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USW@Work

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A Powerful Voice for Workers



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// The future of this republic is in the hands of the American voter. //

Dwight D. Eisenhower



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ON THE COVER

International President Leo W. Gerard and John Edwards (Photo by John Beale)

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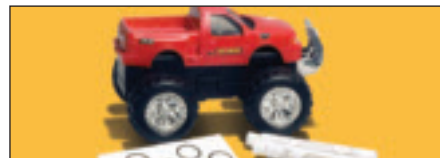
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Speaking Out

USW active and retired members and their families are invited to "speak out" on these pages. Letters should be short and to the point. We reserve the right to edit for length. Mail to *USW@Work*, Five Gateway Center, Pittsburgh PA 15222 or e-mail to *editor@usw.org*.



Couldn't put it down

The latest issue of *USW@Work* was an award-winner. The quality of the writing, the history and culture, the music and the artwork ... I read this Labor Day issue cover to cover. I couldn't put it down!

*Saul Schniderman, President
Library of Congress Professional Guild
AFSCME Local 2910*

Hunting and fishing club

I was really enjoying reading the Labor Day 2007 issue of *USW@Work*. The *Speaking Out* letters were right on the mark. I am a member of the Sierra Club and (the story on) working together with United Steelworkers to expose the toxic contents of Chinese products was powerful. Then I arrived at the inside back cover: the Union Sportsmen Alliance asking me to join a hunting and fishing club. Why? I won't be renewing my membership and subscription as long as you promote killing animals for sport.

*Mae Harms
Garden Valley, Calif*

First line of defense

I am glad I signed up as an Associate Member. The Labor Day issue alone was worth the price of membership. It contains information I do not see elsewhere.

The feature on "Toxic Imports" focused on what Senator Schumer refers to as "the safety and health of American consumers." Unfortunately, it seems that it takes a threat to our safety and health to wake us up.

What about the safety and health of the Chinese workers?

Upton Sinclair wrote "The Jungle" about the unhealthy and unsafe conditions of the workers in the Chicago stockyards but when LBJ presented him with the Presidential Medal of Honor he observed: I tried to appeal to the American people through their hearts, but it was only their stomachs that got

them upset — the conditions of the meat they were eating worried them lots more than the conditions of the workers making the meat for them.

We have to remember that workers are the miners' canaries for society. Their safety and health is the first line of defense for all of us.

*Martin Morand
New York, N.Y.*

New day for Liberian workers

Thank you for publishing the wonderful article "Liberian Workers Celebrate a New Day on the Firestone Plantation" in the *USW@Work* Labor Day issue. This article highlights the plight of workers in Liberia and helps American workers understand the true need for global solidarity in a manner that is both timely and provocative.

*Ellie Larson, AFL-CIO Solidarity Center
Washington, D.C.*

Promote asbestos injury act

After reading an article in *USW@Work* regarding the USW partaking in a world-wide study on lung cancer, it astonishes me that the lobbying force of the USW has done nothing to promote the Fairness in Asbestos Injury Resolution Act of 2005. The "FAIR Act" was introduced and passed in the U.S. Senate and is now being considered in the U.S. House of Representatives.

The bill relates to asbestosis, an industrial disease that is both incurable and progressive and in many instances results in terminal lung cancer. Many Colorado Fuel and Iron (CF&I) retirees have been diagnosed as suffering from asbestosis and since CF&I has been deemed bankrupt and thus not in existence, these afflicted CF&I retirees have no recourse in Colorado's Workers' Compensation and Industrial Disease Act.

*Mike L. Baca, CF&I retiree
Pueblo, Colo.*

Building strength

My father worked at Acme Steel Company in Riverdale, Ill., all during WWII. As you probably know, wages and prices were frozen for the duration of the war, but industry profits were not. At war's end, unions became active, and my father was deeply involved in promoting his local union.

Because of his efforts, he lost his job and was blacklisted. He tried to find work in the many steel mills in south Chicago and northwest Indiana and found that all doors were closed to him. Of necessity he chose another occupation — that of a carpenter — and was a proud union member until he retired.

I do not know why I received a solicitation from the United Steelworkers to join as an associate member, but you can be certain that I joined eagerly and proudly. I commend you for this attempt to build organizational strength and to encourage support even from those who are not actively involved in the industry.

*Janel Borsos
San Antonio, Texas*

Objective outlet

Congratulations on the new look of *USW@Work*! And the articles with broader appeal are even better! The past six years have been brutal for all working people union and non. Making our publication an objective outlet for economic information for all is more important than ever. With the increasing domination of conservative views in print and broadcast media every voice counts. Working men and women count on you to deliver factual, objective information to their dinner tables and workplaces. Thanks for being there for us.

*Joe Santino, Local 1010
East Chicago, Ind.*

One America

John Edwards Wins USW Endorsement for President

John Edwards and his wife Elizabeth were shaking hands, slowly weaving their way through a Labor Day Parade crowd in Pittsburgh when Leo W. Gerard shouted out a challenge to the assembled union members and their families:

"Are you ready to fight back for the labor movement?" the International President asked as the crowd roared its approval. "Are you ready to fight back for your kids and grand-kids?"

By then the early morning fog from the city's rivers had burned off, exposing a gloriously sunny day for thousands of Labor Day marchers, a perfect time to lay the groundwork for a brighter future.

The Promised Land

Bruce Springsteen's *The Promised Land* blared from outdoor speakers as waves of signs reading "John Edwards 08" filled the air around Pittsburgh's ice hockey palace, the Mellon Arena.

With the enthusiasm of the partisan crowd ignited, Gerard introduced Edwards, a Democratic candidate and former senator from North Carolina, as the next president of the United States.

Ignoring the warm day where union T-shirts and shorts were the clothing of choice, Edwards took the stage smiling and perspiring from wearing a dark blue jacket with the USW logo.

As Edwards approached the platform to accept rousing endorsements from the USW and United Mine Workers President Cecil Roberts, a few supporters shouted "one America, not two," a reference to his promise to rebuild our country into a place where every person has a chance to succeed.

The endorsements represented a double shot of adrenalin to Edwards' campaign for the Democratic presidential nomination.



Photo by John Beale

ca, Not Two

The USW's International Executive Board voted unanimously the day before Labor Day to endorse Edwards after polls of USW members showed he was a clear favorite.

Both Gerard and Roberts praised Edwards for his proposals on universal health care coverage, unfair illegal trade and workers' rights. They described him as the Democratic candidate most likely to beat a Republican candidate in the election next year.

Health care for all

Edwards said he is committed to establishing universal health care for every American and to changing entrenched trade policies that have exported 3 million of our jobs to low-wage countries.

He promised to restore the freedom of workers to join unions and to raise their standard of living through collective bargaining. He believes in the right to strike when necessary.

"Senator Edwards is committed, as he has been throughout his life, to going to bat for everyday Americans and to changing a broken political system that leaves millions of Americans without a voice in their government," Gerard said.

Edwards stood up for USW members when it came to their economic security, Gerard said. He offered unsolicited support when Goodyear forced our members out on strike over health insurance, and he has helped in our campaigns to organize new members.

"Edwards is right on the issues that matter to us, and he's the candidate with the best chance of winning in the general election," Gerard added. "It's time we had a president who will fight for working people — and that's what John Edwards will do."

Elizabeth Edwards, looking fit and strong despite a return of cancer to a rib on her right side, later joined Gerard and Roberts in a parade march through Pittsburgh.

After Gerard spoke, Roberts, whose union gave birth to the Steel Workers Organizing Committee (SWOC) some 70 years ago, exhorted the crowd to stand up and be counted in the 2008 election.

"George Bush said he was going to create millions of jobs. Well in fairness he did. But we thought he meant here — not in Mexico, China and India.

"We've got a guy right here who's going to create American jobs and fight for American workers when he's president of the United States," Roberts said to sustained applause.

Miners, Roberts said, are tired of going to the bargaining table and to Congress to finance health care coverage they were promised for a lifetime of hard and dangerous work.

"It is time for universal health care for all Americans," Roberts said. "And John Edwards is a man with a plan for health care for all of us."

After the formal endorsements were made, the microphone was passed to a man on crutches, retired steelworker Steve Skvara, who gained national attention in August at an AFL-CIO sponsored debate in Chicago when he told the candidates he could not afford health insurance for his wife and asked the question, "What's wrong with America?"

"But the greatest thing of all that we have in this country is our unions. People don't realize that even if you don't belong to a union, you benefit from them. How do you think this nation got a 40-hour work week? How do you think we eliminated child labor?"

"And I'll tell you something else that's right. There arose a young man whose family came from the mill. And he stood with working people his whole life, and I believe in this man, and I believe what he can do for our country."

Substantial boost

Edwards said he was proud to accept union endorsements he believes will give his campaign a substantial boost in key battleground states where unions have a large concentration of members.

"We are marching together in a movement to build one country that actually works for everybody — not George Bush's America, not an America where a few people do well and everybody else struggles, but an America where you can come from nothing if you are willing to work hard," he said.

Afterwards, Edwards told reporters that the endorsements gave his campaign added momentum in the race against fellow Democrat Senators Hilary Rodham

“Edwards is right on the issues that matter to us.”

Skvara did talk about what's wrong with America at the rally — health care inequities, the wrong-headed outsourcing of American jobs overseas and the failure of the Bush administration to stem suffering in hurricane-battered New Orleans.

But then he turned to the country's positives, including Edwards.

"We have the right to vote. We have the right to change things," Skvara said.

Clinton and Barack Obama. He said the support of two influential unions was not accidental.

"These unions understand that I'm the strongest candidate in the general election, and I stand for working people," Edwards said. "I am at my core a candidate for president who stands with working people. It's part of who I am. It's a part of what I believe."

Building One America

Edwards Promises Universal Health Insurance, Trade Reform and Freedom to Organize

In America, everyone should have a fair opportunity to realize their dreams, no matter where they came from.

John Edwards is running for president on a promise to build One America where every citizen can work hard and build a better life — the same opportunity he had growing up the son of textile mill worker.

But building One America from today's two Americas — one favored, the other forgotten — will take strong, bold steps to put Washington back on the side of working families.

Notable among Edwards' goals is a truly universal health care program that will take on insurance and drug companies while covering all American citizens with no exclusions.

Edwards pledges to strengthen labor laws and develop smarter trade policies that put workers first and to invest in energy independence and new clean jobs.

He believes we must strengthen our domestic defense, tighten border security and protect vulnerable targets like chemical plants, skyscrapers and computer systems.

Declaring there is no military solution to the chaos in Iraq, Edwards would immediately bring home 40,000 to 50,000 troops and end the war within a year.

Here is a brief review of Edwards' key policies:

★ Health care

There are 47 million Americans without health care this year, 2 million more than in 2006. Health insurance premiums have gone up 100 percent over the last six years.

"In our America, in the America that I will preside over when I am president of the United States, every single American will have health coverage — every man, woman and child. We will require it by law," Edwards said.

Edwards would achieve universal coverage by requiring employers to either cover their workers or help to finance their health insurance. His plan would make insurance affordable by creating new tax credits, expanding Medicaid and the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP), reforming insurance laws and taking steps to contain costs.

Gaps in the health care system would be eliminated under Edwards' program, which would cover long-term care, vision and dental care and eliminate exclusions based on pre-existing medical conditions.

The estimated cost of \$90 billion to \$120 billion a year could be paid for by eliminating tax cuts that the Bush administration promoted for the super wealthy, Edwards said.

"When are we going to have a president who actually stands up to the drug companies, insurance companies and lobbyists in Washington, D.C.?" Edwards asked. "I will be that president."

★ Strengthen labor laws

Edwards knows that unions made manufacturing jobs the foundation of our middle class and can be the difference between poverty and security for our families.

"I will remind those who have forgotten that the union movement built the middle class in America, that the union movement is the greatest anti-poverty movement in American history, that the union movement is crucial to lifting millions of Americans out of poverty," Edwards said.

He supports the Employee Free Choice Act to give workers a real choice to join a union and to toughen penalties against employers for breaking labor laws.



As president, he promised to make the case to the American people and to Congress that labor law reform is needed to strengthen the right to organize and to strengthen the right to collectively bargain.

"If you can join the Republican Party by signing a card, then any worker in America should be able to join a union by doing exactly the same thing," Edwards said.

★ End Poverty

Calling poverty "the great moral issue of our time," Edwards is challenging the country to cut poverty by a third within a decade and to eliminate it entirely within 30 years.

His "Working Society" initiative would lift 12 million Americans out of poverty in 10 years and 37 million Americans by 2036.

To get there, he has proposed initiatives to reward work, break up high-poverty neighborhoods, help families save money and encourage families to act responsibly.

★ Smarter trade policies

Edwards promises to enforce American workers' rights in existing trade agreements and to make sure any new trade agreements include strong labor and environmental standards.

He will also expand trade adjustment assistance to do more for workers and communities that are hurt by global competition and to reform our international tax code to remove the incentives for American companies to move overseas.

"We have a trade policy in America that is not working. For too long the question has been, 'Is this trade deal good for the profits of big multinational corporations?' That's not the right question.

"The question in my administration will be is this proposed trade deal good for working middle-class Americans. Is it good for jobs in America? Is it good for ordinary Americans, not just for the profits of big corporations?" Edwards said.

Many overseas workers work 12 to 16 hours a day in dangerous conditions for poverty wages without the right to form an independent union. Edwards would demand that our trading partners adopt and enforce basic workers' rights including the right to organize and bargain collectively and prohibitions against forced labor, child labor and discrimination.

★ Right to strike

Edwards supports the banning of permanent replacement of strikers so unions can negotiate fairly with employers.

"When it becomes necessary to walk that picket line for members who need health care, who need a pension, who need decent wages, when you're walking that picket line when I'm president of the United States, nobody, nobody will walk through that picket line and take your jobs."

★ Iraq and Iran

Noting that our standing in the world has been badly tarnished under the Bush administration, Edwards promises to restore America's leadership role in the world.

He supports the immediate drawdown of our troops from Iraq and a complete withdrawal of all combat troops from Iraq within about a year. He would prohibit permanent U.S. military bases in Iraq but retain sufficient forces in the region to contain the conflict and ensure that instability does not spill over into other countries.

Declaring it is of the utmost importance that we prevent Iran from possessing nuclear weapons, Edwards would engage the international community to isolate Iran and its nuclear ambitions.

★ Terrorism Strategy

"There is no question we must confront terrorists with the full force of our military might," Edwards said. "As commander in chief, I will never hesitate to do everything in my power to protect Americans and our allies, to root out terrorist cells and to strike swiftly and strongly against those who would do us harm."

As president, Edwards would reinvest in equipment and provide enough troops to rebuild from Iraq; to double our Special Forces to attack and defeat terrorists; to decrease our heavy reliance on Guard and Reserve members in military operations and to deploy in Afghanistan and any other trouble spots.

He pledged to create a "Marshall Corps" of 10,000 professionals, modeled on the Reserves system, that will work on stabilization and humanitarian missions in weak and failing states that can become hotbeds for terrorism. The name "Marshall Corps" is borrowed from the Marshall Plan for rebuilding Europe after World War II.

Photos by John Beale



John Edwards

Successful Son of Mill Hand Fights for Working People

John Reid Edwards was raised in Robbins, N.C., where his father worked in a textile mill and his mother ran a roadside antiques business and worked as a postal carrier.

As a young boy during the 1950s, Edwards was faced with a choice: either fight back against schoolyard bullies or get the crap knocked out of him. His father, Wallace, told him what to do.

"Don't bring that stuff home. You go out there and fight for yourself," Wallace told a six-year-old John Edwards when the young boy complained about getting beaten in a scrape.

He has been fighting ever since.

Edwards was the first person in his family to attend college. He graduated from North Carolina State University in 1974 with a degree in textile technology and later earned a law degree from the University of North Carolina (UNC).

Before entering politics, Edwards clerked for a federal judge and went to work as a personal injury trial lawyer. He eventually became known as a top plaintiffs' attorney in North Carolina.

Prosperity and tragedy

By his late 30s, Edwards had become wealthy as a personal injury trial lawyer representing

victims of corporate negligence and medical malpractice.

He met his wife of 30 years, Elizabeth Anania, also an attorney, at UNC. They married in the summer of 1977 and had four children: Wade, Cate, Emma Clair and Jack.

The family has known both extraordinary prosperity and tragedy. In 1996, Wade, then 16, was killed when strong winds swept his Jeep off a highway.

Elizabeth was diagnosed with breast cancer on Nov. 3, 2004, the day after John Kerry and her husband conceded defeat in the 2004 presidential election.

In March this year, after a period of remission, John and Elizabeth announced her cancer had returned and his campaign was continuing full steam. The Edwardses and her doctor said the cancer is not curable, but is treatable.

After Wade's tragic death, Elizabeth quit practicing as an attorney and John decided to go into politics. They began the Wade Edwards Foundation, a non-profit organization that aims to encourage and inspire young people to the pursuit of excellence.

Edwards defeated incumbent Republican Lauch Faircloth in North Carolina's 1998 Senate election and in 2004 sought the Democratic presidential nomination, eventually running for vice president with Kerry.


Unions play positive role

After the narrow loss, Edwards began working full time at the One America Committee, a political action committee he established in 2001. He was also appointed director of the Center on Poverty, Work and Opportunity at UNC's Chapel Hill School of Law.

In the time since his campaign with Kerry, Edwards has honed his view of the positive role that labor unions can play in revitalizing America.

As president, he promises to support organized labor and to make sure every single American knows that the union movement is crucial to expanding the middle class and to lifting millions out of poverty.

"The economic security of America is what's at stake when we talk about growing and strengthening the union movement in America," Edwards said when he received the USW's endorsement. "And I'll tell you something else. I will lead the way."



John Edwards stands with his parents, Bobbie and Wallace Edwards, outside the family's first home where John was a baby, in Seneca, S.C.
AP Photo/Mary Ann Chastain

Burning Question

Retiree's Heartfelt Plea Resonates at Presidential Debate and Beyond



Steve Skvara's emotional question about health care at a Democratic presidential debate brought a crowd of more than 17,000 union members to their feet and made him the public face of the nation's health care crisis.

Skvara's brush with fame began on Aug. 7 when, standing with crutches in front of a microphone inside Chicago's Soldier Field, he told the candidates that he retired from LTV Steel with a disability after 34 years of service, then lost one-third of his pension and his family's health care benefits after the company went bankrupt two years later.

"Every day of my life I sit at the kitchen table across from the woman who devoted 36 years of her life to my family, and I can't afford to pay her health care," Skvara said, his voice cracking with emotion. "What's wrong with America, and what will you do to change it?"

Skvara and his straight-forward question in front of TV cameras ignited a standing ovation that night and afterwards led to countless media interviews and opportunities to stand with and lobby leading politicians on health care issues.

His brush with fame included a guest spot on the Oprah Winfrey Show, an

invitation to introduce John Edwards at the USW's endorsement rally and a chance to repeat his thoughts on health care at a press event with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, (D-Calif.).

Skvara, 60, said he has been "awestruck" by all of the attention, but he insists the real story is not about his performance but the broader national problem.

No health, no freedom

"It's about everybody. It's every human being in the United States, every worker," he said. "Health care is important. We talk about life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. You can't enjoy any of those freedoms without your health."

Skvara, who took a job with the former Youngstown Steel in mechanical maintenance after high school, has been married to his wife, Sandy, 56, a substitute teacher, for 36 years. They have four grown children.

He and his wife suffered through countless surgeries and health problems after a 1997 car accident in Florida while they were attending a school choir trip. They were driven off the road by a driver who ran away before police arrived.

Skvara suffered a shattered knee, a ruptured Achilles' tendon, a fractured hip, seven broken ribs and a disk blown in his

apprehended, there was no accident settlement. They survived because of Skvara's LTV-paid health insurance, which was later eliminated through the bankruptcy proceedings.

Union, church and community

Skvara has always been involved with his union, church and community. He served as a union representative/shop steward for over 10 years at Local 1011 in East Chicago, Ind.

After the accident, Skvara went through numerous surgeries and rehabilitation and attempted to return to work. But he was physically unable to continue working because of his injuries and took early retirement.

Since retirement, he has been a member of the Steelworkers Organization of Active Retirees (SOAR). He was a SOAR coordinator for two years, and was elected a SOAR executive board member in 2005.

When LTV went bankrupt and retirees lost their health care, Skvara learned about Indiana's State Health Insurance Assistance Program and helped seniors with Medicare problems and to find MediGap insurance. He has also assisted retirees from Bethlehem Steel, National Steel and Slater Steel.

Skvara believes there is a need for big

“What’s wrong with America, and what will you do to change it?”

back. His wife broke her hip, pelvis, ankle and an arm. One child had a broken leg. Another had a broken back.

After his TV appearance, he received phone calls from people all over the country who offered him money. He turned down the monetary offers, but accepted a doctor's gift of a full physical for his wife. She had not seen a doctor in seven years.

Since the other driver was not

changes in the health care system, and is hoping an Edwards presidency will bring the country closer to national health care.

"This is not the America that I remember. This isn't the America I grew up with," Skvara told a reporter for the hometown *Post-Tribune* in Indiana. "We have the finest doctors, the best nurses, but the delivery stinks. There's something radically wrong."

Building Momentum

Best is Yet to Come from Breakthrough Contract at IP Mills

For decades, International Paper pitted its plants against one another in a calculated campaign to reduce worker solidarity to the tensile strength of a saturated sheet of stationery.

IP workers aren't taking the company's divisive tactics anymore. For more than a year, they've stood behind their negotiators seeking a master agreement for 14 mills where paper is made.

Their solidarity was rewarded on Aug. 15 when a master agreement for IP's 14 mills was reached. The pact was ratified overwhelmingly on Aug. 23.

Now that they have a new contract, members at IP's mills are linking up with sisters and brothers at the converters, where paper is turned into other products, to work toward securing a master agreement for them as well.

“We are going to build our momentum and keep everyone engaged in the process and get something going for the converters.”

Perry O'Neil, a trustee for USW Local 4-5 at the IP mill in Ticonderoga, N.Y., serves on a committee of nine mill and converter union officials planning innovative strategies to keep 31 converter plants and the 14 mills together and strong while negotiating with IP for a master agreement for the converters, and, in four years, a new and even better mill master contract.

Keeping engaged

“We are going to build our momentum and keep everyone engaged in the process and get something going for the converters,” O'Neil said of the committee of nine.

This solidarity follows a breakthrough year for the mills.

In the past, IP had negotiated with one mill at a time, a practice that enabled the international company to easily threaten local officials with shutting down whole operations or parts of facilities if concessions weren't accepted.

“They looked at us,” O'Neil explained, “as a local that is a small part of the system and played that against us.” His plant, for example, is small and somewhat more costly to operate, so

IP could threaten to close it and move the work to a larger, more economical mill.

Another member of the committee of nine, Sharon Brock, president of Local 1055 at the IP converter plant in Fort Wayne, Ind., experienced this IP practice all too personally.

Before IP bought the Fort Wayne plant from Wabash Fibre Box a decade ago, it traditionally had engaged in bargaining with two other plants, one in Terre Haute and another in Chicago. But IP split them up and quickly succeeded in stripping benefits from them.

Two years ago, when Brock's plant negotiated solo with IP, she says, “It was a dictation. It was, ‘Here it is. Take it or leave it.’ That is what it is like for a local to bargain with an international company.”

Exciting prospect

So to participate in collective bargaining – first members at all the mills then at all the converters jointly talking to IP – was an exciting prospect for Brock.

“I am all for it,” she said. “I would love to see something like that in my lifetime. We thought we were pretty powerful with just three locals. Imagine what it would be if we had 31!”

Though she works for a converter, Brock was glad members at the 14 mills got their deal. “I was just tickled to death,” she said.

So was O'Neil, because he believes the power of 14 got the mills some benefits that none would have received in bargaining individually. “There is strength in numbers,” he said.

A good example is successorship. O'Neil said his local tried to get a successor clause in their contract in the last negotiations to protect his local members from being permanently laid off if IP sold the plant.

Local management said, “We really want it for you. But it was a no go after they called Memphis,” O'Neil said.

New successorship protection

The master agreement for all 14 mills now contains successorship protection. In addition, it provides virtually the highest monthly pension multiplier in the industry at \$50 for all years of service and gives all workers a high quality PPO health care plan that IP cannot arbitrarily alter, as it could previously. IP will pay increasingly larger shares of the premium costs over the life of the four-year agreement, with the goal of 80 percent at the end.

For the first time ever, IP will make lump sum payments into a fund for any worker who was at least age 50 at the time

mentum



of ratification in August to help them pay for health insurance premiums if they want to retire early.

IP mill workers will receive 2 percent pay increases on the expiration date of their local contract and on the second anniversary. They will also get \$1,000 lump sum payments on the first and third anniversaries.

While there will be a master agreement, each mill will also have a local contract to deal with local issues. Each is to be renewed for four years. But local negotiating committees are free to bargain other issues not handled in the master agreement.

O'Neil noted that the committee of nine will help in that as well. He said the committee will facilitate better communication between the locals, so they will see patterns if IP is attempting to take away benefits from the locals.

"It is mainly communication," he said, "That is the key to everything. If we are together, we feel better about everything, we feel in the loop."

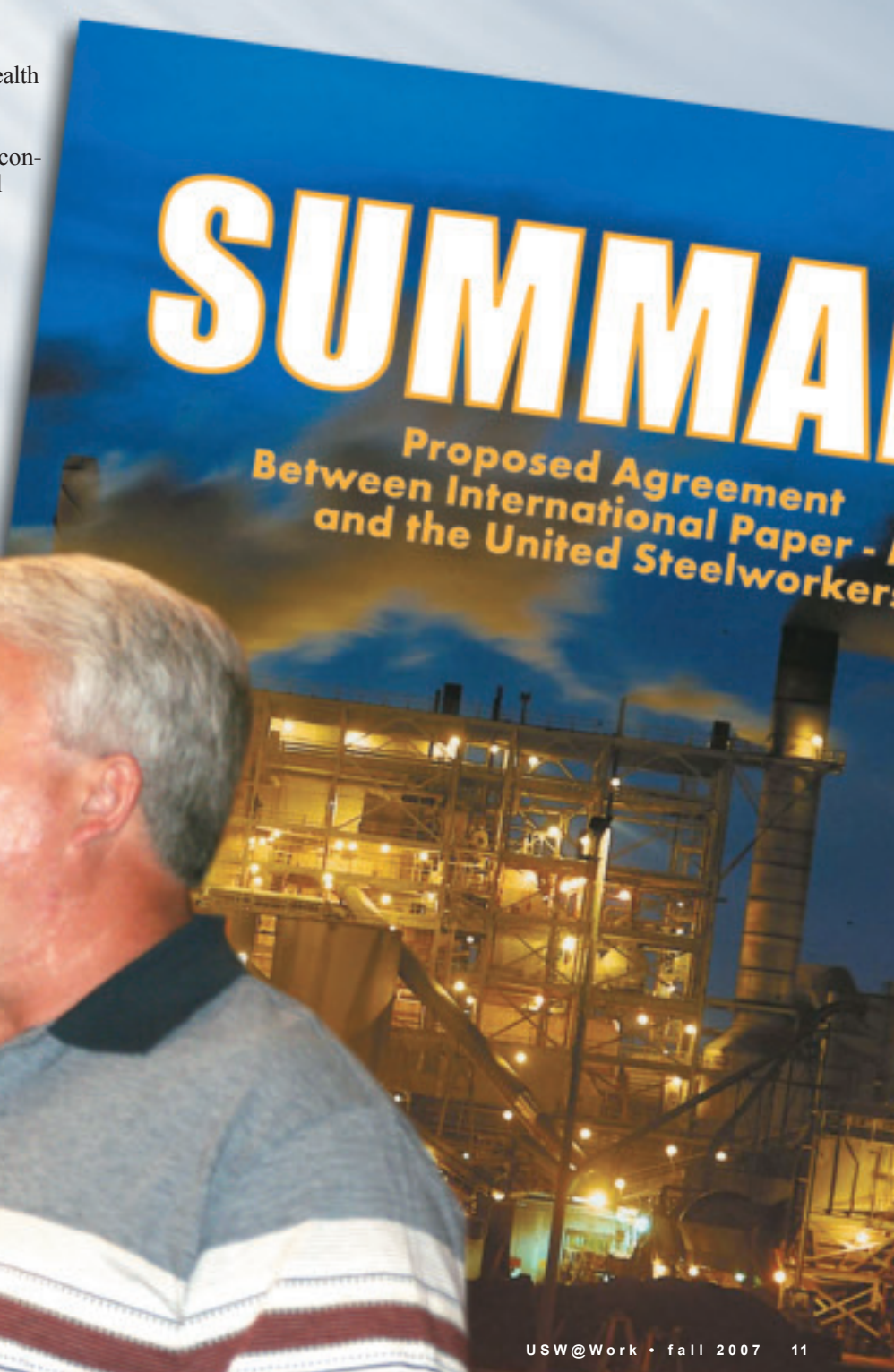
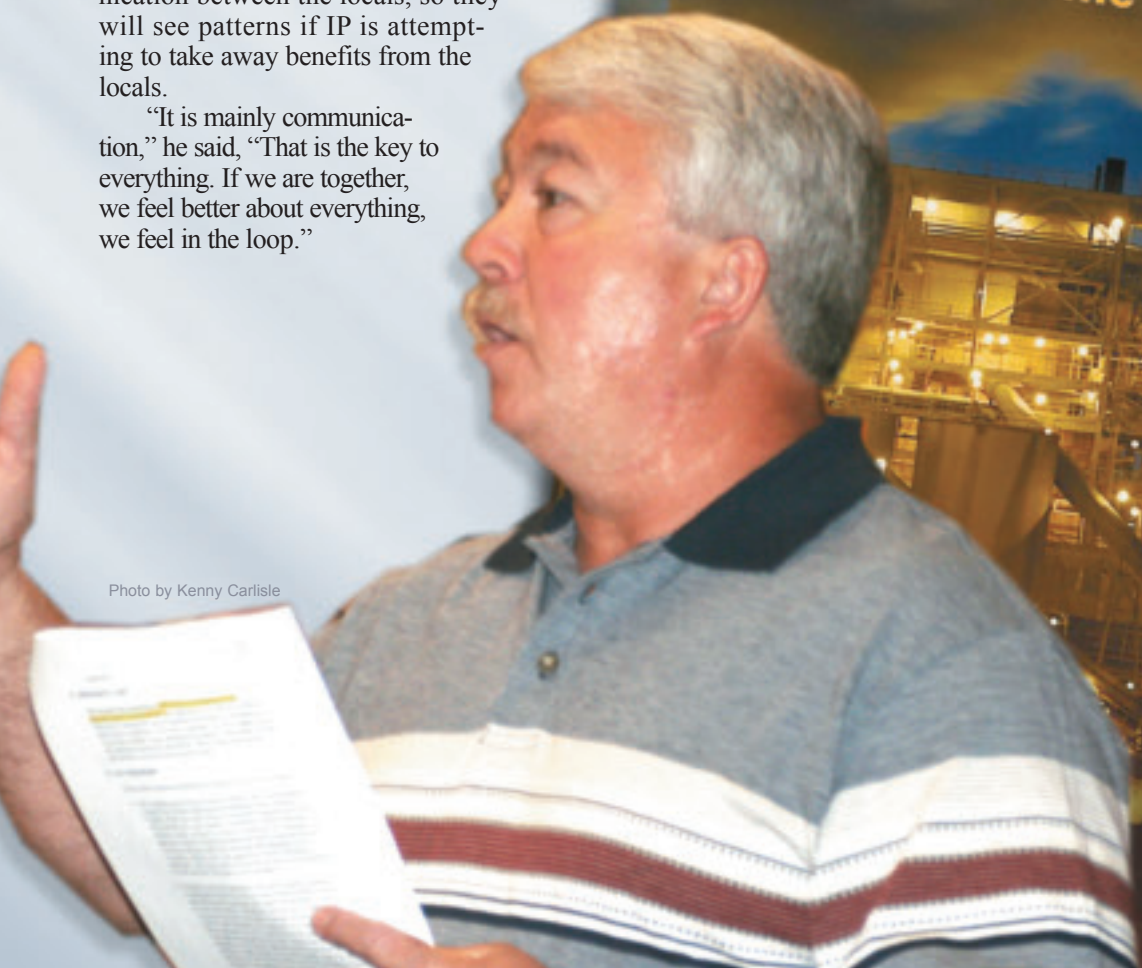
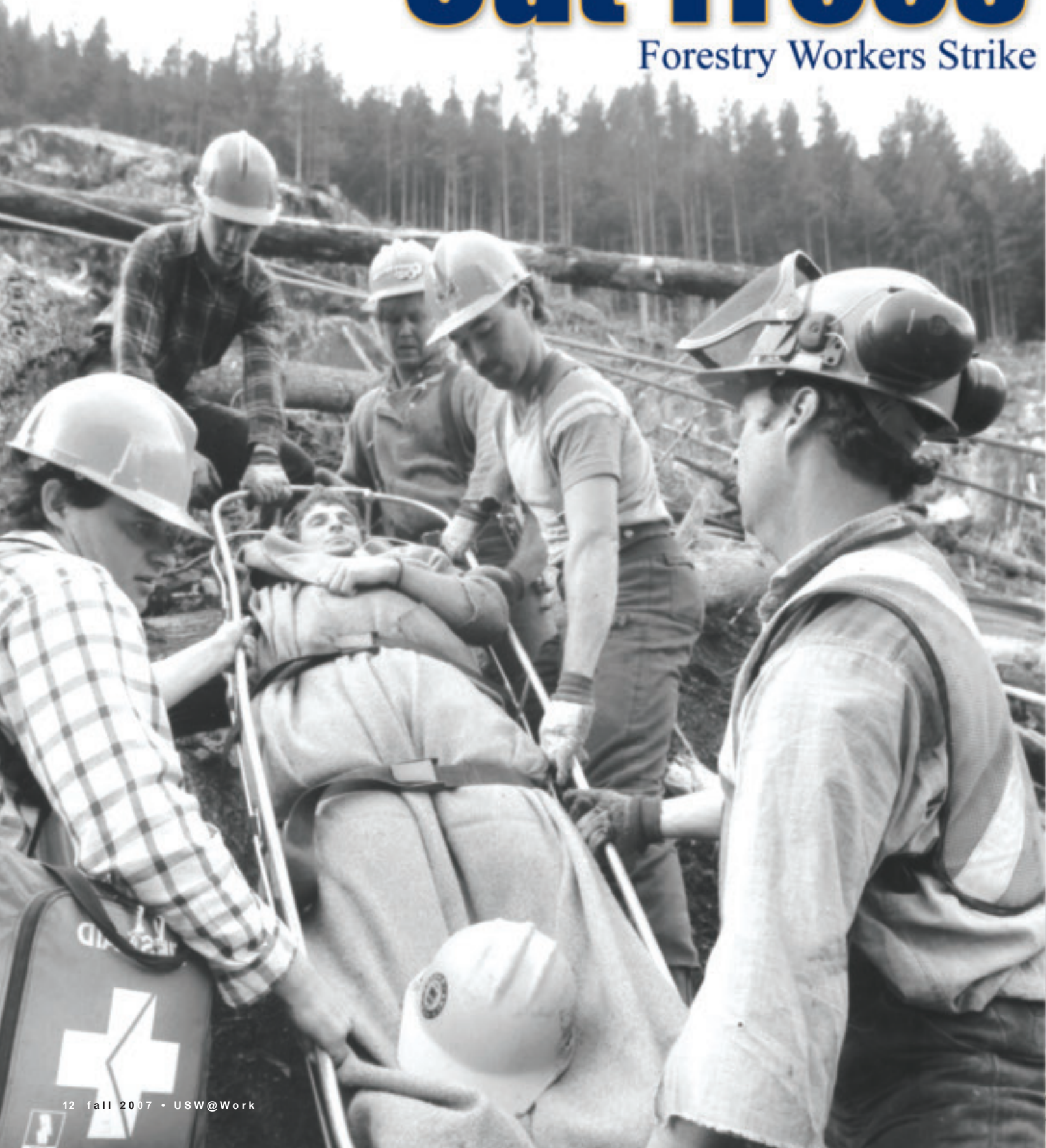


Photo by Kenny Carlisle



Cut Trees

Forestry Workers Strike



Not Safety

34 Companies in British Columbia

At press time, more than 7,000 Canadian forestry workers in coastal British Columbia were in the midst of difficult strikes against 34 companies. Dealing with dangerous working conditions is one of the key issues.

"This strike is about stopping the race to the bottom that all forestry workers are facing," USW Western Canada Director Steve Hunt said.

"This is about restoring dignity and respect for our members so they are employed safely, don't have their jobs contracted out and receive proper severance when their jobs are gone," he added.

Negotiations started last March. When those talks proved unsuccessful, five USW locals on July 21 struck 31 companies represented by an industry group, Forest Industrial Relations (FIR), plus Island Timberlands and International Forest Products (Interfor). The largest of the 31 companies in FIR, Western Forest Products, employs about 2,500 of our members.

Later, another company, TimberWest, locked out USW members. Management lifted the lockout after we won an unfair labor practice charge, but by then our union had declared a strike.

We set standards

"Our members understand the issues in this strike and are solid," said Darrel Wong, president of Local 1-2171, which covers a large swath of coastal territory.

British Columbia is Canada's largest

softwood lumber exporting province. Its forests contain more than half of the commercial timber in Canada, the foremost forestry products exporting nation in the world. The industry is a mix of union and non-union operations.

"We are the ones who set the standard for this industry," Wong added. "There are non-union loggers out there who benefit by what our members achieve in collective bargaining and it is time they stepped up and joined the union and the fight to save lives by stopping the race to the bottom."

It is the USW's first big strike in the forest products industry since the 2004 merger with IWA Canada (the Industrial, Wood and Allied Workers of Canada). A strike by coastal forestry workers in 2003 lasted three weeks and ended with a contract imposed by the provincial government.

The strike has more to do with respect and safety on the job than it does wages and benefits. The biggest issues are flexible shift scheduling, which workers claim has robbed them of any semblance of normal life, plus hours of work and contracting out.

Long hours dangerous

Since 2004, many employers, backed by the government-legislated collective agreement that ended the 2003 strike, have imposed work days of 12 to 16 hours, when hours on the job and travel time are factored together.

"Contractors are being forced to travel and be on the job for 15 hours and

more, and some are working their days off just to make ends meet," said Local 1-363 member Arnie Remmen, who works for Oyster River Logging. "Enough is enough. We want our lives back."

Shockingly, more than 65 forestry workers have been killed in British Columbia since January 2005.

"It has to stop, and it has to stop now," Wong told a September rally. "These long hours are just not safe."

In addition to scheduling, another complaint is lack of severance pay for partial mill closures. Companies shut down operations in stages to reduce the number of final severance packages.

Global market competition and capital's push for lower costs are behind the strife. The employers argue they need to keep workers' schedules flexible to stay competitive in a weak lumber market.

"We're not trying to eliminate flexibility," said Hunt. "We just want some stability. It makes it hard to be on a baseball team or to be a hockey coach, for example, if your schedule is always changing."

Local unions have set up picket lines and held mass rallies and demonstrations at forest product operations and corporate headquarters.

Internationally, USW members in both the United States and Canada have joined the campaign to support the strikers by leafleting outlets of The Home Depot as well as the Canadian RONA chain. The Steelworkers Organization of Active Retirees (SOAR) has promised support and solidarity.

Consumers have been asked by the union not to buy lumber labeled by Western Forest Products and Interfor and to avoid purchasing Weyerhaeuser Cedar One products produced by Western.



Building Power, Tak

Over 1,000 Attend Women of Steel Toronto Conference

You would have thought a rock star had just entered the room.

Over 1,000 Women of Steel (WOS) delegates cheered, clapped, yelled, chanted, whistled and banged pie plates and anything else they could get their hands on when Elizabeth Edwards made an entrance.

The roar of the crowd was so loud that the music playing over the public address system could barely be heard. Women stood on chairs to get a better look and snapped photos like paparazzi.

After five minutes of winding her way through the crowd, shaking hands and receiving hugs, Edwards stepped on to the platform with a smile and appeared to be overwhelmed by the warm reception she received.

"So, are you happy to see her?" International President Leo W. Gerard asked delegates attending an international WOS conference in Toronto this September. He was answered with more banging, clapping and shouting.

"I don't believe I've ever been in a room like this before. You're very lucky, Leo," Edwards said.

Our union is lucky, as well, to have such a vibrant and activist group of women working together on issues that can impact both their work lives and their families.

Building power, taking action

For four days the women activists networked, discussed obstacles and how to overcome them, attended skill-building classes, listened to inspirational speakers including Gerard, Edwards, and Arianna Huffington, and learned how to build power and take action in their union and in the world.

The Sept. 23-26 conference was the largest gathering ever of working women in North America. It also was a vehicle to build international solidarity.

Women from 10 countries including the United States and Canada attended the conference. Also in attendance were trade unionists from Brazil, Chile, Germany, Mexico, South Africa, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom, many of whom discussed the condition of working women in their countries.

There was a cultural side to the conference. Labor themed art by women was on display. The Sudbury Women's Choir from Gerard's local sang "*I Am Woman*," "*Union Woman*," "*Union Man*," and "*Solidarity Forever*" at the receptions and during plenary sessions. Canadian Wanda Whitebird opened the conference with "*The Strong Woman Song*" and an Aboriginal blessing. USW staffer Rebecca Cooper performed a poem she wrote about Wal-Mart.

The conference celebrated success stories like that of WOS Director Ann Flener. Flener began as a local union activist and rose to the presidency of her 1,200-member local at Rubbermaid in Ohio. She was also a national Rapid Response coordinator and assistant director of Organizing.



Photo by Aaron Harris

ing Action

"I'm so proud of our union right now," Flener told the delegates. "What a wonderful opportunity for us to meet and learn from each other and plan actions together to bring the working class and working-class families to the forefront of our nations' agendas."

Former WOS Director Sharon Stiller was honored at a luncheon for her dedication to our union. WOS members shared their remembrances of working with her.

Celebration of women

Leeann Anderson, assistant to the International President/associate general counsel, chaired the conference and said that it was "a celebration of women and our spirit in the USW."

"Strong unions need women. Our union would not be the same without women. As women, we need to remember we all are an extension of each other," Anderson said.

"Women of Steel is about making our union stronger through an engaged, powerful, strong, kick-butt, taking no names, special women-led solidarity," she added. "This is not a battle of the sexes in our union. It's about engaging everyone and bringing them forward together."

WOS committees thrive or die depending on whether or not they support their local's mission and goals, Anderson said. She reminded delegates that the USW constitution requires a WOS committee wherever there is a woman in the local.

Gerard encouraged the delegates to think about what's possible and to believe there can be a better tomorrow.

"If we have courage, the perseverance not to bend, energy, passion and compassion, then a better tomorrow awaits us, our children and grandchildren. We can do it. I believe we can. We can do it because Steelworkers don't accept defeat," he said.

Elected officials from the United States and Canada addressed the delegates and encouraged them to get involved politically.

Libby Davies, leader of Canada's New Democratic Party (NDP) and a Parliament member representing Vancouver, described the NDP's "Fairness for Women Action Plan" that outlines six areas where action is needed: fairness for women at work, better work-family balance, an end to violence against women, making sure women's voices are heard in the political process, fairness for marginalized women and equality for women around the globe.

Dramatic change is possible

"Dramatic changes take place" when we engage the political process and realize the power people have, she said.

Edwards praised our union and said the survival of unions is a personal issue for her husband. "John's family benefits today because of the union," she said.

John Edwards, the USW's endorsed candidate for U.S. president, supports the right to organize. He has pledged to fight for universal health care and trade agreements that are good for workers. He favors paid sick leave, pay equity and protecting women's equality.

"You all are unbelievable," Edwards told the crowd before she left. "I'm going to leave this place with so much energy."

Other speakers also received a warm reception.

Retired International President Lynn Williams provided a lesson in labor history by sharing stories of women pioneers from our union.

Writer and blogger Arianna Huffington discussed how women can overcome their fears. She said women must learn to handle any self-doubt and lack of confidence first before they venture out into politics.

At the end of the conference, Canadian Director Ken Neumann commended the Women of Steel for their perseverance and dedication to activism within their union and in politics.

"Sisters, your work is not done," he said.

"Are you ready to kick ass for the working class?" Anderson asked before delegates left.

You bet. Corporate America, look out. The Women of Steel are here to stay.



Photos by Lynne Baker

Betrayal

Smurfit-Stone Breaks Successorship Pledge When Selling Plant to GP

In pouring rain and darkness, 600 workers, their spouses and neighbors rallied in Brewton, Ala., against Smurfit-Stone Container Corp., which had betrayed them and its promise of successorship to the United Steelworkers.

Pastor H.K. Matthews of the AME Zionist Church spoke that stormy August night after a lightning strike blew out the lights on the Fort Crawford Park stage, leaving the rally lit only by candles and outrage.

The minister said those who made the workers suffer may ultimately pay a terrible price: "There is not enough wealth in the world to keep a sinful man from the fires of hell."

The sins of Smurfit-Stone against its workers in Brewton are myriad. In a handshake deal with the USW not three years earlier, Smurfit had pledged the protection of a successor clause, which meant that if it sold a paper mill, the workers and their labor agreement would go with the machines and buildings.

Shattered promise

Smurfit shattered that promise in August when it sold the Brewton mill to Georgia-Pacific LLC (GP) for \$355 million in an asset-only deal. Smurfit sent permanent layoff notices to 558 workers, including more than 300 members of USW locals 888 and 941, and another 100 members of other unions. Georgia-Pacific invited them to stand for hours in 100-degree Alabama heat to reapply for their jobs — along with everyone else in town.

Then, for weeks, they went to work each day, waiting and wondering who among them would be hired when GP took over the plant on Sept. 28 and who would lose everything.

"Everybody is frightened, scared and mad. Emotions are really high," Local 888 President Dennis Shipp said at the rally.

If Smurfit-Stone had honored its pledge, the weeks of agony would have been avoided.

Crucial armor

Successor protection is crucial armor for working men and women in this country. The USW wants it in every contract. We believe it should be written into federal law so that every worker is shielded against layoff when corporations trade mills and factories like baseball cards.

The betrayal in Brewton is a perfect example of why such protection is essential.

Several years ago, International Paper and other major paper

“Everybody is frightened, scared and mad. Emotions are really high.”

companies began selling off mills and converter plants, where the paper is made into other products. In this environment, the USW moved quickly to protect workers with successor clauses in their contracts.

When the USW heard rumors that Smurfit planned a big sell-off, the union approached management about successor protection. Smurfit promised that as each contract expired, it would grant a successor clause in the new contract. Smurfit officials pointed to their track record and pledged to do the right thing.

In fact, Smurfit did grant successorship in every contract that expired afterward. It sold several plants after that pledge and provided successor protection in each. But then Smurfit turned on its Brewton workers.

Daniel Phelps, who worked eight years at Brewton, was suspicious when he saw people from GP snooping around last summer. "We heard rumors and we asked the boss, and they said it was not true."

In August, Phelps learned of Smurfit's betrayal when, like everyone else, he received a permanent layoff notice.

"We worked there for years, and we had to apply for our own jobs. They opened it up to the public, and that made us very upset. We made them money, and they opened it up to anyone. It was a big blow," he said in August while waiting to hear from GP.

Standing in line

Even so, Phelps and his co-workers stood in line at GP job fairs to try to get their jobs back. They did it knowing there would be no union unless more than 50 percent of the buyer's hires were from the union ranks. Even then, they would need to negotiate a new contract from scratch.

Many, like Phelps did it because they felt they had to. They were "insurance scared." His wife, at age 37 was diagnosed with a serious nervous system disease. Phelps has a degenerative bone disease from a childhood bout of meningitis. And he's got two children who need health insurance.

The same was true for Allen Garvin, a 46-year-old who worked 23 years in the mill and suffers arthritis and lower back pain, and Larry Stewart, financial secretary for USW Local 888, who worked 21 years as a bleach wash operator, and is the victim of a recurring brain tumor. Where would this 43-year-old man get insurance with that pre-existing condition if he couldn't get his job back?

As they waited for word on jobs from GP, workers also worried about paying their mortgages, making their car payments, and starting their lives over. Spouses wondered if they'd have to get jobs or work more hours. Children suffered too.

"It is just inhuman to treat someone this way," Phelps said of Smurfit. "It is heart breaking. It is turning me into a nervous wreck."

By Sept. 10, GP had offered jobs to both Garvin and Stewart. Garvin was relieved even though he took a pay cut and lost a year's service.

Stewart, who has the recurring brain tumor and is a union officer, could hardly believe it when he got the call. He took the drug screen and signed the papers immediately, waiving a three-day waiting period.

By then, everybody Garvin knew, even the local union president and vice president had been hired back. But not everyone would return. Typically, GP cuts 10 to 20 percent of a work force when it takes over a plant.

Through September, GP eliminated job categories and combined others, and it called workers to jobs they'd never done at lower pay rates. Phelps' job — bleach wash helper two — was among those cut. He watched as other workers took the bleach wash helper one jobs and grew increasingly worried as he crossed days off the calendar.

Then, just a week before the 28th, the date GP took over, he got a call offering him a job as a utility man. It was a demotion and a \$4-an-hour cut in pay. But he desperately needed the health insurance, so he signed the papers.

His wife, Tracy Phelps, said it was a blow to his pride. "He

worked there eight years, and they pushed him all the way back down to the bottom," she said. But, she noted, his first cousin's husband had not been called back at all, and they have two little kids to support.

Even though approximately 85 percent of the workers retained their jobs, the event changed them. There is a bitterness and distrust toward management that was not present before.

Pride in product

Stewart talks with pride about the paper he and his fellow workers make at Brewton. "It's a coated paperboard, very pretty board, beautiful white on both sides."

Yet, he said, Smurfit did not invest in upgrading the plant. And Smurfit sold it just two months before the contract was to expire when the local would have gotten its successor protection clause.

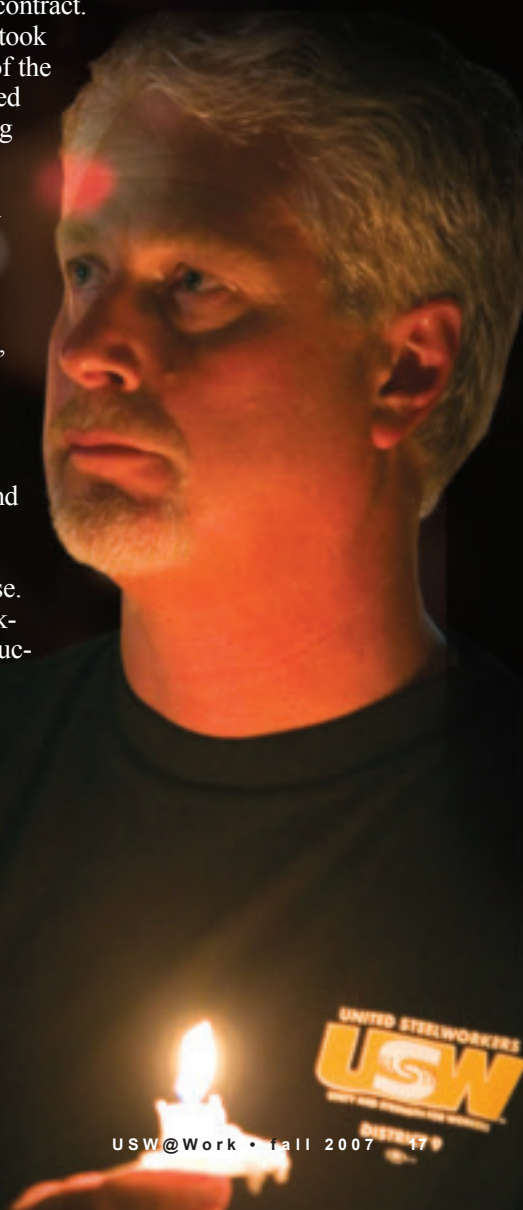
Thankful for a job, Stewart gives credit to the USW and International President Leo W. Gerard for applying pressure on GP. Even so, he cynically wonders if he and other workers are being set up for failure. GP wants them to perform combinations of jobs. He already operates a console with 400 valves. How much more can he do?

Though many remain at work, there is not yet the protection that comes from a union contract.

On Sept. 28, the date GP took over operational control of the facility, the USW requested recognition and bargaining for a new agreement on behalf of employees.

Even when a company hires back more than 50 percent of the workers as GP did and the union has the right to be recognized, the local must negotiate a new contract and sometimes that takes much longer than it should.

"It's all about power and control and the almighty dollar," said USW Vice President Richard LaCosse. And in that struggle, workers need a contract with successor protection.



General Counsel Paul Whitehead reviews testimony for presentation by International Vice President Fred Redmond to a Sept. 6 hearing in Washington, D.C.

Photo by Gary DiNunno, Page One Photography



The legislation would make it tougher to dissolve collective-bargaining agreements in bankruptcy and would help put workers and retirees on a more equal footing with businesses and banks when companies go bankrupt.

"Today, the bankruptcy system has effectively become a device for the wholesale transfer of wealth from workers to other creditors," AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka said in announcing the legislative effort.

"Businesses have used it as a back-door way to slash wages and benefits for current workers and break promises to retirees. Workers have been pushed further and further to the back of the line of those who will be made whole by the companies they have faithfully served," he added.

Share the sacrifice

To ensure that sacrifice is truly shared among CEOs and workers, the legislation would require that executives take the same percentage cuts as workers during the bankruptcy.

Companies would be barred from offering pension plans to executives when the employees' pension plan has been terminated and from offering health care benefits to retired executives when health care has been cut for rank-and-file retirees.

Too Many Lives Crushed

Bankruptcy Law Overhaul is Necessary to Protect Workers and Retirees

When companies go bankrupt, workers shoulder too much of the burden. Retirement promises disappear and workers are often given little choice at the bargaining table but to accept major cuts in wages and benefits or face losing jobs.

"The lives of far too many American workers and retirees have been crushed by corporate reorganizations," International Vice President Fred Redmond told the U.S. House Subcommittee on Commercial and Administrative Law. "Congress can begin to set things right by reforming the bankruptcy laws."

The USW is all too familiar with the Chapter 11 bankruptcy process. More than 40 steel companies filed for bankruptcy court protection over the past decade, mostly the result of global overcapacity in steel and unfairly traded imports.

During that period, more than 55,000 steelworkers were laid off. The government's insurer, the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corp. (PBGC), terminated pension plans that covered 240,000 steelworkers. Nearly 200,000 retirees and surviving spouses lost retiree health insurance coverage.

New legislation unveiled

Democratic leaders in the House and Senate, supported by the USW and the AFL-CIO, unveiled new legislation on Sept. 25 that would remedy the situation by giving workers more protection in bankruptcy proceedings.

The legislation, called the Protecting Employees and Retirees in Business Bankruptcies Act of 2007, is sponsored by Rep. John Conyers (D-Mich.) in the House and Sen. Richard Durbin (D-Ill.) in the Senate.

Paying workers what they are owed should be as important as paying the banks. To that end, the legislation would increase the payment priority for lost wages and benefit plans to \$40,000 per employee. Workers would also be allowed to recover on losses due to wage cuts and other concessions — just like other unsecured creditors who may receive distributions of stock or cash in a bankruptcy.

Workers would be provided a new claim for lost pension benefits when a defined benefit pension plan is terminated. Those whose 401(k) savings plans incur losses in company stock because of company fraud would have an additional priority claim.

To further protect workers against abuse and misuses of bankruptcy, the legislation would change judicial procedures that now too easily allow employers to extract deep concessions well beyond what a company needs to reorganize.

It would require the bankruptcy court to consider the preservation of existing jobs and benefits when approving a company's reorganization plan or a sale of assets to a third party.

Additionally, judicial review of a company's foreign and domestic holdings would be required in their entirety to determine if relief from a labor agreement is warranted.

The bill would also allow airline workers to strike after airlines declare bankruptcy, a move that federal bankruptcy courts have so far blocked. The right to self-help would ensure that the bargaining parties understand the consequences of failing to reach a negotiated agreement.



Health, Safety & Environment Conference Draws Record Attendance

Some 1,500 members and leaders attended the United Steelworkers 2007 Health, Safety & Environment Conference this summer in Dearborn, Mich. It was the largest group ever to attend a USW safety conference.

The conference focused on strategies for preventing workplace fatalities and injuries and on the union's role as the labor movement's leading environmental advocate. It included three days of union presentations and educational workshops, with two days devoted to joint labor-management activities.

In a rousing keynote speech, International President Leo W. Gerard presented a stinging critique of irresponsible corporations turning a blind eye to both worker safety and environmental responsibility. He derided the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) for making it too easy to negotiate fines and penalties down to a pittance.

BP singled out

Gerard singled out BP for particular scorn. He described a corporation that routinely deferred maintenance to reduce costs, resulting in the fatal 2005 explosion at its Texas City, Texas refinery that killed 15 workers and injured 180. He said the company then tried to deceive the union, U.S. Chemical Safety Board (CSB) investigators and the public about the real cause while attempting to scapegoat workers.

"We were not going to let BP off the hook," he said. "We believed that what went on at BP could have happened at almost any refinery, so we chose to hold the company accountable at every level."

Gerard recounted the number of top BP officials who were fired because of union pressure and government investigation following the disaster. The CSB confirmed in a March report that the explosions could have been avoided if upper management had acted sooner to improve safety measures.

"Health and safety is not just a technical issue," Gerard said. "It's not just an issue of putting up the guards, wearing your safety glasses and wearing your boots. Health and safety is really about the ability to exercise power based on knowledge. But to get the changes that everybody knows have to occur, we have to fight for them every day."

District 2 Director Jon Geenen also addressed the incidence of workplace fatalities and serious injuries, linking

them to "behavioral safety" programs.

"Too often these incidents are the result of initiatives led by corporations that focus the blame on the victims, not on the center of the problem," he said.

Ken Neumann, USW's national director for Canada, echoed Geenen's condemnation of behavior-based safety, referring to the "trinkets and toys" that he said employers use in an attempt to "control the hearts and minds of our membership."

In the end, he said "pressures on the job" cause injuries, illnesses and death, and union education and action is necessary to prevent them.

Throughout the week, workshops were facilitated by leaders, guest experts and staff members of the Health Safety and Environment Department and of the USW's Tony Mazzocchi Center for Health, Safety & Environmental Education.

In addition, the conference hosted meetings for local unions at a number of national or regional employers including ATI Allegheny Ludlum, BF Goodrich, Bridgestone/Firestone, Goodyear, Kaiser Aluminum, Wheeling-Pittsburgh Steel and U.S. Steel.

Health and safety – ensuring that our brothers and sisters come home from work at the end of the day alive and healthy – is a good organizing tool, Geenen added.

"You can make a difference every single day you walk into the workplace in the health and safety arena, and that's what gives us relevance in society," he said.

Photos by Andre Smith



USW Engages Workers

to Identify and Eliminate Workplace Hazards

There were no lockout tagout safeguards in place on the equipment that fatally crushed Ron Hackett as he worked in the melt shop of an IPSCO Koppel Tubulars Corp. steel plant.

Hackett, 45, a father of two girls aged 12 and 14, was crushed last March by equipment that straightens steel product as it moves from a continuous caster.

"This never should have happened," said Rick Galiano, president of Local 9305 in Koppel, Pa., his voice cracking with emotion as he spoke. "He was my friend."

To make sure there is no repeat accident, Galiano and a dozen other Local 9305 members are participating in a unique pilot program that aims to train the plant's entire 680-member work force in hazard recognition and safety techniques, so they can act to prevent future disasters.

Prevent workplace deaths

The overall goal of the program is to provide members with tools that can help prevent workplace deaths and serious injuries. Specific objectives include teaching workers to identify lockout tagout hazards and other dangers and to locate areas where chemical spills and releases might occur. Workers also learn to report those problems through the local union safety committee to management with recommendations on how to fix the hazards.

On-the-job fatalities are not an abstract issue for Steelworkers and many other workers in this country. In 2006, there were more than 5,700 workplace fatalities in the United States – an average of more than 15 working Americans killed every day. And last year at least 35 USW members lost their lives at work.

The program was initiated by the USW Health, Safety and Environment Department and its Tony Mazzocchi Center for Health, Safety and Environmental Education (TMC). It is funded in part by a grant from the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences.

A similar pilot program is also underway for more than 900 USW members at Pinnacle Airlines Inc. That initiative followed the death of a young airport worker, Catrina Coffman, who was pinned in a baggage elevator at Dayton International Airport.

The training program provides members with the skills and resources to be facilitators and trainers of their co-workers. This approach puts workers in the center of the learning process and takes advantage of the experience and knowledge they have gained at work.

"There's a tremendous repository of knowledge that workers have on the shop floor," said Paul Renner, TMC training director. "Our members know what's safe and what's not safe. They know how the processes work. We give them the added tools to bring that knowledge together with their co-workers."

OSHA citations

Although steel and airlines are vastly different industries, both fatalities were tied to deficient lockout tagout procedures that are required and supposed to prevent machinery from inadvertently powering up and moving while a worker is in harm's way.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) cited IPSCO Koppel for six serious safety violations carrying proposed penalties of \$36,000 related to the accident that killed Hackett.

IPSCO Koppel has appealed or contested the alleged violations, all of which involved lack of proper training or failure to provide devices to stop equipment movement.

In the airline case, OSHA proposed fines totaling \$13,500 against Pinnacle, which ultimately paid a negotiated \$7,000 fine for violations in Coffman's death. The 21-year-old airport worker was killed while trying to remove baggage jammed in a small lift.

Pinnacle failed to train employees in safety procedures to ensure that any machine needing service would first be disconnected from power sources, OSHA said. It also failed to provide lockout tagout devices.

Failure to properly lockout and tagout is a widespread problem. Many USW members and millions of workers across North America, who maintain, repair and service equipment in all sorts of industries face the risk of being injured by inadequate controls and procedures to protect them from equipment that could inadvertently power up.



Workers act as trainers

Worker trainers act as facilitators and use workbooks as a resource and guide to lead the class through activities designed to refresh and reinforce safety guidelines.

Typically, a workshop breaks up into small groups to work on tasks that require them to use their experience to tackle problems and make judgments on key issues. Someone usually takes notes to report back to the workshop as a whole and for general discussion.

A key activity in the safety training is the development of a hazard map, where workers identify and locate hazards in their workplace so those hazards can be targeted for elimination.

"It works terrifically. You identify things as a hazard that some people don't realize may harm them," said Carole Rooks, a worker trainer at Pinnacle. "Everybody learns from it."

During one phase of the training, IPSCO Koppel workers broke off into small groups gathered around large sheets of paper. They drew floor plans of their work sites, marking health and safety hazards with color codes that identify them as electrical, chemical, physical, flammable or explosive.

"I think it will help. It will help out considerably," said Joe Krol, who operates a caster in the area where Hackett was killed. "Something like this hits everybody."

Hazard mapping

Hazard mapping is just one method for identifying occupational safety and health hazards. The point is to pool knowledge from all of your co-workers so that you can easily organize to identify, control or eliminate the hazards.

While hazards can be avoided with personal protective equipment, maintenance and inspection, training, mitigation and warning devices, generally the better solution is to convince the employer to design or engineer away the problem.

"We argue for designing hazards out of a system as much as possible because that's the highest level of protection," Renner said.

It's not unusual for employers to falsely blame workers when there is an accident, to say that safety improvements are too expensive to make or that expensive changes will jeopardize jobs.

"In their eyes, it's going to cost money so it's bad," said Galiano, the Local 9305 president. "In my view, they should be spending more money on safety."



Arcelor Mittal, USW, Other Unions Commit to Worldwide Health and Safety Program

Arcelor Mittal, the world's largest steel company, and trade unions representing employees from over 20 countries are trying a new and innovative approach to health and safety.

Meeting in Montreal at the International Metalworkers' Federation's (IMF) first world conference of Arcelor Mittal and its trade unions, the company and the unions committed themselves to a joint program of education and training to raise health and safety standards throughout the company.

The conference with Arcelor Mittal, which operates 61 plants in 27 countries, was jointly hosted by the IMF and the United Steelworkers.

In addition to the United States and Canada, trade unions came from Argentina, Belgium, Brazil, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, India, Italy, Liberia, Luxembourg, Macedonia, Mexico, Poland, Romania, Russia, South Africa, Spain, Trinidad and Tobago and the United Kingdom.

Employer's true test

"Arcelor Mittal is one of the world's most profitable steel companies, but the true test of any great company is not only on the balance sheet but the way it treats its workers," International President Leo W. Gerard said.

"This agreement will demonstrate to Arcelor Mittal employees across the globe that their welfare will be the foundation of the company's continued success and that solidarity for unions means more than just empty words," Gerard added.

A task force of trade union and company health and safety experts will be established to advance the vision of eliminating the hazards that workers encounter in their daily work. Plants in the group will be targeted to dramatically improve their performance.

"Occupational health and safety is undoubtedly the single most important issue for working people, irrespective of which region of the world or country in which they happen to live," said IMF General Secretary Marcello Malentacchi.

Union workplaces safer

"It is a proven fact that union workplaces are safer workplaces and we are looking forward to working with the company in not only making health and safety its number one priority but a true reality," Malentacchi added.

When Steelworkers went to Algeria and Mexico to exchange with colleagues who also worked for Arcelor Mittal, they realized we must intensify our contacts and develop solidarity so that wages and working conditions may progress in every plant, said Michel Arsenault, the USW's Quebec director.

"The development of a company must not be based solely on labor costs but rather on innovation, for example," he said.

Arcelor Mittal President and Chief Executive Officer Lakshmi Mittal said the company is committed to achieving the highest safety standards for its employees.

"We are pleased and encouraged in joining our trade unions in achieving our joint vision to be the safest steel company in the world," he said.

Safer Technology Reduces Hazard

Steelworkers Help Protect 1 Million People from Potential Chlorine Exposure

More than one million people who live and work in the vicinity of a Schweitzer-Mauduit International paper mill in Spotswood, N.J., are safer today thanks to the efforts of USW Local 1482.

No longer do 90-ton railcars of chlorine roll through the central New Jersey town to the plant, where the potentially deadly chemical was used to bleach paper.

The victory could save lives. Up until June, the plant, located on Spotswood's Main Street, stored hundreds of thousands of pounds of chlorine gas, which can cause irritation of the eyes, skin and respiratory tract and lead to pulmonary edema and even death in extreme cases.

Even worse, the U.S. Naval Research Laboratory warns that 100,000 people could be killed or injured in the first 30 minutes of a chlorine release from a tank car in a populated area. And according to the company's own consequence

report to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), a worst case chlorine leak could endanger up to 1.1 million people living and working within 14 miles of the plant.

Union, community urging

After urging from union and community activists, the company stopped using bulk chlorine and installed a new process to make chlorine as needed, significantly reducing amounts needed to be stored and transported.

facility's lawn reading, "This plant can kill a million people."

The negative publicity spurred Local 1482 President Steve Green to open discussions with management over safer alternatives for both the work force and local residents.

"Both the union and the community had concerns," Green said. "The union repeatedly urged the company to eliminate the hazard. Fortunately, they responded positively."

Eventually, the local convinced the

“A lot of people who work at this company live in the community. This was a good thing the company did — using a safer process.”

After reading newspaper reports on the plant's use of chlorine, unidentified neighbors displayed a sign on the

company to invest in the new process at the 70-year-old facility. The project cost more than \$700,000 to design and install.

Government Short Changes We

While the government continues to deny thousands of former Rocky Flats Nuclear Weapons workers expedited compensation and medical care, it is also failing to adequately check current nuclear workers for radiation contamination.

Workers at some nuclear weapons plants are not being monitored regularly for radiation contamination, according to a report issued at the end of August by the Department of Energy (DOE) inspector general.

Without such exposure records, current nuclear workers will find it difficult to prove that any illness they get in the future is related to radiation exposure on the job.

At Oak Ridge National Laboratory in Tennessee, for example, two thirds of 24 workers checked did not get all of the required urinalysis and other lab tests for radiation exposure. Some workers canceled the tests themselves.

Federal regulations do not require medical tests, according to the DOE, which refused to make the employees undergo the exams. The agency said air monitoring was more important to detect possible radiation leaks that could harm workers.

Rocky Flats determination

Workers employed at Rocky Flats from April 1952 through December 1966, who were monitored or should have been monitored for neutron exposures, are being added to the Special

Exposure Cohort (SEC) under the Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program Act (EEOICPA), Health and Human Services Secretary Michael Leavitt announced on Aug. 6.

The advisory board determined that workers' exposure to highly dangerous neutron radiation could not be determined because the exposure records were missing.

By being part of the SEC, nuclear workers who have any of 22 radiation-related cancers and were employed at least 250 workdays for the DOE, its predecessor agencies or DOE contractors or subcontractors would automatically receive \$150,000 compensation and medical care.

Thousands of workers who were exposed to radiation doses from 1967 through 2005 and who were exposed to any radiation dose other than a neutron dose from 1952 through 1966 were not granted SEC status.

Workers claim the records from this period are inaccurate or missing while Leavitt claims there are adequate records to reconstruct workers' exposure to radiation.

Those not granted SEC status can still apply for compensation, but they must have their exposure to radiation calculated using a process known as dose reconstruction to determine if the radiation caused their illness.

The USW signed on to a petition Rocky Flats advocates drafted to appeal the Secretary's decision, but it is expected that the

With this inherently safer technology in place, the company reduced its potential danger and won't have to submit a Risk Management Plan to EPA or register with the state's Toxic Catastrophe Prevention Program.

"A lot of people who work at this company live in the community," Green said. "This was a good thing the company did — using a safer process."

Green said both the union and the community deserve credit for helping to convince the company to make the changes.

"I think it's an excellent change," said Mayor Barry Zagnit. "It's very important to the community and the surrounding communities."

Training provided

In 2005, two representatives of the local participated in a Train-the-Trainers program that was coordinated by the New Jersey Work Environment Council,

an alliance of labor, environmental and community organizations. The program used curriculum developed by the USW's Tony Mazzocchi Center for Safety, Health and Environmental Education entitled "Chemical Security through Prevention." Funding came from the National Institute of Environmental Sciences.

Later, 16 local leaders received similar training at the mill. During an activity called hazard mapping, workers identified the chlorine use and storage as the plant's greatest risk.

Schweitzer-Mauduit is a diversified producer of premium specialty papers and the world's largest supplier of fine papers to the tobacco industry. It does business in over

90 countries and employs 3,600 people worldwide.

It became a public company in 1995 with the spinoff by Kimberly-Clark Corp. of its U.S., French and Canadian operations that produced tobacco-related products. Its shares are traded on the New York Stock Exchange.

The Tony Mazzocchi Center for Safety, Health and Environmental Education (TMC), a project of the USW and the Labor Institute, is committed to providing union-based programs that promote workers' rights. To find out

how you can be a part of this program call 1-866-

222-7349 or email

safety@usw.org

Weapons Workers

panel hearing the appeal will affirm the Secretary's findings.

What is needed, advocates say, is a change in the compensation program act to make it easier for sick workers to obtain expedited compensation and medical care.

Our union is drafting changes to the EEOICPA along with the AFL-CIO and member unions in the building trades. The Colorado congressional delegation also is eyeing changes to the law and plans to introduce new legislation to help the ill Rocky Flats workers.

Congressional hearings are also in the works to find out why sick nuclear workers from Rocky Flats and hundreds of other sites around the country face high denial rates and lengthy delays in receiving aid.

These issues will be among the topics discussed at a meeting of the union's Atomic Energy Workers Council (AEWC) to be held Oct. 21 and 22 in Washington, D.C., with a day of lobbying on Capitol Hill on Oct. 23.

Rocky Flats petitioner Jennifer Thompson, right, comforts Nila Adkins after the federal Advisory Board on Radiation and Worker Health rejected immediate aid for a majority of Rocky Flats' workers with cancer. Mrs. Adkins' husband, Danny Adkins, 47, worked at Rocky Flats for 21 ½ years and died of pancreatic cancer in 2003. The Board allowed coverage for only a limited number of workers exposed to neutron radiation between 1952 and 1958.

(Photo by: Omar Vega/The Denver Post)



get the LEAD out

USW Launches Major North American Toxic Imports Campaign

The dramatic scene could have been straight out of a movie: more than 500 Women of Steel, angry that their families have been assaulted with a flood of toxic toys and other products, packed in a hotel room, ready to mobilize.

They stood on chairs; they gobbled up informational brochures and lead screening kits; and they organized community events to educate families about the dangers of a broken trade system.

But the kickoff of the USW's "Protect Our Kids — Stop Toxic Imports" campaign at the Women of Steel conference in Toronto and at the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C., was no work of fiction.

"The energy surrounding this campaign is very real and very special. The response from people who are ready to test their toys and protect their children is overwhelming," said Marilyn Furer, a Chicago area grandmother who attended the Canadian event.

Protect our kids

Her lead testing of baby bibs helped put a face on the issue of unregulated, toxic trade. She's now an Associate Member who's working with the USW on the campaign that includes the distribution of tens of thousands of free "Get the Lead Out" lead screening kits available through www.protect-our-kids.org and www.stoptoxicimports.org. The sites also have the latest campaign news and other helpful information.

"Stop Toxic Imports" also links the toxic imports crisis to failed trade policies that have resulted in the loss of millions of jobs and offers tools for political action, such as an online petition that asks politicians to fix the problem.

"Every grandparent, parent, aunt, uncle and friend in the United States and Canada needs to join this campaign and tell our governments and corporations that enough is enough — we will not stand by and allow your greed to poison our families," Furer said.

She also joined International President Leo W. Gerard, U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio), Public Health Institute founder Les Leopold and Blue Green Alliance Executive Director David Foster at the Washington launch, where Gerard emphasized that the campaign gives consumers a way to respond to the massive threat of toxic imports.

"We're telling people to test your toys and if they're found to be toxic, put them in a bag and take them to your local member of Parliament or your members of Congress and ask them if they would like to take them home to their kids," Gerard said. "Ask them what they plan to do to fix a system that has allowed millions of dangerous imports into our hands and the hands of our children — a system that has killed millions of industrial jobs."



Photo by Gary DiNummo, Page One Photography

Among the jobs that have been lost: hundreds of union positions at an Etch A Sketch factory in Ohio. Production was moved to China, where there is a lack of workers' rights and safety and environmental standards.

Even as the number of imports skyrockets, the regulation of those products has been dismantled. The number of Food and Drug Administration inspectors has been cut every year since 2003 while the volume of food imports has almost doubled. And as the \$233 billion trade deficit with China grows at a rate of 20 percent a year, the import-inspecting Consumer Product Safety Commission has seen its staff of 800 slashed to about half that with more cuts proposed by the Bush administration.

"China's attempt to export its poor standards is a serious problem but a huge number of dangerous imports are made for North American manufacturers that choose profits over safety. Meanwhile, our government regulatory agencies are being gutted. That's equally as disturbing," Gerard said.

Unsafe products include everything from baby bibs to 20 million-plus Mattel Inc. toys to red lead-covered steel from China that is endangering workers. Lead can cause a variety of health problems including learning disabilities, stunted growth, kidney damage and even death.

Ken Neumann, the USW's national director for Canada, pointed out that the campaign draws on the union's lead safety expertise. In the 1960s, former International President George Becker led the effort to protect workers from lead, including writing the

lead standard adopted by the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

The cornerstone of the campaign is Safe Home Sessions involving Women of Steel, the Steelworker Organization of Active Retirees, Associate Members, experts in the union's Health, Safety and the Environment Department and other USW activists. Families will be trained how to remove lead-laced toys and other toxic products from their homes.

The Safe Home Sessions also will provide people with the tools to help fight a flawed system, including information on legislation such as Brown's proposed bill that would require country-of-origin labeling for processed foods.

Brown's legislation would make country-of-origin labeling mandatory for processed foods. He also has introduced the Food and Product Responsibility Act of 2007 with U.S. Sen. Bob Casey (D-Pa.), which would require U.S. Customs and Border Protection and other agencies to have product recall and liability insurance or have sufficient financial resources to afford a recall and any subsequent damage claims.

"From food to toothpaste, toys to tires, we must do more to protect our families from contaminated and defective imports. Safeguarding consumers from unsafe products is the most basic of government functions — we must protect our families and our children," Brown said.



What You Can Do

A broken regulatory system and unfair, unregulated trade policies are endangering our families, our communities and our jobs. This check list provides you with a few ideas for what you can do to send the message that a cheap price tag is not worth putting our families at risk:

Use your USW Get the Lead Out screening kit:

- Test your toys and other imported items and report your results at www.stoptoxicimports.org or www.protect-our-kids.org.
- Review product recall lists and get the unsafe products out of your homes and pass the word.
- Check local child care centers and schools for these recalled toys and get them out!
- If you need more lead tests, buy them from manufacturers such as www.leadcheck.com in the United States or www.leadinspector.com in Canada.

Help spread the word:

- The USW's Women of Steel are sponsoring Get the Lead Out Safe Home sessions around North America to educate friends, family and neighbors about toxic trade and the danger of unregulated globalization. Visit www.stoptoxicimports.org or www.protect-our-kids.org to find events near you.
- Have your own Safe Home testing get-together to share information about lead screening and toxic trade and to let friends and family know what they can do to help.
- Visit local toy, tire and other retailers to see if toxic/faulty products are still on the shelves.
- Join a USW action day at a local retailer or other high-traffic area where you can pass out campaign brochures and lead screening kits. Check the Web for details.

- Encourage your friends to visit www.protect-our-kids.org and join our campaign!
- Encourage nonmembers to join the Associate Member program at www.fightbackamerica.net

Ask your government representatives to fix the broken trade system that is allowing toxic and unsafe imports to threaten our families' health:

- Write or e-mail them a letter saying something such as:

Dear (fill in the name):

Our children should be the top priority of our government. That is why I am imploring you to help put an end to unregulated toxic trade that is threatening our families with everything from lead-laced baby bibs and toys to toxic toothpaste. We need tougher trade laws that not only safeguard consumers but protect our jobs. We need to stop toxic imports from ending up on our store shelves and in our homes. Please take action now to protect our children and stop toxic trade!

*Sincerely,
(Your name)*

- Sign our online petition at www.protect-our-kids.org or www.stoptoxicimports.org then pass along the link and ask your friends, family and co-workers to sign it.



Worker Economics

Health Premiums Rise Faster than Wages

Premiums for employer-sponsored health insurance rose an average of 6.1 percent this year, higher than the 3.7 percent average increase in workers' wages and the inflation rate of 2.6 percent.

This year's increase was the slowest rate of premium growth since 1999, when premiums rose 5.3 percent, according to an annual health benefits survey conducted by the Kaiser Family Foundation and Health Research and Educational Trust.

Since 2001, premiums for family coverage have increased 78 percent, while wages have gone up 19 percent and inflation has gone up 17 percent. The average premium for family coverage was \$12,106 this year, the study said.

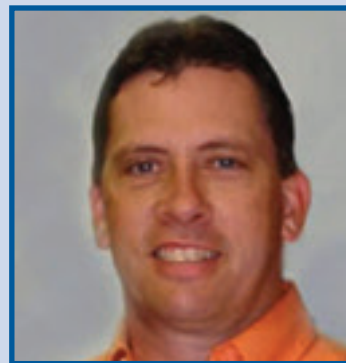
China Commission Hears Worker's Viewpoint

Local 959 President Darryl Jackson brought a worker's perspective to a hearing conducted by the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, a congressionally appointed bipartisan committee studying the impact of U.S.-China trade.

Jackson, whose local represents some 1,800 workers at the Goodyear plant in Fayetteville, N.C., told the commission that his plant makes standard 14 and 15-inch tires, a market that has been targeted by Chinese producers with the help of government subsidies and extremely low wages. Production at Fayetteville has dropped from 65,000 tires a day last year to 48,000 tires a day this year.

Lax product control in China is an issue to consider, he said. Earlier this year, imported Chinese tires were recalled as defective after a set was linked to a fatal rollover crash.

"Who wants to ride on a tire that you've got any doubts about when you're going down the road at 60 miles per hour with your family in the car?" Jackson asked.



Retiring Early a Fading Trend

Americans had been retiring at ever-younger ages since the growth of private pensions and Social Security began more than 50 years ago. That trend now appears to be reversing.

In 1950, nearly half of men 65 and older were still in the labor force, according to the Census Bureau. That percentage bottomed out in the 1980s at less than 16 percent. It has since edged up to about 19 percent, and experts believe it will increase even more as the oldest baby boomers reach 65.

There are about 78 million baby boomers, those born from 1946 to 1964. The oldest will turn 62 next year, the age at which they become eligible for Social Security benefits.

Some will continue working by choice. Others will have to stay on the job as fewer companies offer health insurance to retirees and an alarming number of private pensions fail.

Mega-rich Getting Richer

A significant new study finds America's mega-rich really are getting richer — and its poor are getting poorer.

The net worth of the top two percentile of American families nearly doubled during the last 20 years, from \$1,071,000 in 1984 to \$2,100,500 in 2005.

Compare that growth with the poorest quarter of American families, whose net worth actually declined.

"These findings show that the wealth gap is increasing steadily," says Frank Stafford, a senior research scientist at the University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research, which has studied long-term wealth trends since 1968.

What's driving the trend? It's a complex phenomenon. But one thing is sure: Globalization is creating extreme winners and losers, much as industrialization did at the turn of the last century.

Young Adults Uninsured

Adults aged 19 to 29 are the largest group of the newly uninsured.

That age group made up 30 percent of the 45 million Americans without health insurance in 2005, according to the nonpartisan Commonwealth Fund.

The report said young adults, many who are just entering the work force and can't afford the high cost of individual insurance, are the big drivers of an increase in uninsured adults.

U.S. employers, especially smaller businesses, are increasingly opting not to offer health insurance, leaving workers to fend for themselves.

Solidarity Works

Bargaining Goals Met at Republic Engineered Products

After many years of sacrifice under several owners, 2,000 USW members at Republic Engineered Products (REP) have now earned the right to the same pay, benefits and contract language protections as their counterparts at other North American steelmakers.

"After years of hard work, sacrifice and uncertainty, our members at REP have achieved improvements in their standard of living that they deserve," said District 1 Director and committee Chairman David McCall. "Their solidarity throughout these difficult years enabled our committee to achieve, and in some cases, exceed the industry standard."

USW members at five REP plants ratified a five-year contract on Sept. 27. Mail-in ballots were counted in Pittsburgh. The contract passed by a margin of 81 percent to 19 percent with about 79 percent of eligible members voting.

The company, based in Fairlawn, Ohio, about 30 miles south of Cleveland, makes bar steel used primarily in motor vehicles, appliances and machinery.

The contract covers hourly production and maintenance and office and technical employees at REP facilities in Lorain, Canton and Massillon, Ohio; Lackawanna, N.Y.; and Gary, Ind.

Members in all of the locations had the opportunity to discuss the agreement with their local and international

union negotiating committees before voting on whether to accept or reject it.

The USW reached tentative agreement with REP on Aug. 16 after months of intense negotiations, including a marathon 36-hour stretch during which the previous contract expired and a labor dispute seemed imminent.

The new contract includes a significant wage increase, improves the company's contributory hours to the Steelworkers Pension Trust and greatly enhances the security of our members' jobs, retirements and earnings. Other provisions include maintaining the current health care program, an increase in sickness and accident benefits and an improved profit-sharing plan.

REP employees sacrificed much over the course of several ownership changes and trips to bankruptcy court to keep the company afloat. Over time, they saw wages, benefits and contract language protections lag far behind those at other globally competitive steelmakers in the United States and Canada — even as REP raked in over \$330 million in profit over the last four years.

"Ratifying this contract is a step toward restoring a measure of justice and dignity to our deserving members and retirees at REP," McCall said. "Our union looks forward to working with this company to meet the challenges ahead and continue our proud tradition of steel-making."

Gerdaу Bargaining Wraps Up

USW members at steel mills in Sand Springs and Calvert City knew they were in for a fight when it came to negotiating their first labor agreements with Gerdaу Ameristeel because a big part of their income came from profit-sharing plans with previous owners, Sheffield Steel and North Star Steel. Gerdaу had served notice it wanted to end profit sharing.

Instead, Gerdaу preferred a PIP incentive plan to compensate USW members in future labor agreements.

"We needed a huge hourly wage increase to equal out what our members had been earning under the Sheffield plan," said Kenny Parrick, president of Local 2741 at Sand Springs, Okla. "The new agreement has increased our base rates substantially in return for discontinuing the profit sharing. This will provide much greater earnings and pension opportunities."

In Calvert City, USW members are welcoming a new agreement that preserves their annual income and celebrating a PIP that enhances the possibility for them to boost earnings.

"We were the last Gerdaу plant to reach agreement," said Brian Graves, president of Local 9447-5 at Calvert City, Ky. "We couldn't have done it by ourselves. Our membership understands how important the Unity

Council and support from Gerdaу employees around the world was to reaching our agreement."

The most recent display of solidarity came just a week before the Calvert City settlement when Local 2741 at Sand Springs reached a tentative agreement but delayed ratification until Calvert City settled.

"We weren't about to leave them out there by themselves," Parrick said.

"It's all for one and one for all in this Unity Council," Graves replied.

This one's for Bernie

The two contracts bring to a successful conclusion a process started nine years ago by the late Bernie Kleiman, former general counsel, lead steel industry negotiator and advisor to five international presidents.

"Bernie and the USW Strategic Campaigns department were instrumental in building this Unity Council with workers from the four North Star plants that had been owned by Cargill," said USW lead negotiator Jim Stewart. "His tenacity in bargaining with Cargill produced the successorship language in each of those contracts that preserved all of our USW jobs when Gerdaу purchased those mills."



STEEL CONTRACTS

USW-SCA Tissue Partnership

Recognized for Worker Empowerment

At SCA Tissue, USW-represented workers have a say in how the business is run. Non-union workers can organize without interference from the company, and the union is treated with respect and as an equal partner.

This cooperative labor-management relationship with the USW prompted American Rights at Work (ARW), a leading labor policy and advocacy organization, to select SCA Tissue North America for its annual Labor Day list of partnerships that really work.

"This paper manufacturer deserves praise as a forward-thinking, socially-responsible employer," said Mary Beth Maxwell, ARW executive director.

"Too many companies are competing in a race to the bottom with wages and labor standards," Maxwell added. "In today's economy, everyone profits when employees, their unions and management work in partnership."

SCA was one of seven companies and the only paper manufacturer to make the list, which ARW uses to promote awareness of socially responsible and ethical corporate labor practices. The company also received praise for its environmental record and investment in sustainability efforts worldwide.

Worker empowerment

ARW chose SCA because its partnership with the USW empowers workers.

An integral component of the labor-management partnership is a Joint Advisory Committee comprised of union leaders and SCA company executives. They meet quarterly to discuss the business and assist each SCA site in project implementation. Each area of a plant and every shift have union-management teams to discuss the operation of the business and resolve any problems.

Workers, for example, recently participated in a redesign of the work system for three key manufacturing facilities. They used their expertise to create a more efficient and worker-friendly production process.

"You know you'll be challenged when you come to work," Local 9-1535 President Joey Weston said of the greater role the union and its members have in helping to run the business. "It's more rewarding and makes you feel important to be part of a new style of work that will be the wave of the future."

At Weston's Barton, Ala., facility, workers freely chose USW representation without management interference because of the organizing neutrality agreement signed between SCA and the USW.

Partnership pays off

The USW-SCA partnership is paying off: The employee turnover rate decreased by 29 percent in one of the company's high turnover locations, and the firm boasts one of the best safety records in the industry.

"Overall productivity has improved as a result of the joint partnership and labor-management work system redesign process and programs," said Chuck Gintz, SCA director of employee relations.

"SCA's practices prove that respecting workers' rights is not only the right thing to do, but also offers competitive advantages," Maxwell added. "Businesses work best when employees have a say in how they run."



Deadly Dust

Miners in Mexico Strike to Save Their Lives and Their Union

By David Bacon

In its natural state, Cananea's copper ore is part of a sagebrush-covered mountain in the middle of the Sonora desert in Mexico, 70 miles south of Arizona.

To extract the metal indispensable to computers, automobiles and iPods, the rock is blown out of the mountainside with explosives. A series of crushers and enormous mills grind the huge rocks into a steady stream of sand and dust.

That mine dust can be deadly. Miners who breathe rock dust year after year suffer a variety of lung diseases, the most dangerous of which is silicosis. Generations of miners have died from it on both sides of the border.

Safety conditions protested

About 3,000 miners put down their tools on July 30 at Grupo Mexico mines at Cananea and elsewhere in Mexico to protest safety conditions and to win a long-running feud with the giant international company over the preservation of their union.

By mid-September, 50 days into the strike, rock dust in parts of the huge Cananea complex was so deep it rose up over miners' boot tops, almost to their knees. In tunnels where conveyer belts normally carry the ore from crushers to mills at breakneck speed, the fine powder piled up in drifts.

In a well-run mine, dust is sucked from buildings covering the crushers, mills and conveyer belts by huge collectors. Here, none of the dust collectors have functioned since 1999. Many tanks have rusty holes the size of a bathroom window. And the pipes, which should lead into work areas inside, instead end in midair.

The dust is one of the main reasons behind the strike. "We know what's safe and what's not," one miner said. "But they never want us to spend time fixing problems — just get the production out."

There are other dangers, too. Many machines have no guards, making it easy to lose fingers or worse. Electrical panels have no covers. Holes open in the floor with no guardrails. Catwalks are slippery with dust and grease and are covered by cables and hoses.

Strikers hope to force Grupo Mexico to abide by the union contract that mandates the missing protections. But it is also a strike for the union itself. Across Mexico, miners are locked in conflict with Grupo Mexico, which seeks to replace the

70-year-old miners' union with another union that would let it run the mines as it likes.

If the union loses and the strikers lose their jobs, as many have in the past, they will have to leave Cananea because there is no other work in small communities like this that can sustain a family. Often, even the workers' homes belong to their employer.

The mine's average wage of \$39 a day, plus bonuses and profit-sharing, allows the workers a standard of living higher than most jobs on the U.S./Mexico border.

In Cananea, the health care system funded by the company is clearly inadequate. The old Hospital Ronquillo, where miners and their families get their care, has only one bathroom for men and one for women.

Its inadequacy led miners half a century ago to build a clinic of their own, with a beautifully equipped operating theater, a children's wing, wards with one bed and bathroom per room, specialized prenatal care, obstetrics, and other services. The union contract required the company to pay its costs, and the workers ran it.

"I was born here," says Jose Luis Zamora, who was elected administrator by his fellow miners. "So were most of us."

In 1999, however, Grupo Mexico refused to continue paying the clinic costs. Reopening the clinic in accord with

President

Carlos Salinas de Gortari began a sweeping selloff of large mines, railroads, airlines and other state-owned businesses.

Often, he didn't really sell them. Cananea, for instance, was virtually given to a wealthy investor, German Larrea. Eventually, Larrea's industrial empire, Grupo Mexico, owned most of the large mines in Mexico. He also gained control of its privatized railroad system and other assets.

ASARCO part of Grupo Mexico

Larrea didn't stop at Mexico's border. Today Grupo Mexico's Southern Copper Co., which owns Cananea, also owns two even larger mines in Peru. Larrea also bought up USW employer ASARCO (American Smelting and Refining Co.) with two mines and a smelter in Arizona.

Throughout the 1990s, Larrea cut the Cananea work force as he sought to reduce labor costs and increase profits. Finally, in 1998, the union went on strike. But after three months the government declared the strike illegal and said it would send troops to reopen the mine.

Under the threat of military occupation, the miners agreed to go back to work. The copper smelter and other mine

has become a strike issue.

When Napoleon Gomez Sada, the national president of the Mexican Union of Mine, Metal and Allied Workers, died in 2001, his son, Napoleon Gomez Urrutia was elected union general secretary.

Gomez Urrutia immediately began to push hard against declining conditions for miners. Taking advantage of world record copper prices, he won 6 to 8 percent wage increases, twice those dictated by government policies. He forced open the doors of the elite Technological Institute of Monterrey, where 700 workers and their children now study. He won better housing.

When former Mexican President Vicente Fox pushed to reform the country's labor laws at the behest of the World Bank, Gomez Urrutia built a coalition that spiked the proposals. The union then helped kill a Fox proposal to tax workers' benefits.

Explosion killed 65

All hell broke loose when 65 miners died on Feb. 19, 2006, in a huge explosion in the Pasta de Conchos coal mine in the northern state of Coahuila. Horrified by the deaths, the union discovered that workers on the second shift had complained of high concentrations of explosive methane gas in the shafts the evening before the accident.

In 2004, labor safety inspectors had found 48 health and safety violations in the mine, including oil and gas leaks, missing safety devices and broken lighting. Although Grupo Mexico was given an order to fix the illegal conditions, no compliance inspection was carried out until Feb. 7, 12 days before the explosion. Only two bodies were recovered. Grupo Mexico stopped looking for the others.

Two days after the explosion, Gomez Urrutia accused the Secretary of Labor and Grupo Mexico of "industrial homicide." Fox filed corruption charges

“We know what's safe and what's not," one miner said. "But they never want us to spend time fixing problems — just get the production out.”

the contract is another strike issue.

It's no accident that the dust collectors stopped the same year the company halted payments for the clinic. Both happened the year after the union lost a disastrous 1998 strike that capped a long series of battles in which the union tried to resist privatization.

The Cananea mine was nationalized in 1976. In the late 1980s the Mexican government and the ruling Party of the Institutionalized Revolution, under pressure from rising debt and mandates from the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, began to open up its economy to corporate investment. In 1991,

departments were closed, leading to the loss of 800 jobs. Strikers who had gone to Arizona and beyond, helping to organize caravans of food and clothing during the strike, were blacklisted.

"[My foreman] told me I'd never get a job anywhere in Mexico after that," recalls Chema Pacheco, a strike leader. "I had no alternative but to leave Cananea to look for work in the U.S."

Today 1,350 union members have permanent employment in Cananea's mine. Another 450 people work alongside them for contractors that sell their labor to Grupo Mexico and pay none of the benefits union members receive. That, too,

against him less than a week later.

Former Labor Secretary Francisco Xavier Salazar Sáenz, with support from Grupo Mexico, appointed an expelled union leader, Elias Morales, to replace Gomez Urrutia. In Mexico, the labor secretary can legally choose a union's leader.

Miners support Gomez Urrutia

In defiance, miners re-elected Gomez Urrutia twice, then struck mines at Cananea and Nacozari and the Sicartsa steel mill to demand his reinstatement. The strikes did not achieve their goal and workers at Sicartsa and Cananea eventually returned to work.

But in Nacozari, the government permitted Grupo Mexico to fire its entire work force. It then selectively rehired about 700 union members and brought in another 1,200 workers from southern Mexico.

This fall, when a group of fired miners marched to the mine in Nacozari to demand reinstatement, one of them, Reynaldo Hernández, was killed.

Gomez Urrutia left Mexico with the USW's support to avoid arrest and over the next year mounted a legal effort to win back control of the union. First, the labor secretary's decision to appoint Elias Morales was overturned because of forged documents. Now the corruption charges are also likely to be dismissed.

Gomez Urrutia was accused of stealing \$55 million that Grupo Mexico agreed to pay miners when it took over state-owned properties. In September, however, a

Swiss accounting firm, Horwath Berney Audit SA, went over the union's books and accounted for all the funds.

In November 2006, a new organization received legal status as a union from Mexican labor authorities. The National Union of Workers in the Exploration, Exploitation and Benefit of Mines (SUTEEBM) is headed by Francisco Gamez, a former Cananea employee and labor contractor. Labor Secretary Javier Lozano called the organization a legitimate union.

Company support for the SUTEEBM became even more evident in September when the Mexican labor board set up elections to allow it to take over representation rights in eight mines. The Center for Labor Action and Reflection, a human rights organization, alleges the election process was manipulated to get rid of the miners' union.

Cross-border solidarity

USW representative Manny Armenta accompanied a delegation of striking miners to Tucson, Ariz., where they spoke to a support group organized by the immigrant rights group, Derechos Humanos, and then took a gate collection at the ASARCO mine in Kearney.

The USW and the International

Chemical, Energy and Miners Federation helped the Mexican union arrange for the audit that proved the charges against Gomez Urrutia had been invented.

Following the release of the report, International President Leo W. Gerard wrote to the Mexican government, demanding that it drop charges against Gomez Urrutia and recognize his legitimate status. The USW is also helping to organize a three-country alliance with the unions in Mexico and Peru to face Grupo Mexico together.

Armenta believes that miners on both sides of the U.S./Mexico border have a common interest because so many of them work for Grupo Mexico.

"If we don't help them, eventually we'll face the same problems," he said. "Plus they're fighting for basic principles that we believe in. They want the right to elect their own leaders and to belong to a union controlled by miners, not by the company. We can all identify with that."



News Bytes

USW Helping Boston Cab Drivers

Boston cab drivers hope a united work force will give them a stronger, more influential voice in dealing with regulators. The USW is helping cabbies organize the Boston Taxi Drivers Association to lobby around issues such as better meter and insurance rates and improved working conditions, including possibly health care coverage.

Similar taxi driver alliances are in place in Denver, New York City, Las Vegas, Los Angeles, Philadelphia and Montreal.

Since the National Labor Relations Board considers cab drivers to be independent contractors and not employees, they don't have the right to unionize. The Boston group will function as an Associate Member chapter of the USW.

Rebuilding New Orleans

USW members continue to be active in coalitions that are fighting to rebuild the city of New Orleans as a humane and decent place for its residents.

USW and other AFL-CIO union members joined a coalition of volunteers in New Orleans for "A Day of Service" this summer planting sod, painting schools and landscaping church properties.

Other participants included Dillard University's Deep South Center for Environmental Justice; the Black Leadership Forum; the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority; the Kappa Alpha Sorority and the Louisiana Unity Coalition.

NLRB: FiberMark Violates Law

Acting on a charge filed by the USW, the National Labor Relations Board has filed a complaint against FiberMark Holdings alleging the company violated federal labor law when it cut wages of workers in Lowville, N.Y., by up to \$6 an hour and slashed retiree pensions and health insurance.

The USW filed charges against the company after Local 1988 members were forced to work under conditions imposed by FiberMark on April 15. FiberMark is controlled by the investment firm Silver Point Capitol.

"Just like the story of David versus Goliath, the investment bankers running FiberMark who think they can toy with the lives of working people are going to have to learn a rude lesson," said District 4 Director Bill Pienta.

Connie Entrekin Succeeds Williams as SOAR President

International President Leo W. Gerard (left) administers the oath of office from the union constitution to install Connie Entrekin (center) as the new president of the Steelworkers Organization of Active Retirees (SOAR), while retiring SOAR President Lynn R. Williams (right) participates. The changing-of-the-guard took place during an executive board meeting of the USW's retiree organization on Sept. 6 in Washington, D. C. Entrekin is a retired District 9 Director. Williams, a former International President, will retain an emeritus position with SOAR.



Photo by Gary DiNunno, Page One Photography

Caucus Asks Conti to Rescind Retiree Cuts

The co-chairs of a congressional labor caucus are calling on Continental Tire of North America (CTNA) to rescind cuts to the company's retiree health care plan.

The request was made by Congressional Labor and Working Families Caucus Co-Chairs Linda Sánchez (D-Calif.), Stephen Lynch (D-Mass.), and Michael Michaud (D-Maine) in a letter to CTNA President Alan Hippe.

"Continental Tire retirees deserve fair and just health benefits that allow them access to quality care," they wrote. "We hope you will promptly fulfill Continental Tire's contractual obligations to retired workers."

CTNA, the North American manufacturing subsidiary of Germany's Continental AG, illegally imposed a \$3,000 per year cap on payments for retiree health care earlier this year. As a result of the company's cuts many retirees have to pay as much as \$12,000 a year to keep their health insurance.

A federal judge this July found the cuts illegally violated the company's contractual obligation to retirees. Continental announced in a press release that it would refuse to rescind the cuts pending the outcome of the appeals process.

Redmond Chairs APRI

Fred Redmond, International Vice President (Human Affairs), is the new board chairman of the A. Philip Randolph Institute.

Randolph, founder of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, was one of the great black labor leaders in American history. The institute named after him works for racial equality and economic justice.

Redmond was elected during the group's 38th national conference in Oakland, Calif., to replace retired International Vice President Leon Lynch.

One of the first initiatives to be undertaken by the institute under Redmond's direction will be a national campaign to focus on the health care disparities between blacks and whites.

ITC Rules on China Tires

The USW and Titan International have won an initial ruling from the federal government over our bid to have duties imposed on unfairly traded off-the-road tires made in China.

The United States International Trade Commission, in a unanimous 6-0 vote, found that U.S. producers and the industry's union workers are being harmed by low-cost Chinese imports.

The late summer decision is the first of several rulings that must go in favor of domestic producers and our union before duties of as much as 210 percent can be levied.

China is the largest single source of imports of off-the-road tires used in agriculture and construction. Imports from China increased from 11.2 million tires worth \$166 million in 2004 to nearly 15 million tires worth \$375 million last year.

Photo by Lynne Baker



USW Continues to Explore Global Union

Coordinating contract bargaining globally to improve local leverage was high on the agenda when delegates from USW and UNITE, the largest union in the United Kingdom and Ireland, met in Pittsburgh to continue discussions on a possible trans-Atlantic merger.

The meeting, held from Sept. 29 to Oct. 2, was the second working session since the signing last April 18 in Ottawa, Canada, of a formal agreement to explore a partnership with UNITE.

The discussions were part of a systematic process to identify and overcome hurdles to a merger and to build an organization that will be a formidable global counterforce to multinational companies that now operate with near impunity across borders.

"As global corporations try to force their will on workers, they are pushing on the same issues: job security, health care and deindustrialization," International President Leo W. Gerard said. "Unless we form a global response, they will have the playing field to themselves."

The merger exploration process is expected to take a year. If consummated, a merger would create the first trans-Atlantic labor union representing more than 3 million workers and retirees.

Marie Malagrecia Honored

George Kourpias, president of the Alliance for Retired Americans, presents its President's Award to retired Steelworker and SOAR coordinator Marie Malagrecia in honor of her decades of service to workers and retirees.

Malagrecia, 80, is retiring this year from the ARA's executive board. A former factory worker, Malagrecia went to work for the USW in 1948 in her hometown of Etna, Pa., and in 1979 was made one of the union's first female full-time staff representatives. In 1986, retired International President Lynn Williams named her the first full-time national coordinator for SOAR with an office at the International headquarters in Pittsburgh, where she worked until her retirement in 1994.

Photo by Ike Gittlen



Rapid Response Participation Grows

Using person-to-person techniques that are a hallmark of the USW's Rapid Response effort, District 9 now has 100 percent participation in the education, communication and action program.

All of the district's local union presidents were contacted by staff or Rapid Response volunteer state coordinators and asked to participate, District 9 Director Stan Johnson said.

With the increase in the number of locals in the district as a result of the 2005 merger with PACE, Johnson saw the need to get more locals involved politically.

Some locals use e-mail to send Rapid Response alerts to members. Others select a Rapid Response chairperson for each shift who gets letters out to members through shop stewards.

"We're coming into an election year," Johnson said. "If we're going to build activism in 2008, it is important to build a foundation for that activism by getting participation now."



Made in America Town Meetings

The USW is helping the Alliance for American Manufacturing put on a national series of town hall meetings that aim to educate voters on the important issues of trade and manufacturing.

Nearly 400 voters attended the first "Keep It Made in America" session that was held Sept. 25 at the Manchester, N.H., Palace Theater. The host was former "Cheers" actor John Ratzenberger.

The meetings are free and open to the general public. So far, similar meetings are scheduled for Des Moines, Iowa, Oct. 17; Columbus, Ohio, Nov. 8; Pittsburgh, Nov. 13 and Buffalo, N.Y., Nov. 29. Other dates and cities will be announced.

The project is designed to garner public support for development of a national strategy to grow jobs, spur domestic innovation and strengthen our manufacturing base.

"The manufacturing base of the United States is disappearing," said Ratzenberger, who grew up in a Connecticut factory town. "And when factories disappear, the entire fabric of a community disappears."

Photo by Ike Gittlen



September 2007

Greetings,

As International President of the United Steelworkers, I am asking your local union and membership to support the 2007 campaign for the United Way. Members of the American labor movement have always worked to help our brothers, sisters and neighbors in times of need.

The United Way is one of our longstanding partners in sharing this value, helping working families every day with access to vital resources and services.

Through this partnership, we make a difference. We are not only helping those who are lacking basic necessities today, but working on long-term solutions that address the root causes of our nation's social service needs.

I urge you to support the 2007 United Way Campaign. In doing so, we can continue to build stronger communities and change lives.

Thank you for making your community a better place to live and work.

In solidarity,

Leo W. Gerard

Leo W. Gerard
International President

USW Photo Contest

WINNERS

2 0 0 7

Honorable Mention



Cheryl Larson
Duluth, Minn. — Local 9460

Thomas Boyd
Swanton, Ohio — Local 8316

Ricky S. Janson
Sand Springs, Okla. — Local 2741

Daniel "Boom Box" Flores
Tucson, Ariz. — Local 937

Peter Dinger
Lindenhurst, Ill. — Local 1744

Michael Becker
West Allis, Wis. — Local 9040

The results are in for the 2007 USW Photography Contest.

Members from around the country took their cameras to work to capture co-workers and fellow USW members doing their jobs.

The second and third-place winners in the second annual contest, along with several photographs judged to be honorable mentions, are shown on this page. The first-place winner is honored on the back page of *USW@Work*.

Entries this year reflected both the proud manufacturing tradition of the USW, the nation's largest industrial union, and the growing health care sector.

Prizes were \$300 for the first place winner, \$150 for second place and \$50 for third place. We will conduct the contest again next year and encourage you to take a camera along with you to work when possible and keep an eye open for a winning shot.

Photographer: Tim Huff

Butler, Pa. — Local 9445-11

"Untitled"

Prize: \$50 Third Place Prize

3rd
Place



2nd
Place

Photographer: Owen Small
Evansville, Ind. — Local 9443

Title: "At Work"

Prize: \$150 Second Place Prize



And the Winner is...

Turn to the back cover to see the 1st place winner!

USW Photo Contest **WINNER**

2 0 0 7

Photographer: Bill Work

Tullahoma, Tenn. — Local 6817

Title: "Woman of Steel"

Prize: \$300 Grand Prize

1st
Place



Turn to page 35 to see
more contest winners!

Have You Moved?

Notify your local union financial secretary, or clip out this form
with your old address label and send your new address to:

USW@Work

USW Membership Department,
3340 Perimeter Hill Drive, Nashville, TN 37211

Name _____

New Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____