

History of ATU 757:

1955-1959 Highlights

The Union voted by a 15-to-1 margin to reject the latest company offer of a 4-cent hourly wage increase, plus a small improvement in vacation benefits. The Union's negotiating committee was asking for a 15-cent hourly wage increase. The failure of the company to offer improvements in retirement benefits was one of the main reasons for the vote to reject the offer.

A "pledge of good unionism" campaign involved non-union auto dealers and their union-busting program. Five members signed a settlement saying they wouldn't buy within the first 4 days of the campaign.

The Union won 6 cents an hour in a new pact. The raise brought the Union rate to \$1.96 an hour, plus company-paid retirement pension and other fringe benefits.

There was discussion in the *Labor Press* regarding a name for what became the AFL-CIO. Some ideas included "United American Labor," "United Labor of America," "United Builders of America," and "American Federation of the Free and Equal."

A family of four needed \$180 a week to live, according to a story in the *Labor Press*. The minimum wage was 75 cents an hour.]

Two Portland drivers saved the life of another unionist at the risk of their own lives. Officers of the Teamsters Local 162 paid a special visit to the meeting of 757 to thank Jesse Smith and George Drew for saving the life of Warren Coe, Local 623. The incident occurred on a bus.

There was a big concern regarding Governor Paul Patterson. The Portland Central Labor Council joined the Machinists Council of Oregon in charging the governor with deliberate union busting. A large number of state owned cars were seen crossing picket lines in Salem for repairs and service since mechanics, belonging to Machinist Lodge 1506, were forced to strike at Douglas McKay Chevy Company, Valley Motors and Loder Brothers Olds. The state had not called for bids on repairing state cars.

1956...

City buses kept running after the Portland Traction Company franchise expired at the end of the month. City and company officials kept the Union informed of developments in the franchise dilemma.

Union membership reelected Mel Leinard as business representative and Eugene Watson as secretary/treasurer. The election involved a close race between Charles Snook and Lou Becker for president. In a runoff, Snook defeated incumbent Becker by a slim five-vote majority.

The Rose City Transit Company said it might not operate the bus system after April 10 if it could not reach a 2-year wage agreement with the Union. The Union agreed to talk wages with the company, and negotiation began. Officials said they

might not seek renewal of the franchise if they could not get certain concessions from the City Council, plus a long-term wage agreement with the Union.

Interior Secretary Douglas McKay became a candidate for the U.S. Senate with the intention of opposing Senator Wayne Morse in the November election. It was good news for the nation because it meant McKay would leave the Cabinet where he had done considerable damage to natural resources.

Mel Leinard, business representative of the Union, was appointed to the new post of labor coordinator for the year's United Fund Campaign.

Charles Snook, former president of the Union, was appointed assistant superintendent of operations for the Rose City Transit Company. Snook had joined the company and Local 757 in 1928. The 28-year veteran of the Portland public transportation system was a delegate to the Central Labor Council, the State Federation of Labor and conventions of the International Union.

About 600 members of the Union received a 16-cent hourly pay boost, across the board, on November 1. A 2-year contract, signed by the Union and Rose City Transit, promised additional benefits. Operators gained three paid holidays this year, three more in 1957. Wage increases raised the base salaries of operators to \$2.12 an hour and mechanics to \$2.34 an hour.

Elections results: Senator Wayne Morse won reelection by a decisive 60,000-vote majority over Republican challenger, former Secretary of Interior Douglas McKay. Oregonians elected Robert Holmes as governor, the young state senator from Astoria, who won labor's all-out support over incumbent Governor Elmo Smith. Edith Green won reelection. Al Ullman defeated two-term Congressman Sam Coon in the Second District. Portland's mayor-elect was Terry Schruck, the former president of Firefighters Local 43. By a margin of nearly 3 to 1, Oregon voters rejected Ballot Measure One, which would have opened the door for a sales tax in Oregon.

1957...

The new year brought a 40th birthday party celebration. About 160 charter members were on the Local's membership rolls. Paul Gurske, now the director of the U.S. Labor Department's Bureau of Standards and a former business representative for the Union, returned for the celebration. Five hundred people attended the event.

Transit employees voted on a new uniform that included blue-gray gabardine material.

1959...

A 1-minute "strike" was held in February. Members of the Union who were on duty at noon took part in the display. Management put the nix on bus drivers who wanted to grow beards. The drivers decided to fight back and pulled their buses to the curbs throughout the city, stopping the engines. Many stepped forward and solemnly read their patrons a proclamation.

The hourly wage of the members was 19 cents below that of Seattle bus drivers. Negotiations were underway with the company with the Union asking for an hourly increase of 29 cents. Under the current contract, a man would have to work 12 to

16 hours and then be ordered to report again 2 or 3 hours later to take out the next day's run. The Union rejected the company offer of a 5-cent-an-hour increase. The company, owned by folks in San Francisco, showed a profit of \$400,000 in 1958, but threatened to go out of business if the Union would not accept the 5-cent increase. The issue was settled in October when Union members voted to accept a 17-cent-an-hour package wage increase. The company continued to pay pensions to about 300 retired members.

Highlights of the decade included the invasion of South Korea by North Korea in 1950. That same year CBS began broadcasting color television. Employment of women in U.S. industry reached its highest point ever in 1951. The first atomic submarine was launched a year later. The Milwaukee Braves were the first new major league team in 50 years. *Sports Illustrated* published its first issue in 1954. The Supreme Court banned segregation in public schools in 1955, and during the year following, Elvis reached stardom. In 1959, construction began on the Memorial Coliseum in Portland.]