



LOCAL 2-21 C.A.T. Letter

Check out all the C.A.T. Letters at www.usw2-21.com/updates.htm

Distribution: # 41

Date: January 23, 2010

At last month's union meeting there were 140 people in attendance. As expected, we had a lot of passionate discussion pertaining to negotiations, but more specifically, the volunteer programs many of our members belong to out here. While I felt we had a great turnout for the union meeting, I realized I needed to get the message out to the other 680 members but I wasn't sure when I could do that or how I should handle it. The recent C-5 handout has generated quite a stir all the way from NewPage Corporate in Miamisburg to the USW Headquarters in Pittsburgh and has forced me to address this issue right now, even though much of it was discussed at the negotiating table for both sides to hear last Monday. As best I can, I will try to explain where the committee stands on this issue.

About 2 1/2 years ago we made a commitment to safety. We committed to support the safety program and to stay the course through negotiations. As I mentioned in last month's newsletter, we brought it to the members at the union meeting and got the support there as well. Though it has been tough to do so, we have held steady with that mind set and have done whatever it took to support the numerous safety programs we currently staff. As negotiations began to fall apart, the tension on the floor has grown. With this tension the increased pressure on the safety volunteers had reached the point that some started quitting. I had several meetings with the committee pertaining to this and we felt we needed to step in and take some action before everything these people have worked toward is destroyed.

What we are asking is for these volunteers to simply take a time out. We're asking these volunteers to please not quit the program they currently belong to but rather take some time off and let it rest until we are able to reach an agreement on a fair contract. If and when that happens, hopefully everyone will pick up where they left off and continue down the road of making this a safer place for you and me to work. There are too many good things happening to watch it self destruct. In an effort to protect what these people have accomplished, we felt this was the best way to go. We have had overwhelming support for this thought process from most of these volunteers and I hope all of you will let these people know you appreciate their cooperation and will also support their efforts if and when we get a fair contract and these programs start up again.

There are 2 things I want to bring your attention to; first is that it was decided at the union meeting that the MFR's will continue with their program as well as with any training. The second thing is that the safety program scheduled at the M-Tech center on January 29 will be attended by those that already signed up. While NewPage is a sponsor of this event, it is attended by many people throughout the county, not just from the mill. If I understand it correctly, MIOSHA will be putting on many of the classes. Depending how things go over the next few months that may be our only safety program, calling them whenever we have a problem. We felt the more our people know the OSHA rules and when/how to contact them, the better off we are. Please stand behind the MFRs and those attending this OSHA meeting.

The next thing I want to make very clear is where the committee stands as far as any interruption of work. The following language is from page 5 in our current contract:

ARTICLE 8. INTERRUPTION OF WORK

Section 1. No Strike

The Union agrees that neither it nor any of the employees in the bargaining unit covered by this Agreement will collectively, concertedly or individually induce, engage or participate, directly or indirectly, in any strike, slowdown, stoppage or other interference of production or work, for sympathetic reasons or otherwise, during the term of this Agreement.

Any employee participating in a violation of this Article may be disciplined or discharged.

The Union agrees to exert every effort through its International and Local officers and representatives to end any unauthorized interruption of work. Provided the Union sincerely and in good faith carries out this obligation, the Company agrees not to hold the Union liable for any interruption of work.

We never have, and never will support any action that would be in violation of this language. All through these negotiations we have stressed the importance of being smart. Don't be foolish and do something that will put your job in jeopardy.

Thank you for your support.

In Solidarity,

Bryon Branstrom