students to counselors from the Northwest Draft Counseling center under the terms of a school board resolution passed in June, 1980. The Portland School Board is also on record as opposing reinstatement of draft registration.

Stoops sees the push to get into schools as evidence of the failure of the current selective service system. According to the government's own

figures, he said, there is a 22 percent non-compliance rate in the Portland area; 180,000 people have failed to register nationwide; and only 16 people have been indicted. The figures, says Stoops, show "the anti-draft movement has at least been successful in stalling the prosecution efforts" and intimidation, including high school appearances, is the system's best hope of increasing compliance.

The Selective Service also asked schools for a lot more than just a table in cafeterias to register students. A December letter from National Guard Col. Warren Blanchard asked for school officials to provide the Selective Service with student lists, announce registration promotions over their public address systems, allow displays about military service, and use a guide designed to make young men aware of the stated purposes of registration.

In 1982, notes Stoops, Congress gave Selective Service the legal right to cross-reference their lists with Social Security data, Internal Revenue Service files and Depart-

ment of Motor Vehicle information. The school requests, continued Stoops, is clearly an effort not just to encourage registration, but "to identify non-registrants for further intimidation and possible prosecution by the U.S. Justice Department."

The Draft Counseling Center, said Stoops, continues to watchdog the Selective Service and has obtained permission for equal access to a few schools in Clackamas County, and elsewhere, which have allowed Selective Service on campus. Stoops said he "fully expects the Selective Service to try to get into the Portland schools "because of the high non-compliance rate and the Draft Counseling Center needs community support to stay vigilant. The Counseling Center can be reached at 238-0605.

The *Observer* welcomes Letters to the Editor. Letters should be short, and must contain the writer's name and address (addresses are not printed). The *Observer* reserves the right to edit for length.



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Portland Observer

The *Portland Observer* (USPS 959-680) is published every Thursday by Exie Publishing Company, Inc., 2201 North Killingsworth, Portland, Oregon 97217, Post Office Box 3137, Portland, Oregon 97208. Second class postage paid at Portland, Oregon.

The *Portland Observer* was established in 1970.

Subscriptions: \$15.00 per year in the Tri-County area. Postmaster: Send address changes to the *Portland Observer*, P.O. Box 3137, Portland, Oregon 97208.

Alfred L. Henderson, Editor/Publisher
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