

History of ATU 757:

1930-1940 Highlights

The Union and the company agreed to arbitration in April. The company increased fares from 8 to 10 cents but was unwilling to offer any definite increase in pay for the employees during the negotiations that began when the increase went into effect. By the end of the month, negotiations were at a standstill.

The Great Depression of the 30s brought financial woes to the company. On March 13, 1930, the company was again reorganized. The name was changed from PEPCO to the Pacific Northwest Public Service Company, which incorporated with a capital valuation of \$41 million. It acted as the holding company for Portland General Electric and Portland Electric Power, which were once again separated from each other. PEPCO was the operating company for the rail and bus lines, while the Light and Power Department remained under Portland General Electric. A little while later, the city lines were again separated from the interurban lines and were turned over to a company called the Portland Traction Company. Interurban systems were not profitable. Officials hoped that by separating the operation the burden might be lifted from the city lines. Negotiations began with several of the major railroads serving Portland in hope of finding a buyer for the interurban lines.

In May of 1932, the new streetcars for Portland were purchased. It was hoped that the 15 Brill cars would include new riders to use the street railway.

Labor's legislative program included support of a free textbook law, support of a bill establishing a state system of old age pension, the ratification of the federal child labor amendment and a law that would give the state labor commissioner more power in the collection of wages. Labor also pushed for a bill that would outlaw "yellow dog" contracts, and it supported the personal income tax bill. Another issue of interest was the proposed constitutional amendment that would increase the pay of members of the legislature. Meanwhile, unemployment decreased slightly during the first quarter of the year.]

Thanks to arbitration, streetcar men were granted a wage increase. Car men were given a raise of 30 percent of the increase sought by platform men, and 20 percent given for shop men and track men. The increase amounted to about \$5 to \$8 a month for platform men and about \$4 a month for everyone else. In December, Local 757's annual election was held, and H. F. Pendergast was elected president over Brother Cooper, who had held his leadership position for seven terms.

1931

By April the company began a push for wage reductions. Support for Local 757 came from the Labor Council. The issue, as usual, went to arbitration. The company wanted and announced a 10-percent reduction in salaries. The Union authorized a maximum

cut of 7-1/2 percent.

1932...

The issue of unemployment compensation began to gain momentum across the country. Labor and management alike were greatly concerned about the recession. In June, the Union voted on a 6-hour day for platform men. All that remained was approval by company officials. A favorable decision meant that 250 platform men would be kept on the payroll. The other option was to add to the army of unemployed with the introduction of one-man cars. News reports included stores of doctors who were forced to drive taxis in order to earn a living. Other professionals talked about working as night watchmen and elevator operators. Beginning July 1, 1932, the Union went to a 6-hour normal workday.

1933...

Sears-Roebuck was placed on the "unfair list." In December, 824 new unions were chartered by the AF of L. A special session of the Oregon Legislature was called in Salem where a half-dozen bills were introduced dealing with questions of unemployment relief.

1935...

Ed Becker became a motorman and conductor on the Council Crest line.

1937...

Local 757 opened an agreement with Portland Traction Company (City Lines) and with Portland Electric Power Company for an increase in wages from 72 cents to \$1 an hour. The agreement also called for 2 weeks' paid vacation for all groups.

In April, the *Labor Press* printed a letter from the president of the United Textile Workers concerning the "CIO dictatorship." "The CIO was founded on irresponsibility and illegality," according to the AF of L Council in Washington, D.C. Considerable discussion occurred regarding an affiliation with the CIO. Later that month, the Arbitration Board awarded an increase to Union members retroactive to April 1. The Central Labor Council created a committee that was empowered to handle the day-to-day activities necessary to combat the CIO.

In December, the *Labor Press* went on record saying that the members of the CIO were carrying out the "Communist program" and that the "entire movement was being controlled by the Communist party."

1939...

In July, Local 757 attempted to have members employed on the city lines of the

Portland Traction Company covered by the Railroad Retirement Act. The move would compensate for the loss the members sustained through the traction company's refusal to carry out its insurance program. The Local planned a campaign to prevent loss to its members, with its leaders saying the public would rise in indignation against the proposals of the traction company.