

The Professionals Guild of Ohio



PGO UNION NEWS

June/July 2014

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PGO Council 12 Files Strike Notice

PGO members working at the Montgomery County Children Services authorized the Union to file a strike notice after the county gave its "last best offer" in negotiations for a contract to replace the agreement that expired March 31, 2014. The county was demanding unreasonable concessions from the Union and, to add insult to injury, was offering nominal wage increases to workers after giving outrageous raises to supervisors and managers at the agency. The Union responded by conducting informational picketing at the county commissioners meeting on June 3rd and filing a notice of intent to strike on June 16th.

PGO represents 260 professional and non-professional children services workers in Montgomery County. The Union and county had sixteen bargaining sessions before negotiations broke-down in late May. More than 100 Council 12 members picketed outside the county commissioners meeting and packed the room during the meeting. Many of the members and Council 12 president, **Eric Kanthak**, addressed the commissioners expressing their concerns about the unfair treatment of children services workers.

The scheduled strike was averted when a tentative agreement was reached through a ten-hour mediation session conducted by the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service. This agreement has been ratified by Council 12 members. The county commissioners are scheduled to act on the tentative agreement at its June 24th meeting.

Governor Fails to Save Ohio Jobs

By Paul Henry, Esq.,

PGO Field Representative

After nearly 1,000 workers lost their jobs due to layoffs at the Ormet Aluminum Plant in Hannibal, Ohio, Governor John Kasich refused to meet with the Monroe County Commissioner to discuss how to save the jobs.

According to www.save-ohiojobs.org, American Electric Power (AEP) raised Ormet's electrical rates by over \$20 million per year, and the Ohio Public Utilities Commission (PUCO) refused to help negotiate a resolution that would enable the plant to resume full operations.

Last October the private company announced it would close its plant and lay off more than 1,000 workers after PUCO rejected Ormet's request for an energy plan that would

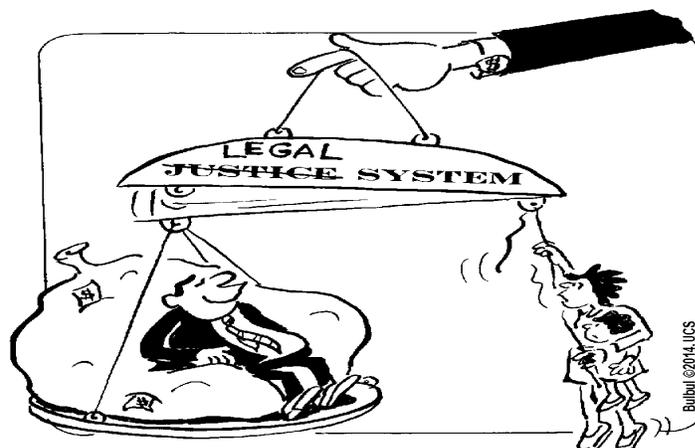
reduce electricity costs and save the plant. Four of the five members on PUCO's board were appointed by Governor Kasich.

The Ormet plant was one of the largest private employers in Southeastern Ohio. After opening in 1956, it became the largest electricity consumer in the state. Critics have called out Governor Kasich for painting a picture that job creation is his highest priority, yet he choose not to intervene on the company's behalf in their case before the PUCO.

Prior to the layoffs, Union workers as well as the employer urged Governor Kasich to save the aluminum plant, warning that hundreds of jobs were at risk. The United Steelworkers Union (USW) even sought signatures for a petition to request that Governor Kasich get involved. USW Local 5724 delivered approximately 9,000 petition signatures to Governor Kasich urging him to bring PUCO, American Electric Power (AEP) and Ormet together to negotiate a power supply arrangement that would allow them to stay in business.

Even the petition was not enough to get the Governor to respond. Rob Nichols, a spokesperson for Kasich, suggested that the governor's office could not help Ormet with the PUCO because it is an independent entity.

Just a few years ago, Governor Kasich's JobsOhio group gave American Greetings Company a whopping \$93.5 million in State incentives for "job creation" to stay in Ohio after threatening to leave. Shortly after American Greetings Company received these incentives, it laid off workers and gave CEO Zev Weiss a big raise.



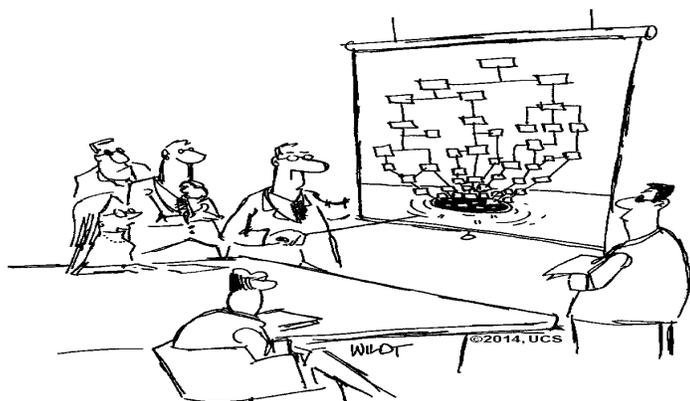
Money and Politics

By Paul Henry, Esq., PGO Field Representative

The Supreme Court issued an opinion in the case of *McCutcheon v. Federal Election Committee* that has expanded the wealthiest Americans ability to finance political campaigns. This case dealt with Mr. McCutcheon, an Alabama businessman who wanted to make campaign contributions to several candidates. He had made \$33,000 worth of contributions to various candidates and planned on making more contributions. He was unable to do so, however, because of a campaign contribution cap for individuals which limited people from donating more than \$48,000 every two years for candidates in federal elections. Believing that this was a violation of his constitutional right of free speech, he pursued his claim all the way to the Supreme Court.

The Court agreed with McCutcheon and stated that the overall caps on contributions placed an unacceptable burden on an "individual's right to participate in the public debate through political expression and political association." This decision did not remove the cap on the amount an individual can donate to a single candidate; that amount still remains at \$2,600. However, people will now be allowed to donate money to as many candidates as they choose.

Justice Breyer dissented and called the majority opinion a disturbing development that raised the overall contribution ceiling to infinity. Breyer has insisted that this decision will allow individuals to contribute millions of dollars to political parties or campaigns, allowing the wealthy to have more influence in politics. Breyer went on to say "[i]f the court in *Citizens United* opened a door, today's decision may well open a floodgate."



"Frankly, at this point in the flow chart, we don't care what happens to these people."

Target: the New Wal-Mart

By Paul Henry, Esq., PGO Field Representative

Once seen as an alternative to Wal-Mart, Target has decided to take a page out of its retail rival’s playbook. Target has begun requiring its employees to watch a video disparaging unions and the labor movement. This is being done in order to scare its employees away from unionizing. This type of behavior has come to be expected by Wal-Mart but Target has been silent on the issue up until now.

Target’s anti-union video begins with two clean cut and cheerful Target employees. These “employees” claim that a Union is just a business. A business which they allege has been made irrelevant by changes in state and federal law which provide all the protections that a worker could ever need. They go on to claim that if a greedy Union was established in Target, the business may not be able to recover from the disruption that would be caused.

Whether it is Target or Wal-Mart providing the message, the common theme prevalent in all anti-union propaganda is misinformation and fear. The claim that unions are irrelevant because the law provides “enough protection already” is completely false. The typical Target cashier makes around eight dollars an hour. As difficult as it is to attempt to raise a family on eight dollars an hour, it is unfortunately legal for companies to only pay the required minimum wage (in Ohio, the minimum wage is \$7.95 an hour). Unions allows workers to negotiate their wages and to improve their working conditions from the minimal standards set out by the law.

In the video, the Target “employees” also imply that if a Union were to become involved, the company would not be able to handle the financial burden. Target’s CEO has been paid approximately \$64 million over the past three years and the company earned \$73.3 billion in revenues in 2012. Target evidently does not believe in passing its good fortune onto the employees who have made the company so successful. To say that unionized employees would financially burden the company is a flat-out lie. A person cannot help but question his or her loyalty to a company like Target when it looks at a competitor like Wal-Mart and instead of choosing to do the right thing, it decides to follow the bad example.

Time and Money

The National Low Income Housing Coalition calculated how many hours a week a minimum-wage worker would need to work to afford a two-bedroom apartment at fair market rent. The answer: at least 67. In more than half the states, you’d have to work more than 80 hours a week. And in Hawaii, you’d have to work 177 hours—yes, more hours than actually exist in a week!

(Source: Labor Notes, May 2014)

Summer Fun the Union Way

Summer is here and that means many of you are planning vacations and enjoying cookouts. PGO would like to offer a few friendly reminders and helpful hints. First, make sure when planning your vacation you take a look at your contract. Vacation provisions within the contract will lay-out the proper procedure you must follow when requesting time off. To avoid problems or worse, the denial of a vacation request, be sure you follow the procedure listed.

If you plan on traveling, Unite Here! has released an app for smart phones which allows you to search for union friendly hotels.

If you plan on having a cookout, try to buy from **Kroger** or **Meijer**. Both of these chains employ union workers. When buying food for your cookouts, the following brands are made by union employees:

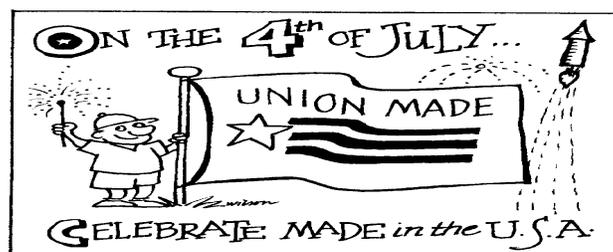
Food:

- Ball Park
- Boars Head
- Oscar Meyer
- Heinz Ketchup
- French’s Mustard
- Frito-Lay Chips

Beverages:

- Coke
- Pepsi
- Budweiser
- Miller

Most importantly, have a safe and enjoyable summer.



Labor Movie List

By Nicole Jackson, Esq., PGO Field Representative

Here are a list of 10 movies (not ranked) that we recommend watching about the labor movement, the American wage disparity, and how politics play into it all. Most of the movies on this list can be found at your local library, on Netflix, or YouTube.

1. **At the River I Stand (1993)** - This powerful documentary was shown during a special viewing at the 2014 Labor Notes Conference. The documentary follows the two months leading up to the 1968 tragic death of Martin Luther King Jr., while he was in Memphis in support of 1,300 striking sanitation workers.
2. **Norma Rae (1979)** - Starring Sally Field and based on the true story of a brave North Carolina woman named Crystal Lee Sutton, formerly Crystal Lee Jordan, who was fired from her job folding towels at the J.P. Stevens textile plant in Roanoke Rapids, N.C. for trying to organize a union in the early 1970s. Her last action at the plant was writing the word "UNION" on a piece of cardboard and standing on her work table, leading her co-workers to turn off their machines in solidarity.
3. **Harlan County, USA (1976)** - An Oscar-winning documentary covering the "Brookside Strike," an effort of 180 coal miners and their wives against the Duke Power Company in Harlan County, Kentucky in 1973.
4. **Park Avenue: Money, Power and the American Dream (2012)** - 740 Park Avenue, Manhattan, is one of the most exclusive addresses in the world, home to the 1% of the 1%. Ten minutes to the north, is the other Park Avenue, in the South Bronx. Here, unemployment is as high as 19% and half the population needs food stamps. The documentary even details a prank call to Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker who details his plans to bust public sector unions--even in Ohio. *Full movie on Youtube.
5. **The One Percent (2006)** - A documentary by filmmaker Jamie Johnson, the great-grandson of Robert Wood Johnson I (co-founder of Johnson & Johnson), about the growing wealth gap between America's wealthy elite compared to

the majority of citizens. *Full movie on Netflix and Youtube.

6. **Roger & Me (1989)** - A documentary film by controversial filmmaker Michael Moore, this powerful film takes a hard look at the realities faced when the GM auto plants shut down in Flint, Michigan sending 30,000 employees to the unemployment lines and leading to rampant poverty, collapse, and crime in the city. Moore documents the Flint Sit-Down Strike, which resulted in the birth of the United Auto Workers Union.
7. **Silkwood (1983)** - A drama film inspired by the life of Karen Silkwood, who was a nuclear power plant whistleblower and a labor union activist who died in a suspicious car accident while on her way to meet with a reporter that was investigating alleged wrongdoing at the plant where she worked.
8. **Cesar Chavez (2014)** - This drama film is based on the life and career of legendary civil rights activist and labor organizer Cesar Chavez who co-founded United Farm Workers, and follows his mission to organize 50,000 farm workers in California.
9. **Citizen Koch (2013)** - Also screened at the 2014 Labor Notes conference, this documentary details the U.S. Supreme Court's *Citizens United* ruling that opened the floodgates for unlimited political spending. The documentary also details how union rights are being destroyed by corporate and billionaire donors whose ultimate goal is to bust unions, particularly - the Koch Brothers.
10. **Wal-Mart: The High Cost of Low Price (2005)** - This documentary reveals that Wal-Mart underpays its workers, criticizes the company's anti-union tactics, and how Wal-Mart is responsible for forcing small businesses to close -- documenting the closing of one Middleton, Ohio family hardware store after Wal-Mart came to town.

