A March on the Boss

Seward Co-op workers, backed by supporters, demand union recognition

By Steve Share, Labor Review editor

MINNEAPOLIS — Workers at Seward Co-op, backed by union and community supporters, marched into the co-op’s two retail natural foods grocery stores June 7 to demand a $15 per hour wage and union recognition.

And outside the co-op’s Franklin Ave. restaurant, Creamery Cafe, the throng of workers and supporters — about 150 strong — confronted Seward manager Sean Doyle to ask for immediate union recognition. He refused.

“An overwhelming number of us have signed union authorization cards and we demand recognition of our union,” urged Seward deli cook Amber Young, a two-year employee.

Earlier that same day, Seward workers submitted union authorization cards to the local National Labor Relations Board office seeking to organize with United Food and Commercial Workers Local 653.

The day was “the proudest day of my life so far,” said Amy Swenson, Minneapolis, who has worked eight years at Seward’s Franklin Ave. grocery.

During her time at Seward, “it’s changed drastically — for the worse,” she said. “I’ve seen unequal treatment of workers — and enough is enough.”

“Here we are, banded together to advocate for our wants and needs and to hold the co-op accountable to its overall vision,” said Michelle Johnson, a two-year Seward employee and produce worker.

Swenson asked: “Is it a coincidence that all the workers who have told their stories are women?”

“It just feels like there’s a disconnect...”

Seward Co-op workers and supporters marched down Franklin Ave., first to the co-op’s Creamery Cafe, then on to the co-op’s retail natural foods grocery.

Following a brief occupation of Seward’s Franklin Ave. grocery, the group boarded waiting buses and moved on to Seward’s second grocery store on E. 38th Street.
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