Volume 4/2
Spring 2009

USW@Work

A Publication of the United Steelworkers ... r Workers

INSIDE USW@WORK

"We need to send a message to Congress and the Obama administration that Americans recognize we must make things here. We don't need more off-shoring. We need jobs – we need to rebuild domestic manufacturing and our auto industry."

International President Leo W. Gerard
May 2009

Saving Manufacturing
Family-owned Fenton Glass, like many other U.S. manufacturers, is fighting to survive and retain the jobs of skilled USW members.

Buy American
USW members are introducing Buy American resolutions in communities across the United States to help the economy get back on track.

World-Class Polluter
Now the world's largest steelmaker, China is also a world-class polluter. Failure to control pollution gives China an unfair advantage over competitors.

Trade Complaint
To protect American jobs, the USW filed a major trade complaint asking the Obama administration to limit unfair imports of consumer tires from China.

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ON THE COVER
The "Keep It Made in America" bus tour stops in St. Louis.
USW Photo by Scott Weaver

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SPEAKING Out

Fighting for Fair Trade, EFCA

While President Obama and his administration are trying to come up with solutions to the collapse of our economy, the Republicans who brought us here keep preaching their tired old rhetoric. They keep talking about tax cuts like those Ronald Reagan gave to the affluent.

Remember the "trickle-down" theory? Trickle-down simply padded their already overfilled pockets and enabled them to buy bigger and more expensive homes and cars. Did it create jobs? In China, Mexico, Bangladesh, Taiwan and elsewhere, it did.

They exploited workers and polluted the air and water. They boosted their profits while American factory workers watched their plants close and their jobs be exported.

Give tax incentives to corporations that bring manufacturing jobs to this country and close tax loopholes for companies that exploit foreign workers and the environment.

Leon R. Zorko, retired
Union Grove, Wis.

Timber Owner Speaks Out

I read the article on sustainable forestry with much interest, since I am a timberland owner. It should be noted that the majority of forest land is privately owned. It would be very foolish if timberland was not managed for sustainable or improved levels of forest products.

The best stewards of the land are the owners, whether private or corporate. We spend much time in research, development and application to ensure that forests are sustainable and healthy and to promote aesthetics, wildlife, recreation and common sense environmental concerns.

Nowhere in the article did I see mention of consulting with private landowners. My personal dealings with environmental groups and government bureaucracies does more to hinder my goals than to help.

There are too many intrusions by those who may mean well, but in reality probably don't know the difference between a white oak and a red oak.

I'm concerned that we are going to be saddled with over-regulation by the government fueled by popular activist groups that are unaware of many important facts.

David Sanders, Local 12
Gadsden, Ala.

Save our Jobs

Most of us know of companies that go overseas to manufacture cheap products and then ship those products back here to the United States to sell for fat profits. I believe Labor should lobby for a special tax applied to all such imported products that will nullify the differential gained by exporting our jobs and level the playing field.

President Obama supports the right to organize and he supports workers' freedom to choose whether or not to join a union without interference from employers. I support President Obama because he is what we need to save our jobs and keep companies from moving overseas.

Richard Vogt, Local 1115, retired
Waukegan, Ill.

Greed, Lending and Regulation

I am currently laid off from an iron-ore company that makes pellets for the steel industry.

I had felt the steel industry was recession proof, which might have proven to be the case if it weren't for people getting greedy, banks lending money irresponsibly and lack of government regulation and control.

You can see now what disaster can take place when governments don't control their financial industry and let industry have its own way. You get the fox watching the hen house.

Clarence Johnson
Calumet, Minn.

A Better Place for All

A year or so ago, I got a letter from President Gerard inviting me to become an associate member. I was very impressed by his sincerity to improve not only the lives of the membership but all Americans.

That honest sincerity got to me and I joined and will continue to support your efforts to make this country a better place to live for all of us. Joining was a leap of faith for me as I am an old management guy, having been CEO of several hospitals in my career.

Bob Trautman
Newberry, Mich.

Shame on CEOs

Shame! Shame on you!!!

CEOs of all corporations and banking institutions, shame on you for accepting bonus payments when you already have more than enough. Why must you be so greedy?

Low-income people who cannot meet their bills need the funds.

Let the CEOs give up their hefty bonuses, go back to their Bibles and read the message where the Lord tells you to help the poor … and share.

Esther Tucker, USW widow
Columbiana, Ohio

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.

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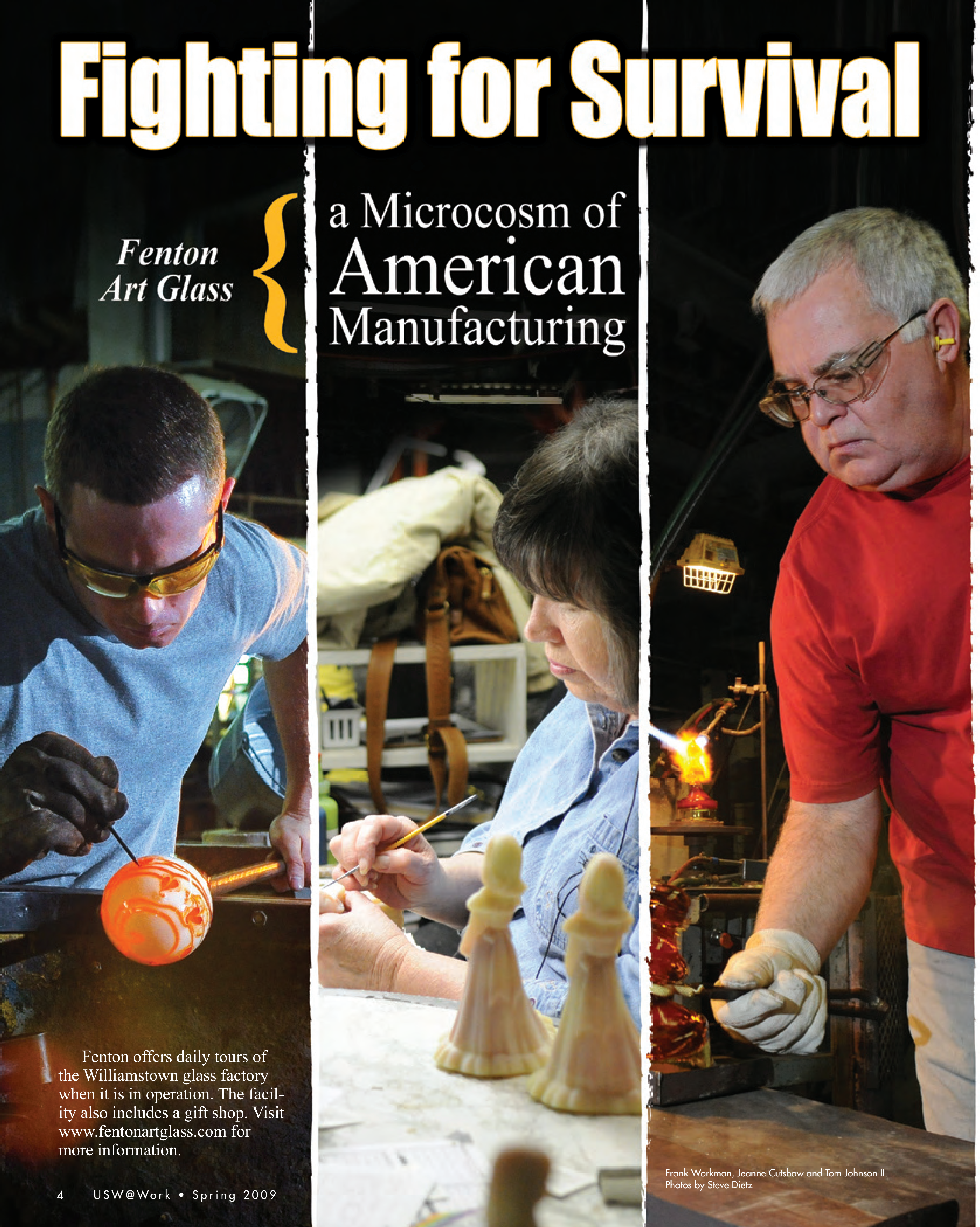
Fighting for Survival

Fenton Art Glass { a Microcosm of American Manufacturing



Fenton offers daily tours of the Williamstown glass factory when it is in operation. The facility also includes a gift shop. Visit www.fentonartglass.com for more information.

Frank Workman, Jeanne Cutshaw and Tom Johnson II. Photos by Steve Dietz

The sky is dark and a spring chill fills the air in Williamstown, W. Va. It's before dawn and the mostly residential neighborhood has yet to rise. But if you listen carefully, you can hear the muted roar of the pot furnace escaping the walls of the Fenton Art Glass Co. factory.

Once inside, where the heat from glass-making ovens immediately warm, the chorus of rumbling grows louder and the darkness is broken by the sight of a ball of glass, still glowing bright orange from the 2,600-degree heat from which it came.

The glass is on the end of a 5½-foot hollow metal stick, called a blowpipe, and is twirled deliberately until the shape morphs into a figure resembling a tiny cat.

Dave Fetty, a 45-year Fenton veteran, effortlessly drifts between twirling the pipe and blowing into the glass, causing it to expand. Quickly, he shapes hearts on the figurine then snaps it off the blowpipe and hands it over to a co-worker who shuttles it away to cool.

Each of the tiny feline figurines will be stamped with Fetty's name and a logo that not only represents a company, but a family, a dedicated USW-represented work force, a community and a dying art: Fenton - Handmade in the USA.

"A lot of times I wake up and think, 'What can I make today,'" the 72-year-old Fetty says as he begins another figurine. "There's a particular pride and satisfaction in that. It's not just about what we make. It's the fact that we make something, we make it in America, in West Virginia, at Fenton."

Rich history, uncertain future

Fenton is a family-owned glass company that has been making decorative and utilitarian glassware – vases, figurines, baskets and other colorful art glass – since 1905.

In many ways, it's a microcosm of American manufacturing – a company fighting for survival in a war against cheap imports, a sputtering economy and a business culture where profits are often valued over people.

The factory in West Virginia employs about 120 workers on one shift. At its height, more than 700 worked day and night. From day one, Fenton employees had a union – the American Flint Glass Workers – and now, the United Steelworkers Local 508.

"Our local has done many things to assist the company and to keep it going," said decorative painter Truda Mendenhall, who was laid off in 2007 and again early this year.

Mendenhall blames "cheap knock-offs from China" and is among the thousands of USW members pushing the union's Buy American resolution, which urges governments at every level to spend tax dollars on U.S.-made products and services and to invest in manufacturing.

To attract bargain hunters, Fenton itself created separate International collections of glassware, painted ceramics and seasonal decorations that are produced and shipped from Chinese factories. They are less expensive to make and sell than the glassware produced in Williamstown.

> It's not just about what we make. It's the fact that we make something, we make it in *America*, in West Virginia, at Fenton.

"Our workers struggle because they're laid off. They have a unique talent and you can't go anywhere to get a job," Mendenhall said. "I'm hopeful that with legislation to encourage American jobs that we can not only bring back laid-off workers, but hire new workers."

Keeping the art alive

Fenton remains the largest manufacturer of handmade colored glass in the United States – and practically the only one in the world. There are only two or three others left.

"When places like this close, the art dies," said James Measell, Fenton's resident historian. "We're doing what we have to do to keep the art alive."

In 2007, Fenton announced it would close within a few months, and 25 workers were laid off right away. A few months later, after an increase in orders from QVC's shopping channel and others plus internal changes, Fenton said it was staying open.

President George W. Fenton, the third generation of his family to run the company, said the thought of closing was emotional and the fight to remain open is tough, even today. The plant temporarily stopped production this April 13 through May 8, and the annual July week-long vacation may be extended.

Fenton says for his family, it's always been about more than profit.

"Jobs are the No. 1 thing," Fenton said. "When somebody asks me, 'how are you doing?' How many people do we have working here, that's the first thing I think about. So keeping those jobs is critical."

The American Dream

For Fetty, a lifetime career in manufacturing has been the American Dream. He says the nation must return to one that values manufacturing and gives people the same chance he had.

"I started making glass when I was 19 years old. I needed a job and these were good jobs," Fetty said. "Then, I found out I was an artist."

Fetty is considered a master glass artisan, a rare worker who not only has the technical skill needed for the carefully choreographed process, but artistic ability and instinct. The company hired him back after he retired because of his special talent, and he's been instrumental in helping mentor one of Fenton's youngest artisans, Frank Workman.

At Fenton, every job is important. Workers assemble in teams referred to as "shops." The furnace crew is responsible for keeping the ovens' temperature regulated and in working order. There are mold makers and helpers, artists who hand-paint whimsical flowers and other details onto Fenton's pieces, and packers who carefully prepare the art for shipping.

Employees face the prospect of furloughs when orders are slow and have worked for several years with no pay raises. There is constant stress about whether Fenton and the work it provides can survive.

"Fenton is very important to the community, just like other factories are important to their communities," Fetty said during a break from glassmaking where he perused the gift shop and proudly showed a display that held some of his work. "It would be a really sad thing if this place closes."

U.S. Auto Industry Crisis Jeopardizes Manufacturing

Tour, Teach-in Focuses on American Jobs

More than 7.2 million paychecks in the United States are dependent on the struggling domestic auto industry, including jobs in the manufacturing, health care, service and retail industries.

On May 11, our union and the Alliance for American Manufacturing embarked on an 11-state, 30-plus city bus tour to deliver the important message that those jobs matter to all of us, not just Detroit, and all of us need to be in the fight to save them.

At every stop, the "Keep It Made in America" bus tour highlighted one common theme: Auto and other manufacturing jobs are the foundation of the American Dream, and the American Dream is under assault.

"This jobs crisis goes deeper than auto companies and assembly workers in Detroit," International President Leo W. Gerard said. "Reducing U.S. auto manufacturing drives down overall employment, from the people who make auto catalogs and shipping boxes to workers making glass for windshields, rubber for tires and other materials.

In our union in the United States and Canada, more than 350,000 of our members' jobs depend on the auto industry – from rubber, steel, glass and chemical workers to those who manufacture parts, computer chips and even paper used in sales brochures.

We also represent bank tellers who deal with auto loans, bus drivers who work for schools and health care workers whose jobs are in communities that would be hurt by the loss of auto jobs and the tax base they provide.

"The reality is this: if we are silent, we will be crushed. If we don't stand up and fight, we will be crushed," Gerard told a cheering crowd in Hamtramck, Mich., just outside Detroit. "I'm not going to tell you today that if we fight we're guaranteed to win, but I will tell you this: if we don't fight for our kids' futures and our grandkids' futures, we're going to lose. We've been silent for too long. Manufacturing is the backbone of this country."

Bus tour participants included workers from auto parts facilities and steel, aluminum, glass, plastics and rubber plants. They were joined on the tour by local auto dealers, community employers, and community organizers and politicians.

At the end of the tour, workers joined business, community and labor leaders May 19 at the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C., for a day-long 'teach-in' conference on the impact of the automotive supply chain in American communities.


Little Rock, Ark.


Indianapolis, Ind.


Humboldt, Tenn.


St. Louis, Mo.


Bay City, Mich.


Dearborn, Mich.

AAM Photos

Coast to Coast, USW Pushing Buy American

Union Working for Jobs Across North America

Nearly $800 billion in economic stimulus funds are now flowing from the federal government for infrastructure and other projects meant to help the U.S. economy get back on track.

The United Steelworkers worked hard in Washington, D.C., when the bill was being debated to make sure that a Buy American provision was included. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act signed by President Obama requires that American-made steel is used in infrastructure projects.

But the USW didn't stop there.

In nearly 1,000 cities, towns, villages, counties, states and other localities across the United States, USW members have helped introduce Buy American resolutions to help ensure that tax dollars aren't used to boost the economies of countries like China and India, where companies unfairly subsidize their industries, disregard environmental and safety regulations and manipulate currency.

"The Buy American resolution is smart policy," said International President Leo W. Gerard. "In order to pull the United States and the world out of this economic mess, we have to refocus the American economy on manufacturing."

Infrastructure investment could create as many as 18,000 jobs for every $1 billion invested, if U.S. goods and services are used, according to a University of Massachusetts study. Polls by Pew and Harris Interactive also show that more than 80 percent of Americans support Buy American provisions.

Good for Canada, too

Ken Neumann, the USW's national director in Canada, said the Buy American provision benefits the entire North American steel industry.

"When the American economy gets moving again, that will be good news for the steel industry in both countries," he said. "Our government should implement a Buy Canada program then both countries could develop a coordinated approach to domestic procurement.

"The North American steel industry was an integrated market long before the cross-border ownership that now exists," Neumann said. "This was recognized by the U.S. International Trade Commission in 2002 after the USW sought exclusion of Canadian steel from measures against foreign dumping."

Neumann said Buy American is not protectionist since it adheres to international obligations. He also noted that the USW has a long history of working for the mutual benefit of members in both countries.

More than 400 passed

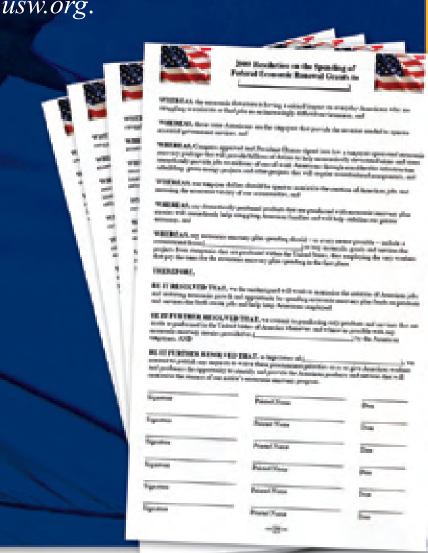
In the United States, the Buy American resolution has passed in Indiana, West Virginia and Kentucky, and in dozens of cities from West Valley, Utah, to Pittsburgh, where several Steelworkers showed up to testify.

The United States is, by far, the world's largest importer, bringing in $819 billion in goods in 2007.

As International Vice President Tom Conway said when he testified before the House Steel Caucus along with a panel of steel company CEOs: "Those opposed to this idea want to use our dollars meant to build roads, bridges and public works projects to buy government-subsidized steel and other goods made in places like China, where the government also manipulates its currency.

"Why should we let our hard-earned tax dollars support the economies of cheaters like China and help pad the pockets of some of the very same corporate fat cats who got us in this economic mess in the first place?"

You can track the resolutions and download a Buy American Tool Kit at www.usw.org/buyamerican. For more information about the USW's economic renewal campaign, for more information visit *www.makeourfuturework.org* or *www.usw.org*.



The resolution calls on local and state governments to:

- Maximize the creation of American jobs and restore economic growth and opportunity by spending economic recovery plan funds on products and services that both create jobs and help keep Americans employed.
- Commit to purchasing only products and services that are made or performed in the United States whenever and wherever possible with any economic recovery monies provided by the American people.
- Commit to publish any requests to waive these procurement priorities so as to give American workers and producers the opportunity to identify and provide the American products and services that will maximize the success of our nation's economic recovery program.

Contract Preserves Sunoco Refinery Jobs

Pay Cuts, Layoffs Resisted

"It's strictly a health-and-safety issue for our workers and the surrounding community."

As the recession worsened and unemployment soared, USW locals at two Sunoco refineries in Pennsylvania negotiated three-year contracts that protect bargaining unit workers from corporate downsizing.

The successful negotiations with Local 10-1 in South Philadelphia and Local 10-901 in Marcus Hook, Pa. were part of the ongoing National Oil Bargaining (NOB) contract talks.

Sunoco agreed there would be no involuntary layoffs at either facility and dropped a request for pay cuts. Both locals preserved gains they had made in previous contracts and obtained the NOB pattern.

A national pattern was set on Feb. 3 when the USW and the industry's lead negotiator, Shell/Motiva, reached a three-year agreement that averted national work stoppages.

The NOB program covers approximately 30,000 USW-represented workers in the industry. Most of the contracts in the program expired Feb. 1 while some are "off-date" and expire from several months up to a year later. The Sunoco contracts expired on March 1.

Layoffs sought

Citing a downturn in the refining business because of reduced demand for gasoline, Sunoco originally sought layoffs to cut expenses.

At the South Philadelphia refinery, Sunoco proposed a 25 percent decrease in the number of operator positions, pay cuts for 140 operators and some job combinations.

According to Local 10-1 President Jim Savage, 111 of the plant's approximately 400 operators would have been eliminated under Sunoco's proposals. Savage expressed concern over how cuts of that magnitude could impact the health and safety of employees and residents.

Sunoco workers demonstrate at Philadelphia City Hall.
Photo by USW Local 10-1

"It's strictly a health-and-safety issue for our workers and the surrounding community," he told local reporters.

Local 10-901 President Tim Kolodi said the company sought to eliminate about 90 of the approximately 450 union positions at the Marcus Hook refinery as well as cut pay for transfer and shipping department operators.

At both locations, Sunoco wanted to change pension, sick time and medical benefits without negotiating with the union.

Locals mobilize

After Savage learned of the proposed cuts in the first bargaining session with Sunoco, his local decided to fight back publicly.

They started with securing a billboard across from the refinery. With a photo of a refinery fire in the background, the billboard delivered the message: "Don't Let This Happen Here. Demand Safe Refinery Staffing Levels at Sunoco."

Management passed the sign every day.

The local then purchased radio time to tell the greater public that following through on Sunoco's plan to cut jobs would put the community at risk for possible fires and explosions. The radio spots were followed by a full page newspaper ad with the same message.

Three days before both of the March 1 expirations, local members and their community and union allies demonstrated at Philadelphia City Hall and marched to Sunoco's corporate offices chanting, "They say cut back; we say fight back!"

The marchers gave company representatives a petition signed by 2,000 residents who lived near the refineries and were concerned that the job cuts would create unsafe situations.

Both locals were prepared to strike, but minutes before the contracts expired it was determined that enough progress had been made to warrant 24-hour rolling extensions.

Local 10-901 ratified its contract on March 12, followed by Local 10-1's ratification the next day.

The pattern included a three-year agreement, 3 percent annual wage increases, a $2,500 lump sum payment, continuing health care coverage with an 80-20 split on premiums and inclusion of successorship and job security letters of agreement in the no-retrogression language. The locals also retained the right to bargain over pension, sick time and medical benefits.

At the Philadelphia refinery, both parties compromised on the combination of some operators' positions.

At the Marcus Hook refinery, Sunoco agreed to use our members to do major overhaul work instead of contractors and allow maintenance employees to move between both refineries and receive more money for their travel time.

"This was probably one of the toughest negotiations I've been in during my 26 years with Sunoco," Kolodi said. "It was a fair settlement for both labor and the company. Now it's time to move on."

Other agreements

The USW has since reached settlements at several other oil facilities. All met the NOB pattern agreement. As of this writing, contracts were pending at the ConocoPhillips refinery in Ponca City, Okla., and the Husky refinery in Lima, Ohio. Three more contracts are being negotiated this spring and four agreements expire this summer. The remaining contract, ExxonMobil at Baytown, Texas, expires next April.

Cause for Alarm

China: World's Largest Steel Producer and World-Class Polluter

China's steel industry grew by more than 20 percent a year in the last decade and now exceeds the combined production of the United States, Japan, Russia, India, South Korea, Germany, Ukraine and Brazil.

Now the world's largest steel producer, China is also a world-class polluter. It produces more sulfur dioxide and carbon monoxide than any other country, making it a major contributor to global warming.

The trends show no sign of abating. Even in the global economic slowdown, China continues to expand steel production while other countries contract. And it is backpedaling on already weak environmental protections as it speeds approval of new industrial projects to stimulate the economy.

LA smog from China

China's pollution is so severe that it affects communities thousands of miles away. On smoggy days, as much as 25 percent of the particulate matter in the air over Los Angeles can be traced to China.

As a result, a real climate change solution can not be achieved unless Congress and the Obama administration hold China accountable for its reckless environmental practices.

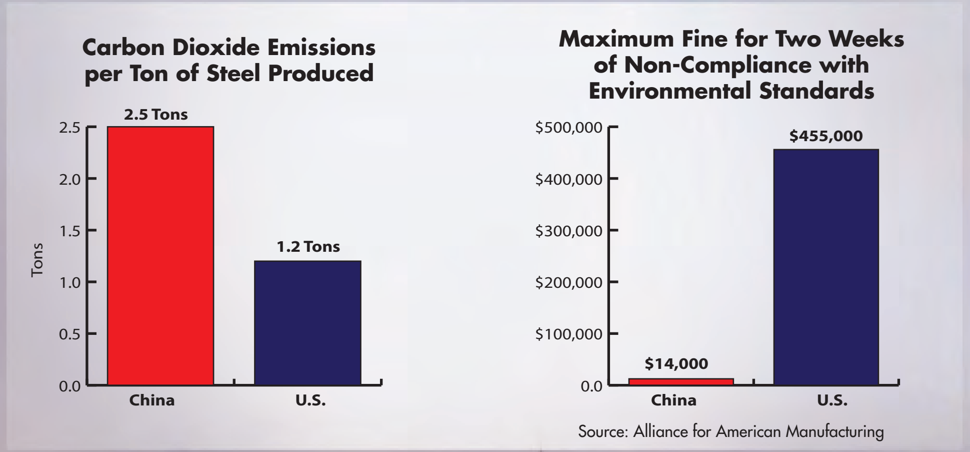
"China's steel industry is not only harming the health of its own people, but spreading pollution around the world and contributing to global warming," said Scott Paul, executive director of the Alliance for American Manufacturing (AAM), which is supported by the USW and leading manufacturers.

A new report issued by the AAM takes an in-depth look at China's pollution-control problems and the damage it is doing to human health and global efforts to address climate change.

"American jobs are at stake and so is the health of the planet," International President Leo W. Gerard said.

The USW represents more than 85,000 active workers in the basic steel industry, plus hundreds of thousands of retired steelworkers who are impacted by the inequities of environmental standards for China's steel production.

Gerard called for the report to be used as a guide for the United States and China to make Chinese pollution standards and enforcement efforts consistent with programs in other steel-producing countries.



Source: Alliance for American Manufacturing

By 2007 China was producing 500 million tons of steel a year, four times the amount it produced at the beginning of the decade. The United States, by comparison, only produced 94 million tons in 2007.

China makes too much steel even by its own count. The Chinese government estimates that China's annual output is about 100 million tons more than it should be, a figure equal to the whole annual output of the U.S. industry.

And steel is not the only industry that has too much capacity. China has 5,000 cement makers, 3,800 glass makers, 3,500 pulp and paper producers and no less than 24,000 chemical companies.

China's steel industry produces at least twice as much greenhouse gases per ton of steel as the U.S. industry. Mills in China emit more than five times as much sulfur dioxide (SO_2) per ton produced, almost three times as much nitrogen oxides and almost 20 times as much particulate matter as the American industry.

Its failure to control pollution gives China a significant advantage over more responsible competitors, the report showed.

"Ironically, China pays a heavy price for the serious harm it is inflicting on its citizens, resources and the environment,' Paul said. "And we suffer from the damage China is doing to the planet and unfair competition in the steel industry that's vital to American jobs and our economic future."

Energy subsidies

Research for the new report was conducted by the AAM with a team of environmental and legal experts, including investigators working in China. A year earlier, another AAM report found China's steel producers have received more than $27 billion in governmental energy subsidies since 2000.

Pollution is taking a heavy toll within China. According to the World Bank, pollution causes as many as 750,000 premature deaths there each year. Nearly all (99 percent) of the 540 million Chinese who live in urban areas breathe unsafe air.

Pollution from steel plants in China far exceeds the pollution created by the U.S. industry because of poor regulation and enforcement and the rapid expansion of capacity.

The levels of pollution are three to 20 times higher per ton of steel produced in China than in the United States, depending on the specific pollutant and industrial process analyzed.

Perhaps the most glaring example of the huge gap between environmental protection in China and the United States is the resources and personnel devoted to regulation and enforcement.

China's Ministry of Environmental Protection (MEP) has only about 300 employees, compared to the 18,000 who work for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Weak enforcement

In addition to low standards, the new report found that "the Chinese steel industry operates in an environment in which enforcement of existing standards is weak, the permit system is ineffective, and facilities do not do an adequate job of monitoring their emissions and discharges. Financial penalties for violations are too low to have a substantial deterrent effect."

Due to China's low standards and lax enforcement, U.S. steel companies in recent years spent 80 percent more than their Chinese counterparts per ton of steel – $8.83 versus $4.85 — on controlling air and water pollution alone.

This meant a yearly savings for China's steel sector of more than $1.7 billion at 2006 production levels. Chinese steel makers would have to triple or quadruple their capital expenditures to reduce emissions to U.S. levels.

"This report shows that China does not enforce its own environmental regulations," said Terrence D. Straub, U.S. Steel senior vice president for public policy and governmental affairs.

"Since Beijing has been unwilling to impose reasonable emissions regulations on provincial and local governments, there's little anticipation that they will address carbon emissions and global climate change either."


A cyclist travels through polluted air in Lanzhou, China.
AP Photo/EyePress File

UNITED STEELWORKERS

Rapid Response

Activists Lobby for Free Choice, Green Jobs and Economic Reform

Some 800 of the United Steelworkers' most active members joined forces with the Blue Green Alliance for a joint conference in our nation's Capitol, where repairing the broken economy, protecting our environment and expanding rights to organize topped the agenda.

The biennial Rapid Response national conference took place earlier this year in Washington, D.C. at the same time as the second annual Good Jobs, Green Jobs conference.

In all, nearly 4,000 people from labor, environmental groups, government, business and the academic world gathered to discuss green jobs, economic renewal, Employee Free Choice and other issues.

Educate, empower, engage

"Every time we have a Rapid Response conference it gets people motivated," said USW member Steve Merriner, of Local 995 in Follansbee, W.Va. "When you get a whole bunch of activists together you're energized and ready to go back and do some work at your local."

Since its creation in 1995, Rapid Response educates members who get others involved in advocating for workers' issues, sometimes at a moment's notice.

There are e-mail campaigns, phone drives, lunch-break meetings and other grass-roots efforts. Most recently, Rapid Response activists have been pushing the union's Buy American resolution and working for passage of the Employee Free Choice Act.

"When legislative issues impact our working lives, Rapid Response is there," said Tim Waters the program's director. "We take on key Steelworker family concerns like the economy, job creation, health care, overtime pay and trade and make sure our members' voices are heard."

This year's conference was especially poignant as the retirement of International Secretary-Treasurer James English, a pioneer of the Rapid Response program, was announced.

"The creation of the Rapid Response program has changed the relationship of the union and its members," English said.

"With it, we changed to a truly activist union, one in which the members write letters, make phone calls, attend rallies and do many other things to make our elected public officials realize that we will hold them accountable, support those who support us and oppose those who oppose us."

Rapid Response is needed now more than ever as our nation suffers through the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression, English told conference attendees.

"The challenge of our Rapid Response coordinators in each local union is to make sure that our members realize that they can make a difference by helping us make our elected officials accountable to us for the positions they take and the votes they cast," English said.

International President Leo W. Gerard addresses rally for the Employee Free Choice Act in Washington, D.C.
Photos by Steve Dietz

Employee Free Choice Act

A highlight of the conference was a Capitol Hill rally for the Employee Free Choice Act attended by Rapid Response devotees and thousands of others.

International President Leo W. Gerard led the rally, where U.S. Sen. Tom Harkin of Iowa and U.S. Rep. George Miller of California joined Sierra Club President Allison Chin in support of the measure.

"Time and again, you've seen your hard work, your creativity, your ingenuity, your productivity taken from you and given to shareholders, to the elites, to CEOs. Decisions about the workplace belong to the worker…that's the promise of America. It's foolish to think we will rebuild this country without the participation of the American worker," Miller told the cheering crowd.

After the rally, Rapid Response activists helped deliver some of the 1.5 million cards supporting the proposed law to the steps of Congress and spent the rest of the day lobbying lawmakers on issues important to working families.

The issues included job creation and the Employee Free Choice Act, which would give employees – not employers – the right to choose how they vote for a union and bargain for a better life.

The economic crisis and the impact it is having on USW members was a constant topic at the conference, as were ideas for economic renewal that works for working families.

One example: nurturing green jobs and making them good-paying, union jobs. Think manufacturing wind turbines, making energy-efficient windows and hybrid cars, or retrofitting buildings to be more energy efficient.

"As we move to a green economy, we aren't putting our jobs up for bid for China or Russia," Gerard said in his keynote address. "We won't give away our economic future to countries with slave labor and no pollution laws."

Another solution discussed was the USW's Buy American resolution, which urges governments at every level to buy U.S.-made steel and other products when spending the $800 billion in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds.

Chris Wegner, a member of Local 13729 who works for the City of Niles, Michigan, attended the Rapid Response conference and heard about the Buy American resolution.

"My first thought was to get right on it as soon as I got home," says Wegner. "It's the only way we're going to revitalize jobs in this country."

Wegner followed by helping get four resolutions passed in his area. "Some of the communities probably won't even get money, but they're still in favor. This is not a Democratic or Republican issue; it's an American issue."

Merriner attended a resolution workshop at the Rapid Response conference and returned home to help get three resolutions introduced. The Ball Corp. worker and third-generation Steelworker said revitalizing manufacturing in this country is a patriotic duty.

"To me, if you're not making something – if you're just buying and selling or servicing – you're not doing anything real. It's a national security issue. It's a safety issue. It's a pride issue," he said. "If the products that people need or want are made somewhere else – well, you see where that's gotten us. It's got to change.

"My dad worked at Weirton Steel until the day he died. My grandfather also worked there and in the mines. The work our families did went into the military, into the skyscrapers and the roads. That means something. It's good to say, 'Hey, I made that.'"

Secretary-Treasurer Retires after 41 Years of Distinguished Service

Mergers, Rapid Response and Fair Elections his Legacy

International Secretary-Treasurer James D. English is retiring from a distinguished 41-year career that shaped the United Steelworkers into the activist union it is today.

"Jim is a representative of the values of this union – hard work and integrity," International President Leo W. Gerard said in tribute to English.

District 9 Director Stan Johnson, who joined the USW in the 1995 merger with the United Rubber Workers (URW), succeeded English. He was appointed by unanimous vote of the International Executive Board (IEB) and sworn into office at an IEB meeting in May.

English told the USW's Rubber/Plastics Industry Council (RPIC) that it is a "great pleasure" to be followed in office by Johnson.

"Stan has shown tremendous talent both before and since the merger," English said.

Integrity and honesty

Co-workers describe English as a man of intelligence, integrity and honesty who took on big challenges and opportunities yet did not seek the limelight.

"As George Becker said to me once, he's so honest that if he found a $20 bill on the sidewalk, he'd call the IRS," Gerard recalled.

As Secretary-Treasurer beginning in 2001, English served as the union's chief financial officer, responsible for overseeing the USW's investments and financial operations as well as directing union elections and other internal operations.

He helped to negotiate and implement most of the mergers with other unions that built our membership strength including those with the URW, the Aluminum, Brick and Glass Workers Union (ABG) and the Paper, Allied-Industrial, Chemical and Energy Workers International Union (PACE).

Rapid Response

Financial affairs were just one aspect of his job. English oversaw development of the award-winning Rapid Response, a legislative initiative that engages the union's membership on political and social issues that affect their jobs, families and communities. Rapid Response has been honored by the AFL-CIO as a top legislative action group and mobilization network.

An enduring achievement, the program took off from the beginning, said Johnson, who served with HR Director Robert Rootes as the first co-national directors.

"Jim's ability to guide that program was instrumental in creating the activist union that we have become," Johnson said.

AFL-CIO organizer

English joined the USW's Legal Department in 1968 after graduating from Georgetown University's law school and working for two years as an organizer for the AFL-CIO.

He played a key role in negotiations in the steel, aluminum and container industries and was a major force in developing lead and coke oven emission standards adopted by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA).

From the mid-1970s through 1994, his principal role was to serve as the union's neutral attorney. He had the responsibility of making sure International union elections were conducted properly in the face of penetrating Department of Labor scrutiny.

Bound not to support either side, English served as a neutral during contested International elections. Notable races include the 1977 contest between former president Lloyd McBride and Ed Sadlowski, and the 1984 race between former President Lynn Williams and Treasurer Frank McKee.

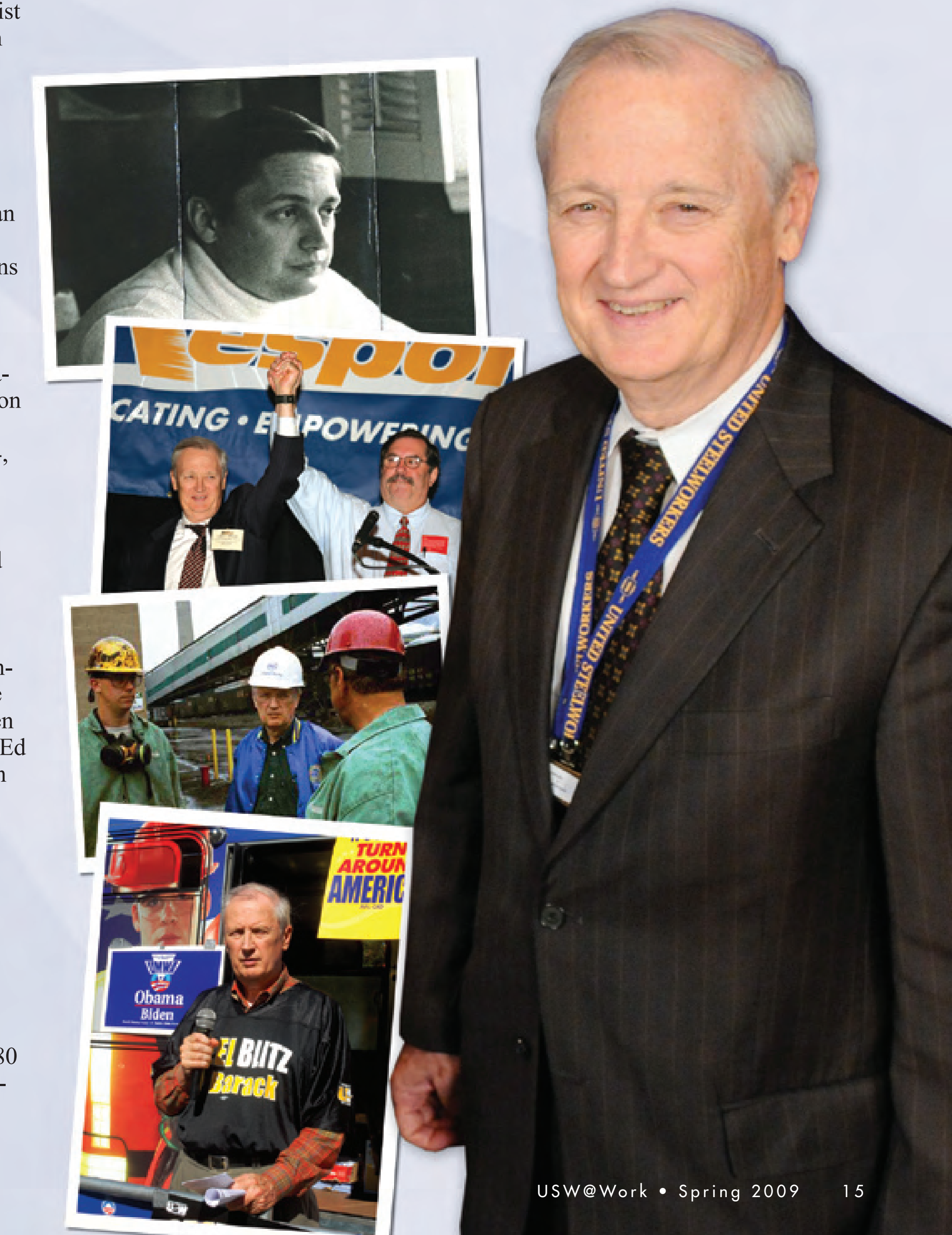
Preserved elections

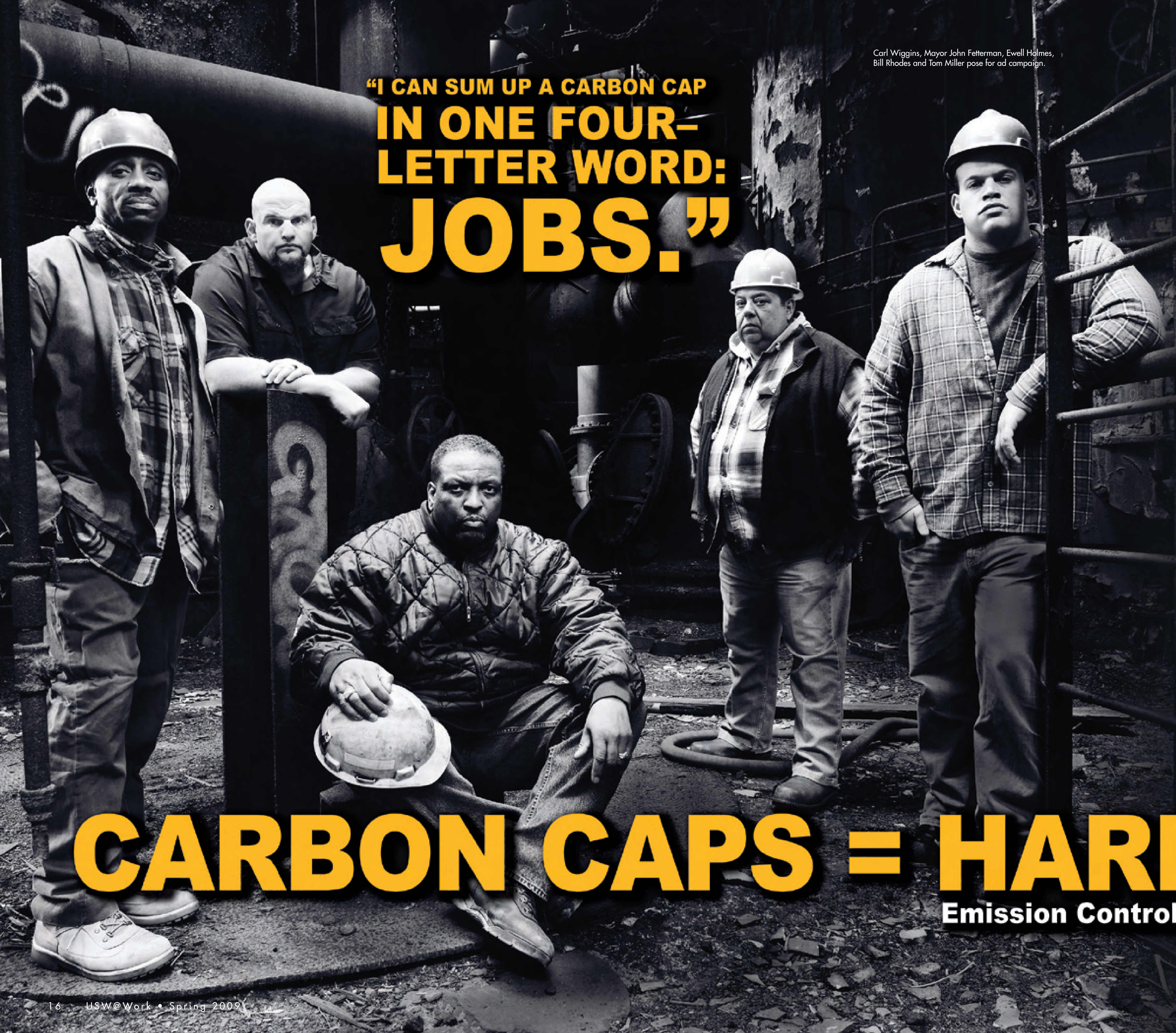
In order to preserve our unique system of direct membership election of International officers, English recommended a dramatic overhaul of the union's constitution and election manual.

His work led to the creation in 1980 of the Campaign Conduct Administrative Committee (CCAC), whose first chairman was former Secretary of Labor Willard Wirtz, who served in the John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson administrations.

The CCAC oversees prohibitions against the use of outsider monies in election campaigns and against using union funds and facilities in support of any candidate. Those provisions were upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court in the early 1980s.

In 1994, then newly-elected President Becker named English as his executive assistant, a position he held until 2000 when he served briefly as the union's general counsel before becoming secretary-treasurer.





Carl Wiggins, Mayor John Fetterman, Ewell Holmes, Bill Rhodes and Tom Miller pose for ad campaign.

"I CAN SUM UP A CARBON CAP IN ONE FOUR–LETTER WORD: JOBS."

CARBON CAPS = HARD HATS

Emission Controls Could Mean Good Jobs

A group of steelworkers and the tattooed Harvard-educated mayor of a small steel town near Pittsburgh are the stars of a television, print and Internet advertising campaign that supports a cap on carbon pollution.

The campaign, sponsored by the Environmental Defense Action Fund and endorsed by the USW and the Blue Green Alliance, links a cap on carbon emissions to the creation of new jobs in blue-collar industries.

Todd Simko, who was laid off in March when Precoat Metals closed its plant in McKeesport, Pa., was one of several USW members featured in the gritty "Carbon Caps = Hard Hats" campaign. They were filmed in an abandoned mill and in Braddock, Pa.

"Anything that creates jobs I'm all for it. I've got a family of five," said Simko, 33, whose three children aged 12, 13 and 16 were also filmed. "We need work. This place is dead."

Fascinating experience

Jaimee Grinage, a second generation Woman of Steel, participated in the filming during a layoff from U.S. Steel's Irvin Works near Pittsburgh. She has since returned to work in the mill's coating department.

"The experience was so fascinating, to see how a commercial is made," Grinage said. "It was just nice to be a part of this."

Grinage studied the issue after appearing in the commercial and said she supports carbon cap legislation to "lower emissions, help the environment and create jobs."

Emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases including methane and nitrous oxides trap the sun's heat and contribute to global warming.

A carbon cap, the ad campaign maintains, would limit utility and industrial emissions while, at the same time, creating demand for steel and other products that can be used for alternative energy applications and products to retrofit older buildings and make them more efficient.

Jump-start economy

Climate change legislation is a critical step to jump-starting the U.S. economy, said International President Leo W. Gerard.

"The USW has long believed that good jobs and clean jobs are the same thing and we don't need to trade one for the other," Gerard said.

"In today's stagnant economy, we need carbon reduction legislation more than ever to generate good-paying, sustainable jobs and a future with clean air."

Braddock Mayor John Fetterman said his steel town in Pittsburgh's Mon Valley didn't get a bailout like Wall Street and the nation's banking center but could get a boost from efforts to provide alternative energy sources and lower energy consumption.

"Each wind turbine contains 250 tons of steel and has thousands of moving parts," Fetterman said. "Producing that steel and those parts means jobs, the kind of jobs that are good to raise a family on, the kind of jobs we lost around here in the 1970s and 1980s."

Unfair Trade Challenged

USW, Steelmakers Seek Relief from Chinese Oil Pipe

The United Steelworkers and seven steel manufacturers filed a petition with U.S. trade agencies accusing China of illegally dumping and subsidizing pipe used in the oil and gas industry.

The petition, filed April 8 with the U.S. Department of Commerce (DOC) and the U.S. International Trade Commission, begins an investigative process that will determine whether the domestic industry will receive relief from China's unfair trading practices.

Chinese producers benefit from massive illegal government subsidies and dumping margins ranging from 40 to 90 percent, the USW and the domestic companies allege.

At the time of the filing, more than 2,000 workers were laid off from domestic operations making oil country tubular goods. They represent a third of a domestic industry that employs 6,000.

Manufacturing at risk

The petition seeks to assure that members of the USW will have jobs when the market comes back from the recession.

"We cannot let China get away with targeting these family-supportive and skilled jobs through predatory trading practices," said International President Leo W. Gerard.

"China must be stopped from cheating on trade with illegally dumped and subsidized products that destroy our ability to drill for oil and gas in the United States."

World-class production facilities in the United States are idle as a result of a surge in illegally traded imports from China, and there is a danger those facilities could be closed forever.

Dumped and subsidized imports from China tripled from 750,000 tons in 2006 to 2.2 million tons last year and continued increasing in the first quarter this year. The 2008 shipments were worth an estimated $2.7 billion.

These imports have significantly undersold domestic producers and have created a huge inventory buildup in the U.S. market, according to Rob Simon, vice president and general manager of Evraz Rocky Mountain Steel Mills, a petitioner.

The USW is the largest union representing production workers employed by the petitioner companies. U.S. Steel Corp. is the largest producer. Others included Maverick Tube, Evraz Rocky Mountain, TMK IPSCO, V&M Star, V&M TCA and Wheatland Tube.

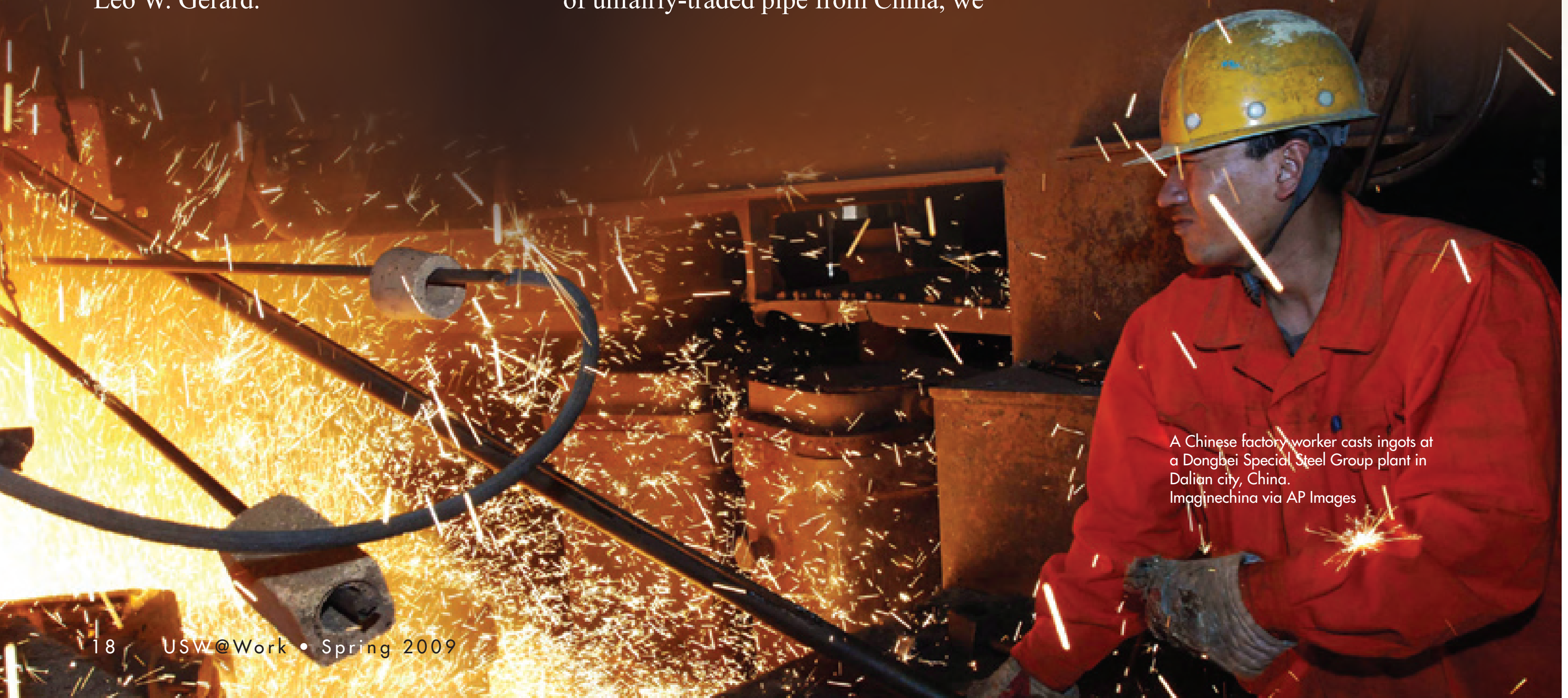
Import volume astonishes

"Because of the astonishing volume of unfairly-traded pipe from China, we have large numbers of laid-off workers at world-class production facilities that need strict enforcement of our trade laws before it's too late and we lose the capacity to make this critical product," said International Vice President Tom Conway, who oversees the union's pipe sector.

The petition alleges two forms of unfair trading practices. Dumping occurs when a foreign producer sells a product in the United States at a price that is lower than the producer's sale price in its home market or below the cost of production. Subsidizing occurs when a foreign government provides financial assistance to benefit the production, manufacture, or exportation of a good.

If the Department of Commerce finds that an imported product is dumped or subsidized and the ITC finds that a U.S. industry producing a like product is materially injured or threatened with material injury, an antidumping duty order or countervailing duty order will be imposed.

Under U.S. trade law, the ITC is to make a preliminary injury determination by May 26. The DOC is expected to issue a preliminary subsidy finding by Sept. 8 and a preliminary dumping finding by Nov. 6.



A Chinese factory worker casts ingots at a Dongbei Special Steel Group plant in Dalian city, China.
Imaginechina via AP Images

Photo by Steve Dietz

Challenging Times

Paper Workers Fight to Keep Industry Alive

USW paper workers, like the rest of our union's membership, are living through a challenging time for their industry. The weak and changing economy has led to less demand for paper and forest products.

In the United States, some 250,000 workers have lost their jobs since the beginning of the decade. In the last two years alone, 25 paper industry mills have been shuttered. The forest industry in Canada has seen 20,000 layoffs.

Despite the gloomy news, paper workers are fighting back. A new Packaging Corporation of America (PCA) Box Master Agreement was ratified in April. Paper workers are lobbying Congress to keep a tax credit in place so jobs are not lost.

Graphic Packaging workers are mobilizing for a fair contract. Georgia-Pacific workers at a site the USW organized two years ago are fighting for a first contract. Our union is making sure the Smurfit-Stone and AbitibiBowater bankruptcies do not negatively impact our members.

Through the work of the USW and U.S. Rep Michael Michaud (D-Maine), a bipartisan caucus has been established in Congress to focus on issues facing the paper industry. Caucus members represent states or districts with paper mills.

USW paper workers from pulp and integrated pulp and paper mills have been contacting their representatives and senators and lobbying on Capitol Hill to retain the alternative fuels tax credit for the industry.

Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus (D-Mont.) and other senior lawmakers say the tax credit has turned into an unintended, billion-dollar windfall for the paper industry, and they are considering legislation to remove the tax break, let it lapse or limit it. Some Canadian companies say the credit puts them at a disadvantage.

Paper companies that have pulp mills or integrated pulp and paper-making operations obtain the credit by mixing small amounts of diesel fuel with the wood pulp by-product "black liquor" in recovery boilers that are used to power operations.

The tax break helps the paper industry in the conversion to alternative energy. Millions of dollars have been invested in recovery boilers and other technologies that use renewable fuels derived from biomass. The industry produces almost 70 percent of its own power and even sells the excess energy generated to the power grid.

"The timing of this credit is impeccable," said International Vice President Jon Geenen, who heads the union's paper sector. "The paper industry is cash starved right now and in need of capital investment to maintain black liquor recovery systems and develop other biomass conversion. This credit maintains other critical infrastructure if there is to be a vibrant paper industry in the United States."

Life line for industry

The tax credit is also a life line for an industry that has many mills in small towns that depend on them to sustain the community.

Working to preserve this critical credit is also giving USW paper workers a chance to have a real conversation with our elected officials on the importance of the paper industry and its future.

The issue is part of a larger struggle to preserve and encourage green industry in the United States. In addition to black liquor mills, many paper mills are working to increase the capacity to recycle – behavior that should be encouraged by our nation.

"If this tax credit is removed, thousands of good-paying jobs could be lost," said USW member Fred Bailey who works for AbitibiBowater in Coosa Pines, Ala.

"Jobs like the one me and my co-workers have aren't readily available in our area. If our mill shuts down, we would have a difficult time finding a job that paid the same amount. So in a way, this tax credit is helping to keep small-town America alive."

Import Surge Costing U.S. Jobs

U.S. Tire Industry Threatened by Chinese Imports

In a major trade complaint that seeks to preserve American jobs, the United Steelworkers is asking President Obama to cap a large burst of consumer tire imports from China.

"We are aggressively using America's trade remedy laws to help workers and their employers combat an import surge from a country not playing by the rules," said International President Leo W. Gerard.

The petition, filed with the International Trade Commission (ITC) on April 20 under Section 421 of the Trade Act of 1974, will be the first test of President Obama's election campaign pledge to increase enforcement of U.S. trade laws.

Relief may be granted under Section 421 if a surge of imported products causes or threatens to cause market disruption to domestic producers. The ITC conducts a hearing and proposes relief where appropriate. A final determination will be made by President Obama.

So far, however, no Section 421 relief has ever been granted because former President George W. Bush rejected every petition that reached his desk, often on the grounds that it was not in the overall economic interest of the United States.

WTO safeguard

China agreed to a temporary country-specific safeguard measure as part of its bilateral trade negotiations with the United States, necessary for China's eventual accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001. The "safeguard action" gives the United States the option to combat injurious surges of certain product imports.

"Section 421 is a tool to redress Chinese import surges that gets us through the current economic crisis and preserves a part of America's industrial base," Gerard said.

The USW seeks to cut imports of tires from China used on passenger cars, light trucks, minivans and sport utility vehicles by more than half to 21 million units, the level of imports in 2005. The proposed quota would increase 5 percent per year over three years.

The petition maintains this would improve domestic job security, enable U.S. tire makers to regain lost market share, increase production and sales, and allow investment in capital equipment so domestic employers could better compete over the longer term.

The USW represents about 15,000 tire workers employed at 13 plants in nine states, which accounted for nearly half of the industry's production capacity in 2008.

Overall, the domestic consumer tire industry counts 10 producers with 27 plants in 15 states: Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Mississippi, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee and Virginia.

"American workers are struggling to make it through the worst economic crisis in 80 years," Gerard said. "Our tire industry is collapsing under the weight of 46 million Chinese tires entering our shrinking market annually."

Last year, China sent 46 million tires worth more than $1.7 billion to the United States, making it the single largest source of consumer tire imports.

Imports of consumer tires from China increased from 2004 to 2008 by 215 percent in volume and 295 percent by value, documents submitted in the case show.

Domestic production declined during the same time period by more than 25 percent. The domestic industry's share of the U.S. tire market declined from 63 percent in 2004 to below 50 percent last year. The Chinese share of the U.S. market grew from less than five percent to more than 17 percent.

"We believe the evidence strongly supports an affirmative outcome as a result of this import surge from China," said International Vice President Tom Conway, who chairs the union's negotiating committee at Goodyear Tire and Rubber Corp.

Six factories closed

Since 2004, nearly 7,000 U.S. tire workers have been affected by the shutdowns of six consumer tire factories, Conway said.

Continental Tire closed plants in Kentucky and North Carolina. Bridgestone/Firestone closed one plant in Oklahoma and Goodyear one plant in Texas.

This year, Cooper Tire announced plans to close a non-union plant in Albany, Ga., which employs 1,400 workers. Michelin said it will close a USW-represented plant in Opelika, Ala., which employs 1,000, by Oct. 31.

"We need a quota imposed to reduce the artificial level of imports flowing from the distortions in the Chinese economy and the government's manipulation of its currency," Conway added.

The ITC's six member commission will direct an investigation, hold public hearings and vote on a final recommendation to be sent to President Obama.

The ITC has 60 days from the filing of the petition to determine whether imports of consumer tires from China are causing market disruption. If the ITC makes an affirmative decision, it forwards a report to the president by day 80. The president will then have 70 days to decide whether to grant relief.

Goodyear's Tyler Plant Lost Market to China

Until it closed last year, Goodyear's Tyler, Texas, plant made the type of consumer tires that are the subject of the trade case filed by the USW against China with the U.S. International Trade Commission.

The Tyler plant employed about 1,450 USW members at its peak to produce wholesale, private-label tires sized to fit 13,14 and 15 inch wheels – the market segment that has been destroyed by imports from China.

"Tyler is representative of a plant that did everything right," said Jim Wansley, retired president of USW Local 746L.

"We built a culture there, an employee involvement culture and we became the leaders in productivity, safety, waste innovation, and company-union relations in the seven years I was the union president," he added.

The plant, built in 1962 by Kelly Springfield and once the second-largest employer in Tyler, is empty and for sale. The asking price is $9.2 million.

Goodyear had warned that the market for the consumer tires made in Tyler was under attack, Wansley said.

"For over 10 years in our negotiations the company made it pretty plain that we were losing a whole segment of our tire market and that it was accelerating," he said.

"We've steadily lost plants and Tyler was the latest. As Goodyear goes into negotiations this year, they've already said they're not going to be able to maintain the number of plants that they have, so we're looking at another situation."

Tyler's fate was a key issue in the last round of negotiations with Goodyear three years ago. The deal worked out in late 2006 after a three-month strike allowed Goodyear to stick with plans to close the plant, but provided a one-year transition period during which workers would have an opportunity to take advantage of retirement buyouts.

The plant completely closed in 2008. Tire production stopped in January. A smaller rubber mixing operation that remained was halted later in the year.

The impact on the Tyler region has been far-reaching when you count lost wages and benefits, taxes, charitable contributions and spin-off jobs.

"For the 1,200 or so jobs that we lost at the plant, the community lost another three to five times that. They lost their biggest United Way contributor. The impact just goes on and on," Wansley said.

"The state has been out untold millions of dollars in unemployment benefits and retraining and every bit of it is a direct result of foreign competition, unfair foreign competition."

The Tyler Economic Development Council estimates that the plant generated $948 million a year in direct and indirect spending in the local, regional and state economies.

The tire factory was the second biggest employer in Tyler behind an air conditioning factory, but it had the largest payroll in dollar terms, said Tom Mullins, the council's president and CEO.

"These were good, middle-class, all-American manufacturing jobs that we hated to lose," Mullins said.

Jim Wansley
Photo by Jaime R. Carrero/Carrero Photography

Protecting Jobs and Benefits Key

Rubber/Plastic Industry Conference Sets Bargaining Goals

Protecting jobs endangered by a deep recession and an unprecedented flood of imports is the top bargaining goal for this year's round of talks with major tire producers.

Master contracts with Goodyear, Bridgestone/Firestone and Michelin North America Inc. covering some 20,000 USW members expire this July.

As part of the preparations for those talks and later discussions with other tire makers, the USW's Rubber/Plastic Industry Conference (R/PIC) met over two days in March to develop bargaining policies and goals that balance the needs of workers with the realities of the global recession and slow demand.


Photos by Tom Fitzpatrick

International Vice President Tom Conway acknowledged tough times and warned delegates to be wary of employers who would take advantage of a slow economy to overreach.

Essential bargaining

Given the decline in the world economy and the flood of imports impacting the domestic industry, conference delegates agreed to make job security this year's lead goal.

Duane Pritchett, president of Local 1155 in Morrison, Tenn., said delegates came up with a short and clearly written list of bargaining goals to show seriousness of intent to bargain.

"But it's an essential list," he said. "At this point, we can't afford to think in terms of gains. We've got to hold our ground and not concede anything."

Each of the three big tire companies has already cut back on production since the last contract talks. Goodyear closed a tire factory in Tyler, Texas. Bridgestone shut down a facility in Oklahoma City and Michelin announced the closure of its plant in Opelika, Ala.

Goodyear strike

Many of the issues at the top of this year's bargaining goals were among the issues discussed in the last round of talks held three years ago in 2006.

Those talks were marked by an 86-day strike against Goodyear over, among other issues, management's attempts to wash their hands of legal and moral responsibilities to retirees.

The strike was settled with agreement to establish a Voluntary Employee Beneficiary Association (VEBA) trust fund to take over retiree health care obligations. Goodyear committed $1 billion to the fund.

Maintaining dignity, equity and security for retirees is again a major bargaining goal. That means maintaining properly-funded defined benefit pension plans and employer-sponsored health care programs where they exist.

Delegates pledged to push for the maintenance of employer-sponsored retiree health care programs where they are in place. Elsewhere, effort should go toward providing adequate future funding for VEBA trust plans.

Under the banner of job security, delegates agreed to address plant closure protections and the need to maintain capital investment in facilities for them to remain viable.

Recognizing the grim reality of the economy, policymakers called for protecting and improving already negotiated closure benefits and Supplemental Unemployment Benefits (SUB).

Companies must not, for example, be permitted to bankrupt SUB plans and deny members unemployment benefits by implementing short work weeks.

Keep COLA

While we are in an economic downturn, the delegates also concluded we cannot ignore the Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) issue.

COLA, originally negotiated in 1976 as a result of a three-month strike, remains an essential part of rubber agreements. All efforts must be made to preserve the financial security of our members, the delegates recommended.

Skilled trades

Delegates also called for job security language to protect skilled trades workers from losing jobs over contracting out of work.

Maintaining and improving health and safety conditions for active members, and closing the gaps between veteran and new employees in tiered wage systems are also key topics.

"We will take all steps possible to eliminate the disparity between old and new employees," said Policy Committee Chairman Daniel Barber, president of Local 831 in Danville, Va.

Recognizing that difficult economic times can motivate employers to cut corners, the policy committee called for vigilance in maintaining and improving health and safety language.

Tire demand off

The demand for tires in North America, the largest market for a global industry, has fallen with the nation's economic collapse and the steep decline in domestic auto sales.

It's difficult to underestimate the importance of the domestic auto industry to tire makers and the rest of the nation's manufacturing industries.

"General Motors alone is the fourth largest company in the world," said Local 87 President Dennis Bingham, at Delphi in Dayton, Ohio. "They buy more tires, more steel, more plastic and rubber products than anyone."

Automotive sales are projected to fall to 10.1 million units this year, down from 13.5 million in 2008 and 16.5 million in 2007. That would be the fewest number of vehicles sold since 1967.

Not only are people not buying cars, they are putting fewer miles on the vehicles they already have.

"Machinery sales, car sales, truck sales, everything is down," said Mike O'Connor, of Local 7 in Akron, Ohio. "And people are just taking a more cautious approach to where they have to drive and when. All of those things contribute to a flat market. It's a huge concern."

Victory at Cooper

During the conference, Ron Hoover, retiring executive vice president in charge of R/PIC, praised local unions at Cooper Tire & Rubber Co.'s Findlay, Ohio, and Texarkana, Ark., tire plants.

Faced with the threat of a plant closure, the USW locals at both of those facilities negotiated separate contract agreements that secured jobs and production for the three years.

Cooper afterwards announced it would close its non-union passenger and light truck facility in Albany, Ga., within the next year.

"These guys put together an agreement that in many ways was better than the pattern. They established common expiration dates and closed a non-union scab plant rather than a union plant, and that is virtually unheard of these days," Hoover said. "I marvel at their talent."

R/PIC Leader Ron Hoover Plans Retirement

As head of the USW's Rubber/Plastics Industry Conference (R/PIC), Ron Hoover never let up the fight to win job security for our members and to persuade employers to invest in American production and jobs.

Hoover fought to keep companies producing tires and rubber products in North America as opposed to China and other foreign markets, and he defended workers from the industry's attempts to cut costs on the backs of USW members and retirees.

Now 68, the International executive vice president has decided to hang up his boxing gloves. He will retire this summer 45 years after he went to work for Goodyear in Topeka, Kan., and made the decision to get involved with the United Rubber Workers (URW) union.

Hoover announced his decision during R/PIC's pre-negotiations policy conference in Pittsburgh this March.

"This union and its members have made my life truly blessed," he said.

"Hoover led a three-month work stoppage in 2006 against Goodyear that secured a $1 billion investment to protect medical and prescription drug benefits for current and future retirees.

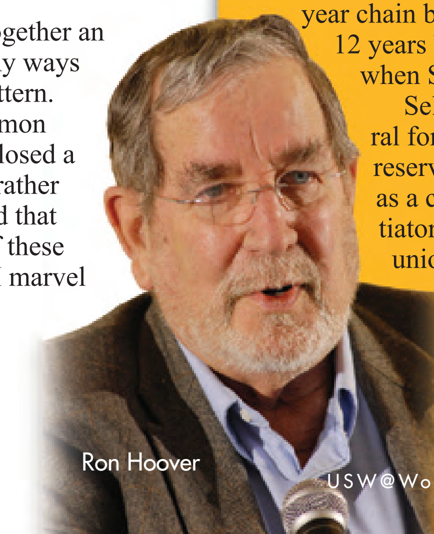
He helped to engineer plant sales to save U.S. jobs and joined with Titan Tire in filing a trade case that led to duties on subsidized and dumped off-road tires made in China.

Hoover joined the URW in 1964 when he went to work at Goodyear. He was a union activist at Local 307, serving as division chairman and two-term president before his appointment to the URW staff in 1989. After the URW merged with the USW in 1995, Hoover served as assistant to John Sellers, who then led R/PIC.

Hoover was coordinator of the Goodyear chain bargaining committee for 12 years before taking over R/PIC when Sellers retired in 2005.

Sellers called Hoover a natural for the position and said his reserved nature belied his talents as a critical thinker and negotiator who had the trust of the union's locals.

"Ron is very smart, very savvy," Sellers said. "People may buy his aw-shucks manner, but they do so at their own peril."


Ron Hoover

A Slap in the Face

Pipe Made in India Infuriates Unemployed Steelworkers

Congress Asked to Tighten Trade Laws, Support U.S. Jobs

With the big mill in Granite City, Ill. idle for the first time in 130 years, it was startling for unemployed steelworkers to discover flat-bed train cars pulling into town loaded with miles of steel pipe made in India.

"Just it being in our country in these trying times is an insult to me, my membership, our community and America in general," said outgoing USW Local 1899 President Russ Saltsgaver, whose local represents some 2,000 workers laid off from U.S. Steel's sprawling Granite City Works.

The pipe, each section stenciled with the phrase "Made in India," will become part of a new pipeline under construction to carry tar sands crude oil from Canada to refineries in the U.S. Midwest.

The presence of imported pipe in the shadow of an idled American mill has caused an outcry among workers and sparked calls for Congress to tighten trade rules and for more companies to Buy American and support U.S. jobs.

Trade laws fail workers

It's another example of how inadequate or unenforced trade laws are failing American workers and have led to a dangerous decline in the capacity of manufacturing industries in the United States.

"I think it is an outrage and a manifestation of what's been happening to manufacturing in America for a number of years now," said USW Sub-District 2 Director Dave Dowling.

"As a matter of public policy, we've allowed our manufacturing base to slowly disappear. It's a trend that must be stopped."

The USW has stepped up the filing of trade actions against China and other countries that are illegally subsidizing steel exports and dumping steel in this country at below fair market prices.

The union and its activist members are also pushing for domestic policies to restore America's manufacturing capacity and the family-supporting jobs that manufacturing has historically provided.

Around the country, USW members are asking state and local governments to use federal stimulus money whenever possible to Buy American and support domestic jobs.

Politicians show support

In Granite City, politicians of both parties expressed their support. U.S. Rep. Jerry Costello (D-Ill.) called for fair trade policies that create good-paying jobs in the United States.

"At a time when thousands of local steelworkers are laid off, shipping steel from India for a project in our area is unacceptable and outrageous," Costello said. "We can and should make that steel in the U.S."

Now in its second year of construction, the Keystone Pipeline, a $5.2 billion joint venture between ConocoPhillips and TransCanada, an energy producer and transmission company, will run 2,148 miles and move Canadian tar sands crude oil from Alberta to markets in the U.S. Midwest.

In Illinois, the oil will be processed at the Conoco Phillips refinery located about 12 miles away from the Granite City Works. The refinery has undergone a major upgrade to process the Canadian crude.

The irony of imported pipe stacked in the shadows of a once productive American plant that has been closed for lack of orders is hard to take for workers who have been laid off by the thousands.

"I'm sure everyone can understand the emotional impact for me, watching this within sight of our idled mill," said Doug May, a USW member and crane operator who has worked at the Granite City plant for 35 years. "I felt like someone punched me in the gut."

May and Dennis Barker, Local 1899's Rapid Response and PAC chairman both got close enough to the train cars to photograph "Made in India" and other markings linking the pipe to the Keystone project.

Retiree sounded alert

Jeff Rains, a Granite City retiree and activist with the Steelworker Organization of Active Retirees (SOAR), made the discovery while walking from his home to the union hall.

He was delayed at a rail crossing by a pipe-laden train as it was switching back and forth into the River's Edge, a former Army depot that has been designated a U.S. foreign trade zone.

"It was a huge train and I got curious," Rains said. "I started looking for a port of origin, but there was nothing. Then I walked up to the cars and saw the stencil "Made in India."

Rains, who worked for most of his adult life at the Granite City Works, said he was "very, very angry" over the foreign-sourced pipe and the loss of work it potentially represents.

"I worked over 30 years at that plant. My older brother had 40 years and my younger brother is a current employee, now laid off. So, it's a vital part of my family," he said.

The jobs issue has strong local support. Some 1,000 people attended an April rally staged by Local 1899 to draw attention to the foreign-made product. In February, before Rains discovered the pipe, 5,000 people marched through Granite City to support a strong Buy American clause in the federal stimulus package.

"Just (this pipe) being in our country in these trying times is an insult to me, my membership, our community and America in general."

Photo by Dilip Vishwanat

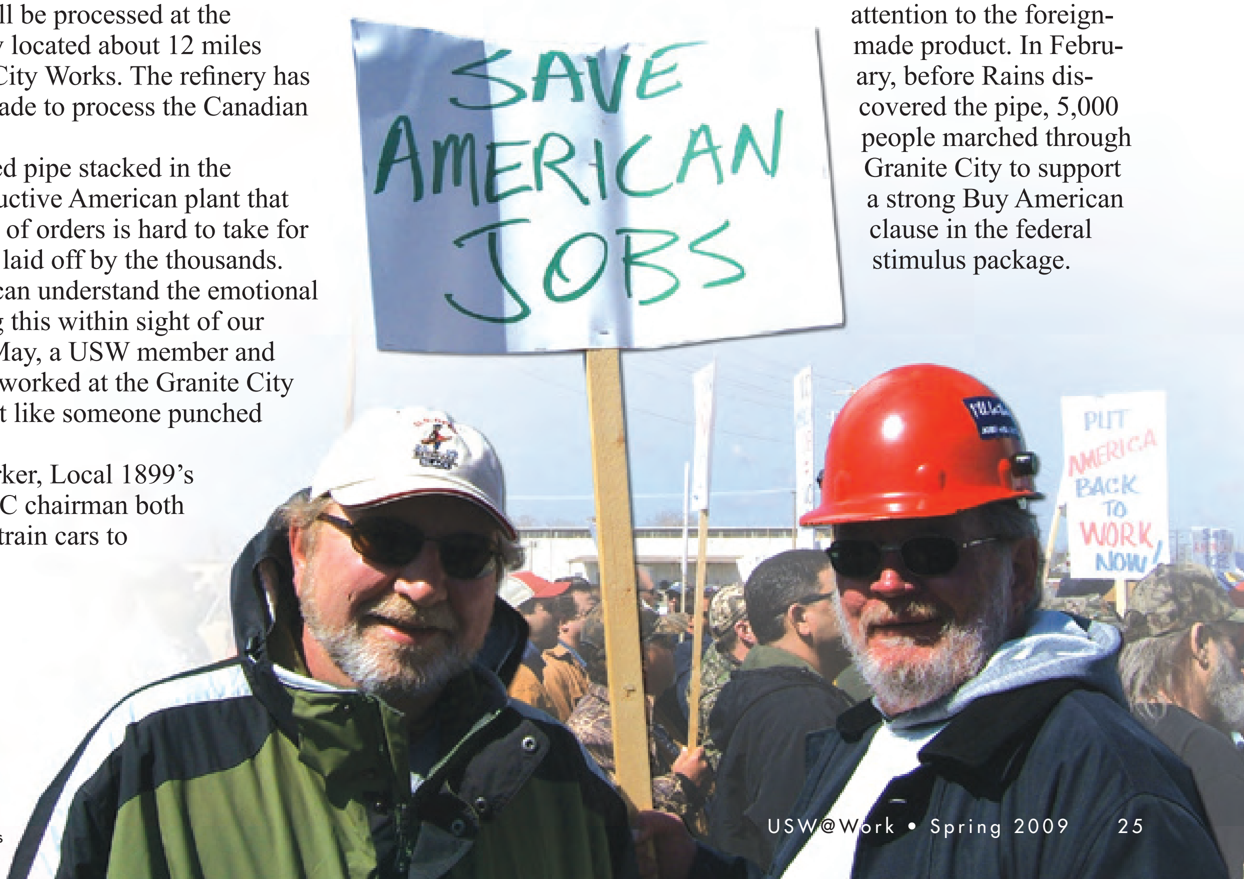


Photo by Gary Gaines

Shrinking manufacturing

The shrinking of American manufacturing capacity apparently played a role in the pipe procurement process. TransCanada claims the American and Canadian industries could not meet all of its requirements in 2006 when 560,000 tons of large-diameter pipe were ordered.

While some of the pipe came from Canadian and U.S. producers, the biggest order went to a giant Indian company, the Welspun Group, whose business interests range from home textiles to pipe manufacture and oil and gas exploration.

Jim Prescott, a pipeline spokesman, contends U.S. firms could not meet all project criteria including price, quantity, quality and delivery dates tied to construction schedules.

"When the bids went out, it was clear that steel manufacturers in the United States were maxed out," Prescott told inquiring reporters.

If trade laws had been fair over the years to U.S. producers, the domestic industry might have retained the production capacity needed to timely fill this type of large order.

"We've been losing manufacturing capacity at an alarming rate and we need to stop that. We need to restore manufacturing to the United States," Rains said.

Photo by Dennis Barker

USW Challenges Pipeline Permit

Safety Reasons Cited

The USW is challenging the pending federal permit for a controversial $5.4 billion pipeline to transport crude oil from Alberta, Canada, to Houston, Texas.

International Vice President Tom Conway on April 6 filed a formal complaint with the U.S. Department of Transportation urging that a special permit requested by TransCanada, the pipeline company, be denied.

Conway said the pipeline, under construction to carry crude oil from Alberta, Canada, to U.S. refiners, is using a 36-inch thin-wall pipe at higher maximum operation pressure than is safely permitted under existing regulations.

"Our members work hard to produce quality steel and large diameter crude oil transmission pipe right here in the U.S. that meets all safety requirements," Conway said.

USW-represented steel and pipe production workers "do not want to be denied the opportunity to provide that quality pipe based on a waiver of a fundamental safety regulation promulgated under the normal rule-making procedures," he added.

Pipe imported from India made news April 7 when some 1,000 steelworkers on layoff from U.S. Steel's Granite City mill joined a demonstration over its use in a separate TransCanada pipeline with a terminus to the Conoco-Phillips refinery in Wood River, Ill.

When their mill is operating, Granite City steelworkers produce flat-roll products that can be used by domestic pipe makers.

In the DOT submission, the union wrote it was in agreement with the serious safety concerns filed earlier by the Sierra Club on the pipeline's permit application.

"Non-compliance would increase the risk of ruptures, leaks and spills and lessen pipeline safety by the use of thinner pipe and greater operating pressure," the complaint said.

Rupture risk

Hazardous material pipelines historically have a much greater risk of rupturing because of overpressure that occurs in surge events.

The pipeline company proposes to move tar sands bitumen, which differs from typical crude oil in its chemistry and mineral components.

The company does not address what internal corrosion may occur from the higher mineral content existing in tar sand bitumen, the union noted.

"Allowing operation at a greater percentage of maximum operating pressure means allowing construction with thinner pipe, which will have less ability to withstand corrosion over time," Conway said.

Put People First

Global Union Calls on World Leaders to Protect Workers

Put people first in rebuilding the world's economies. That's the challenge the global union Workers Uniting presented to world leaders attending the G-20 financial summit in London.

Workers Uniting, the international union created last summer by the USW and Unite the Union, the biggest union in Britain and Ireland, called on G-20 leaders to protect working people as the current financial crisis jeopardizes millions of jobs and livelihoods.

Formally known as the Group of Twenty Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors, the G-20 represents 19 of the world's largest national economies plus the European Union. Its members have about two-thirds of the world's population and 85 percent of its economic output.

"Workers across the world are calling for an end to the unregulated markets, and a new approach is needed," said Unite Joint General Secretary Tony Woodley. "We now have a unique opportunity to lift people out of poverty and create good quality jobs."

While in London for a meeting of the Workers Uniting Steering Committee, International President Leo W. Gerard and other USW leaders joined an estimated 35,000 protestors who marched through the city demanding action on jobs, poverty and climate change.

Support manufacturing

The new global union called for government support for the manufacturing sector, particularly auto companies and their suppliers. It also set out strategies to address the consequences of mismanagement in the financial sector.

"Governments around the world must step forward to provide meaningful economic stimulus to mitigate the impact of what is rapidly becoming a devastating worldwide recession," Gerard said.

"They must also begin to reestablish their role in regulating economic activity in a manner that ensures that the interests of working people are properly addressed," he added.

The crisis in financial markets, which began in the United States and the United Kingdom in 2007, has spread to much of the rest of the world.

Millions of jobs are expected to be lost as the recession, the worst in generations, drags on, jeopardizing the futures of working families everywhere. In fact, the International Monetary Fund expects economic growth in the developed world to decline this year for the first time ever since World War II.

In a position paper, Workers Uniting blamed the current crisis on "30 years of ideologically driven unsustainable free market policies" that have eroded standards of living and workers' rights around the world.

"While globalization, free trade agreements, attacks on unions and workers have been pushed in the name of a flexible and competitive economy, these policies have resulted in growing inequality, poverty, insecurity and environmental problems," the report said.

Not enough done

National governments have not done enough to support workers through this period of recession, said Unite Joint General Secretary Derek Simpson.

"We need fundamental change to ensure we put people first. There can only be one solution to this downturn and that is through worker prosperity and the creation of supportive jobs," he said.

Workers Uniting is committed to an international campaign to rebuild our economies so they create decent jobs and public services, eradicate global poverty and inequity and build a green economy.

International President Leo W. Gerard, Unite's Derek Simpson and Tony Woodley, Secretary-Treasurer Stan Johnson, Vice President Fred Redmond, National Director for Canada Ken Neumann and Jerry Fernandez.

Global Solidarity

STOP the Violence!

USW's Redmond Confronts Colombian President Over Trade Union Murders

Following the first meeting of the Workers Uniting Steering Committee, a fact-finding team from the USW and the UK's Unite the Union traveled to Colombia and confronted its president over labor and human rights violations.

Led by International Vice President Fred Redmond and Unite Chairman Tony Woodhouse, the delegation met with Colombian trade union and human rights organization leaders and heard testimony from dozens of victims of atrocities committed by Colombian security forces and paramilitary groups.

During an April 7 video conference with Colombian President Alvaro Uribe, Redmond cited U.S. State Department statistics showing an increase in violence against trade union members in Colombia and called for it to stop.

Trade agreements opposed

"The United Steelworkers will oppose free trade agreements between Colombia and the U.S. or Canada until the government of Colombia demonstrates real progress in ending labor and human rights violations in Colombia," Redmond told Uribe.

Both the United States and Canada have negotiated free trade agreements with Colombia. So far, neither of those agreements has been ratified by legislatures.

Simon Dubbins, director of international affairs for Unite the Union, made clear to Uribe that the delegation did not accept his claim that progress is being made in ending rights violations.

Instead, Dubbins said the delegation believed testimonials from dozens of victims of atrocities committed by Colombian security forces and paramilitary groups that state-sanctioned violence against trade unionists is widespread.

"We are shocked at what we have heard, and have no doubts on the evidence given that the Colombian government of Alvaro Uribe, and the security forces, are complicit in these human rights crimes," the delegation said in a statement read by MP Sandra Osbourne of the United Kingdom.

Too little progress

Despite the Colombian and United States governments' assertions to the contrary, there has been too little real progress in ending the brutality that trade unionists face in Colombia. Over 2,700 unionists have been killed there since 1987.

The delegation, which included six members of the British Parliament and top trade union leaders, also met with numerous leaders from the Colombian government. Some members of the group toured a prison and visited with human rights activist Martin Sandoval. They called for his release.

Union Building

ArcelorMittal Workers in Liberia Vote Union Despite Election Interference

By Mike Zielinski

Editor's note: The USW and the AFL-CIO Solidarity Center began aiding Firestone Rubber plantation workers in Liberia about four years ago at the request of workers who elected a new union there in 2007. The USW later became involved with workers at ArcelorMittal's mining development in Liberia. Those workers elected union representation on April 11 with the USW's Mike Zielinski serving as an official observer in Buchanan, Liberia. The Liberia Ministry of Labor cited Zielinski's report in upholding the final election results. His edited report follows.

There was serious interference from political and company officials in the voting process, efforts that appear to have succeeded in suppressing the number of voters who participated in the election.

The polls were supposed to be open from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. In Buchanan, however, the polls did not open until 11:50 a.m. During the delay I counted 32 workers who arrived to vote, only to find the polling place closed. Most left to go to their jobs.

Talking to these workers I learned that there was a great deal of confusion as to whether the vote was going forward or not. They said ArcelorMittal officials discouraged people from participating by ordering them to work without allowing time to cast a ballot or by suggesting that the election would not take place. This message was reinforced when workers found the polls closed.

The mayor of Buchanan also questioned why an election was taking place, and people reported that political leaders pressured the Labor Commissioner to cancel the election.

Poll opening delayed

The polls opened nearly six hours late because the Labor Commissioner went in search of ArcelorMittal officials to discuss obstacles placed in front of voters.

When the voting finally commenced, the process went smoothly. Workers were asked to present their company identifications and were then checked against employee lists provided by ArcelorMittal and Odebrecht, a Brazilian-owned contractor.

Staff from the Ministry of Labor briefed every voter on how the voting process worked, giving them a detailed explanation before they entered a private room to vote in secrecy.

At a few minutes past 3 p.m., the Honorable Rep. Gabriel B. Smith of Grand Bassa County entered the polling place accompanied by a man who was identified as the police chief, along with several other uniformed police officers. Shortly afterwards, they were joined by Arthur Massaquio, a public relations officer for ArcelorMittal who earlier in the day had signed in as an elections observer.

Rep. Smith held up the voting for one hour. During this time, workers came in to vote only to be told to sit down. At one point, I counted 34 people who had arrived to vote, but were instructed to remain seated by Rep. Smith.

Rep. Smith challenged the need to conduct the voting and challenged the Forestry, Logging and Industrial Workers Union of Liberia's placement on the ballot.

Rep. Smith said he was acting in the interests of the United Steel, Industrial and Railroad Workers Union of Liberia, which had approached him about stopping the election. He said there would be "chaos" if the election went forward, despite the fact that the process had been trouble-free up until he intervened.

Rep. Smith then ordered the people waiting to vote to go back to work because he was canceling the election. The workers were also addressed by Massaquio, who stepped out of his role as an observer and lectured the room on why the election should be cancelled.

Finally, Rep. Smith took a phone call from Ministry of Labor official Cole Bangalu in Monrovia. He did not divulge the contents of their conversation, but left the polling area just after 4 p.m. By then most of the workers had cleared out of the polling place as Rep. Smith had instructed them to do.

I then observed Massaquio, the ArcelorMittal official, get into Rep. Smith's vehicle where the two of them conducted a private conversation. As Massaquio exited the car, he shook Rep. Smith's hand and said, "Thank you, my friend."

Meanwhile, the Labor Commissioner announced that his instructions from the Ministry of Labor were to proceed with the voting despite the interventions. The polls remained open until 6 p.m. and only a handful of voters turned out.

Mike Zielinski, right, talks to workers in Liberia.

I have observed union and political elections for some 20 years and have never witnessed such blatant interference.

It is virtually certain that several dozen voters were intimidated by the intervention of the political and corporate leaders and that word spread throughout ArcelorMittal's Buchanan operation that Rep. Smith had cancelled the election.

Workers vote decisively

Despite these efforts to derail the democratic process, workers voted decisively for a union, recognizing that their most fundamental rights of free association were at stake.

When the polls closed, the ballots were counted in the presence of the observers.

The preliminary numbers gave 217 votes to the two unions on the ballot and just one vote to management, the non-union option.

The workers chose the Forestry, Logging and Industrial Workers Union of Liberia (FLIWUL) over the United Steel, Industrial and Railroad Workers Union of Liberia by a vote of 198 to 19.

Two weeks later, the Liberia Ministry of Labor certified FLIWUL as the winner of the representation election and rejected objections filed by ArcelorMittal.

Stan Johnson
Appointed Secretary-Treasurer

Stan Johnson, 52, has been appointed USW Secretary-Treasurer by the International Executive Board to fill the remaining term of Jim English, who retired. He will also serve as chairman of the 40,000-member Rubber and Plastic Industry Conference (R/PIC).

Johnson grew up in a union household. He recalls being on the picket line as a young boy with his father, who was employed by the Gates Tire Co. in Nashville and a member of the United Rubber Workers (URW) union.

"There was never any question in my mind that the union was responsible for my family's middle-class standard of living," Johnson said.

When he got out of school, he went to college for a while but quit to take a job in the same tire plant where his father worked. It was then owned by Armstrong Tire.

"I just volunteered for things," he said. "I became shop steward, I went on to hold nearly every position in the local and I eventually was elected president of 700-member URW Local 670."

His plant was acquired by Pirelli and Johnson led his local on strike in 1994 when the company tried to terminate retiree health care benefits. It was a brutal struggle as Pirelli replaced the entire membership of Local 670 and another plant with scab labor. Victory came when the National Labor Relations Board ruled it an unfair labor practice strike and Pirelli agreed to preserve retiree health care.

Following the merger of the URW and USW, International President George Becker recognized Johnson's leadership capabilities and offered him a job in Pittsburgh.

One of his first assignments was to work on the development of the Rapid Response program, a network of activists who influence national legislation crucial to union members. Rapid Response stands out in the labor movement as a model for membership participation.

His other assignments have been varied and included moves to different geographic areas. Becker promoted him to assistant to the International president, assigned to working on trade issues in Washington, D.C. He went on to serve as USW organizing director in Pittsburgh for two years. When an opening occurred in the Carolinas in 2003, he was assigned as a sub-district director.

Ten months later, he was recalled to Pittsburgh to become the executive assistant to Becker. When Leo W. Gerard took over as International president at Becker's retirement, he offered Johnson the position of assistant to the director of District 9, headquartered in Birmingham, Ala. Johnson became district director when Connie Entrekin retired in 2006.

District 12 Director
Terry Bonds Retires

District 12 Director Terry Bonds, 67, retired in May, capping a career that began in 1970 when the former millwright was elected vice president of a local union at Alcoa's plant in Point Comfort, Texas.

"I served in almost every capacity in the union – shop steward, local union president, political coordinator, organizing coordinator, Rapid Response coordinator and sub-district director," Bonds said. "I tried my damnest to never forget where I came from. I'm still an old Alcoa millwright who people elected to represent them."

In 1995, Bonds was named assistant director for the then new 11-state District 12. He was first elected director of District 12 in November 1997, re-elected in 2001 and was re-elected by acclamation in 2005.

He said he was most proud of how District 12 merged the former PACE and USWA staffs after the 1995 merger. "Our staff is pretty much a seamless group now," he said. "I'm proud of them and the job they did."

A native Texan, Bonds worked as a roughneck in oil fields around the Texas Gulf Coast before going to work at Alcoa, where he joined USW Local Union 4370. He was elected vice president in 1970, became president in 1972 to fill an unexpired term, and was elected president in 1973.

In 1976, Bonds was appointed as a staff representative in the former District 37. In 1984 he was named sub-district director for the Houston area and later for all of Texas and served as the district's organizing coordinator and legislative representative.

Daniel Flippo
Named District 9 Director

Daniel Flippo, 46, was appointed Director of District 9 in May 2009 to succeed Stan Johnson, who became International Secretary-Treasurer.

Prior to his appointment as director by the International Executive Board, Flippo had served as Assistant to the USW District 9 Director since 2007.

A native of Amory, Miss., Flippo began his career in 1980 as a production worker for Conoco Chemicals, now Georgia Gulf Chemicals, in Aberdeen, Miss.

Flippo joined Local 15198 and quickly became a union activist. He took on a variety of assignments including steward and grievance chairman before he was elected president of the local in 1986. He served three terms.

Because the plant uses the hazardous material vinyl chloride in the process, "safety was a very important part of the work," Flippo said.

After attending the AFL-CIO Organizing Institute, Flippo worked for several years as a volunteer organizer in former District 36. He became an International staff representative in 1996.

While a staff representative for Mississippi and Alabama, Flippo played a significant role in establishing the Mississippi Labor Management Conference and served on the conference board of directors.

As a sub-director for Florida and Georgia, Flippo was instrumental in integrating staff assignments following the 2005 merger with PACE. He was appointed assistant to the director in 2007 after attending the Trade Union Program at Harvard University.

As assistant director, Flippo served as chair of both the Package Holding Council, formerly Blue Ridge Paper, and the BASF Council. He was coordinator of the district's PAC, First Contract and Education committees.

He was raised in a union household, the son of a Teamster truck driver, attended Amory High School and Itawamba Community College.

Robert LaVenture
Named District 12 Director

Robert LaVenture, 57, was appointed director of District 12 in May 2009 to succeed Terry Bonds, who retired.

Prior to his appointment by the International Executive Board, LaVenture had been an assistant to the director of District 12.

A native of Wisconsin, LaVenture joined the union when he went to work at an International Harvester foundry in Waukesha, Wis., in 1970.

Once his probation period was up at International Harvester, now Navistar, he joined Local Union 3740 and accepted an appointment as a local trustee. He later served as local union steward and vice president before being elected president of the local, a position he held for five terms.

While local president, LaVenture was involved in developing the Navistar Education Center, the first employee education center in Wisconsin. The center was replicated in 11 locations across the state.

In 1988, LaVenture worked briefly as a state AFL-CIO coordinator assisting in the setup of the education centers. He joined the USW staff in 1989 to service the Milwaukee area in what was formerly District 32.

In 1993, he transferred to Concord, Calif., in what was then former District 39. Four years later, in 1998, he moved to Oklahoma as a staff representative to fill a vacancy and a year later became sub-director for Oklahoma and Arkansas.

Director Bonds asked LaVenture to relocate to Albuquerque, N.M., in 2003 as an assistant director. His duties included, among other things, assisting the staff in negotiations. He was also dues and first contract coordinator.

LaVenture also serves on the Advisory Board of the Institute for Career Development (ICD).

Reopen or Sell!

Photo by Scott Marshall

Three busloads of unemployed steelworkers rallied at the Federal Plaza in downtown Chicago to demand that ArcelorMittal reopen its steel mill in Hennepin, Ill., or sell it to a firm that would run it.

Despite a $48 million profit last year, ArcelorMittal announced its intent to permanently close the Hennepin mill and move its production elsewhere. The company has shut down plants and blast furnaces around the world in response to the global downturn.

Illinois gave $10 million in tax breaks to ArcelorMittal in 2005 to get the company to locate offices in Chicago, not far from Federal Plaza, said District 7 Director Jim Robinson.

"Now they are closing a viable operation and are preparing to ship vital equipment to France and Brazil," Robinson added. "Instead, they should sell the mill to viable bidders who will keep good-paying jobs here in America."

USW Local 7367 represents about 285 Steelworkers at the Hennepin plant, located about 100 miles west of Chicago. Putnam County, where the Hennepin mill is located, currently has the highest jobless rate in Illinois at 14.1 percent.

U.S. protests against the company have been peaceful. In Europe this month, workers angry over plant closures attacked the company's headquarters in Luxembourg, setting off smoke bombs and breaking windows.

Members Revive Fund

When hurricanes Ike and Gustav ravaged the Gulf Coast last fall, our union had a problem.

The United Steelworkers Charitable and Education Organization, a non-profit fund that has been there in the past for so many members facing large-scale tragedies, was nearly depleted and unable to assist in the way we would hope.

The Rapid Response network issued a call for action at the end of last year and local unions responded by raising more than $200,000 to date. District 13 led the way by raising $45,000, followed by District 12 ($35,000) and District 1 ($29,000).

Contributions are tax deductible. You may write checks to the Steelworkers Charitable and Educational Organization. Mail to: United Steelworkers, c/o Tim Waters, Rapid Response, Five Gateway Center, Pittsburgh, Pa. 15222.

Free Jobless Help

The AFL-CIO and its Working America affiliate launched a new Web site that offers a database of resources and advice for unemployed people looking for jobs.

The site, *www.unemploymentlifeline.com*, includes a Talk With Others section where people can ask questions and give advice to others about job resources.

Everything Comes at a Price

A laid-off U.S. Steel Canada worker has traded his hard hat for a guitar, making a searing YouTube tribute video for thousands of his former colleagues who are also unemployed.

Remo Cino, a 10-year employee who was laid off from the former Stelco last year, composed a song he titled, "Everything Comes at a Price." It is played out against a backdrop slideshow of current and past images of the steel plant and workers.

While Cino's tribute is directed at U.S. Steel Canada workers, he has dedicated it to all those laid off due to the current recession. To see the video, go to *www.YouTube.com* and search for the song's title.

Joslyn Jones, a member of USW Local 351L at the BFGoodrich plant in Tuscaloosa, Ala., is the lucky winner of a Political Action Committee drawing for a Harley-Davidson motorcycle or $10,000. PACs and the funds they raise play a key role in the USW's ongoing political activism on behalf of working people and their families.

New Lease on Life

USW Local 14200 member Jim Hahn was featured in *USA Today* after he donated a kidney to his wife Hannah just before he lost his job at Americas Styrenics in Marietta, Ohio.

The surgeon moved up the procedure by a month so the Hahns could take advantage of insurance coverage while it was still available from the company, a joint venture of Dow Chemical and Chevron Phillips Chemical.

"If more people knew how easy it was to be a living donor, I think a lot more people would step up to the plate and be willing to be donors," Hahn said.

The kidney transplant took place in February at Washington's Georgetown University Hospital. It was one of several surgeries Mrs. Hahn has had in the past decade.

Medicare will cover Mrs. Hahn's medical needs once the company-paid insurance coverage lapses. Jim Hahn said he would try to go without coverage while he attends nursing school.


Photo by Joe Brier

Labor Conference in Iraq

Jim Norris, president of USW Local 675, joined a delegation of American labor union members who attended the first International Labor Conference ever held in Iraq.

Norris, whose amalgamated local represents oil, chemical and other workers in Southern California and Nevada, traveled with six delegates organized by the group U.S. Labor Against the War (USLAW).

The conference, held March 13 and 14 in Erbil in the Kurdish region of Iraq, drew more than 200 delegates from unions and federations in Iraq, the United States, the United Kingdom, South Africa, Japan, Australia and Iran.

Minimize the Hardship, Alcoa Told

Workers should not bear the full brunt of the global economic downturn, International Vice President Fred Redmond told Alcoa at its annual shareholders meeting.

"We are urging Alcoa to redouble its efforts to respond to the economic crisis in a way that minimizes the hardship for Alcoa's current and laid-off employees," Redmond told the May 8 meeting.

Redmond spoke to the annual meeting on behalf of the Alcoa Global Union Network, a network of trade unions from around the world.

Alcoa Members Reinstated

Ten employees wrongly accused of participating in a slowdown at Alcoa's Warrick, Ind., plant were returned to their jobs under a settlement with the company.

"The settlement, while not absolving them completely, does allow the men and women to resume their careers at Alcoa free from living under the cloud of suspicion of having violated a key part of our contract that prohibits lockouts, strikes, and slowdowns," said Local 104 Business Agent Marty Ellison.

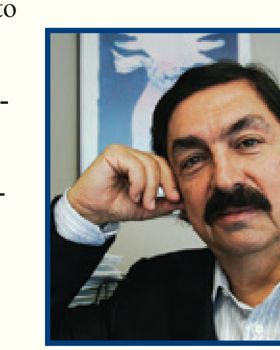
Ellison praised the 1,500 members of Local 104, calling their solidarity a "clear demonstration of the basic principles of unionism."

While the union's policy is to keep individual grievances private, the public was informed of this settlement because of the extensive media coverage the case received.

Court Rules for Miners' Union Leader

A panel of judges in Mexico City's Federal District Court granted legal protection to exiled mining union leader Napoleón Gómez Urrutia.

The March 23 decision invalidates arrest warrants issued for him and Mexico's extradition request to Canada, where Gomez and his family now live.



The Mexican government prosecuted Gomez after he publicly protested the 2006 deaths of 65 miners at Grupo Mexico's Pasta de Conchos mine, calling them "industrial homicide."

After his life was threatened, the USW helped him and his family settle in Canada, where he continued to receive death threats.

"The continuing legal and personal persecution of Napoleon Gomez must end," said Ken Neumann, USW National Director for Canada, who helped Gomez and his wife secure work papers enabling them to remain in Canada.

Supporting Car Wash Workers

Actor Esai Morales joined other members of the Screen Actors Guild in urging Los Angeles motorists to boycott car washes that mistreat their workers.

The former NYPD Blue star picketed the Vermont Hand Wash in late April as part of a boycott being coordinated by the USW's Carwash Workers Organizing Committee.


Photo by Claudia Li

Vermont Car Wash is one of several owned by the same family that have been cited or fined for failing to pay minimum wage and provide workers compensation insurance, among other offenses.

"Everyone has the right to speak out and organize against unacceptable conditions on the job, without the fear of retaliation," Morales said.

Capitol Letters

Real agent of change

President Barack Obama's first 100 days showed workers there was reason to hope that he'd be a real agent of change, as he promised, a guy at the top who would give the working class a fair chance instead of constantly kowtowing to the corporate class.

Democratic majorities in both houses of Congress helped, of course.

Together they created and saved jobs by passing a stimulus package and working to preserve the U.S. auto industry. They established a foreclosure prevention program. They passed a 2010 Budget Resolution that will ease health care reform. And they began reversing tax priorities.

When Congress passed the stimulus bill in February, House Appropriations Committee Chairman David R. Obey (D-Wis.) said, "I think we need to appreciate that the bill is the largest change in domestic policy since the 1930s."

Change: It was dramatic. In the previous eight years, each improvement in social policy required a pitched battle, like that over the first increase in minimum wage in a decade. The stimulus legislation, however, made progress in several social areas. It extended unemployment insurance, increased food stamps and boosted Social Security payments. It also provided aid to continue health insurance for the unemployed.

New jobs, clean environment

The main point of the stimulus package, of course, was to create more than 3 million jobs as unemployment continued to rise. Hundreds of billions in the $787 billion package is devoted to public works projects and to alternative energy that will both create jobs and improve the environment.

In addition, the bill contains $8,000 tax credits for first-time home buyers. This helps the purchasers and the collapsed market.

Similarly, the Obama administration established a foreclosure prevention plan for existing homeowners. The $75 billion plan pays lenders to help borrowers stay in their homes by modifying their mortgages. The Bush administration, by contrast, launched programs that were criticized for being too little, too late. One, for example, called, "Hope Now," proved inadequate because it was voluntary and privately funded. By providing adequate federal money for his program, Obama changed the tone.

Change: While dealing with wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and trying to stabilize Wall Street, the Obama administration also took on the troubles of Michigan – the car industry. Obama set up the Presidential Task Force on the Auto Industry, which includes Ron Bloom, former special assistant to International President Leo W. Gerard. As auto workers were pressured to accept concessions to prevent the bankruptcies of GM and Chrysler, there was some feeling of parity when Obama asked for GM Chairman Rick Wagoner's resignation in March. Still, the sinking feeling returned in May when Chrysler filed for bankruptcy. And it remained unclear at press time whether the same fate awaits GM.

Middle-class tax cuts

Late in April, Congress passed the fiscal year 2010 Budget Resolution. It renews $500 billion in tax cuts for the middle class that were set to expire over the next several years. That comes on top of the tax cuts given to virtually every working family in the stimulus package. They didn't go to the rich and "trickle down."

And on May 4, Obama announced his intention to pursue corporations and the rich who hide profits overseas to avoid paying taxes. Obama said the offshore tax havens encourage companies to ship jobs overseas, and he wants to end it. The telling statistic is this: Last year American multinationals paid $16 billion in taxes on $700 billion in foreign income – an effective tax rate of a mere 2.3 percent.

That is a different approach from the previous administration that gave huge tax breaks to the rich. That is change.

Most significantly, the 2010 Budget Resolution clears a path for health care reform if Republicans refuse to cooperate later this summer.

The Party of No

The GOP has, so far, rebuffed Obama's every entreaty. He invited them to the White House for cocktail parties and the Super Bowl. He solicited their opinions on issues. Still, not one member of the House voted for either the stimulus legislation or the budget resolution. And Sen. Arlen Specter, the newly minted Democrat from Pennsylvania, still voted days later with his former fellow Republican senators against the budget resolution.

Specter provides a glimmer of hope for Congress. He switched parties, noting that the GOP would not support him in the Pennsylvania primary next year.

With Al Franken, the Democrat from Minnesota likely to take his disputed Senate seat in June, Democrats may have the 60 votes necessary to override a Republican filibuster. That is if they can keep Specter in line as well as conservative Democrats.

Change: A progressive president and the 60 votes necessary to finally secure progressive legislation. Finally.

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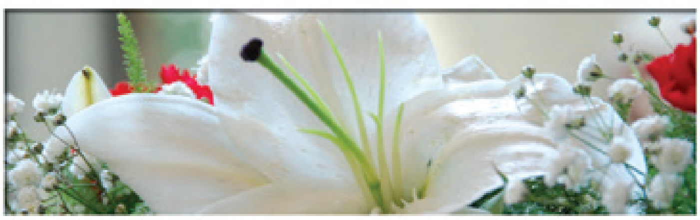
In Memory of

USW Members who

4/30/08	Russell Payne, 61	ArcelorMittal; Mittal Steel USA
5/3/08	Marcus Christopher Broome, 28	International Paper Company
5/8/08	Calvin Craig Turner, 35	Toromont Industries Ltd.; Toromont Cat Ltd.
5/22/08	John Sroka, 24	All-American
6/22/08	Lloyd "Butch" Benjamin, 49	Haverhill Paperboard Corp.
7/23/08	Peter Conley, 43	Huhtamaki Food Service
7/21/08	Eugene Diserio, 57	Eagle Manufacturing Co.
7/28/08	Edmund Giasson, 51	Cerberus Capital Mgmt.; New Page Corp.
8/15/08	Peter Eudave, 35	Asarco Ray Mines
8/20/08	Justin Rogers, 22	Canada Talc Ltd.
9/3/08	Robert J. Fuchs, 65	Severstal Steel
10/7/08	Steve Webber, 53	Fedje Gunderson Contractors
10/11/08	Tom Eftank, 67	Buzzi Unicem
10/17/08	Joseph Williams, 28	Kinder Morgan
10/30/08	Rocky Scullino, 58	Essar Steel Algoma
11/5/08	Greg Mayo, 56	Airgas Merchant Gases
11/5/08	Jeffery Pace, 27	Alton Steel Incorporated
11/10/08	Heladio Ramirez, 32	Highway Steel
11/11/08	Dale Sharman, 49	Delek US Holding
11/27/08	Richard Smith, 57	Kimberly Clark Paper
12/4/08	James Hammett, 50	Delek US Holding
12/4/08	Terry Paradis, 45	CN Rail
1/04/09	Andrew Hunter, 46	City of Galveston, Texas
1/05/09	Billy Frank Halford, 59	Chapman Forest Products
1/13/09	Jose Galindo, 68	Highway Steel
1/15/09	John Grobsmith, 58	Crucible Steel
2/2/09	William Drake, 65	International Paper
2/12/09	Donna Prisco, 52	Pinnacle Airlines (Colgan Air Inc.)
2/12/09	Matilda Quintero, 57	Pinnacle Airlines (Colgan Air Inc.)
4/3/09	Ryan Huxley, 29	Valley Brook Nurseries
4/26/09	Nelson Tan, 50	Exxon Mobile



Died at Work

2008 2009

Workers Memorial Day 2009