

May 4th, 2009

C.A.T. Distribution #23

Friday's negotiations ended with many issues still not answered or in some cases not even addressed. I know you're sick of hearing it but there is still no movement on flexibility.

During the week, the company did make a feeble attempt at an economic offer which simply pissed everyone off (see back of sheet). There seemed to be a strong sense of urgency expressed by the company but as soon as the time came where they could have moved forward by leaps and bounds, they went 180 degrees and made a very weak attempt at addressing our issues. The company was hoping to negotiate 16 hours on Friday as well as work through the weekend, but the committee did not see where it was to our advantage. Many of us had already made plans for the weekend. Had negotiations gone well at all during the week, we may have jumped through hoops to change our plans. We felt the company was not listening to our concerns at all. There are currently no more dates set for future negotiating. The month of May is out of the question as schedules are already full for the entire month. It sounds like the first chance to meet again will be the second week in June.

Many of you may already know, the Luke mill voted on their contract proposal last Thursday and overwhelmingly turned it down. This is especially newsworthy as this facility hasn't turned down a contract proposal in over 35 years. Just like flexibility and job cuts are our biggest issues on our proposal, job evaluation (JE) is one of the biggest issues on their proposal. This is a method the company and union have used for years to determine a wage adjustment for a job. It is a contractual item and can be grieved up to and including arbitration. Naturally the company wants a system like we have here, where they can say "NO" to a wage adjustment and the only tool we have is Article 14 where it allows us to go in front of the exact same people for a second time where they simply say "NO" again. Why wouldn't the company want everyone on that system, right?

Thanks to all of you that brought the rumors to my attention so I could address them. The way things are going we'll probably have to run a rumor report once a week around here. I also want to thank those that have been calling the woodyard in support of those people out there. They (woodyard) are the ones that had their stickers and window posters taken (as well as some confidential info) last week by their foreman. They were kicking themselves thinking maybe they did something wrong. In fact they did everything right by calling me and by not getting into any kind of altercation (verbal or otherwise) with their boss. As for an update about the confidential papers: the hourly people do not have them so I'll be watching close to see where/if they surface.

Many of you have been calling/writing me with some very good questions about the announced down time as well as the shape of the paper industry in general. I know for every person that asks a question, there are probably another dozen or more that are thinking about the same issues. For this reason I strongly encourage all of you to attend the town hall meetings Mike Entz will be conducting throughout the week. These meetings are on a volunteer basis and you will not be paid to attend. I still maintain what I said before, if you care at all about what is happening to the industry you make your living at; it is worth your time to attend and ask questions. NewPage has a policy of not putting things in writing but verbally they will do their best to provide answers. Don't get your information through me or your co-workers, go to these meetings yourself and get involved.

Thanks one more time for your support and dedication displayed while we are at the table. Our strength will undoubtedly be tested in the near future. **Remember; United we stand, divided we BEG!!!!**

In Solidarity,



Bryon Branstrom