

Los Angeles Times unionizes, after management's bad press

A horrific event over a century ago at the *Los Angeles Times* left a legacy that only now is changing. In 1910, a bombing occurred during a union organizing drive, and that solidified a company culture vehemently opposed to unions.

But on Jan. 4 this year, employees voted 248-44 in favor of joining NewsGuild, a union that represents more than 25,000 news workers across the country.

Missteps by the *Times'* parent company, Tronc Inc., may have tipped the vote toward unionization.

In a December Securities and Exchange Commission filing, Tronc revealed it signed a \$5 million per year contract with Merrick Ventures, a company owned by Tronc's chairman "to provide certain management expertise and technical services."

The union described the deal as an "act of plundering" that "cost Tronc and its newsrooms \$4.6 million between February 2016 and last September." The move came at a time when newspaper employee salaries had been frozen for years.

The union used the controversy over newspaper executive's salaries as a recruiting tool, pointing out that Tronc executives earn far more than executives at rival newspapers.

Note: Employee expectations for better pay will rise with the economy. Employers that want to manage wages should be prepared for blowback if the optics of executive perks seem unfair to rank-and-file employees.