

USW@work

A Publication of the United Steelworkers

A Powerful Voice for Workers

**LABOR
DAY
2009**



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“We stand without apology for the principle of paying people well ... That is both morally right, and we believe the right way to organize an economy.”

Ron Bloom

former assistant to the USW International President, in a 2008 speech to a Campaign for America's Future conference. Bloom now heads the Presidential Task Force on the Auto Industry. (see page 30)



Make it Here

As the economy continues to sputter, more people are beginning to realize that manufacturing matters to the United States and Canada.



Safety Matters

A pilot safety training program in District 2 honors the life of USW member Kevin Wilson, who was killed at work two years ago.



Fighting the Wave

The USW stands up for tire industry workers whose jobs are jeopardized by a wave of cheap Chinese imports.



Keep Up the Pressure

USW activists continue to press for the Employee Free Choice Act as potential compromises are discussed in Washington, D.C.

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Labor Day illustration by Daniel Marsula

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Putting Workers in Danger

China can make and sell products cheaper by putting its workers in danger.

Look at the photograph at the bottom of page 18 in the spring issue of *USW@Work*. The man has no face protection, no eye protection, does have gloves, but they are short and badly worn.

He looks bone tired. He is an accident waiting to happen. Why?

No one represents him or cares about his safety and welfare, and no one makes sure he is paid fairly or that he works a reasonable shift. He is obviously not a member of the United Steelworkers union. If he tried to organize a union, he would be in prison.

*Jane C. Donnelly, Associate Member
Fletcher, N.C.*

China's Aluminum Industry

I just finished reading the article on China's steel industry and the pollution they cause as well as how much they produce. I have worked at an aluminum smelter for the past 33 years and have heard many stories about China's aluminum industry and similar statistics on production and pollution in their aluminum smelters. (I once heard that the average life expectancy of an aluminum worker in China was only 45 years because of the unhealthy work environment.) In fact, our plant is shutting down partly because we can no longer compete with places like China.

*Tom Wiley, Local 320
Columbia Falls, Mont.*

Union Made is Hard to Find

I'll try to keep this letter short, but it will be hard. I've been a union member for over 40 years, and I used to buy union-made clothing, cars and whatever. But it now is hard to find American-made goods, let alone union made.

*Ron Boileau, Local 1279, retired
Larsen, Wis.*

Recreate Manufacturing Industries

The USA needs to withdraw from all international trade treaties and place a high import duty tariff on all imported products in order to re-create the manufacturing industries and the jobs that these trade treaties and our government destroyed over the last few decades. Yes, everything will cost the consumer more.

Both political parties and the U.S. government have allowed and may have encouraged U.S. importing companies, U.S. manufacturing corporations, Wall Street financial geniuses, business manipulators, and others to outsource U.S. jobs to foreign countries where labor costs are a small

fraction of U.S. citizen wage and benefit expectations.

We need a bigger economic pie, not a bigger piece of the remaining economic pie that is shrinking daily. The U.S. government is selling title to everything of value in our country to foreign manufacturers and their governments. The U.S. government is calling this "Investing in America."

*Gerald Spencer
Houston, Texas*

Make It in America

Jobs and quality are two good reasons why North American-made products should be used in our own bridge, highway and other infrastructure projects.

One good example of this is the \$6.3 billion reconstruction of the San Francisco Oakland Bay Bridge, now delayed by welding problems at a China-based steel fabricator.

It was bad enough that California circumvented Buy American requirements to purchase fabricated steel bridge parts from the Zenhau Port Machine Co. of Shanghai.

Now welding problems have halted delivery from Shanghai of the Chinese-made steel ordered to reconstruct the bridge's eastern span, which collapsed in a 1989 earthquake.

The welding problems were first discovered last year, and executives said they had been corrected. Now the problems seem to be more serious than originally thought.

Once again safety has become an issue with products from China. Everything from tires to toxic toys to toothpaste produced in China has been subject to recalls.

This issue is particularly relevant to Local 6966 at PDM Strocal Inc. here in California. We have skilled workers experienced in bridge welding who are now laid off.

Why are we importing faulty products to repair an earthquake-damaged bridge span when our domestic steel industry is running at 40 percent of capacity and thousands of our own steelworkers are out of work?

*Jesus Modesto, Local 6966, President
Stockton, Calif.*



SPEAKING

Out

USW active and retired members and their families are invited to "speak out" on these pages. Letters should be short and to the point. We reserve the right to edit for length.

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USW Continues Push for

Manufacturing Rebirth

Union's campaign takes message to communities

This summer's 11-city, four-day "Keep It Made in America" bus tour made one thing crystal clear: Americans – no matter what they do, where they live or whom they vote for – understand the importance of manufacturing to their families and communities.

As the economy continues to sputter, joblessness continues to grow, budget deficits rise and the middle class continues to suffer, more people are beginning to realize that manufacturing matters to the United States and Canada.

In a recent survey of 600 randomly-chosen voters in key congressional districts conducted by the USW, 90 percent of the respondents said manufacturing was very important to the success of the American economy, 91 percent said the United States should have a plan to

revitalize manufacturing and 75 percent said they would support government incentives and financial support to increase domestic manufacturing.

"As the days pass, support grows for manufacturing and the good, family- and community-sustaining jobs they provide. Across North America, people realize that the Wall Street and Bay Street Ponzi schemes of the past will not support a strong economy and they want a stable future for them, their children and their grandchildren," said International President Leo W. Gerard.

Fighting in USA, Canada

This is nothing new for the USW. Our "Make Our Future Work" economic education program kicked off in January, our "Buy America" resolution campaign that began in March has resulted in more

than 500 pro-domestic manufacturing resolutions passed nationwide, and in May we co-sponsored the auto bus tour and Washington, D.C., teach-in with the Alliance for American Manufacturing. Now, we're taking our campaign to save jobs to the next level, using our thousands of activists and tapping into the growing network of manufacturing supporters to help spread the message even further.

"We're talking to audiences that may not be as familiar with the topic but who understand the need for good jobs and strong communities," said International Vice President Tom Conway.

"We're talking about the importance of manufacturing with churches, youth organizations, health care reform advocates, public officials, educators and others. We're hitting the streets and the

Web. Rebuilding the middle class is a civil rights issue, a community issue, a political issue, an education issue, a family issue and together we can achieve the change we need."

Similarly in Canada, our Ontario Drive to Work [DRV2WK] caravan for jobs showed there was grass-roots commitment for manufacturing jobs as the basis of strong communities. The USW has been at the forefront of the fight for greater Canadian stimulus spending, domestic content requirements for all public procurement, and the enforcement of corporate foreign investment agreements.

And we have been fighting for a Buy Canada policy from the Canadian government that would eventually allow the United States and Canada to develop a Buy North American policy.

President Obama recently said, "The fight for American manufacturing is the fight for America's future."

He couldn't have been more right. Every manufacturing job creates five more jobs. That's compared to just one job created for every service sector job such as those in retail and restaurants.

The auto sector alone is responsible for 7.2 million jobs in the United States – from teachers and small-business owners to first responders and health care workers.

In the United States and Canada, domestic manufacturing provides a secure tax-base that helps communities fund health care for children and the elderly, maintenance, schools and emergency services.

So it's no wonder that the loss of more than 5 million manufacturing jobs since 2000 in the United States and millions more in Canada has devastated our economies as shaky financial bubbles burst.

Industrial policy needed

Civil rights leader Jesse Jackson wrote in a June 2009 column that revitalizing the auto industry and other manufacturing is a transition that "will require planning, an industrial policy and government commitment."

Jackson isn't the only big name calling for an industrial policy that helps level the playing field for U.S. workers, who are among the most productive and efficient in the world working in some of the most modern plants with the best, high-tech equipment. General Electric Chief Executive Jeffrey Immelt and Ford Motor Co. CEO Bill Ford Jr. have both called for policies that renew American manufacturing.

"The fight for American manufacturing is the fight for America's future."

"The industrial base is eroding and prosperous nations don't let their industries erode," Ford said during the National Summit in Detroit. "Government, industry and academia all have to be on the same page. Too many times they throw bombs at each other rather than working together."

Moody's Economy.com founder and chief economist Mark Zandi, U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio), and InterMedia Partners managing partner Leo Hindery have also said a policy that supports domestic manufacturing is needed.

Get involved

As the call for investment in domestic manufacturing heats up, it's important for USW members to remain leaders on the issue. Talk about it outside the union hall. Attend meetings with neighborhood groups. Talk about manufacturing and our campaign with your church, school or civic organizations. Work with local officials and elected leaders, encouraging them to not only pass and implement our Buy America resolution, but to put pressure on officials in every level of government to make manufacturing a priority.

Manufacturing isn't an isolated issue and you shouldn't talk about it that way. For example, as we move towards a greener economy and energy, talk about why it's important to make sure the wind turbines, solar panels and other items needed are made locally. As the health care reform debate intensifies, be sure to talk about how providing coverage for every American helps lower business costs and gives U.S. workers a more level playing field in the global market, which will encourage more investment in domestic industries.

Use this as an opportunity to talk about key issues: How we need to push for fair trade, changes to tax laws, and penalties for countries like China that manipulate currency to give themselves an unfair edge when competing against North American manufacturers. Our workers are the most productive, efficient in the world and our businesses can compete while providing good jobs at home – when everyone plays by the rules.

Visit the USW's economy renewal Web page, www.makeourfuturework.org, for more information and tips on how you can get involved, and for the latest on what your union is doing to help save manufacturing, your jobs and your future. Work with your local union officers and staff. Let us know what you've tried and how it has worked.

A bold push by the United Steelworkers to save domestic tire industry jobs from a wave of cheap Chinese imports is a chance for President Obama to chart a new course for U.S. trade policy.

Obama has until Sept. 17 to act on a U.S. International Trade Commission (ITC) recommendation that he impose punitive duties of up to 55 percent on Chinese tires that have disrupted the U.S. market and destroyed thousands of good-paying production jobs.

In filing the case, one of the most important trade actions ever taken against China, the USW alone stood up for tire industry workers whose jobs are on the line because of rogue trading practices.

And the ITC agreed with the USW's position. In a 4-2 vote, the agency recommended that Obama adopt a three-year tariff on Chinese imports of consumer tires, starting at 55 percent the first year, 45 percent the second year and 35 percent the third.

"Our domestic industries cannot survive unless our government enforces the trade laws that are designed to curb and dissuade anti-competitive practices that cause market disruptions," said International President Leo W. Gerard.

The USW represents about 15,000 tire workers at 13 plants in nine states, accounting for roughly half of the industry's production capacity last year.

In its petition, the USW claimed that imports of consumer tires from China increased from 2004 to 2008 by 215 percent in volume and 295 percent by value.

In 2008 China exported nearly 46 million consumer tires with a value of more than \$1.7 billion to the United States, making it the largest source of consumer tire imports.

While Chinese exports were rising, domestic production and jobs were declining. During the surge period domestic production of consumer tires declined by more than 25 percent.

Nearly 5,100 U.S. tire workers lost their jobs during the period covered by the complaint as a result of the massive erosion in domestic production. Another 3,000 more jobs could be lost by year's end as three plants are under threat of closure.

Workers getting crushed

"The data makes clear that American workers are getting crushed by a surge in imports from passenger car and light-truck tires from China," U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio) told the ITC at a June hearing attended by 10 members of Congress who supported the USW's position.

International Vice President Tom Conway, chairman of the USW's bargaining committee at Goodyear, said the company has warned since 2003 that low-cost imports were threatening its operations in North America.

USW Presses Obama to Protect Tire Industry from Surging Chinese Imports

New Course for Trade Policy?

"Despite our members making painful concessions and the union bargaining hard to make sure our plants received the capital investments to stay on the cutting edge of technology and innovation, without strong remedies from the president, our work will be for naught and the opportunity to build a stronger domestic industry will be lost," Conway said.

Although the USW filed the trade case without corporate co-signers, every U.S. tire company complied with the ITC's request's for data.

The data revealed that many of the well-known domestic brands have themselves opened factories in China, where they source one out of six tires they sell in the United States.

It is another unmistakable example that the interests of multinational companies are no longer in sync with the interests of American workers and their communities.

Tests Obama's campaign pledge

The case, initiated by the USW last April under Section 421 of the Trade Act of 1974, is widely seen as a test of Obama's campaign pledge to strongly enforce U.S. trade law and crack down on China's unfair trade practices.

Relief may be granted under Section 421 if a surge of imported products causes or threatens to cause market disruption to domestic producers. Based on

data presented to it, the ITC has already found market disruption occurred.

Congress approved Section 421 of the trade law to ensure that rapidly increasing imports from China did not result in market disruption, and, if such disruption occurred as it has in the tire industry, a rapid remedy would be available.

China agreed to this temporary country-specific safeguard as part of bilateral trade negotiations that led to its joining the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001.

Former President George W. Bush routinely ignored the interests of U.S. workers when confronted with similar decisions. The ITC four times recommended that Bush impose tariffs or quotas on products unfairly surging into our market from China. Each time, Bush rejected relief for domestic industries and workers.

Gerard is optimistic that Obama will support the ITC's recommendation for tariffs even though that recommendation is not binding.

"It is time for the promise of enforcing U.S. trade laws to be fulfilled," he said.

The case has implications beyond the tire industry. It is a centerpiece of the USW's drive for tougher enforcement of trade laws by the new administration and comes at a time when the manufacturing

sector is reeling from the recession and the restructuring of the domestic auto industry.

When the ITC finds market disruption to a domestic industry and its workers, as happened here, U.S. laws require the agency to recommend a remedy to address the disruption. The President then has the discretion to decide whether to implement temporary "safeguards" against the Chinese imported product.

The USW initially asked the ITC to recommend that Obama cut Chinese tire imports in half through market caps. The ITC instead voted 4-2 in favor of charging additional duties on the imports.

Even though the decision called for tariffs instead of caps, Gerard called the ITC's remedy vote a great victory for the USW, its members and for all U.S. tire workers.

"The tariffs voted by the commissioners should remedy the market disruptive surge in Chinese tire imports that have caused harm to the domestic industry," he said.

Economic analysis done by the USW and the ITC shows that the proposed tariffs will have significant beneficial effects for the domestic industry.

"We applaud the commission's decision and look forward to working with the Obama administration to see that it is fully implemented," Conway said.

Senators Back Import Relief in 421 Case

A group of 11 Democrat and Republican senators are calling on President Barack Obama to adopt the recommendations of the U.S. International Trade Commission to impose safeguard tariffs on Chinese passenger and light truck tires.

In a letter to the president, nine Democrats and two Republicans argued that the safeguard recommendations would allow the U.S. industry to recover without imposing any significant cost on consumers.

"We firmly agree that adopting the ITC's recommended relief would provide the breathing room the industry and its

work force so desperately need to bring back its capacity and work force," the senators wrote. They added that the Section 421 case is also "an important step in regaining the public's confidence in trade liberalization."

The group was led by Sen. Blanche Lincoln (D-Ark.). The letter was also signed by Senators Evan Bayh (D-Ind.), Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio), Robert Casey (D-Pa.), Kirsten Gillibrand (D-N.Y.), Kay Hagen (D-N.C.), Arlen Specter (D-Pa.), Debbie Stabenow (D-Mich.), Mark Warner (D-Va.), Richard Burr (R-N.C.) and Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.).

Tire Importers, GM and Ford Oppose USW

A group of six U.S. tire importers – including two major private branders – have joined forces to ally themselves with China and battle efforts by the United Steelworkers to limit the importation of Chinese-made passenger tires.

The group, which calls itself the American Coalition for Free Trade in Tires, includes Hercules Tire & Rubber Co. and Del-Nat Corp., as well as importers American Omni Trading Co., Dunlap & Kyle Co. Inc., Ortek Global Supply & Distribution Co. and Foreign Tire Sales Inc.

General Motors Co. and Ford Motor Co. also lobbied President Obama to exempt tires for new cars from proposed tariffs on Chinese imports, a request International President Leo W. Gerard called offensive.

Gerard said that Chinese tire imports put U.S. union jobs at risk, and auto companies that received billions of dollars in government aid shouldn't be intervening. "I find it offensive that the U.S. automakers, which just had their industry saved, are speaking against us," Gerard said.

Jobs on the Line

USW Fights to Keep, Expand Paper Industry Tax Credit

Our union is fighting to keep an alternative fuel mixture tax credit in place for the paper industry to create new jobs, maintain existing ones and increase the use of renewable fuel.

U.S. Senators Max Baucus (D-Mont.) and Charles Grassley (R-Iowa) in June proposed legislation that would prevent the paper industry from receiving the tax credit, while leaving it intact for other sectors.

The current tax credit expires on Dec. 31. The USW is working on ideas for long-term incentives to encourage the use of biofuels and energy efficiency in the industry.

The union believes incentives should not be limited, as they are now, to traditional pulp mills. They should be expanded to recycled paper plants, free-standing paper mills that tap the clean power of hydroelectric and converters to use biofuels or to sell excess biomass to be used as biofuels by others.

With these incentives, the paper industry could be a major force in increasing the use of alternative energy in the United States.

Credit worth \$6 billion

Companies receive a 50 cent tax break for every gallon of biofuel with a small amount of diesel or other fossil

fuel mixed in. The tax credit is refundable, so companies without a tax liability can receive direct payments from the federal government.

The IRS ruled the paper industry could take the tax credit because it uses a by-product from the pulp-making process called black liquor to power operations.

Sen. Baucus charged that the tax break for the paper sector is costing the U.S. Treasury billions of dollars and was not meant to provide a boon to companies from a process "they've already been doing for several decades." He acknowledged that the paper industry is struggling, but said "taxpayers don't want to see another billion-dollar bailout."

The tax credit is expected to generate some \$6 billion for the paper industry — money that could restart mills and generate economic activity in areas where there is little or no other industry.

Each operating pulp mill supports 200 to 500 family-supporting jobs that are the mainstay of many rural communities. When a mill shuts down, locally-owned businesses hurt and more workers are laid off.

Encourages biofuel use

The intent of the alternative fuel mixture tax credit is to

encourage the use of biofuels. The tax break has caused mills to increase their generation of biomass-based electricity and provides an incentive in the future to do so, just as the law intended.

"This tax credit is encouraging paper companies to make greater use of biofuel, and in the case of one Maine producer, Old Town Fuel & Fiber in Old Town, it's allowing this company to pursue a project to produce jet fuel in addition to pulp," said International President Leo W. Gerard.

The Old Town mill would not be operating without the tax credit. The credit also may be partly responsible for the restart of Tembec's former pulp and paper mill in St. Francisville, La.

International Vice President Jon Geenen, who oversees the union's paper industry sector, said the tax credit was controversial because "no one knew the massive size of the contribution the paper industry is making to increase the use of biofuel."

Renewable fuel leader

The paper industry is the leader in the use of renewable fuel and plays an integral role in this country's transition to a clean-energy economy. Millions of dollars have been invested in recovery boilers and other technologies that use renewable fuel derived from biomass.

"Repeal isn't a solution," Geenen said. "We believe the paper industry has significant expertise that could jump start development of the second generation of biofuels. We think the tax credit is playing a large role in helping this happen, and we think any new legislation should create targeted incentives to encourage this behavior, not only with chemical pulp mills, but all across the paper industry."

The paper industry produces almost 70 percent of its own power and sells excess energy back to the power grid. For every pulp mill that is shut down, the energy generated from biofuel is replaced with fossil fuel.

"It surely cannot be the intent of Congress to encourage a switch by any significant user or class of users from a viable source of biofuel to fossil fuels, and yet this is the perverse effect the staff draft would have if it were to become law," USW Legislative Director Holly Hart wrote to Baucus and Grassley.

USW on the offense

The USW responded quickly after Baucus and Grassley announced that they were considering repealing the tax break for the paper industry.

For three weeks in May, 26 USW members traveled to Washington, D.C. to lobby their legislators and members of the Senate Finance and House Ways and Means committees to retain the alternative fuel tax break. Gerard wrote to President Obama and the Senate Finance Committee opposing the repeal as did local unions and individual union members.

"We made the point that the tax credit has turned out to be good for both jobs and for America's energy future," said USW Local 4-261 Vice President Dan Lawson, one of the leaders of the group that visited Capitol Hill.

New Covington Agreement Showcases USW's Strengths

Members of USW Local 8-675 at MeadWestvaco (MWV) in Covington, Va., negotiated industry-leading wage and benefit increases in a new contract that reflects the growing clout of the union's multi-plant MWV Council.

The six-year agreement raises the bar for the paper industry and should leave no doubt that the USW is the union best suited to represent the 900 hourly production and maintenance workers at the Covington plant, which has been involved in a representational dispute for almost three years.

The agreement features \$2,600 in cash bonuses and 16.1 percent in general wage increases over the term, including 4.25 percent at ratification and an additional 2 percent this December.

The contract also raises the multiplier for the defined benefit pension plan from \$48 to \$58 per month, setting a new high watermark for this segment of the paper industry.

Improving health care

To improve health care for members and their families and to control medical costs, the USW negotiated an option for a union-run health care plan and clinic at Covington. It will be similar to a successful plan and clinic for USW MeadWestvaco workers in Evadale, Texas, that has improved results for participants.

The agreement also contains additional wage increases for maintenance employees in exchange for those employees acquiring second and third skills.

While controversial, the additional skill training provides workers with more security and pay in a market threatened by lower-skilled, non-union contractors, continuing unfair trade, industry consolidation and reduced demand for paper.

The cross-training agreement helps MeadWestvaco run more efficiently, provides training in new, marketable skills at company expense and helps keep independent contractors out of the plant, Local 8-675 President Bobby Harrison told local media.

Something for all

"I've been working at the mill for 40 years, and this is an excellent contract by

any standard because everybody got something," said Franklin Tucker, an employee in the oiler department.

The Covington local had been working under its previous agreement, which expired December 2006. Prior to the restart of talks in June, negotiations were last held in August 2007.

International Vice President Jon Geenen, who directs the union's paper industry



bargaining, said much has been learned in Covington over the past three years.

"Today everyone knows rifts within this or any other local union place barriers in front of our success," he said.

"This contract lays the foundation for reunification of the membership and illustrates the resources, resolve and ability of the USW to deliver first-rate agreements, even in difficult times, when a well disciplined and coordinated approach is applied to the collective bargaining process."

Call for elections

The National Labor Relations Board recently dismissed claims by the Covington Paperworkers Union that MeadWestvaco illegally bargained with the USW and that the company was obligated to bargain with it instead.

Geenen called for new elections in Covington to "create a structure inclusive of all views from every area of the mill to build an even stronger local union."

Glenn Allen Hinkle, a 22-year-veteran of the mill, said many of his union brothers and sisters are looking forward to the end of the strife within the local.

"We have waited a long time for a new contract because of the disaffiliation attempt that only hurt the community and our members," Hinkle said. "With the best contract I've ever seen, it's time to stop the infighting, quit looking backward and start moving forward."



Get-Tough Strategy Promised

Administration Promises to Better Enforce Trade Laws Worldwide

U.S. Trade Representative Ron Kirk chose an audience of steelworkers to announce the Obama administration's new get-tough policy of enforcing America's trade laws.

Speaking at U.S. Steel Corp.'s Edgar Thomson plant, Kirk outlined trade measures that he said would save American jobs and create new ones by better enforcing our nation's trade rights around the world.

Kirk said he chose Pittsburgh's Mon Valley for his address because "American workers need to know that this administration has their backs in the global trading system."

"I can tell you with no reservations: the Obama administration is both willing and able to enforce our trade agreements," Kirk said. "American workers deserve no less."

Promises draw praise

The promises made in the trade envoy's speech drew praise from the USW and the National Association of Manufacturing – organizations that are often on opposite sides of the fence on issues.

"As North America's largest industrial union, the United Steelworkers have had to bear too much of the burden of foreign unfair, predatory and protectionist trade practices," International President Leo W. Gerard said.

"Our government must ensure that the products of our manufacturers and farmers have access to foreign markets and are not forced to compete with unfairly subsidized or dumped products here at home," Gerard added.

Kirk's speech may have been a warm-up for President Obama's remarks to the September G-20 summit

meeting of the world's economic ministers in Pittsburgh, where the president is expected to lay out his positions on trade.

Pittsburgh is also home to the USW, which has been actively engaged in utilizing our nation's trade laws and enforcement tools to combat foreign unfair, predatory and protectionist trade practices.

USW pushing tire remedies

Currently, the USW is urging President Obama to adopt the International Trade Commission's recommendation that relief be provided to the domestic consumer tire industry.

Calling Kirk's address an important move toward a "new era in trade policy," Gerard said the success of the speech and the new policy will be measured in the days ahead by the number of jobs that are created.

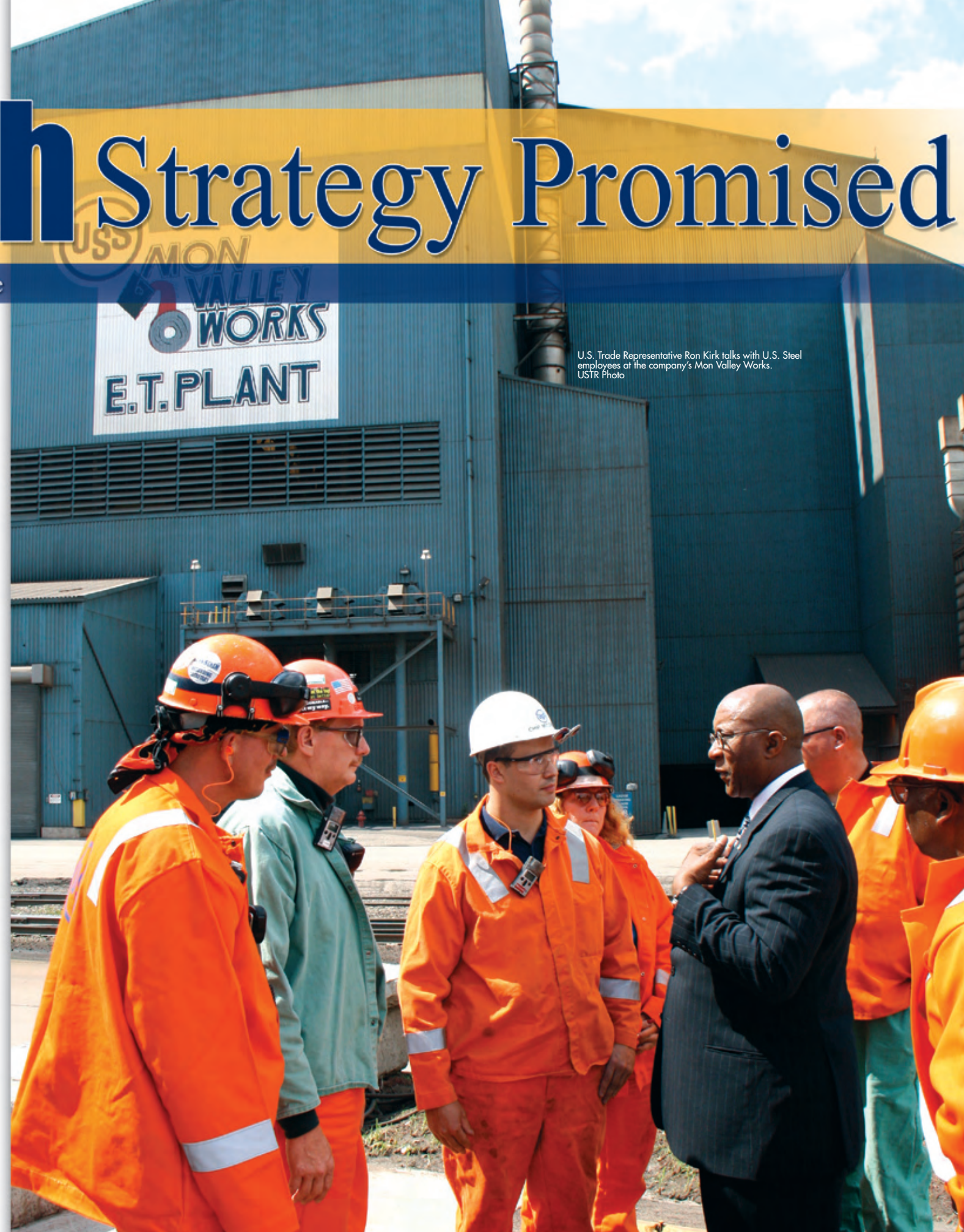
"For our union enforcing the rules has been a constant fight that we will continue to wage," Gerard said. "A clear and consistent approach to trade enforcement will help to retain and create good, family-supportive jobs."

The USW, Gerard said, looks forward to working with Kirk and the Obama administration to make sure that the July 16 speech is followed by an integrated action plan.

"Enforcing the rules is an essential ingredient to ensure that our trade policies actually work to create jobs, opportunity and economic growth," Gerard said. "When America stands up, our trading partners open up. That's the way it should be."

Target labor violations

Kirk said his office would partner with other government agencies and identify labor violations in trade



U.S. Trade Representative Ron Kirk talks with U.S. Steel employees at the company's Mon Valley Works. USTR Photo

“American workers need to know that this administration has their backs in the global trading system.”

agreements. He said the administration would not hesitate to litigate in the World Trade Organization or in other forums when violations are found.

To help level the playing field, Kirk promised the United States would step up monitoring of the trading practices of our partner countries and enforce labor provisions of their trade agreements.

"If they know we are holding a magnifying glass up to their actions, they'll be less likely to break the rules," he said.

In addition to using the WTO to eliminate unfair export restraints, Kirk said his office would enforce intellectual property rights and fight to improve market access for American products.

The United States will also take on what Kirk said is one of the biggest obstacles manufacturers face: technical barriers to trade, or technical regulations and standards that restrict U.S. exports of safe, high quality products.

"Now we will seek out these barriers and tackle them head-on," he said.

Farm barriers confronted

The United States will also confront barriers that other countries raise to prevent our farmers and ranchers from marketing their products abroad, he said.

As an example, Kirk noted the restrictive regulations that some countries slapped on American pork because of the H1N1 flu scare.

U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio) said he was pleased by Kirk's statements on enforcement, but that this should not be confused with a new direction in trade policy.

"Our trade strategy is broken," Brown said. "Workers want President Obama to negotiate new and better trade deals."

Eliminating Hazards

Pilot Program Gives Workers Tools to Improve Safety

Two years ago on Sept. 21, USW Local 1900 member Kevin Wilson, a young bench operator at Michigan Seamless Tube in South Lyon, Mich., went to work but never returned home.



Kevin Wilson

While he and a co-worker were trying to get a balky tubing machine to work, Wilson, 21, was accidentally caught between the base of the machine and a large moving carriage. The force killed him instantly.

His family urged USW leadership to do everything possible to make workplaces safer so their pain and suffering would not be felt by any other families.

"Nobody should have to die while performing their job," Steven W. Wilson, Kevin's father, wrote. "It is our deepest hope and our sincerest wish that your stated resolve to create safer workplaces for your membership will lead to more than words."

As a result, District 2 has made workplace safety education a top priority through a pilot program that has come to be known as the Kevin Wilson Initiative.

Leadership challenged

District 2 Director Michael Bolton challenged union leadership to make the priority a reality and charged a newly-developed Safety Team with providing our members with the necessary training to make a positive difference.

"Companies viewing workers being killed at work as a matter of doing business have to end," Bolton said.

"It is no longer acceptable for them to act

in this manner, and we will not accept that attitude from management in the workplaces where our members are employed."

On-the-job fatalities are a real and serious issue for all Steelworkers and other American workers no matter their industry or service occupation.

In 2007, the most recent year for which job fatality data is available, 5,657 U.S. workers lost their lives on

the job as a result of traumatic injuries.

That same year more than 4 million work-related injuries and illnesses were reported by employers – a number that likely understates the problem. The AFL-CIO estimates that the true toll is two to three times greater, or 8 million to 12 million injuries and illnesses a year.

Partnership program

The training initiative is a partnership between the district and the USW's Tony Mazzocchi Center (TMC) grant program. It is driven by a rank-and file Coordination, Adaptation, Training and Support Team (CATS).

The overall goal of the program is to provide members with methods and tools that can help prevent workplace deaths and serious injuries.

"It's never been done before on a district-wide level. We want to turn it into a model for every other district to use," said Steve Doherty, a member of Local 1096 and the

rank-and-file training coordinator of the District 2 CATS team.

Specific objectives include training workers to identify any hazards and other dangers and to locate areas where chemical spills, releases and handling occur.

Workers also learn to proactively address and report identified hazards through the local union safety committee to management with recommendations on how to fix the hazards.

"Hazard mapping is training that can reach every member," Doherty said. "It's one thing that really hits home and gets people talking safety. It changes the culture of facilities and is an effective tool to make changes that will make the workplace safer."

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

"I can speak to the benefit of worker-to-worker training,"

said Doherty, a paper worker.

"It has broken down a lot of barriers when the

members find out I run a pressure sensitive label coater and am just a regular coater operator from Local 1096."

Hazard mapping

Typically, a workshop breaks up into small groups gathered around large sheets of paper. They draw floor plans of their work sites, marking health and safety hazards with color codes that identify them as electrical, chemical, physical, flammable or both.

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

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

Over 1,400 members of NewPage Corp. Local 2-21, 2-359 and 2-116 in Michigan and Wisconsin are being trained by rank-and-file trainers from their own facilities.

"Hazard mapping has really empowered people and gotten them involved with safety," said Wes Krause, a worker-trainer with Local 2-116.

Rick Bahr, president of Local 2-469, said hazard mapping in many areas of his plant has helped identify and locate hazards for elimination.

"Using the USW's Systems of Safety, we send all of our employees safely home to their families at the end of the workday," Bahr said.

Nancy Smith, recording secretary and safety representative of Local 2-469 at Appleton Papers in Appleton, Wis., was first exposed to hazard mapping in 2007 as a participant in a "Train-the-Trainer" program.

Smith shared her experience with union officers and management. Although their initial reaction was positive, there was no immediate movement to institute the program.

Everything changed nearly a year later when a union member accidentally got an arm caught up to his shoulder in a machine where two rollers come together.

Eleven days later, hazard mapping exercises began in earnest at Appleton. The program has spread to several areas of the plant and has involved production employees, engineers, maintenance workers and managers. Hourly workers and management from other locals in the region were also invited to participate.

At press time, Local 2-469 members had completed 50 hazard maps and were working to fix the hazards that have been identified so far. Smith has also helped to train other locals at sister plants.

Local 1-266 at the Appleton Papers facility in West Carrollton, Ohio, for example, trained 19 members as certified trainers and in June kicked off the hazard mapping exercise.

"Mapping has had an amazing impact on our work force," Smith said. "This process is supported by both hourly and management."



Photo by Earl Dotter



Hazard mapping in District 2
Photo courtesy of Steve Doherty



When Will They Ever Learn



Oil Industry
Continues
to Repeat
Health and Safety
Mistakes

Oil refiners are failing to learn from the leaks, fires and process upsets that occur on a regular basis and continue to repeat the types of errors that lead to those events.

On Aug. 4, the USW withdrew from talks with the American Petroleum Institute and the oil industry because of the lack of progress being made over fatigue and process safety standards.

Several relatively recent incidents illustrate how oil and chemical companies are failing to heed the lessons learned from previous accidents in the industry.

A worker at the ExxonMobil refinery in Torrance, Calif., died two weeks after burns suffered while opening a coke drum, a process known as deheading. While many facilities have installed remote deheading devices and made other changes to the operation by learning from the Equilon coker fatalities of 1998, other companies have chosen not to upgrade their equipment. They needlessly put operations personnel in harm's way.

Sunoco accidents

Ten contract workers were sent to a hospital when some 22 pounds of hydrofluoric acid was released at the Sunoco refinery in Philadelphia. There are safer chemicals that can be used in the process but Sunoco has chosen not to change over.

An explosion and fire in the ethylene complex at Sunoco's refinery in Marcus Hook, Pa., did not hurt anyone. Sunoco, however did not repair or replace the damaged equipment and shut the complex down, throwing 40 to 50 people out of work.

Last August, two workers lost their lives in the wake of an explosion and fire at the Bayer CropScience chemical facility in Institute, W. Va.

"What makes this worse is you could change the name from Bayer and substitute Union Carbide, Bhopal; BP, Texas City; or any of a dozen facilities and the root or causal factors would read the same," said Kim Nibarger of the USW's Health, Safety & Environment Department.

"Companies are not learning the

lessons from prior incidents, even though these accidents have been thoroughly investigated and the results shared," he added.

OSHA sees same problems

OSHA inspection teams repeatedly saw the same problems at refineries during the first year of the national emphasis program, Acting Assistant Secretary of Labor for OSHA Jordan Barab said in a June 10 statement.

This national emphasis program was announced in 2007 after the U.S. Chemical Safety Board (CSB) faulted the agency's enforcement of safety rules at BP's Texas City, Texas, refinery.

OSHA issued nearly 350 Process Safety Management (PSM) citations to 14 refineries in the first year of the inspection program. It also sent letters to the management of more than 100 oil refineries, providing them with data on compliance issues and urging them to comply with the PSM standard.

This standard requires employers to develop and incorporate comprehensive, site-specific safety management systems to reduce risks of fatal or catastrophic incidents.

In response to Barab's remarks, the American Petroleum Institute (API) issued a statement saying that "U.S. refiners have maintained a strong safety record..." and that a refinery worker is four to five times less likely to be injured on the job than employees in other manufacturing sectors. It said the injury rate has steadily decreased for refinery employees.

Injury rate misleading

The injury rate for refinery workers is misleading, however, because it does not account for the injuries, illnesses and deaths of contract employees. Refiners are not required to report what happens to its contractors at work. So, the deaths of the 15 contract workers in the March 2005 explosion and fire at BP's Texas City refinery were not counted toward BP's injury rate.

Also, a low injury rate does not reflect safe working conditions at chemical, refining and gas operations. BP's Texas City refinery had a low injury rate at the time of the explosion but was found to be lacking a safety

culture. The PSM standard was not followed and the company did not pay attention to or learn from its previous safety investigations.

API also contended that refiners strive to eliminate hazards through process hazard analysis, investigation of accidents and near miss incidents, corrective action, maintenance and safe operation of process equipment and safety training.

“Companies are not learning the lessons from prior incidents, even though these accidents have been thoroughly investigated and the results shared.”

OSHA found refineries that "failed to address their own process safety findings and recommendations, and failed to establish maintenance procedures for equipment such as pressure vessels and emergency shutdown systems."

In a 2007 USW survey of oil workers, most thought the overall management of process safety systems at their sites was less than very effective.

Fair playing field sought

One of the 14 elements of PSM is the requirement that the company consult with employees and their representatives on the development and implementation of the PSM elements and hazard assessments.

"Consult means to work together to develop, not tell the union and the employees what the company has decided," Nibarger said.

The USW insisted that it be treated as an equal stakeholder in discussions with the API over creation of a fatigue standard and performance indicators for process safety.

The union had been meeting with the trade association for months and telling the group that the two fatigue and process safety committees must

follow CSB's guidelines to include "diverse sectors such as industry, labor, government, public interest and environmental organizations and experts from relevant scientific organizations and disciplines."

Instead, API gave one vote to each of the 22 oil companies on the committees and one vote to each of the labor representatives. Two labor representatives were on the fatigue committee and three were on the process safety committee.

"That totally went against the spirit of the CSB's recommendations," said International Vice President Gary Beevers. "It would be difficult to get a fair standard on a consensus basis with a majority of the committee leaning toward the interests of employers."

"The oil companies try to get by with as few regulations and mandates as possible. All we wanted was a fair playing field," he said.

Disputes will be resolved

"This industry will simply not get serious about developing standards that have real meat in them and reflect a true consensus," Beevers said.

The industry fought the union over specifics of the fatigue standard. It did not want to say how many open schedules would be reduced. An open schedule occurs when a person is reassigned to a temporary position like a trainer or procedure writer or turnaround planner and another employee has to replace them. This led to excessive overtime since no new employees were hired.

The oil companies also disagreed with the USW over the level of transparency and public reporting for process safety performance indicators. The goal was to allow the companies to learn from each other's incidents and near misses and force them to be more accountable to their workers and the communities in which they do business.

"Our union will either get the fatigue and PSM standards recommended by the CSB or we will work extremely hard to get these standards done through federal legislation," Beevers said. "We will consider the alternatives in order to accomplish our goal of a safe workplace."

USW Endorses Trumka for AFL-CIO President

Richard Trumka at USW convention
Photo by Steve Dietz

USW Convention Speech Hoists Profile

AFL-CIO Secretary Treasurer Richard Trumka raised the rafters at the USW's constitutional convention last year with a fiery speech telling union members it would be wrong to vote against Barack Obama because of his race.

The speech did more than drive convention delegates to their feet with applause. It raised Trumka's profile after working 14 years with and in the shadows of John J. Sweeney, the AFL-CIO's president.

Now Trumka, who turned 60 on July 26, is running for president of the nation's largest union federation with the endorsement of the USW's International Executive Board and other major labor unions.

His stemwinder of a speech at our convention has been watched more than

535,000 times on YouTube, an unusually large audience for a labor leader.

"There's no evil that has inflicted more pain and more suffering than racism – and it's something we in the labor movement have a special responsibility to challenge," Trumka said in the speech.

"We've seen how companies set worker against worker – how they throw whites a few extra crumbs off the table and how we all end up losing," he added. "But we've seen something else too. We've seen that when we cross that color line and stand together no one can keep us down."

Performance helped Obama

His performance has been credited with helping deliver working-class voters to Obama in battleground states.

Trumka officially announced his candidacy in July with a vow to reunify labor to overcome a Wall Street-driven economy that has enriched investors at the expense of everyday Americans, and to better connect labor unions to a new generation of workers.

"Not only does Richard have the experience and the intellectual capacity to do the job, he brings great heart to the fight for issues that matter to

America's working families," International President Leo W. Gerard said in announcing the USW's endorsement.

"We believe his life-long passion for helping workers, sparked by his own experiences as a third-generation coal miner, makes him the right person for the job."

Trumka's slate includes Liz Shuler, executive assistant to the president of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, as his running mate for secretary-treasurer. Arlene Holt, the current executive vice president, is also on the team.

With no opposition announced so far, Trumka could succeed Sweeney, who has announced his retirement, at the AFL-CIO's convention in Pittsburgh this September.

More aggressive style

If elected, the former coal miner is likely to bring a more aggressive style than Sweeney to the leadership of the 11 million-member federation, a coalition of 56 labor unions.

"Rich will be aggressive, bold, militant and smart," Rose Ann DeMoro, executive director of the California Nurses Association/National Nurses Organizing Committee, said in her endorsement statement.

Trumka promised to work "with employers who want to work with us" and to oppose those who "want to abuse people, take benefits away, jettison retirees."

Immediate items on his agenda include pushing to reform the health care delivery system and to pass legislation

that would make it easier for workers to form and join unions at their work.

Collective bargaining, he argued, is needed more than ever

to counter corporate greed, to shrink the expanding gap between the pay for executives and workers, and to lobby for tax and trade laws that would "level the playing field" so multinational companies stop migrating to low-wage countries.

"We'll fight them on the political front. We'll fight them on the legislative front. We'll fight them on the collective bargaining front. We'll fight them so that workers get a fair deal. That is what I'm going to do," Trumka said.

Taking grandfather's advice

During a miners' strike when he was a youngster, Trumka's maternal grandfather, Attilio Bertugli, told him he could help miners by getting a good education and learning to represent them.

He went to work as a coal miner at 19 and alternated time underground with college. After college, he received a law degree from Villanova University.

He was a staff attorney with the United Mine Workers from 1974 to 1979. He was first elected UMW President in 1982.

While UMW President, Trumka led a successful nine-month strike against the Pittston Coal Co. over its refusal to pay into a health and retirement fund. He encouraged non-violent civil disobedience and a sophisticated campaign against corporate Wall Street investors.

His leadership saved health care benefits for workers "not just in the coalfields, but in workplaces across the nation," UMW President Cecil E. Roberts said in endorsing his predecessor.

Other early endorsements came from the AFL-CIO affiliated unions of the Building and Construction Trades Department, AFSCME, the United Mine Workers of America, the New Jersey and Ohio state federations and local labor councils.

Trumka would take over the 56 union, 11-million-member federation at a time of both promise and peril for the nation's labor movement.

There has been more progress on labor's agenda in the opening months of the Obama administration than the entire previous eight years under Republican George Bush, a period when labor was under siege by Washington.

But the promise of Obama is tempered by the peril of a recessionary economy that has lost millions of jobs, many in the manufacturing sector where the USW is strong.

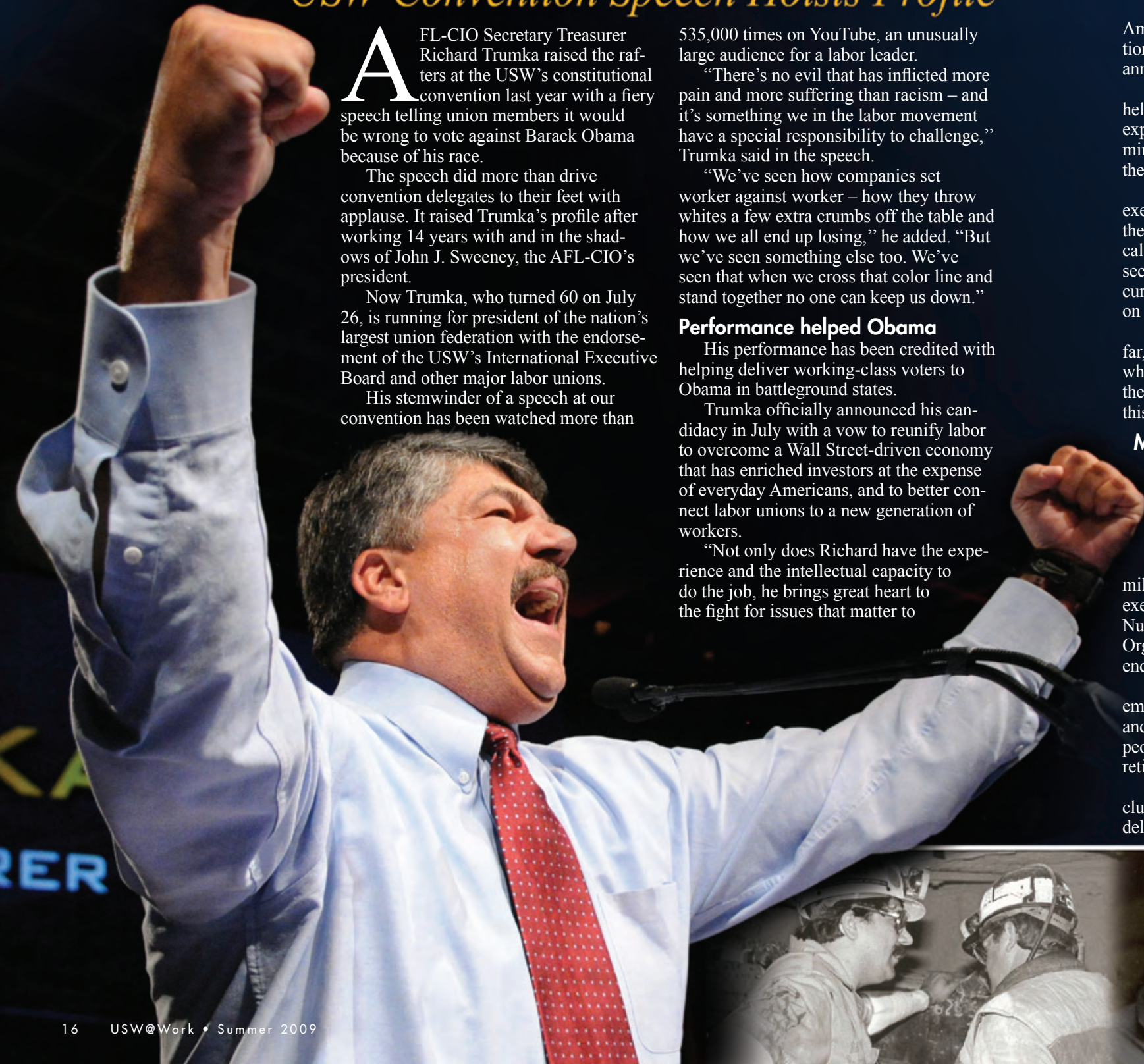
At the AFL-CIO, Trumka has focused on creating investment programs for union pension and benefit funds and fighting excessive corporate profits.

Supports U.S. manufacturing

He chairs the AFL-CIO Industrial Union Council, a consortium of manufacturing unions focusing on key issues in trade, health care and labor law reform. He co-chairs the China Currency Coalition, an alliance of industry, agriculture, services, and worker organizations whose mission is to support U.S. manufacturing.

In his speeches, he has accused companies of squeezing their workers and has condemned outsourcing and unfair trade.

"For 30 years corporate America has dominated the political scene, and it has hurt this country," Trumka said in an interview on his candidacy. "Multinationals do what they think is best for them even if it's not in the interests of the country. One of our main objectives is to realign the interests of corporations with the interests of the nation."



Obstructing needed change

From the very beginning, when Barack Obama inherited an economy teetering on the second Great Depression and tried to respond with appropriately big change, Republicans yelled, "Whoa, slow down."

They repeatedly said the new administration had taken on too many challenges and should downsize its dreams. They wanted a smaller stimulus package. They didn't want to provide auto companies the kind of help they'd handed to Wall Street banks.

This might be attributed to deep political policy differences. But that's not it. It's really an attempt by Republicans to thwart accomplishment of Democratic goals, so Republicans can proclaim their failures in mid-term Congressional elections and regain power.

What Republican Sen. Jim DeMint said about health care reform is the perfect illustration. He didn't talk about philosophical differences. He didn't say the GOP should be offering its own solutions to resolve the crisis. He said the issue should be used to destroy Obama. "If we're able to stop Obama on this, it will be his Waterloo. It will break him," he said.

In a time when unemployment is at its highest in decades, when health care costs have doubled in a decade, when the price of two wars is overwhelming, Obama has said he can't settle for piddling solutions.

No alternatives presented

No solution is what the Republicans offered for health care. They presented no comprehensive alternative to what the Democrats drafted in House and Senate committees that actually included a few Republicans like Sen. Olympia Snowe of Maine.

In the end, it was Democrats, Blue Dogs, who held up a vote on health care reform that the administration wanted to occur before the August recess.

The Blue Dogs, claiming they were trying to hold down the cost of the reform measure, at the same time demanded changes that increased its costs. Most of the Blue Dogs are from the South, like the group's key health care negotiator, Rep. Mike Ross (D-Ark.), but they also include Reps. Patrick Murphy, Jason Altmire, and Kathy Dahlkemper, all of Pennsylvania, all Democrats the USW helped elect over incumbent Republicans.

A bill did pass the House Committee on Energy and Commerce before the August recess, including a public option, requirements that insurers accept all applicants and prohibitions against charging higher premiums based on medical history. Both the House and Senate were expected to resume work on health care reform in September.

The Obama administration continued to press for revamping the system with town hall meetings and press conferences and to fight off attacks by Republicans, Big Pharma, and other vested corporate interests spending untold tens of millions to defeat change.

Costly status quo

Similar to the health care reform, several other bills important to the pocketbooks of steelworkers remained in limbo when Congress took its recess.

The climate protection legislation known as the cap-and-trade bill passed the House in June 219 to 212, but is not expected to move in the Senate before September. The Blue Green Alliance has been working to ensure that the final legislation doesn't create incentives that encourage energy-intensive industries to leave the United States and set up shop in less expensive countries where they will be permitted to pollute.

Lawmakers have expressed support for cap-and-trade because of the jobs the bill could create. Sen. Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.) has said it could reduce the country's dependency on foreign oil, create millions of clean energy jobs and protect the next generation from pollution.

Labor law reform

Many of those new jobs could be union jobs if the path to collective bargaining weren't so fraught with danger for organizers. The Employee Free Choice Act would solve many of those problems, but, like health care and cap-and-trade, it got stuck before the August recess.

Democrats were unable to get the legislation passed in the Senate even though they have a filibuster-proof 60-vote super majority with Pa. Sen. Arlen Specter having switched to the Democratic Party and Democrat Al Franken ultimately seated as the senator from Minnesota.

The problem is that Specter, once a sponsor of the bill, turned his back on it before switching parties and would not commit to it after he did. In addition, several conservative Democrats, like Sen. Blanche Lincoln from Arkansas, also reneged on their commitments to the bill.

Activists responded with a huge Employee Free Choice rally on Lincoln's doorstep in Little Rock in July. And an Employee Free Choice Act Lobby Day was conducted Sept. 10 with faith leaders, environmentalists, civil rights leaders, women's advocates and others joining labor leaders pressing for passage this year.

Cap-and-trade would create jobs; the Employee Free Choice Act would ensure they were good-paying jobs and health reform would assure that all Americans have health insurance. The country needs big change and can't afford to slow down.

When Bob Lonsbrough of Local 98 in Leavittsburg, Ohio, signed up for a Steelworkers credit card, he wasn't thinking about getting lung cancer, or about the difficult 18-month battle that would follow.

But his wife Judy is thankful that he did sign up because when the Lonsbrough family needed help the most, their union credit card lessened the financial stress of a serious illness.

The Warren, Ohio family received a \$1,250 disability grant that does not need to be repaid through the USW Union Plus credit card, which offers special benefits to members in the case of disability, disaster, strike or lockout.

"It helped us out a lot," Mrs. Lonsbrough said.

A fourth generation Steelworker, Lonsbrough was proud of being a union member, especially after the help his fellow members gave him as he struggled with the lung cancer.

A tire inspector, Lonsbrough had worked 25 years for Denman Tire when chest pains sent him to the hospital. He thought he might have pulled a muscle at work, but it turned out to be cancer.

In the end, Lonsbrough hoped that by raising his voice in support of unions and for increased awareness of lung cancer, he would have a positive impact.

"Without unions, we just wouldn't have the benefits that are available to us," Lonsbrough said before he passed away last September.

Grants like the one the Lonsbrough family received are part of a comprehensive package of benefits from Union Plus called Union SAFE. The \$3 million initiative is designed to help union members make ends meet during today's climate of economic crisis.

"While we're fighting for economic renewal, it's essential that we give working families the help they need to recover, and Union SAFE does that with financial support and education," International President Leo W. Gerard said.

USW families who need to build a budget, deal with debt, avoid foreclosure or save for college, can turn to Union SAFE for help. Help is often available if you are facing hardship due to large hospital bills or a recent job loss, disability or natural disaster.

A medical crisis is one key cause of financial hardship for working families,



Judy Lonsbrough

as is dealing with a strike or lockout. That's why it's helpful to have a mortgage that comes with special protections during union-sanctioned strikes.

After more than 28 years of working at an Ormet Corp. aluminum facility in the Ohio Valley, Dan Snyder, of New Martinsville, W.Va., found himself on a picket line in 2004 when the company filed for bankruptcy protection. Some 15 months later, after the company sold and closed the rolling mill where he worked, he was out of a job.

Snyder's burden was eased somewhat by knowing that he wouldn't lose his house. He was able to keep his home and make his payments because his Union Plus mortgage provided more than \$4,300 in assistance. Union Plus mortgages are available to union members,

Available Union Plus Programs

Credit counseling: All USW families can get free credit counseling services, budgeting advice and no-fee debt management and bankruptcy counseling benefits. Call 1-877-833-1745.

College Grants: College savings grants of \$500 are available to USW members who open a new 529 tax-free college savings or pre-tuition account and contribute at least \$1,000. Visit [UnionPlus.org/College Savings](http://UnionPlus.org/CollegeSavings) for information.

Eldercare resources: The Union Plus Eldercare program offers help for finding resources and referrals to geriatric care managers, independent living/assisted living facilities, Alzheimer's care options, in-home care, adult day care, senior relocation specialists, and community-based resources. Call 1-866-570-8588 or visit UnionPlus.org/Eldercare

Prescription discount: USW members can get a free online prescription discount card to save on out-of-pocket prescription costs at UnionPlus.org/RXcard.

Financial education: Union Plus offers a host of resources with tips, tools and calculators to get you on the right track. They include UnionDebtHelp.org and UnionPlusRetirement.org

Foreclosure prevention: If you're worried you might lose your home, call the Union Plus Save My Home Hotline at 1-866-490-5361.

Scholarships: Visit UnionPlus.org/Scholarships to see how Union Plus helps you afford education and training.

Union Plus Lends Helping Hand in Time of Need

New Benefits Address Job Loss, Hospital Bills and College Saving

their parents and children.

Those who have had a Union Plus mortgage for more than a year may qualify for assistance. Interest-free loans are available in the event of a layoff, disability, or a short-term strike or lockout.

In case of a lockout or a union-sanctioned strike lasting longer than one month, the mortgage program provides up to six months of payments which do not ever need to be repaid.

If you are buying a home or looking to refinance, call 1-800-848-6466 or visit UnionPlus.org/Mortgage for details.

"This program is the greatest for a union man. You have to get it," Snyder said. "People need to realize that there are real benefits to being union. The Union Plus mortgage program is a prime example."

Workers' Rights are Civil Rights

Demonstrators Converge on Little Rock to Support Labor Law Reform

Braving 100 degree heat, activists from the USW and other unions joined civil rights and community leaders in Little Rock, Ark., to demand that Senator Blanche Lincoln vote for and support the Employee Free Choice Act.

The July rally came as Democratic and Republican legislators were discussing potential compromises to the legislation behind closed doors in Washington.

While those discussions were underway, activists engaged in the USW's Rapid Response program continued to lead the charge and keep up the pressure for real and meaningful labor law reform.

In places like Arkansas, Colorado, Louisiana, Maine and Pennsylvania, the USW has repeatedly targeted those Senators who had not yet given their support to the reform bill.

In Little Rock, the protestors poured into the city from Texarkana, Ft. Smith, Pine Bluff and other locations around the state on eight buses and in hundreds



Little Rock rally photos by Thomas Hudson

of cars. Organizers estimated the crowd size swelled to 1,500.

Civil rights link

The demonstration was the latest in a series of actions that are more reminiscent of the modern civil rights movement than a typical legislative campaign. The campaign has included a statewide 24-hour candlelight prayer vigil, a previous march and rally, mobilization of faith leaders, and other creative activities.

The event began at Little Rock's historic Central High School, the 1957 site of an important first test of school desegregation. Nine African-American students, the Little Rock Nine, were denied entrance to the school in defiance of a 1954 U.S. Supreme Court decision ordering integration of public schools.

Just as the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 opened the doors to greater freedoms

for African-Americans, the Employee Free Choice Act will open the door for workers to freely form unions and bargain collectively.

The Rev. Wendell Griffin, a Baptist pastor and judge on the Arkansas Court of Appeals, told the story of how his family's life changed for the better when his father's job at a non-union sawmill became union. He got a raise, a pension and a safer place to work.

"My father had what every worker ought to have in Arkansas," Griffin told the crowd. "Every worker ought to have the right to join a union. Every worker ought to have a right to a safe place to work and every worker's family ought to have a pension.

"But that will not happen if every worker doesn't have the right to demand a union. Start serving notice that Arkansas is going Free Choice!"

State Senator Joyce Elliott welcomed protestors to her Little Rock district and talked about the fight to restore the freedom to form unions and to bargain collectively.

AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Arlene Holt Baker said the freedom struggle of the workers' rights movement is an extension of the freedom struggle of the civil rights movement.

No Wal-Mart Democrats

International President Leo W. Gerard urged Lincoln, a Democrat and former co-sponsor who withdrew her support, to once again back the rights of workers to join a union of their choice.

"We don't need Wal-Mart Democrats," Gerard said. "We need worker Democrats."

Gerard kicked off a mile-long march to the State Capital by linking the rights of workers to the American civil rights movement that long ago made its mark on Little Rock.

"Today we say to the people of Arkansas, stand with us for civil rights because workers' rights are civil rights," Gerard said to applause.

At the Capital, AFL-CIO Secretary Treasurer Richard Trumka spoke passionately about how the Employee Free Choice Act will bring justice to America's middle class. He urged Lincoln to do the right thing and vote for change.

"Do what's right by working people. Do what's right by the middle class. Do what's right by our economy," Trumka said. "Let American workers, Arkansas workers, negotiate their way into the middle class, rather than borrow their way into the middle class."

Scare Tactics



Billy Mason

After 24 years of making airplane parts at an Alcoa factory in Hampton, Va., Billy Mason brings home less money for his family today than when he started.

"Our pay just hasn't kept up with rising costs of food, services and utilities," he said. "Every week your money just keeps running out before Friday gets back around."

Mason earned about \$6,000 less last year grinding and polishing metal castings than he did in 1985 when combining a \$2 an hour drop in pay with increased health care costs.

In hopes of gaining freedom to bargain for a better future, Mason joined an in-plant organizing committee and started talking with co-workers about joining the United Steelworkers. The initial response was positive.

Once workers signed authorization cards and filed a petition for an election with the National Labor Relations Board,

the company fought back with misinformation and intimidation.

At the beginning of each shift, Mason said management held stand-up meetings bashing the union. As the election neared, captive sit-down meetings were held every other day.

"Probably the biggest advantage that the company had was they could make us go to their meetings, look at their slides, listen to everybody," he said. "A lie is almost as powerful as the truth if I can get you to believe it."

Although two-thirds of the workers had signed union cards, the company's long scare campaign was successful and the election was lost.

After the vote, Mason was suspended for two weeks. The union took his case to the National Labor Relations Board and he was awarded back pay.

Despite the company's opposition, Mason said he is still an advocate of the union and is waiting to see if Congress reforms labor law by passing the Employee Free Choice Act.

"If it does pass, I'm ready to go to work the next day on a level playing field."



Anti-Union Tactics Become More Common

Weak labor laws and a hostile environment have emboldened employers to step up the use of legal and illegal tactics to interfere with the rights of workers to organize and join a union.

It has become routine for U.S. companies to rely on threats, harassment and other intimidation tactics to stop union drives, concludes a new Cornell University study of more than 1,000 randomly-chosen organizing elections.

"For the vast majority of workers who want to join unions today, the right to organize and bargain collectively – free from coercion, intimidation and retaliation – is at best a promise indefinitely deferred," said Kate Bronfenbrenner, the study's author.

Bronfenbrenner, director of labor education research at Cornell, said workers were fired for union activity in 34 percent of the elections. In 57 percent of the reviewed elections, employers threatened to shut down all or part of their facilities, and, in 47 percent, employers threatened to cut

wages and benefits. In 63 percent of the campaigns, supervisors met with workers one on one and interrogated them about their union activity or whether they or others were supporting the union. More than half the time, supervisors threatened workers.

Bronfenbrenner has studied employer behavior in organizing campaigns for many years. This latest study, "No Holds Barred: The Intensification of Employer Opposition to Bargaining," is her fourth survey over 20 years.

Employer harassment in union elections is not new. So what distinguishes the current organizing climate from previous decades of employer opposition to unions?

The primary difference, Bronfenbrenner found, is that the most intense and aggressive anti-union campaign strategies are no longer reserved for extreme anti-union employers such as Wal-Mart.

"We've found a climate of employer opposition that revealed a clear pattern of interrogation and surveillance... followed by threats and harassment to make sure that workers who pursue a union do so at clear personal risk," Bronfenbrenner said.

Walk to Run: USW Helping Members Run for Political Offices

What do Kokomo, Ind., Mayor Greg Goodnight, Iowa State Rep. Jerry Kearns, Maine Congressman Mike Michaud and Allegheny County, Pa., Councilwoman Amanda Green have in common?

Besides being elected officials, they are all proud Steelworkers.

And, it appears, they are part of an emerging trend of USW members running for – and winning – local and state offices.

It makes sense as USW members have spent many hours fighting to protect workers' rights by educating and mobilizing.

Who better to help shape policy and drive our communities' agendas than hard-working activists who understand the importance of manufacturing, health care reform, a clean, healthy environment, fair trade and other issues important to working families?

Community volunteers

"The USW is in many places synonymous with the community. We're the community activists, the volunteers, the coaches and people folks turn to for information and action," said Kyle McDermott, the USW's national political field director. "It's only natural for our union leaders to become local and state leaders and help change our country from the ground up."

The USW wants to grow this effort called Walk to Run by identifying members interested in running for office or currently holding office in their communities.

Our hope is to provide a variety of resources to those USW-endorsed members running for office based on availability, need and a commitment to our issues. This is by no means an endorsement mechanism of the union. Endorsement should still be sought through the USW district structure.

If you are considering running for local, state, or federal office, or if you are already an elected official, please take an online survey to help us shape the program. You can go to www.usw.org/walktorun for more information.

Chamber Launching All-Out Attack on American Workers

Just as sure as death and taxes, you can count on the U.S. Chamber of Commerce to defend the interests of big business against those of ordinary working people.

For nearly a century, the nation's most powerful business group has been campaigning against increases in the minimum wage, legal protections for America's workers, fair labor practices and unions.

All told, the Chamber has spent an estimated \$447 million in the last decade opposing labor issues including the Employee Free Choice Act, universal health care, efforts to curb global warming and even pay restrictions for the CEOs of bailed-out banks.

Its opposition to pro-worker legislation has included the Family Time and Workplace Flexibility Act, the Fair Minimum Wage Act and expanding the Family and Medical Leave Act.

And the Chamber does all this while making you think its policies would benefit not just the business elite but everyone – just like mom, apple pie and the American flag.

Wolves in sheep's clothing

Beware of wolves in sheep's clothing. You would think, for example,

that a group called the Coalition for a Democratic Workplace (CDW) would be dedicated to promoting the needs and desires of America's workers.

Nothing could be further from the truth. The CDW is a corporate front group funded by the Chamber of Commerce, the Associated Builders and Contractors, and the Wal-Mart dominated Retail Industry Leaders Association.

The CDW does the dirty work for corporate interests through TV ads and public relations campaigns meant to block the Employee Free Choice Act and other pro-worker policies. It is behind those television ads that falsely claim the Employee Free Choice Act would take away secret ballot elections when the proposed bill would instead ensure that workers can choose their own union formation process, either through majority sign up or a National Labor Relations Board Election.

The CDW and its allies have spent tens of millions of dollars on TV and radio advertisements, talk-show appearances and "independent" studies opposing employees right to choose a union.

Then there is the Workforce Freedom Initiative. Again a pro-worker sounding name belies the organization's intentions to block the economic initiatives of labor unions.

In its own words, the Chamber describes the Workforce Freedom Initiative as a "multimillion-dollar grass-roots mobilization and advocacy campaign" to "preserve democracy in the American work place, restrain abusive union pension fund activism, and block the anti-competitive agenda advocated by many labor unions."

Earlier this year, ignoring the common sense reasoning that at least some

of our taxpayer bailout money should be invested in American-made products if we are to stimulate our economy, the Chamber sided with foreign embassies against the Buy America provision in the economic stimulus package.

The Chamber's argument that Buy America provisions would start a trade war is a tired one. The stimulus bill requires that U.S. materials be used in funded projects, but it also states that the clause not override U.S. international trade commitments.

\$100 million buys a lot

And that's not all folks. The Chamber's most recent initiative supposes to protect nothing other than America's free market system and counter the Obama administration's regulatory agenda.

The Chamber in June announced it

will spend \$100 million to stem what it calls the "rapidly growing influence of government over private sector activity." It said the national advocacy campaign will be sweeping and involve advertising, education, political activities, new media and grass-roots organizing.

The Chamber, of course, didn't complain about government influence last fall when it lobbied hard for the \$700 billion plus bailout package for Wall Street.

The new efforts come as the government is expanding its influence in the automobile and banking industries and reform is on the horizon for the health care and energy sectors.

In a nutshell, the Chamber is spending \$100 million to roll us back to the old failed policies of the Bush administration when we need new policies to revive the middle class and working families.

“The Chamber is spending \$100 million to roll us back to the old failed policies of the Bush administration.”



Ohio Chamber Kills Pride in America Parade

In a small Ohio town, the Chamber of Commerce – that's the U.S. Chamber of Commerce – proved once again how anti-American and anti-worker it can be when it comes to supporting U.S. industry.

The Chamber affiliate in Findlay, Ohio, forced Mayor Pete Sehnert to cancel a union-organized parade that was to feature American-made classic cars and Harley-Davidson motorcycles simply because of union involvement.

Greater Findlay Inc., the local Chamber arm, "did everything they could to sabotage us," said Donnie Blatt, the USW's Rapid Response coordinator for District 1. "They told business not to cooperate with us."

Community event planned

The program was being organized by USW Local 270L at the Cooper Tire & Rubber Co. plant in Findlay as a community function for the last Saturday in July. The union sought to get business leaders involved and spent months meeting with Sehnert, the city's Republican mayor, who initially supported the plans.

Union leaders said they were clear from the start that they did not want the event to be seen solely as a union program. "We said we wanted it to be a community event," Blatt said. "We were just trying to do good things for the community."

The "Greater Findlay, the Heart of Commerce and Community Celebration" event was cancelled

because businesses would not support it with organized labor's strong involvement. Mayor Sehnert said the city will hold a similar event next year without the participation of unions in organizing it.

"Findlay's a non-union, Republican area and mostly what we had were Democratic speakers and union people," Sehnert told *The Courier* newspaper in Findlay. "It's not what I had in mind."

Someone could infer from Sehnert's statement that a pro-America, Buy-America celebration isn't supported by Republicans. The event would have opened with a parade of U.S.-made, union-made Harley-Davidsons and classic American autos driving down Main Street, alongside floats showcasing American-made products.

Speakers would have included U.S. Reps. Marcy Kaptur and Betty Sutton, the state attorney general and state treasurer. Blatt says Gov. Ted Strickland was thinking of speaking as well.

The state's oldest manufacturing firm planned to join the festivities, with its owner speaking about the importance of keeping manufacturing in Ohio. USW District 1 planned to give away free hot dogs and hamburgers.

"This is a great event, and for them to bypass it just because we pay union dues is terrible, just terrible," said Rod Nelson, president of USW Local 270L.

Blatt said union officials told the mayor: "We don't want this to be a union event. We want this to be a celebration of American manufacturing, a celebration of American workers. We want this to be a community celebration highlighting the need to keep good jobs in the U.S. and in Ohio."

Manufacturing a Better Future for America

Make It in America



The United States cannot revive its economy without first rebuilding the nation's manufacturing base.

While most of us understand how devastating the loss of a plant can be to a community and to the economy, policy makers don't always seem to get it.

With unemployment so high, skyrocketing debt, state budgets collapsing, and tough times for nearly everyone, it's important to understand why the engine of our economy has sputtered.

A new book, *Manufacturing a Better Future for America*, advances our understanding. It explains the current state of manufacturing in the United States, how we got to where we are and why it's essential to revitalize our manufacturing base.

There has never been a more critical time to rebuild the foundation of America's economy. Rebuilding manufacturing would create more jobs, reduce harmful global trade imbalances and strengthen the American economy.

Manufacturing in decline

But it is easier said than done. Manufacturing in America is in serious decline with 40,000 factory closures and more than five million jobs lost over the last decade alone.

To create the book, the Alliance for American Manufacturing – an innovative partnership of the USW and leading U.S. manufacturers (AAM) – asked some of the brightest minds in America for their ideas.

The resulting nine essays touch on international trade, skills and training, innovation, the social costs of deindustrialization, the intersection of manufacturing and national security, industrial policies in nations that compete with us, and the globalization of supply chains.

For nearly 300 years, the United States invested in producing goods and, as a result, became the richest nation in history. But for the past

Bold Industrial Policy Needed

few decades, policy makers have systematically dismantled our manufacturing base through bad tax policies and short-sighted trade agreements that encourage consumption of cheap imports and provide incentives for U.S.-based companies to export jobs.

As a result, some 40,000 U.S. manufacturing plants closed between 2001 and 2008, resulting in the loss of millions of family-supporting jobs. From 2001 to 2007, some 2.3 million jobs were lost just from the nation's huge trade deficit with China alone.

The book makes the case for a new U.S. industrial policy.

"The failure of our domestic and international trade policies to support manufacturing must be reversed," says Scott Paul, the AAM's executive director. "We urgently need a national manufacturing strategy."

Industrial policy is not a new or radical concept. Alexander Hamilton constructed the America's first industrial policy in 1791. President Reagan, spurred on by a Democratic Congress, adopted measures to counter a grossly imbalanced trade relationship with Europe and Japan in the 1980s.

The Plaza Accords, which raised the value of currencies in Japan and Europe relative to the dollar in a managed way, had a positive effect on lowering our trade deficit. Key government investments in the semiconductor industry and other technologies spurred their development and commercialization. President Reagan signed into law enhanced Buy American requirements for infrastructure projects to boost domestic jobs.

Those same principles could form the foundation of a new industrial policy today. Paul suggested raising the value of China's currency to market-based levels, investing in value-added manufacturing such as clean energy and engage in serious bilateral talks with China to make sure it honors the commitments it made upon entry to the World Trade Organization in 2001 to eliminate its own protectionist policies. Finally, keep domestic purchasing requirements in place so that tax dollars are re-invested in our economy.

Paul also urged Congress to provide access to much-needed capital for small and mid-sized manufacturers to capture new clean energy markets here and abroad.

"Unless we want green manufacturing jobs created in Shanghai instead of Cincinnati, or Dusseldorf instead of Denver, we must support domestic development of these industries," Paul said.

Local union leaders and district staff representing some 5,000 USW members in the Heavy and Highway Construction Conference met in Pittsburgh July 27 to share information and discuss their industry's problems.

District 8 Director Billy Thompson, who chairs the conference, recognized that employment levels are still down in spite of the federal stimulus package designated for shovel-ready projects.

"The Obama administration and Congress have done everything they can by appropriating the funds but several states are operating at a deficit and have been unable to approve a budget," Thompson said. "A lot of the money is tied up by state governments."

Local 14581 has more than 1,000

members in Kentucky but only 500 are working according to Gypsy Cantrell, vice president of the local.

"There's no work anywhere in the private sector. Out-of-state contractors are coming in to bid on jobs," said Cantrell who is from Elkhorn City, Ky. "When we try to organize a company, they lawyer-up right away. And they're high-dollar lawyers."

Cantrell said labor law reform would make a tremendous difference in organizing. "That would help us eliminate the fear of rival contractors coming out of the woodwork," she said.

Health insurance

Each local negotiates health care for its members in its own geographic area. Some are having difficulty sustaining the benefits, particularly when

non-union competitors work in the same region and offer little or no benefits.

The union reps heard a presentation on what insurance options may be available to their members. The possibility of joining together to form a larger group that would benefit all workers in the conference was greeted with strong interest. The conference agreed to study the matter further and review proposals before deciding how to move forward.

The USW Heavy Highway Construction Conference was established more than 30 years ago following the 1972 merger into the USW of District 50 of the Allied & Technical Workers. Today, local unions belonging to the conference are headquartered in Pennsylvania, West Virginia, New Jersey and Kentucky.

Construction Workers Await Stimulus

Photo by Jennifer Jurek

Book cover
courtesy of
Alliance for
American
Manufacturing

Jillberto Rios Ramirez (right) describes rescue effort. Photo by Scott Weaver



Abandoned Without Justice in Mexico

Police Shut Down Rescue Operation Run by Widows

In the 3 ½ years since an explosion ripped through the Pasta de Conchos coal mine in Mexico, killing 65 men, Jillberto Rios Ramirez has gone underground almost daily to dig through rubble in hopes of finding the bodies of his son and other lost miners.

The rescue operation, financially supported by a group of miners' widows who occupied the site, was shut down on July 31 by 100 members of the Coahuila state police.

Until the police assault, Ramirez was part of a 13-man volunteer rescue team that was scratching through the earth to uncover 63 bodies abandoned after the February 2006 explosion by the owner, Grupo Mexico, and the Mexican government.

The police, accompanied by Grupo Mexico security guards, forcibly dislodged the miners and family members, who vowed to somehow continue their relief efforts.

Among the injured was Rosa Maria Mejia, who heads the Widows of Pasta de Conchos group that organized the recovery operation. She had met just two weeks earlier with an international labor delegation led by the USW, the International Federation of Chemical, Energy Mine and General Workers' Unions (ICEM) and the International Metalworkers Federation (IMF).

Only two bodies were recovered in the immediate aftermath of the accident before Grupo Mexico called off the search less than a week after the

accident, infuriating the families of the miners who were angry at not being able to bury their dead.

Why did Ramirez get involved? "Because I was a miner and they are our brothers," he told the visiting labor delegation. "And not just for my son, but for all of the miners who were there."

The rescue team members, paid a small amount through bucket collections and other donations, removed rocks, gravel and dust caused by the explosion and tried to reinforce walls and ceilings with posts and arches.

The union leaders from Argentina, Canada, Peru, South Africa and the United States met with family members of the victims and with the rescue team that is working to recover miners' bodies. At the entrance to the mine, they placed wreaths in memory of the workers who died.

Grupo Mexico, blamed by a special prosecutor for allowing a deadly mix of methane, dust and oxygen to build up in the mine, has abandoned the site and left behind expensive equipment.

Widows control rescue

The widows created by the worst coal mining disaster in Mexico in a generation, are still waiting for their husbands to come home.

Before the police moved in, the miners' widows had taken control of the rescue operation and moved onto the abandoned mine site. They lived in a makeshift community near the entrance.

"The company basically

abandoned us here," said Aida Gonzalez Farias, whose husband Elias died in the disaster.

They used their own resources and collected donations to continue the rescue operation. Grupo Mexico has declined to help pay for any of the recovery operations.

Women who did not know each other on the day the accident happened now act together like family with the shared goal of recovering remains of their loved ones.

Juanita Carrera Rodriguez, whose husband is among the dead, said the widows received support from the miners' union and international sympathizers.

"We feel strengthened. We have even more energy to keep fighting and to get our husbands out of a place where they have been buried because, unfortunately, the company hasn't done anything and it won't do anything."

Rodriguez said she stayed at the mine site for months after the accident, too stricken to properly care for her children who were too young to understand the tragedy.

"It was just because of the depth of my pain and at that time my children weren't enough for me to fill that hole, that empty hole that was created when I lost my husband," she said. "All of my feelings and energy was focused here."

Los Mineros Under Attack

International Delegation Demands Mexico End Persecution

Trade union and government leaders from 13 countries traveled to Mexico this summer to support Los Mineros, the national miner's union that has been under attack by the Mexican government and the conglomerate Grupo Mexico.

"Workers around the world are outraged at Mexico's attacks on the Mineworkers union," said International President Leo W. Gerard.

The delegation, organized by the USW, the International Metalworkers' Federation (IMF) and the International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers' Unions (ICEM), sought but was denied a meeting with President Felipe Calderón to discuss his government's handling of the mine workers conflict.

Unbridled interference

The delegation, led by Canada's National Democratic Party leader Jack Layton, instead confronted Mexican Labor Secretary Javier Lozano Alarcon over the government's meddling with Los Mineros.

During the meeting, Layton informed the Labor Secretary that the Mexican government's unbridled interference into the internal affairs of Los Mineros constitutes "serious and unacceptable violations of human rights."

Afterwards, Layton said the expression of global solidarity in support of

the Mexican union and its exiled leader, Napoleon Gomez, was unusual and very powerful.

"The delegation included trade union leaders from Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Germany, Italy, Norway, Peru, Poland, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, and the United States, and government leaders from Australia, Canada and Peru.

In addition to declaring that Los Mineros strikes are illegal, the government has jailed union leaders, frozen union bank accounts and repeatedly failed to prosecute those who have assassinated four Los Mineros members.

"During our meeting it became painfully obvious that the Mexican government cannot defend itself over its terrible record of trade union repression and violation of human rights," said Ken Neumann, the USW national director for Canada.

Following the 2006 coal mine explosion at the Grupo Mexico-owned Pasta de Conchos, Gomez accused the company and the Mexican government of committing "industrial homicide."

The government removed Gomez from office by fabricating charges that he defrauded Los Mineros of \$55 million. Mexico continues to conceal an audit by the country's National Banking and Securities Commission, which cleared Gomez.

The delegation also met with Los Mineros national Executive Committee

member Juan Linares Montufar, who has been held in a Mexico City jail since returning from Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada in December 2008. Linares had been meeting with Gomez, who is living in exile in Canada. He moved there with help from the USW.

Los Mineros is one of the few unions in Mexico that continues to strike for higher wages. The union has won a series of strikes with wage increases above 8 percent, exceeding the 4.5 percent limit imposed by the government. The union has also criticized the government's labor law reform proposals and the lack of health and safety protections for workers.

Government harassment

In response, the government twice removed Gomez from office and has repeatedly filed criminal charges against the union leadership, although these have been thrown out by the courts.

The government also tried repeatedly to declare illegal a strike at three Grupo Mexico mines which has run for nearly two years, but the courts have rebuffed those efforts. The government has also supported Grupo Mexico in establishing company-dominated unions at eight other facilities.

Four union members have been killed in the conflict. The government has not investigated or prosecuted their cases.



Union members march to commemorate the 75th anniversary of Los Mineros. Photo by Scott Weaver

One Year Later

ArcelorMittal Global Health and Safety Agreement

Just over a year ago, the USW and trade unions around the globe signed a groundbreaking agreement with the world's largest steelmaker, ArcelorMittal, to improve health and safety standards throughout the company.

Since then, a number of important steps have been taken toward fulfilling the promise of a truly global commitment to safer and healthier workplaces.

"Occupational health and safety is the single most important issue for working people, wherever they live," said global committee participant Al Long, a member of Local 6787 at the ArcelorMittal plant in Burns Harbor, Ind. "We all understand that union workplaces are safer workplaces, and our goal is to make all workplaces safer, one step at a time."

One of the main goals of the agreement is to establish joint union and management safety committees at all of the ArcelorMittal operations, a process that is underway. The company operates more than 60 plants in 21 countries.

sure proposals are being implemented and are working.

Union members and their management counterparts from other countries have also been asked to participate in quarterly joint safety conferences in the United States.

In addition, ArcelorMittal and its employees worldwide marked their first-ever "Global Health and Safety Day," which coincided with Workers Memorial Day and focused on education and training to raise health and safety standards throughout the company.

ArcelorMittal workers worldwide spent the day learning about health and safety and received practical training specific to the equipment they work with every day.

The events included a video presentation featuring many of the principal employee representatives, including International President Leo W. Gerard and ArcelorMittal President and CEO Lakshmi Mittal.

As the realities of the global economy dictate, the USW's strategic alliances have already paved the way for progress in making workplaces safer in many countries.

We must continue to push for basic workplace health and safety standards with all of our multinational employers to raise the bar for workers everywhere.

The USW and global allies' partnership with ArcelorMittal in the world's first global health and safety agreement is important for USW members and working men and women – not just in the United States and Canada, and not just in the steel industry – but everywhere. In order to take advantage of this opportunity to create more awareness around the issue of occupational health and safety in the age of globalization, we must create more global workers' alliances to work with management to take on this important task.

We must also work to make sure all employees and their supervisors are trained properly. We must do whatever we can to minimize unsafe working conditions in all of our workplaces.

Finally, in this time of global economic crisis, we cannot fall into the trap of allowing the pressures of the market impact decisions on the shop floor that would endanger any worker.

The global financial crisis could push an increasing number of children, particularly girls, into child labor, according to a new International Labor Organization report.

While recent global estimates indicate the number of children involved in child labor has been falling, the financial crisis threatens to erode this progress, the report, "Give Girls a Chance," concluded.

"In the recession and with declining household income, children are put out of school and put into work. And girls are often among the first," said Frank Hagemann, the ILO's director of research and policy.

Hagemann said he fears that the current global economic crisis with its declining commodity prices and credit constraints will reverse the generally positive decline in child labor.

Trend threatened

In its most recent survey, the ILO reported in 2006 that there were 218 million child laborers around the world, a significant decrease from the 246 million child laborers reported four years earlier.

ILO Director-General Juan Somavia said the policies chosen in the present economic crisis will be a test of national and global commitments to ban child labor.

"Protecting girls – and all children – from child labor calls for integrated responses that include jobs for parents and social protection measures that help them to keep both girls and boys in school," Somavia said.

Children as young as five years old work long hours for little or no pay. And girls are just as likely as boys to be forced into some of the most hazardous forms of labor.

Nearly half of the 218 million child laborers around the world are girls, according to the report, which was released to coincide with this year's World Day Against Child Labor.

100 million girls

More than 100 million girls are involved in child labor, according to the ILO's estimates. And many girls face the worst forms of child labor.

Much work undertaken by girls is hidden from public view, which

Financial Crisis May Expand Child Labor, ILO Fears

Girls at Risk



creates particular dangers. Girls make up the overwhelming number of children in domestic work in third party households and there are regular reports of the abuse of child domestic workers. More than half of the girls are forced to work in prostitution and pornography or in bonded labor in agriculture, mining and quarrying, the report said.

All children are vulnerable, but girls run particular risks, said study co-author Patrick Quinn. Girls are very often entrapped in hidden work situations, which can leave them open to abuse.

Double burden

In their own homes, girls take on household chores to a much greater extent than boys. Combined with economic activity outside the household, this imposes a "double burden" that increases the risk of girls dropping out of school.

In many societies girls are in an inferior and vulnerable position compared to boys and are more likely to lack basic education. This seriously restricts their future opportunities.

As the financial crisis increases poverty, poor families with a number of children may have to make choices about which children stay in school and which work.

In cultures where a higher value is placed on education of male children, girls risk being taken out of school and are then likely to enter the work force at an early age.

Other factors which could push up the numbers in child labor include cuts in national education budgets, and a decline in remittances of migrant workers abroad, as these remittances often help to keep children in school.

Working in 90 countries

The ILO's International Program on the Elimination of Child Labor (IPEC) has activities in almost 90 countries worldwide.

The program works at the policy level, supporting development of legislative and policy frameworks to tackle child labor, as well as through programs aimed at preventing and withdrawing children from child labor, and has developed a global action plan to eliminate its worst forms – including hazardous work, commercial sexual exploitation, trafficking and all forms of slavery – by 2016.

Many of ILO-IPEC's local programs are working with girls, providing them with a chance of education or training as an alternative to child labor.

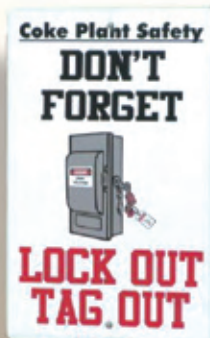
“Occupational health and safety is the single most important issue for working people, wherever they live.”

Other first actions included the creation of a joint global health and safety committee to target specific plants for dramatic improvements in safety performance. The group has met this year in Mexico and the Czech Republic with Romania on the agenda.

Safety audits and training

In the past year, the committee has conducted an extensive safety audit with Mexican union members, scheduled safety training at a mill in Kazakhstan to be taught by union members from Spain and is working to get Brazilian union members to be allowed to participate in accident investigations.

The committee is sharing information about successful health and safety practices between plants and across continents, and is following up at some of the worst areas to make



Are Cheap Jeans Worth the Price?



Photos courtesy National Labor Committee

Worker Asking for Maternity Leave Dismissed

Less than two months before she was to give birth, a 21-year old woman worker was thrown out of the R.L. Denim factory when she asked for her legal right to maternity leave with pay.

When the NLC met the young woman, also named Fatema, she was coughing and wheezing, just having been diagnosed with tuberculosis.

Under the law in Bangladesh, pregnant women are guaranteed 16 weeks of maternity leave with pay. The pay is based on the average wage earned over the previous three months including regular and overtime wages and bonuses.

Despite the law, the women was let go in July 2008 when she was 7 ½ months pregnant. She was asked to leave without receiving any of the benefits legally due to her.

Her average wage at the R.L. Denim plant was the equivalent of \$51.09 for a seven-day week including regular and overtime wages and a production bonus. At that rate, honoring her legal right to maternity leave with pay would have cost the factory \$189.



Fatema and child



Mrs. Parvin

Factory Worker Dies

We all enjoy a bargain. But how would you feel if you knew that the cheap jeans you bought were made by an overworked young woman who died after collapsing on the job.

For three days in early December 2008, Fatema Akter, 18, begged her supervisor at the R.L. Denim factory in Bangladesh for a day off. Forced to work 13 to 15 hours a day, seven days a week, Fatema was sick and exhausted with pains in her chest and arms. She also had dysentery, which may have resulted from the factory's filthy drinking water.

Rather than grant her a sick day, the supervisor, identified only as Mr. Monir, slapped Fatema in the face very hard

and ordered her to continue working.

Several days later, Fatema became so violently ill at about 10 a.m. that she was allowed to lie down on a piece of cardboard on the factory floor. Management left her lying there apparently unconscious, not lifting a finger to arrange for treatment.

After an hour or so, the workers demanded that Fatema be taken to a hospital and management arranged for a co-worker to take her on a small motorcycle rickshaw to the Al-Amin Hospital in Chittagong, where she was pronounced dead at 5 p.m.

Fatema was a helper on the Line D at the denim factory. Her identify card number was 532.

As a helper, her job was to clean the finished jeans, which meant she used a small scissor to cut off loose threads

left on the pants. She was assigned a mandatory production goal of cleaning 90 to 100 pairs of jeans each hour, or an average of one pair of jeans every 38 seconds.

The pace was frantic and relentless. In a typical 13-hour shift, Fatema had to clean 1,235 pairs of pants. She was paid one-tenth of a U.S. cent for each pair cleaned.

If Fatema fell behind, she was cursed and slapped – an event that the National Labor Committee (NLC) says happened frequently. She was paid just 11 ½ cents an hour, 93 cents a day and \$5.60 U.S. a week.

Fatema's family had no money to bury their daughter and has asked management to pay a life insurance benefit of approximately \$1,460 and a death benefit of \$4,380.

Workers Cursed and Beaten

The NLC interviewed a factory helper identified only as Mrs. Parvin, who said she was terminated in 2009 after requesting maternity leave.

Mrs. Parvin told the NLC that the plant's general manager and two supervisors routinely cursed at, slapped and beat her and other women workers if they moved too slowly. They also pulled the women's hair and even kicked them. When they cursed at the young women, they used the most vile language.

Mrs. Parvin said she was tired and often sick during her difficult pregnancy and pleaded with management to allow her to go on maternity leave. But her request was always denied.

Less than three weeks before she was to give birth, Mrs. Parvin could no longer make her assigned production goal. The general manager angrily told her to leave the factory.

After working seven-day, 80-hour work weeks for four years, Mrs. Parvin was kicked out of the factory with less than 10 percent of the legal maternity benefits due to her.

The manager gave her the equivalent of \$21.90 and said she could reapply for her job in two months. The NLC calculated that she was instead owed \$230.08.

women – is perhaps the biggest victory for workers in the developing world to date," said International President Leo W. Gerard.

"The workers will no longer be beaten at work. They will be paid for overtime and maternity leave. They now have toilet paper and other basic needs."

The inhuman conditions that led to the campaign were uncovered by the National Labor Committee (NLC), a U.S. based activist organization that has long been supported by the USW.

For years, hundreds of young women employed at the R.L. Denim factory were trapped under prison-like conditions, forced to work seven days a week, beaten, denied maternity leave and paid just pennies an hour, NLC Director Charles Kernaghan uncovered.

Metro Group, the world's third-largest retailer with outlets across Europe, ultimately pledged to make significant changes in its worldwide supply chain to

guarantee that human and worker rights are respected at the factory, where workers are paid an estimated 13 U.S. cents for each pair of jeans they sew.

Gerard said the settlement is a "big win in the fight against the global race to the bottom – not only for the workers in Bangladesh, but for Workers Uniting as we take on battles from a global perspective."

When the factory workers – more than 650 mostly young women who sew clothing for Metro and its Macro Cash & Carry stores – asked for their most basic legal rights, they were attacked, fired and thrown out on the street with nothing. For too many workers in the developing world, this is the only choice they have – be exploited or starve.

In May, just when the factory's workers were on the verge of winning legal rights to a democratic voice in the work place, Metro announced it was pulling its work from the factory following years of

profiting from their exploitation.

At that time, Workers Uniting was joined by the German union Verdi in signing an unprecedented Joint International Solidarity statement in support of the Bangladeshi workers. Together, the unions represent some 5.5 million workers.

"Our solidarity sent a clear message that our unions are not only dedicated to protecting and growing the rights of our own members, but that we will fight to protect the rights of workers across the developing world," said Unite Joint General Secretary Derek Simpson.

Added Unite Joint General Secretary Tony Woodley: "Our efforts helped hold a corporate exploiter accountable, showed what's possible when workers around the world stand together."

According to the NLC, Metro Group admitted its failure to monitor and protect the factory's workers. In a statement, Metro said it would immediately

return all of its orders to the R.L. Denim factory, institute significant changes throughout its worldwide supply chain to guarantee that human and worker rights standards are finally respected and open the factory to the respected Bangladesh Center for Workers Solidarity and National Garment Workers Federation to push for continued improvements.

Abusive supervisors were fired and pay was corrected, the NLC told its supporters. The factory also now has child and health care centers, purified drinking water, a dining area, toilet paper and soap.

"This campaign is so significant in that it has broken through the isolation to reach out to some of the poorest and most abused workers in the global sweatshop economy, proving that with the help of international solidarity, workers can now ask for their rights and win," the NLC said.

Ending the HORROR

Workers Uniting Celebrates Victory in Bangladesh

Workers Uniting, the world's first global union, helped to correct abuses at a sweatshop in Bangladesh where young woman were routinely beaten, denied maternity leave and forced to work grueling hours while being shortchanged of their wages.

Standing up for exploited workers at

the R.L. Denim factory in Bangladesh was one of the first global solidarity projects undertaken by Workers Uniting after its formation last summer by the United Steelworkers and Unite, the largest labor union in the United Kingdom and Ireland.

"The victory for R.L. Denim workers in Bangladesh – hundreds of young

Rubber Workers Address Economic Crisis

Rubber workers and trade union leaders from around the world met in Nashville to discuss the impact of the global recession on the rubber industry and its labor relations and to develop a plan of action.

The International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers' Unions (ICEM) World Rubber Conference held in May drew nearly 90 trade unionists from throughout the world.

The conference centered primarily on the global economic crisis with panelists speaking of shut-downs, layoffs, wage freezes, reductions in pay and hours worked, contract labor and lack of investment at plants around the world.

The USW was the conference host. International Secretary-Treasurer Stan Johnson, who leads the USW's Rubber/Plastics Industry Conference (R/PIC), was unanimously elected as the ICEM's permanent chairman for the rubber industry.

"Our opportunity lies in making sure that work and the value of workers is once again important," Johnson said. "It is our responsibility, individually and collectively, to step forward and change our future."

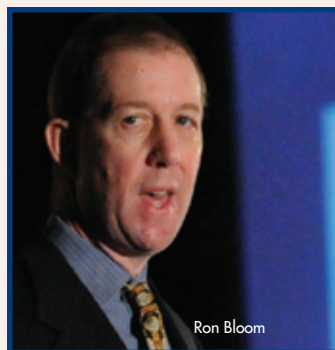
For more conference details, visit www.icem.org.

IEB Supports Strikers

The International Executive Board on July 8 showed support for 217 USW members who are on strike at Prysmian Cable and Systems in Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu, Quebec.

Prysmian broke off talks even before the monetary issues of the contract were discussed. After more than twenty meetings, members of Locals 7016 and 8428 went on strike April 1.

The company, formerly Pirelli Cables, is majority owned by the investment house Goldman Sachs, which participated in the U.S. government's Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP). It produces electric cables and operates four plants in North America.



Ron Bloom

Bloom Leads Auto Task Force

Ron Bloom, a former special assistant to International President Leo W. Gerard, is the new leader of the Presidential Task Force on the Auto Industry.

Bloom, who left the USW in February to become a senior advisor to the task force, was tapped in July to succeed Steven Rattner, a former New York investment banker who oversaw the task force and has returned to private life.

A Harvard trained banker before he joined the USW, Bloom assumed leadership of the task force's activities at the request of Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner.

Landry Named DPE VP

Leaders representing the 24 national unions affiliated with the AFL-CIO's Department of Professional Employees (DPE) have elected USW International Vice President Carol Landry as a new DPE general vice president. The DPE represents more than 4 million professional and technical workers. Landry was elected to a four-year term at the DPE, where she filled a board seat vacated by retired Secretary-Treasurer Jim English.



Carol Landry

ASARCO Strike Authorization

Copper workers represented by the Steelworkers and other unions employed by ASARCO LLC have unanimously approved a strike if the USW determines the action necessary. Employees at all ASARCO locations could strike if Grupo Mexico, the corporate parent of bankrupt ASARCO, goes forward with a plan of reorganization without first reaching an agreement with the union.

By contrast, Sterlite Inc., which has agreed to purchase assets under a debtors' plan of reorganization, has reached a labor agreement with the USW in the event that plan is approved. Grupo Mexico has not reached an agreement with the union despite many negotiating sessions over the past two years.

A hearing to consider the competing plans for bankruptcy reorganization is scheduled to begin on August 14 in federal bankruptcy court in Corpus Christi, Texas.

Women of Steel Raise Funds

Women of Steel (WOS) in Southern Illinois have actively supported the fight against domestic violence in recent years through financial support of the Phoenix Crisis Center in Granite City, Ill. Their activities have raised over \$50,000 in six years.

This year, the WOS chose as its beneficiary the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation to honor the late Mary Jo Hollenbeck, the sister of Local 1899 WOS activist Joyce Hayden.

Local businesses and individuals gave generously and the members of the Polish Hall in Madison, Ill., donated their facility. In the photo, Hayden (left) and Norma Gaines, Local 68 recording secretary and WOS co-coordinator for District 7, present a plaque to Polish Hall President Tom Gordon Jr., in recognition of the organization's support.



Joyce Hayden, Tom Gordon, Jr., and Norma Gaines

\$1.4 Million "Lunch Money" Settlement

The USW reached a settlement in a lawsuit against Riverside Cement of California and its parent company, TXI, requiring the company to pay \$1.4 million to all of its represented employees at facilities in Oro Grande and Crestmore, Calif.

The payments will compensate employees for missed and on-duty meal and rest periods. Some former employees are also eligible for compensation. The money will be distributed according to a court-approved formula. TXI is a major cement producer operating in Texas and California.

Gerard Receives Honorary Degree

International President Leo W. Gerard received an honorary doctor of laws degree from the University of Guelph in Ontario, Canada in recognition of his contributions to social justice. The university cited Gerard's leadership in fighting for workers' rights in the United States and Canada.



University of Guelph Photo

New Home for Flint Archives

American Flint Glass Workers Union (AFGWU) archives dating back to the union's formation in 1878 have been relocated to the Museum of American Glass in Weston, W.Va., following the sale of the union's former headquarters in Toledo.

The AFGWU was one of the oldest union movements in the United States, predating the Steelworkers, the Auto Workers and the Rubber Workers. George M. Parker, president of the Flints from 1961 until 1989, was instrumental in establishing a museum and archives to commemorate the history of this significant organization.

In 2003, the union merged with the United Steelworkers. Flint's glassworkers and former members of the Aluminum, Brick and Glass (ABG) union are now part of the USW Glass Conference.

The archives, accepted by the museum in February, are an invaluable asset to those who seek to understand the historical context of the development and growth of the labor movement in the United States.

Arbitrator Rules for USW

An independent arbitrator ordered AK Steel to abandon plans to shut down its Ashland, Ky., plant and lay off about 750 USW-represented workers because the USW's contract prevents members from being laid off while other plants are operating.

International President Leo W. Gerard warned other employers that the USW will continue to enforce its contractual protections, no matter what market conditions are or how difficult economic times become.

"We promised job and earnings security in Ashland and delivered," said Gerard. "We promised to fight for fairness and dignity for our members and we're true to our word."

Local 1865 President Doug Campbell thanked international representatives who assisted in the arbitration efforts. "Our members need to know that our grievance procedure works, even if it seems slow at times," he said.

Putting Money Where it Matters

Jones of Local 7655 is PAC Member of the Quarter

Local 7655 President William E. Jones knows how important it is for labor to be active in politics and he puts his money where it matters.

“Having labor-friendly candidates means a lot to the future and the very existence of organized labor from our local city and county officials all the way to the president of the United States,” Jones said.

Local 7655, which represents employees at the Carrier Air Conditioning plant in Collierville, Tenn., urges members to get involved in local, state and federal elections and participate in payroll check-off for the Steelworkers’ Political Action Fund.

PACs and the funds they raise play a key role in the USW’s ongoing activism on behalf of working people and their families. USW PAC Coordinator Michael Scarver notes that most corporations have well-funded PACs to push their causes in Washington, D.C., and at state and local governments.

Voluntary support important

“Politics has an effect on everything that this union does for our members from negotiating labor agreements to fighting for issues that pertain to the running of the facilities where our members work,” Scarver said.

Federal Election Commission rules prohibit the use of union dues money for political purposes, making it imperative that members voluntarily support PAC.

Scarver said it is easier than you might think to get a PAC started in your local and arrange for the company to allow payroll check-off. “Once we take that first step and talk to our members, it becomes pretty easy,” he said.

Members at Local 7655 are asked to support the fund through voluntary donations of at least \$1 a week or \$52 a year. This year’s drive was conducted by local Chairperson Debra Daniel.

“This local has been very active in



William E. Jones

the political arena, particularly in the 2006 Senate race here in Tennessee and, of course, the presidential race last year,” Jones said.

“I know PAC is important because it gives labor an opportunity to develop resources to help get pro-labor candidates elected. Corporations outspend labor many times over, but thanks to PAC we were able to pull members out of the local to get the job done.”

Because of its consistent activism in politics, Scarver honored the local by naming Jones the PAC Member of the Quarter.

“They are one of the top contributors in District 9,” Scarver said of the local’s members. “They are at the forefront of every important election that can impact employees at that plant.”

Actively involved

Jones, 34, started working at Carrier when he was 19 and quickly joined the union once his probationary period ended. He has been actively involved since 1997, serving as shop steward and chief steward before being elected president of the local in 2006, when he was 31.

He has served on the local’s Rapid Response, organizing and bargaining committees as well as the Tennessee Labor Management Foundation, the executive committee of the Shelby County Democratic Party and the United Way advisory committee representing labor.

“There is always room for improvement. We as working people should always hold our elected officials accountable and true to their word,” Jones said. “There is nothing better for a working person than a union and PAC is a major contributor to the very existence of organized labor.”

United Way Day of Caring

Women of Steel Clean and Organize Domestic Violence Shelter

The Women of Steel Committee at Local 1000 in Corning, N.Y., rolled up their sleeves for the United Way and perked up a women’s domestic violence shelter inside and out.

The local’s WOS Committee was one of eight teams from Corning Inc. that participated in all-day community projects as part of the United Way Day of Caring in Corning on June 24.

“This was a fun way to team build for our women’s committee and a great help to the women’s shelter as well,” said team leader Rebecca Price, chair of the WOS Committee.

Local 1000 represents more than 1,500 workers at Corning’s headquarters and business locations in Corning and around the region.

The Day of Caring, a tangible way for volunteers to support United Way agencies and activities, is sponsored annually by the United Way of the Southern Tier.

Typically, the projects involve physical labor and are tasks that the agencies involved can’t get done during their day-to-day operations.

The WOS group cleaned and organized the shelter’s common kitchen including walls, floor, cabinets, appliances and its messy pantry. They also cleaned and sanitized the shelter’s play room and all of its children’s toys.

“We went from the top down and cleaned everything,” Price said. “And when we were done we went outside and cleaned up the garden beds, too.”

All of the teams that ventured into the community for service projects received support from both Local 1000 and Corning, Price said.

One team of Local 1000 board members cleaned up the streets and alleyways around the local union hall, clearing trash and pulling weeds.

The staff and clients of the shelter appeared to be overwhelmed by the efforts and generosity of the volunteers, and more projects are planned.

“We established a great relationship with these other women in our community and look forward to serving them again,” Price said.



UNITED STEELWORKERS
USW
UNITY AND STRENGTH FOR WORKERS™

Leo W. Gerard
International President

June 2009

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

As your International President, I ask you and your local union membership to support the 2009 United Way Campaign. The USW is proud to be a longstanding partner with the United Way and shares its objective of helping working families every day with access to vital resources and services.

The USW, in conjunction with the AFL-CIO, has been working with the Obama administration to help restore workers’ rights, health care for all and an economy that works for all. But in the meantime, millions of American families are struggling with unemployment. Eight million working Americans have lost their jobs since the onset last year of the current economic crisis. Many hard-working people are going to local food pantries for help with food for the first time in their lives. The AFL-CIO has established a national Web site, UnemploymentLifeline.com, which offers a range of resources and strategies for the unemployed. But families in need must be helped directly in the communities where they live.

Our primary community partner in this vital daily work is the United Way. Through this partnership, we do make a difference. We continue to help those who are lacking basic necessities, as well as working on long-term solutions that address the real causes of our nation’s social service needs.

The work of the local United Ways deserves the support of union brothers and sisters in their communities. Please join me in supporting the 2009 United Way campaign – together we can help those in real need now, while we work to turn America around. Thank you.

In solidarity,

Leo W. Gerard

Leo W. Gerard
International President

LWG/crm

United Steel, Paper and Forestry, Rubber, Manufacturing, Energy, Allied Industrial and Service Workers International Union
Five Gateway Center, Pittsburgh, PA 15222 • 412-562-2400 • www.usw.org

Have You Moved?

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

USW@Work

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

Name _____

New Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____



SAFETY MATTERS

Go inside USW@Work for stories on safety in the oil and steel industries and on how to eliminate hazards where you work. See pages 12, 14 and 28.