

# December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2008

C.A.T. Contract Distribution #11

What was supposed to have been a productive week has turned into anything but that. To put it in a nutshell, we received one new proposal pertaining to the economics (see reverse side) and received information we requested about insurance issues. That was it!

The biggest news for the week, other than the minor progress on the economic items, was the company's insurance proposal. Naturally they have offered the Lumenos insurance but have now added a substandard PPO with it. This is especially frustrating when you consider that in 2005 Local 21 came UNDER the projected cost for our healthcare by \$217,000. In 2006 we came UNDER the projection by \$714,000 and in 2007 we came UNDER the projection by a whopping \$854,000. You don't need me to tell you that's just short of 2 MILLION DOLLARS in three years. What more could a company hope for? They already have everything they could want, a workforce that is relatively healthy (even though our average age is 50 yrs old), an educated workforce that doesn't abuse the system, and utilization that came under the projection every year since NewPage owned us. What do these people want...blood? Obviously insurance WILL be one of the single biggest issues for negotiations, followed closely by the language they want that will gut our contract which includes flexibility, lines of progression, and working Christmas.

We had one new TA:

<p><b>Company Proposal 21 - Side Agreements:</b> This was already close to completion and all we did was make sure everything was up to date. Nothing Earth shattering here.</p>
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Because the company wasn't prepared to make any more economic offers, negotiations broke off at noon on Thursday and will not resume until Monday, December 17<sup>th</sup>. Obviously we (the committee) are frustrated at the lack of progress at the table. I was previously quoted as saying that I felt this week would say a lot and went so far as to predict we would have substantial gains in the economic package to report by week's end. Boy; was I wrong. Although they won't admit it, I believe the company's reluctance to do much this whole week has a lot to do with the NewPage Council meeting we will be attending in Detroit on Tuesday. This meeting was set up by the USW to discuss strategy at the table. Remember, our sister mill in Luke is going through negotiations right now too and an alliance is crucial at this time. I strongly urge you all to attend the next union meeting on December 10<sup>th</sup> as we will be reporting to our members the discussions that took place at this NewPage Council meeting. You will be getting information first hand as we will be leaving Detroit by late morning on Wednesday to try to get here in time for the start of the union meeting.

I expect frustration to sweep throughout the mill and I totally understand it. I'm as upset as you are. I feel this week was very unproductive and in fact only hurt negotiations rather than getting closer to something to vote on. I will be discussing strategic avenues with the USW on Tuesday and will probably start getting some classes set up at the hall for the first round of C-5 training. This of course will depend on the availability of the USW strategic training team.

Thanks to all of you for your support,

Bryon Branstrom