



## LOCAL 2-21 C.A.T. Letter

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Distribution: # 34

Date: September 18, 2009

As all of you know, we went back to the negotiating table today for the first time since June 12<sup>th</sup>. We didn't waste much time getting up to speed from where we left off. The bargaining committee took the lead by informing Bill Smith that we had our finger on the pulse of our membership and that the proposal was voted down by exactly the percentage we predicted. We explained that we took this message to Pittsburgh and for the first time we are comfortable that the USW is very much engaged in our cause, as are the other NewPage mills. Also in our opening statement we talked about the partnership formed by NewPage and the USW to fight the dumping of illegal imported paper in our country, as well as to campaign for the bio-fuel credit. Pertaining to these issues, Rick Willette told our union brothers and sisters at the Rumford mill that they (NewPage) couldn't have achieved this without our help. WHY THEN DO THEY TREAT US LIKE CRAP AT THE TABLE? For crying out loud we're not the enemy so quit treating us as such. Jon Geenen, our International Vice President and the head of the paper sector, called Rick Willette to express these exact concerns.

After the initial opening statement, we submitted 5 information requests to the company. Three of those were asking for clarification to previous answers and two of these were new. The company caucused for a few hours and came back with very few answers. It was at this point the company made their stand very clear. THEY ARE NOT GOING TO MOVE FROM THEIR PREVIOUS PROPOSAL, THE PROPOSAL WE VOTED DOWN BY 95%.

With that being said, prepare yourself for a battle. We predicted this battle for the past 5 years and just recently warned that it was coming. Well folks, after today, it is here. Before everyone gets real excited though, let us see what they have to say when we meet on October 5<sup>th</sup>. Bill Smith was very clear that the company wouldn't be changing their stand from where they are today. He did offer moving a couple things around but that means nothing with the union busting language they have on their proposal right now. You all need to realize the seriousness of the language facing us. The company could change the job duties from department to department without negotiating with the union. They can put you where ever they want on a daily basis meaning you don't know where you will be working when you cross the bridge each day.

The main heartache with this is that they already have flexibility language that they're not using. The current flexibility language is so broad they could currently do a lot more than they are. In fact if they did what they are legally able to do today, many of you would be screaming. My point to this is they don't use what they have. If they used what they have and it wasn't working, I could understand why they want more. The bottom line is it's never enough. It doesn't matter that we are the best producing mill out there....they want more. It doesn't matter that they're not even using the flex language they currently have.....they want more. Well folks, enough is enough.

Get ready to take a stand. If we come out of negotiations on October 5<sup>th</sup> with no movement by the company, the atmosphere will change big time. Because of the mood set by today's negotiating, I wouldn't blame you for being pissed off, in fact I would have a hard time understanding it if you weren't. Just keep a cool head and please don't do anything to get yourself in trouble. If we come out of the October 5<sup>th</sup> meeting with no movement, we will begin holding parking lot rallies and education classes to explain behavior and to remind people to be careful from getting in trouble. The company WILL be looking to fire someone at this time to make an example for others to see. This is the oldest trick in the book but one they continually use.

For the past 5 years we have been keeping you informed through our monthly newsletters and the web site. For the last 2 years we have incorporated the CAT reports which all of you seem to appreciate and most recently we have utilized the C-5 team to educate you through their handouts. We've done all of this to keep you informed and to get you engaged. It's worked well as many of you have told us, you feel you know what is going on at all times and that you understand the battle we are facing. Our solidarity will be tested in the near future.....there's not a doubt in my mind we will pass with flying colors.

Thanks again for your support.

In Solidarity,

Bryon Branstrom