

## SEIU Local 140 Newsletter 5.4.23

### Take Action!

- Attend the **Labor Notes Troublemakers School** Saturday 5/6 from 9am-4pm at McDaniel High School, 2735 NE 82nd Ave. The event is open to all and is free for SEIU members. Learn more and register at <https://labornotes.org/pdx>.
- **The next bargaining session** is Friday 5/19 from 1-5pm at the SEIU office, 525 NE Oregon St.

## Union Updates

### Disaster Pay Grievance Hearing Summary

Seven custodians met with management on Monday to continue pushing for disaster pay and compensation as a result of the snow days and state of emergency in February. We met with Genevieve Rough, director of employee and labor relations, and Dan Jung, chief operating officer. We reminded them of the reason for filing this grievance and shared further testimony from workers who endured grueling commutes and who were forced to choose between risking their lives to go to work or sacrificing personal/emergency or vacation leave.

Rough expressed interest in finding a “remedy” as opposed to forcing us to take it to arbitration. However, the district did not specify what they are willing to do to resolve the issue. While Rough and Jung claimed to be the decision makers in this case, they also said they needed to know the financial impact first so that they could make a “recommendation” to the financial department. Rough brought up the supposed “fiscal cliff” the district is facing, but when we asked about the nearly \$200,000 that Jung made last year, he claimed it was “not germane” to the grievance.

We should hear back from the district next week about their decision on the grievance. In the meantime, they asked for an estimate of costs resulting from coming to work during the snowstorm. You can fill out this [form](#) if you were forced to pay for things like uber rides, car repairs, towing, or injuries.

### School Board Candidate Forum

Last Sunday, April 30th, a union coalition forum was held at the PAT union hall to direct questions at school board candidates. There were four candidates present: Andrew Scott, Michelle DePass (both incumbents), Derrick Peterson, and Eddie Wang. Only Derrick Peterson is running opposed, by Patte Sullivan, who was not there. Peterson has presented himself as mostly focused on issues of diversity, but did not mention his 35 year long career in the sheriff department nor [his role](#) as a “marketplace apostle” of Harvest International Ministry, an organisation opposed to both gay marriage and abortion rights: important things to consider for a prospective school board candidate, and which he seems to hide.

During the forum, members of SEIU, PAT, DCU, asked several questions about the solutions to problems we all face at PPS such as understaffing, exorbitant admin pay, racial inequality, crumbling buildings, contractor outsourcing, and student and worker support and safety. All of which is in the context of the [proposed budget](#) by superintendent Guadelupe Guerrero, that plans to cut 27 full-time equivalent custodial positions, and on a district wide level exacerbate these issues. Generally, pay

disparity has also gotten worse with teachers and other classified staff falling down 3% while admin and non-represented staff has gone up 6% in pay. This budget proposal will have to go through a school board vote to be ratified.

## **Local Labor Solidarity**

### **Action at Zenith Energy**

This last Saturday, three SEIU 140 union members went to a demonstration to oppose the Zenith Energy facility on NW Front Avenue. Located along the river in an industrial area, trains take oil to the site and from there the oil is loaded onto ships for export. The oil is not used in Oregon and the company employs few people at their facility here. On Saturday, those assembled listened to speakers as well as music. There was also a sit-in where land defenders sat in front of the entrance blocking any traffic from entering or leaving. Although it wasn't clear whether the facility had been operating that day, those there were willing to risk arrest to shut down this center of resource extraction and environmental destruction. The history of the facility shows the difficulty of confronting the fossil fuel industry even in a supposedly environmentally minded city like Portland. A future article will explain more of the history of Zenith and the environmental justice concerns about their operations, as well as how city politicians like Dan Ryan have enabled their potential expansion.

## **Labor History**

### **Labor Struggles in the Late 1800s**

Although a wave of repression followed the mass strikes of 1886 and Haymarket Square, workers continued to agitate and revolt against a society increasingly centered around the profits of the owning and employing classes.

In the 1880s and 1890s Andrew Carnegie oversaw the continued growth of Carnegie Steel Company. The Homestead steel mill was one of the largest of Carnegie's plants, located near Pittsburgh. Despite some steel mills having their unions broken, the workers at Homestead were still represented by the Amalgamated Association of Iron and Steel Workers. Their contract was set to expire on July 1 1892 and Carnegie gave Henry Clay Frick, the manager of the factory, orders to break the union by any means necessary. On July 2 Frick fired the workers, and before doing so he had a massive fortified wall built around the plant. On July 6 two barges full of Pinkerton agents, private security forces, traveled to occupy the plant and prevent the workers from disrupting operations. Workers then stormed the plant and attempted to prevent the Pinkertons from entering the site, leading to a bloody battle that eventually saw the Pinkertons retreating from the area. Soon thereafter the governor sent in the National Guard after Frick had requested them, and by July 15 the plant was operating again with replacement workers. To this day, Pinkerton continues to function as a private security and investigations company, with many corporate clients.

Another strike of the late 1800s was the Pullman Strike from May to July of 1894. The Pullman Palace Car Company manufactured railroad cars out of their company town near Chicago. In May of 1894 workers had walked out after the corporation refused to raise wages despite an increased cost of living following the economic crisis of 1893. The American Railway Union (ARU), under the leadership of

Eugene V. Debs, called for a boycott where workers across the railroad industry would stop handling any cars manufactured by Pullman. The railroads began firing workers who refused to handle the train cars and by June 29 there were around 50,000 workers on strike. The strike continued to grow and on July 3 federal troops were sent in to enforce an injunction. On July 6 strikers carried out extensive sabotage to railway equipment and on July 7, as the police and soldiers continued their bloody crackdown on workers, Eugene V. Debs was arrested along with other prominent figures in the strike. By August 3 the strike was over and Debs would end up spending a radicalizing 6 months in prison for his involvement in the strike. In a future installment of labor history we'll examine the context of the early 1900s and the continued labor conflict in the US, including what Debs would end up doing following his time in prison.