



LOCAL 2-21 C.A.T. Letter

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Do I dare start this CAT letter with a little optimism? We spent the last 2 days discussing Flexibility. This is one of the biggest issues left to negotiate and as you know from past CAT letters, the company's proposal was to be able to flex you around where ever they wanted you. Our fear was that you could come in on your job but immediately be told to report to a different area and then have someone replace you on your job. To add insult to injury, this flexing didn't have to be done by seniority either as they could take anyone they wanted from your line of progression.

While we are far from coming to an agreement, we did make some headway today in getting the company to understand how they can achieve what they want with the current language they have. I'm sure I don't need to remind all of you about the flexibility language that was negotiated back in 1989. At that time everyone received \$.50 per hour to accept the flex language. Over the past 20 years the utilization of this language has been hit and miss at best. There has been very little consistency in using this language which created a lot of push back when the company would try. This language has been used so little that many new people at the mill are not even aware that it exists.

The current language is actually pretty broad and as I reported in one CAT letter, if you actually knew what the company could do right now, many of you would be pissed off. Well, that is the route the committee took in defending our stand about flexibility. We feel the company can be "competitive" with the language they have. We feel the company can best utilize the current workforce with this language and that they do not have to come at us with something so strict they strip us of our job ownership or our seniority.

Part of the discussion revolved around language training classes which would be a joint venture (after ratification) between the committee and the company bargaining team. These kinds of classes are not uncommon after a contract ratification. We held them in 2002 and I'm told these classes were held back in '89 when the language was first accepted as well.

I know there will be some of you that will ask why the hell we would promote the current language to be used. The answer is very simple; to save our jobs and to save seniority! I've been flexed by the current language and while I don't like it, I have retained job ownership and I have had my seniority respected. These are 2 huge factors we need to protect, therefore we damn sure can live with the language we have been getting paid for over the past 20 years rather than open Pandora's box and have to deal with all the other issues that will come with it. In my first sentence, I asked if I dare start this letter with a little optimism. The reason I mentioned optimism is because for the first time since negotiations started, I actually believe we may come up with an answer to the company's flexibility proposal without damaging the union stand on seniority and job ownership. Don't get me wrong, this is far from a done deal but all parties involved are taking a serious look.

Naturally flexibility isn't the only big issue still out there. We still have to deal with Company Proposal #1 which is the transferring of job duties from department to department without negotiating with the union, as is the current practice. We also have meal tickets, bidding of temporary vacancies, deferred maintenance and Christmas just to name a few.

As you can see we still have our work cut out for us but I do believe a little headway was made today. We are scheduled to meet on December 14th and 15th but it looks like we are going to try to fit in a couple dates in November. We need to try to work out something that fits everyone's schedule. We have a 3rd step grievance meeting scheduled for Tuesday November 3rd and may use the rest of that day to negotiate but as I said, nothing in November is concrete yet.

Thank you for your support.

In Solidarity,

Bryon Branstrom