

Chronology of Ole Wolff (Yantai) Trade Union's struggle

Abbreviation:

OWY: Ole Wolff (Yantai) Electronics Ltd. Co.

OWYTU: Ole Wolff (Yantai) Trade Union

Date	Chronology
Oct 2005	According to its business registration, Ole Wolff (Yantai) Electronics Co Ltd was founded on 19 Oct 2005.
Jan 2006	Ole Wolff started production. At the time of recruitment, Liu Meizhen and her colleagues were employed. OWY promised to offer them written labour contracts, pay for labour insurance and the local minimum wages 530 Yuan/month.
10 Feb 2006	After one month of services, workers' wages got cut down to 480 Yuan. Another 30 Yuan wage deduction after 10 days. OWY refused to sign labour contracts. Female workers reported violations to the Fushan district labour bureau. Chief Shi of the labour bureau refused to give a judgment of the case (By law, the labour bureau has to deliver a verdict within 30 days, or within 60 days if the case is complicated)
28-29 Apr 2006	58 female workers were sacked by OWY without a reason. OWY required the workers to sign a resignation letters, 57 of them refused. The 57 workers demanded labour bureau to handle the case. On the same afternoon, OWY fired another 10 female workers. OWY declined workers' demand for reinstatement. In the negotiation process between OWY and workers, OWY promised to pay those "resigned workers" each 300 Yuan and pay for their labour insurance. Yet a part of the payment was deducted afterwards.
30 Apr – 4 Jun 2006	7 workers (out of 57) insisted to return to work and get labour contracts. They visited labour bureau and letters & complaints office for a month and finally succeeded. The other 50 workers were still sacked. With this struggle and knowing OWY's usual practice of mistreating the workers, workers were motivated to establish a trade union.
Mid July 2006	Workers applied to set up a union from OWY and Fushan District ACFTU. OWY refused and delayed the process. District ACFTU was supportive at first but rather powerless. OWY was aggressive towards Liu Meizhen, the workers' representative.
29 Sept 2006	OWY announced that for the one week national holiday, only 3 days were "given" and workers had to work on all 4 Sundays to repay OWY for the extra four days off they enjoyed. Liu Meizhen and five other female workers protested this decision and were eager to set up a union.

Chronology of Ole Wolff (Yantai) Trade Union's struggle

8 Oct 2006	OWY put out a notice of “dismissal of workers’ representative Liu XX, it stated that “she failed to obey the management, stir troubles among workers, severely violated the regulations and system”. OWY also spread out rumours, saying workers’ representative wanted to establish the union, only to satisfy her personal interest to become the union chairperson. When workers complained to the district labour bureau, it refused to take on the case. Angry workers launched a strike, with the demand to set up a union.
12 Oct 2006	OWY posted a notice, threatening “illegal” strikers, each to pay OWY 15,000 Yuan compensation. 6 workers who were denied access to OWY factory, stayed outside the factory to share their solidarity with workers.
14 Oct 2006	OWY told workers, if they failed to return to work and signed a “promise letter”, which says that they would show “absolute obedience to management’, they had to move out from factory dormitory.
16 Oct 2006	Zhang Jun, who was commissioned by workers, got in touch with the national level ACFTU. ACFTU replied that strike was not illegal and agreed that workers’ representative to tell media and fellow workers, about ACFTU’s view on strike.
18 Oct 2006	ACFTU sent a delegation to Yantai. ACFTU recommended the six sacked workers to start arbitration process and demand for reinstatement. However, Chief Shi of Fushan District’s labour bureau announced strike was illegal. When OWY workers told Shi ACFTU’s opinion, Shi replied “What does ACFTU know?”
20 Oct 2006	Strike continued. With the support of national ACFTU, ACFTU at city and district levels visited OWY, and asked the workers to return to work and then form a union. Workers insisted to first form a union, before returning to work. Vice chief of the district labour bureau, Mr Guo disallowed 6 sacked workers to go into the factory to participate the union election. On the same night, the OWYTU was founded. It has 116 members and elected a union committee and union funding auditing-committee. A 13-day strike came to an end. The union immediately wrote proposal to OWY, to re-correct its violations and reinstate 6-sacked workers. However, OWY refused and the district ACFTU criticized the new trade union’s action.
8 Nov 2006	OWYTU chairperson Wang Zhaori complained at Fushan District labour bureau about OWY’s lack of written contract for workers and failure to pay labour insurance, etc.
15 Nov 2006	The labour disputes arbitration case of the 6-sacked workers were heard. Later OW spread rumours that each of 6 workers received 10,000 Yuan compensation to terminate the case.
18 Dec 2006	6 workers won the case. They received an official verdict in the morning of 20 Dec.
4 Jan 2007	OWY appealed at the district court, the case was heard on 30 Jan.

Chronology of Ole Wolff (Yantai) Trade Union's struggle

2 Feb 2007	<p>OWY transferred the union chair Wang from a normal production line to a more dangerous post (examining post). OWYTU sent a letter to OWY, to demand the cancellation of transfer.</p> <p>OWY delayed the union due payment. After consulting the national level ACFTU, OWYTU drafted an "Order of Payment" to the district court. On the same day, it also publicized this news on the OWYTU's blog.</p>
15 Feb 2007	<p>OWY put out a notice, saying it stopped providing free meals and deducting wages for workers who demanded for written contract and labour insurance.</p> <p>OWYTU posted a notice demanding the company to sign labor contract with workers and to provide them with social security, but were torn down by OWY.</p>
8 Mar 2007	<p>OWY put out a public announcement to dismiss the chair- and vice-chairperson of the trade union (this decision was abandoned after the strike)</p>
9-15 Mar 2007	<p>After several complaints at the district labour bureau, concerning mass recruitment of new workers, dismissals of existing workers, OWYTU didn't get any result. It launched a strict, demanding OWY to sign an one-year contract with workers. Labour bureau stepped in for mediation, OWY's demand was "if you want a written contract with OWY, you have to sign a resignation letter from the trade union." Workers declined OWY's demands. On 15 Mar, OWY gave in and worker succeeded in getting contracts.</p>
6 Apr 2007	<p>After retaliation from OWY, Yu Liyan quit her post as vice-chairperson in Jan 2007. Jiang Qianqiu was then elected as new vice-chair.</p>
1 Jun 2007	<p>OWYTU applied for "compulsory payment order" at the Fushan district People's Court. Back on 13 April, the court has issued an "order of payment" to OWY.</p>
4 Jun 2007	<p>After retaliation, OWYTU chairperson resigned from the factory and her chair-position altogether. Jiang Qianqiu took over the chair's work.</p>
7 Jun 2007	<p>OWY set up a cleaning shift, which required workers to process chemicals, including Benzene, without any protective gears. Jiang and other 6 union officials were dismissed, because they led a group of female workers, who felt dizzy and sick, to demand for protective gears and improvements at workplace. After the dismissal, Jiang reported the factory situation to the local health bureau, and forced OWY to distribute protective gears to workers and made improvement at workplace.</p> <p>OWYTU complained at the district labour bureau about OWY's retaliation on union officials. The labour bureau refused to take up the case and asked them to bring it to court. It even said, "you can go to sue us at court for administrative neglect".</p>

Chronology of Ole Wolff (Yantai) Trade Union's struggle

8 Aug 2007	<p>That morning, the District ACFTU initiated a meeting with OWYTU, and Yantai city labour bureau.</p> <p>The aim of the meeting was to discuss the illegal dismissal of the Jiang qianqiu, the Vice Chairperson of OWYTU, by the management. The labor bureau refused to recognize the dismissal was a retaliation to target the OWYTU by the management. The meeting failed to reach any agreement.</p>
8 Oct 2007	<p>Zhang Jun, the OWYTU consultant and Jiang, the vice-chairperson finally pushed the local district labour bureau to issue a "re-correctional instruction ordered by the labour protection and monitor department". The document stated that Jiang was correct to protect workers' legal rights and interests and OWY's action towards Jiang was retaliation, hence OWY must continue to fulfill its responsibility as stipulated in its labor contract with Jiang. However, OWY refused to take any correctional measures and labour bureau failed to carry out any action.</p>
30 Oct 2007	<p>Through legal means, OWY was forced to pay some part of the missing union dues. The payment was temporarily kept by the district ACFTU.</p>
13 Nov 2007	<p>OWY met with Jiang, the vice-chair of OWYTU. OWY offered her 30,000 Yuan if she would quit her job. Jiang declined the offer.</p>
29 Nov 2007	<p>6 workers won the case at the second hearing. On 5 Dec, OWYTU complained at labour bureau, to demand for reinstatement of these 6 workers and OWY to pay their wages and labour insurance from 13 Oct 2006 till then. OWY refused to abide the verdict and labour bureau did nothing.</p>
24 Dec 2007	<p>OWYTU sued the district labour bureau for administrative neglect. The court (what level?) gave a reason of "the administrative proceeding document was not well written" to decline the lawsuit.</p>
10 Jan 2008	<p>Management of OWY organized a re-election for the OWYTU, assigned Li Yulan, the human resources manager as the candidate for chairperson and sent supervisors to monitor the election. Yet the management's controlled re-election failed after the OWYTU filed complaints to both the management and the local ACFTU.</p>
25 Jan 2008	<p>2 un-identified government officials went to the district ACFTU to investigate Zhang Jun's background.</p>
22 Feb 2008	<p>Jiang, the vice-chairperson of OWYTU, and her boyfriend got visits at home, by police from the town police station. The police said they were sent by the Yantai city's Personnel Bureau, via the Laiyang city (county-city in Yantai) police, to study their family background.</p>

Chronology of Ole Wolff (Yantai) Trade Union's struggle

19 Feb 2008	Shandong provincial newspaper "Qilu evening news" interviewed OWYTU, related government department and OWY, then published a long report called "apply to establish a trade union, female workers were dismissed repeatedly: a grassroots trade union's right defending struggles in a foreign enterprise".
24-26 Feb 2008	Shandong provincial "Qilu TV channel" also broadcasted the case continuously. In the program, some government officials criticized the OWYTU consultant without grounds. OWYTU debated the issue at its blog.
7-8 Mar 2008	After a long struggle, OWYTU got the union dues back from the district ACFTU. It used the money for Women's Day activities.
Mar-Apr 2008	Shandong People's radio, Central People's radio, China Central TV all interviewed OWYTU and reported their struggles.
Around 9 April 2008	OWYTU got in touch with the grassroots union Wal-mart's Nanchang 81 branch of Jiangxi province. Both union officials shared their experience in right defending.
19 May 2008	The Denmark Federation of Trade Unions, or 3F in short, was informed about this case. They met with Mr. Ole Wolff himself. Mr Wolff admitted the case but claimed that it was beyond his power to control or reform the factory. He said that the Yantai factory was reducing its own employees and would try to subcontract the production.
27 May 2008	OWYTU called the Yantai city labour bureau. The labour bureau official said he didn't want to talk to him because the whole issue was too sensitive.
23 June 2008	OWYTU posted an article on the blog to argue with Mr Wolff's excuse of not being able to control the factory.
14 August 2008	The website of 3F posted the first open report about the case after Mr. Wolff declined to response to 3F's request for an agreement which would recognize the OWYTU.
25 August 2008	OWYTU consultant Zhang jun met with General Manager of OWY and presented the latter a four point demands.
31 August 2008	The Danish National TV reported on the case.

For details of the OWYTU's struggle, please visit:
<http://blog.sina.com.cn/youyudzhongguoren> (Chinese)