



#### Local Labor News:

Recently, Oregon AFSCME Local 1724 ratified a

1-year extension on their contract with the City of Eugene. Nearly 700 city workers are represented by Local 1724. Included in the contract extension is a 4.2% salary increase beginning July 1, 2007.

For more specific information on the terms of extensions, visit Oregon AFSCME Council 75's website at <http://www.oregonafscme.com/>.

Here in the Eugene-Springfield area, SEIU Local 503 has also begun contract negotiations on several contracts, and the Bargaining Team representing classified staff at Oregon University System campuses (including nearly 1400 workers at the U. of O.) has asked for continuation of fully-paid medical premiums, and the continuation of the employer -paid subsidy for part time workers that keeps their out-of-pocket premiums at a reasonable level. They've also proposed tying the minimum wage on campus to the federal food stamp eligibility level for a family of four. The good news on economics is that, thanks to some intervention from the governor's office, Higher Ed workers are being allowed to negotiate these "core economics" in conjunction with the State of Oregon Dept. of Administrative Services workers. This of course increases OUS workers' bargaining power.

Union proposals on non-economic issues include increased recognition of seniority. Management's first economic offer falls far short of SEIU's goals: their COLA offer is for less than inflation (1% annually), the insurance offer falls short of the union goal and is especially bad in that it proposes eliminating the subsidy for part-time workers. This would mean part-time workers would end up paying several hundred dollars a month more than they *already* are for a lesser benefit package than full-time employees. Management's non-economic proposals contain what are seen as attempts to take away existing worker rights. They include an attempt to severely reduce our bumping rights in layoff situations, attempts to unilaterally impose flexible, non- standard work schedules without employee consent, and the imposition of new trial service requirements for current employees who laterally transfer to a new job in the same classification and for those who voluntarily demote to a lower classification. Trial service is a probationary period without union protections during which employees can be dismissed without recourse. And finally, Management is asking for language that will make it even easier for them to contract out union work. All this being said, bargaining sessions so far have included some very good discussions with management on several topics, most specifically in the areas of upward mobility, worker schedules, and trial service. ESSN members joined SEIU Local 503 members for a March 22<sup>nd</sup> noon rally in front of Oregon Hall on the U.O. campus, in support of affordable healthcare and economic justice. (*information provided by SEIU Local 503 Bargaining Team member*)

UFCW Local 555 has also begun to renegotiate a contract with employers that will cover the majority of Local 555's grocery and meat workers.

### **National Labor News:**

Mississippi—On March 8<sup>th</sup>, 7,000 members of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) at Northrop Grumman's Pascagoula shipyard went out on strike in response to the defense company's proposed contract that included miniscule wage increases and more expensive healthcare costs. Hit hard by Hurricane Katrina, Pascagoula has seen a huge increase in the cost of living. While Northrop Grumman received large sums of money from the Navy and FEMA to repair hurricane damage, workers are unable to make ends meet, labor in hazardous conditions, and some are still living in temporary trailers. More information is available at <http://www.ibew.org/>.

California—Thousands of farm workers are out of work after a devastating citrus freeze that began in January. While President Bush declared California a federal disaster area on Wednesday, March 14<sup>th</sup>, the United Farm Workers (UFW) are struggling to make sure that federal relief covers farm workers and not just growers. Reportedly, the relief aid currently only includes food assistance and extended unemployment benefits to farm workers, many of who remain destitute. According to the UFW website,

“...federal relief is needed towards mortgage and rental assistance as well as utility payments. Without this aid, thousands of families will lose their homes.”

The UFW is asking activists to sign an online petition demanding the government to provide aid to farm workers. To sign the petition, visit:

[www.ufwaction.org/campaign/freeze\\_housing/iisndb34q5ibd7d](http://www.ufwaction.org/campaign/freeze_housing/iisndb34q5ibd7d).

### **International Labor News:**

Iraq—Members of The General Union of the Tourism and Hotels Federation of Workers Councils organized a strike at the Sheraton Hotel-Baghdad on March 3-4, 2007. 250 workers struck, calling for overdue salaries and unpaid benefits that had been frozen due to a decline in business and the transformation of hotels into military controlled zones. The administration, when confronted by workers, agreed to their demands, resulting in a union victory.

United Kingdom—Baristas United, the IWW Coffee Shop Workers Union, has begun a spring organizing drive among workers at Starbucks and other cafes. To aid in this effort, they have released a Baristas United Bulletin (BUB), including information on how to begin an organizing drive, along with fellow worker interviews. To view the BUB or learn more about the current global efforts to organize baristas visit the IWW Starbucks Union Website at [www.starbucksunion.org](http://www.starbucksunion.org)