

February 27th, 2009

C.A.T. Distribution #15

This is a tough CAT report to write, let me explain why. The entire world is going through hard times right now and this facility is no exception. We, the committee, have had countless meetings discussing this exact issue and have told those in charge of this mill that we realize how difficult times are and that we know we need to work through this together to insure we are both here when times are good again, (and make no mistake about it, times will be good again). I meant those words when I said them to Mike Entz because, in fact, we do need to work together to get through this. Unfortunately that doesn't seem to be the path the company decided to go down. Instead, the company that claims to be the "employer of choice" and wants to be known for its "integrity" has decided to create (what I view as) a hostile work environment.

Let me explain that comment with some facts; NewPage Corporation is the biggest coated paper producer in North America, Local 21 is the biggest Local of all the NewPage mills BUT MORE IMPORTANTLY we are by far the most organized. I have attended many conventions and council meetings, ranging in numbers of people from 25 all the way up to 1500 and I can tell you that without a doubt, our Local is by far the most informed and most engaged union of any that I have seen. Seriously, we are used as a model (for other Locals) as to how things should be done as far as communication, preparation, and education are concerned. Our members are mobilized; meaning if this committee asks anything of you, you have consistently been there for us. So, with that being said, I feel the recent attacks on our privileges are by design. I feel the company is purposely doing things to stir up our members and pit them against each other. The announcement about only getting our bankers on straight time has upset many people. Add to that the compressed vacation schedules, forced vacations, the recent job cuts (with not 1 penny of compensation for the added responsibility), and overtime cut out regardless if we feel a job can be safely done or not. You can see why everyone is on the edge and at each other's throats. If that wasn't enough to convince you that this is by design, think about this; Last Monday's bulletin reported how the Operators in the Boiler House as well as the Turbine Operators helped on a LSS project on #11 boiler. Those people came to me screaming as they said they had no part of it. Their involvement was mandatory as they had to do certain things as the Black Belts monitored it. At a time when everything seems to be heading South, these people were accused (by others in the mill) of jumping in bed with the company. It's not true. Tell me that wasn't by design. Another example is in maintenance. The company has always taken pleasure in pitting the day maintenance against tour maintenance and recent issues/expectations are just more of the same. The sad part of all of this is that I think their scam is working. For the first time in 6 years I feel the membership weakening a little by going after each other. I realize things are very frustrating right now but please, keep your eyes on the prize. Please use this to show the company we are more united than ever. Work together to get time off. Work it out among yourselves and call in personal. Stand shoulder to shoulder and show the company we might bend but we darn sure won't break. I felt this CAT Report was needed right now because, while things seem to be pretty tense, they are sure to get worse before they get better. We've talked about troubling negotiations for the past 5 years. We predicted this was going to happen so there should be no surprises. Everything I mentioned above is all part of the game, and believe me, there are still more moves they will make.

As I'm sure most of you know by now, the International sent up a few representatives from Pittsburgh on Wednesday to train the committee on certain issues as well as to discuss negotiations. One of these representatives was Leeann Anderson, an attorney, but more importantly, the assistant to the USW President Leo Gerard. It was a compliment to us, to have Leeann personally show up to conduct this training. She was full of information and assurance that the International is on board with us and very mobilized behind the scenes right now. She was like a breath of fresh air with the information she brought to us. Leeann did take a tour of the mill and while flying back to Pittsburgh, she even took the time to place a message on our message board.

To sum this CAT report up I want to say a few things; **Stay strong!!** We need to be united now, more than ever. **Stay focused!!** It's so easy to get upset which leads to accidents, please be careful. **Stay informed!!** If things get much worse we will be holding informational meetings at the hall (for all shifts to attend) to rally the troops and to keep you up to speed with everything going on behind the scenes. Get friendly with the web site (www.usw2-21.com) as we use the message board everyday to communicate. **Thank you all for your support and understanding!**

Next negotiation dates: March 2,9,10,13,16,17,23,24,27

In Solidarity,



Bryon Branstrom