

December 11th, 2008

C.A.T. Contract Distribution #12

As you probably remember from the last CAT letter, I mentioned that some of us on the committee would be going to Detroit for a NewPage Council meeting on Tuesday December 9th. In fact, to be completely honest with all of you, I believe it was because of this meeting the company was reluctant to negotiate to any extent during our last week of negotiations.

I'm pleased to tell all of you that as a result of this council meeting, negotiations have been temporarily postponed while our International Vice President Jon Geenen contacts Rick Willette to explain we are not interested in a substandard insurance offer and that the company will have to come up with a PPO plan we can live with or the USW will. It's important you all understand the dilemma we are in. We submit information requests to the company pertaining to our insurance and what we receive is information that is either inaccurate or unacceptable.

Let me explain this a little further. We asked for information explaining what the premiums would be for the Lumenos insurance. You would think this would have been a part of their original presentation, but it wasn't. That was on October 29 when we verbally asked for these premiums. We didn't get anything from the company so on November 14th we again requested it in writing, along with other information requests. We finally received it on December 2nd, 34 days after our initial request. Here's the kicker, the premiums are exactly the same as those from 979 and almost exactly the same as the premiums presented to Luke. The company didn't take into consideration our utilization, they didn't care that we came under their projection for the previous 3 years by just under 2 MILLION DOLLARS, and they didn't put an ounce of work into their answer, instead they simply handed us the premiums from another local. We immediately questioned this and you guessed it; their answer was, "it is what it is". We have become good stewards of our insurance and have come in under our projection and that's the thanks we get? So back to my original point, we waited 34 days for an answer pertaining to premiums that the company had from day one.

Another issue is inaccurate information. We requested information pertaining to the numbers in our Local. We wanted to know how many people maxed out on their insurance "out of pocket" in the past couple years and how many total people (counting dependants) are under our insurance. They came back, at the last minute on Tuesday, with numbers so screwed up that each of us in Local 21 would have 5.05 dependants. Think about that...EVERY person would have to have 5.05 dependants. How stupid do they think we are? It took a whole 5 seconds for us to question this and guess what, the next day they came in with another set of numbers. This time it was more believable with a total of 1957 total dependants meaning counting yourself it is 2.3 people per household.

BUT....what do we believe anymore? Now we have to analyze absolutely everything.

On another note pertaining to insurance, we have a copy of an e-mail reply from Rick Willette saying insurance is a LOCAL issue and NOT a corporate mandate. Therefore, to get back to my original intent of this CAT report, negotiations are on hold until we can get our arms around this insurance issue and to get the company to listen to our concerns for a change. I am very pleased we now have some active involvement from the International.

Remember, we aren't alone in this battle. In early January we will be sending 2 people from our Local to join all the other NewPage mills in Luke, Maryland. These people will be working to form a scheduled support plan throughout all NewPage mills with every Local becoming involved. This is a strategic commitment that was made during the Detroit meeting to include scheduled events already in the works.

I also want to report that any C-5 training I previously alluded to has been pushed back for now as the International will be here to do some targeted training with the committee first. This will be done at both the Escanaba and Luke mills.

Last but not least I'm asking for your understanding with the delay in negotiations, I'm not asking you to like it as I'm no different than all of you, I'd like to see this done, but this delay is necessary to get everyone back on track toward a positive contract that we all can live with.

Thank you all for your continued support.

In Solidarity,

Bryon Branstrom