

Nabisco workers at three US production plants go on strike

Julio Patron**16 August 2021**

Some 200 workers at a Nabisco bakery in northeast Portland, Oregon, went out on an indefinite strike on Tuesday, August 10, demanding, among other things, a fair contract and a halt to company plans to change the traditional workweek schedule. They have now been joined by hundreds of Nabisco bakery workers in Richmond, Virginia, and Aurora, Colorado.

Nabisco workers have been confronting years of deteriorating working conditions, the elimination of pensions, cuts in health care benefits and the threat of plant closures.

Despite the record profits Nabisco has made during the pandemic, with revenue rising 2.8 percent to \$26.6 billion in 2020, the company is attempting to slash the living standards of its workers even more brutally than in previous contracts.

In 2016, Mondelez International, the parent company of Nabisco, slashed half of the Nabisco production lines at its Chicago plant and laid off over 400 workers, while closing its Fairlawn, New Jersey, and Atlanta, Georgia, plants, slashing over 1,000 jobs in total.

In 2018, the company eliminated the pensions of thousands of workers and retirees, instead shifting to a 401(k) plan, two years after the contract with the Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco and Grain Millers (BCTGM) expired.

Instead of mobilizing its thousands of members in defense of the pension of the Nabisco workers, the BCTGM belatedly agreed to the elimination of pensions, after it had already been in effect, two years later in April 2020.

Now the workers are fighting against the attempts of the company to eliminate daily overtime after eight hours and premium pay for working weekends, as well as an increase of temp workers by 25 percent and further cuts in health benefits.

The BCTGM union, which “represents” Nabisco bakers in the US, has attempted to divert the focus of the strike to attacks on workers in Mexico. It has stated for the last decade that the main issue confronting the Nabisco workers is “outsourcing” of jobs to Nabisco plants in Mexico, and called for a reactionary boycott of all Nabisco products made in Mexico.

BCTGM International President Anthony Shelton issued a statement on the strike, declaring that, “In all three locations, our courageous members are speaking with one clear, strong voice. They are telling Nabisco to put an end to the outsourcing of jobs to Mexico and get off the ridiculous demand for contract concessions at a time when the company is making record profits.”

Despite the rhetoric about contract concessions, the unions have collaborated with the company to lower labor costs in order to boost profits off the backs of workers. As a result Nabisco workers have faced a relentless assault on their standard of living and the complete elimination of pensions.

The BCTGM is isolating the strike from the rest of the working class, including workers in Mexico and the thousands of workers which work for the parent company Mondelez International, along with other snack food production workers, such as Frito-Lay workers, who face the same dire working conditions.

A BCTGM member wrote on Twitter, “I feel for the guys in Portland. At least they had the guts to go out and fight. International waited til they closed 2 plants and lose 1000 Union members to now have a local of less than 250 members to strike????”

The fact that the Nabisco workers from the three different facilities went on strike simultaneously shows there is a willingness to fight, but for their strike to succeed, workers at Nabisco must take stock of the experiences of the Frito-Lay strike.

Workers went on strike at Kansas and Topeka Frito-Lay factories after rejecting four sellout agreements brought to the workers by the BCTGM. The strike was shut down by the BCTGM after starving workers on meager strike pay and then forcing through a sellout. As the WSWS noted, “The BCTGM bears full responsibility for the passing of the agreement. The contract will not alleviate the brutal working conditions, and in the next contract negotiations, the BCTGM will feign amnesia as it denounces working conditions it agreed to and enforced.”

We urge Nabisco workers to draw the lessons of the BCTGM betrayal at Frito-Lay and build a rank-and-file committee to take over conduct of their fight. Workers who want to join the fight or learn more should get in contact with the WSWS today about building rank-and-file committees at your plant.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:
wsws.org/contact