

Union Takes to Street in Secaucus Dispute

By Hugh R. Morley, Staff Writer

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Members of Teamsters Local 1-L picket Tuesday, May 29, 2012, in New York City. Carmine Galasso / Staff Photographer

An ongoing and bitter contract dispute between the Teamsters and the owner of a Secaucus printing company ended up in the streets of New York Tuesday, when about 25 union members demonstrated outside the office of the U.S. Small Business Administration.

Teamsters Local 1-L, a New York-based branch of the Amalgamated Lithographers of America union, has for three years sought to organize the workers of AFL Web Printing, and has been trying to negotiate a contract with the company since workers voted to unionize in August 2010.

AFL, which provides web printing, finishing and circulation services to publishers, is owned by Long Island-based Westbury Partners, a private equity firm.

The printing company, which had been negotiating a deal with the 50-member union, declared an impasse in April, prompting the union to file a complaint alleging labor law violations, **Dave Hancock, [Locker Associates]** a union spokesman said.

Demonstrators Tuesday called for the SBA to cut ties with Westbury because AFL has "a history of breaking the law and violating worker's rights."

The union said it targeted the SBA because the agency had awarded "at least \$100 million in funding" to the private equity firm.

"The SBA should look and make sure those grants are used prudently, and not just to maintain their (the company's) old, self-serving interest," said Patrick LoPresti, president of Local 1-L. He said the company is offering workers a contract with no raises and no sick days. "They should invest in labor. Workers like to advance, everybody likes to earn a little bit more."

Joseph L. Cavone, AFL's vice-president of sales and marketing, said the company would not comment.

Westbury is an SBA-licensed Small Business Investment Company, which means it is able to borrow funds with an SBA guarantee, SBA spokesman Michael Stamler said.

Westbury has received \$70 million in SBA-guaranteed funding, and in July 2008 invested in AFL, later increasing its investment to 85 percent of the company, Stamler said.

"The labor dispute between AFL and Local One, while unfortunate, does not disqualify the investment according to SBA regulations, and does not render it inconsistent with public policy," Stamler said.

In urging the SBA to cut ties with Westbury, the union noted that in March an administrative law judge concluded that AFL had violated federal labor laws by "threatening employees with plant closure if they engaged in union activities or supported the union." The charges related to the organizing effort that led up to the union election, union officials said.

Judge Steven Fish, sitting in Washington D.C., found the company had "unlawfully laid off" four employees, and ordered the company to reinstate them.

The union also sought to pressure the SBA by citing a proposed penalty of \$170,000 levied against AFL by the U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration last July.

The penalty stemmed from a February inspection of the company's Vorhees plant that found numerous health and safety violations.

A Department of Labor official late Tuesday was unable to say whether the company paid the penalty or not.

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