

June 6, 2019

**Opposition to Ontario Government's Anti-Social Offensive**

## **June 7-8 Days of Action on First Anniversary of Election of Ford Government**



### **CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

- **Proper Investments Required So Workers Can Provide Citizens with the Services They Need** - Interview, *Jason Fraser, Paramedic and Chair of CUPE's Ambulance Committee of Ontario*
- **Injured Workers Refuse to Be Silenced or Deterred in Fighting for Their Rights**

#### **Montreal Transit Maintenance Workers Uphold the Dignity of Labour**

- **Bitter Fight for a Favourable Collective Agreement** - Interview, *Gleason Frenette, President, Montreal Transit Union*

#### **Brunswick Smelter Workers Enter Seventh Week of Lockout**

- **Steelworkers and Allies Hold Vigorous Mass Rally in Support of Glencore**

## Workers in Belledune

### Canadian Workers Support Mining Workers in Idaho

- BC and U.S. Steelworkers Rally at Hecla Mining's Annual General Meeting

### U.S. Alcoa and Arconic Workers Voting to Strike

- Workers Defend Their Rights and Dignity Against Unacceptable Demands Which Favour Narrow Private Interests - Pierre Chénier

### Opposition to Ontario Government's Anti-Social Offensive

## Proper Investments Required So Workers Can Provide Citizens with the Services They Need

- Interview, Jason Fraser, Paramedic and Chair of CUPE's Ambulance Committee of Ontario -



Contingent of paramedics participates in Health Care Day of Action, Queen's Park, April 30, 2019.

**Workers' Forum:** On May 17 the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) issued a press release entitled "In the face of dire funding cuts, Ontario paramedics ask: 'Will there be an ambulance available when you need one?'" Can you tell us more about this?

**Jason Fraser:** The funding model for paramedic services in Ontario is roughly a 50-50 split. The province contributes 50 per cent and the municipalities contribute 50 per cent. That is each year. Typically, the provincial government increases the amount it transfers by about 5 per cent each year. What they have done is they have frozen the amount of money that they are transferring at 2017-2018 rates. Municipalities have already passed their budgets for 2019. They were expecting 50 per cent of whatever their budget was going to be this year to come from the provincial government but they are now getting less, they are actually getting what their budget was for the 2018 year. That is a significant shortfall for paramedic





services across the province.

We don't really know what municipalities are going to do to offset those costs yet. Some municipalities committed to having new vehicles in service, to having more paramedics. Right now we do not know how they are going to make up that shortfall.

For example, in the Durham Region they have a \$1.75 million shortfall. The question is how are they going to make up that shortfall. Had the provincial government not frozen the rates, the region of Durham would have got that \$1.75 million from the government.

**WF:** In the communique, you are quoted as saying that ambulance services are already facing situations in which they cannot provide adequate services to Ontarians.

**JF:** Yes. Across the province, in several areas, we have what are called code zeroes, a situation where there is either limited resources or no ambulances available to respond to calls. That is already happening in certain communities across the province.

Will this funding shortfall result in some paramedics being laid off? We don't know yet. Is it going to further increase the lack of resources, especially in municipalities that were going to put a vehicle on the road and were relying on that funding from the province? Now they don't have the funding so they can't put that other vehicle on the road.



We know that call volume is increasing between 3.5 per cent and 5 per cent a year. The call volume is increasing because of many factors, one being the aging population. Also, in the city of Toronto, the provincial government cancelled the funding for safe injection sites which had really reduced the number of 911 calls. With safe injection sites closing because they do not have the funding, that means more people are calling 911.

We are still looking at what is going to be the impact of this.

Further, with paramedic services and communication centres as well, the provincial government is looking at restructuring everything. We currently have 52 land ambulance services that are operated by municipalities and the province is looking at restructuring them, at reducing their

number. We have not been consulted on that yet. We had a little technical briefing on it and we have been promised a seat at the table but we do not have any dates for that yet. It is definitely not going to be 52 services. It might go down to 10 services. Each municipality would be lumped in within a larger geographical area. We would have to cover a larger area but we do not have enough resources to cover our own areas so that is just going to make matters worse again. This does not bode well at all.

We would like to see the provincial funding reinstated so that the services get the appropriate amount of money they need to operate their service. As far as the restructuring goes, we think that the best model is the current model. They just need to properly invest in our services so that we can provide them to the citizens of Ontario.

(Photos: WF, OFL)



## Injured Workers Refuse to Be Silenced or Deterred in Fighting for Their Rights



For the 36th year injured workers gathered on June 1 at Queen's Park to forcefully put their demand that their right to full compensation when injured or made ill on the job be guaranteed. This Injured Workers' Day sees injured workers, alongside many other sectors of the society in Ontario, faced with an increasingly brutal anti-social offensive under the current government.

A spirit of determination was palpable at the rally, which this year in particular brought forward the voices and experiences of the injured workers, presenting both the successes in their organizing and the serious difficulties they face with escalating cuts by the Ford government. The speakers presented their experiences as injured workers within the perspective of how to organize to change the difficult situation faced by so many workers. A large contingent of retired General Electric workers travelled to the rally from Peterborough, and others came from Barrie, Hamilton and other areas.



During the last year, in addition to the Ford government's cuts to employer WSIB premiums, which will take badly needed funds out of the system, the guaranteed basic income pilot project was terminated and cuts were made to the funding of government bodies dealing with injury and illness prevention. A piece of legislation which would accredit certain companies to do their own inspections for health and safety, shelved due to widespread opposition, may also be brought back by the Ford government.

In addition, the recently announced cuts to Legal Aid will have serious consequences for injured workers who are more and more denied their claims and forced to appeal. Not only do the legal clinics help injured workers with their claims, one speaker said, expressing her anger at the cuts, they teach us how to fight for justice.



## A Year of Organizing



**ONIWG President Willie Noiles**

The successful last year of organizing around the *Workers' Comp Is a Right!* (WCIAR) campaign found expression in a number of ways at the rally. Ontario Network of Injured Workers' Groups (ONIWG) President Willie Noiles focussed his remarks on the successes of the campaign, pointing out that the campaign's petition had been tabled numerous times in the Legislature, keeping the demands of the campaign in front of the MPPs. In addition, through their organizing, they have succeeded in getting a private member's bill before the Legislature to end deeming -- one of the three main demands of the WCIAR campaign. Noiles also pointed out that the pace of work has stepped up as new groups have been organized in different regions.

Janice Martell from the McIntyre Powder Project, based in Northern Ontario mining communities, announced that over the last year work had been done to bring together those who were organizing where there are occupational disease clusters to fight for just compensation. Out of this came the Allied Forces which presently includes the McIntyre Powder Project, General Electric and Ventra Plastics workers from Peterborough, Kitchener Rubber Workers and the Victims of Chemical Valley in Sarnia. They are working together to enforce their demands for compensation, while they keep the specificity of their local organizing. Martell said the name came from the Allied Forces in World War II who together were able to defeat a formidable enemy.

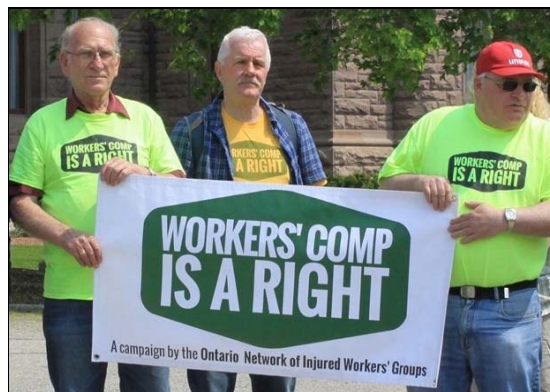
Martell spoke about the difficulty workers faced in being compensated for occupational illnesses whose symptoms often appear years later, when companies have closed plants or workers retired. "WSIB has the power to grant our right to fair compensation or to deny our right to fair compensation and with each denial comes a multitude of other denials. You deny us our dignity, the acknowledgement that our years of exposure to multiple toxins is significantly responsible for our sickness. You deny us our right to know how many others in the same workplaces, exposed to the same toxins, are suffering the same diseases. You deny us the opinions of our physicians and substitute the opinions of your hired guns. You deny the evidence that we hold in our bodies, that we live with, rally against, and die from in numbers that defy your decisions to deny. You deny us the peace of dying with the knowledge that our families will be taken care of by the fair compensation which we were promised.

"Your power to deny us is vast. It overwhelms us. It angers us. It leaves us without hope, without justice, without help or the financial means to fight back. Yet here we are. All of us gathered here together in defiance of your power. [...] We deny you our silence -- you will hear our voices. We



deny you the comfort of our anonymity -- you will see our faces, you will know our stories, our struggles, our suffering. We deny you our isolation -- we will find one another, we will gather, we will organize, we will stand together, we will fight back. We deny you your narrative. We will expose you and challenge your power to deny."

The rally included a number of cultural performances, including the songs "Oh What a Journey, Oh What a Load" and "We Will Rise" by the Justice Singers, and a skit "We Are the People" which rejected the Ford governments' sloganeering that it speaks for the people -- saying that we are the people and will speak for ourselves. A moving spoken word piece closed out the program.











## Windsor



A tornado warning could not keep Injured Workers' Day from being marked in Windsor. A number of activists for injured workers' gathered at the WSIB offices to demand reforms to WSIB regulations which favour the workers.

The following day activists for injured workers, representatives of the Windsor and District Labour Council, and activists of the MLPC distributed over 1,000 flyers at Art in the Park in Windsor. The flyers were well received by the public with many people stopping to chat on their way into or out of the park.

This was the first time such a mass action had taken place on Injured Workers' Day and plans are in the works for similar mass distributions in future years.



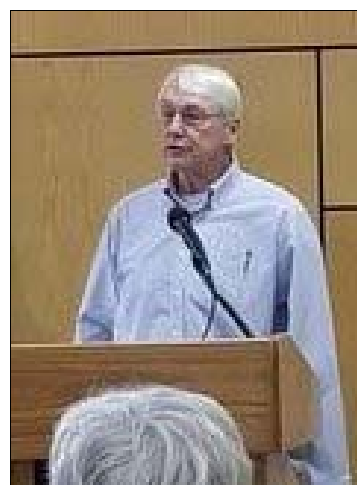


## Injured Workers' Day Actions in London and Thunder Bay

### London



### Thunder Bay



(Photos: WF, ONIWG, P. Stacho, Occupy WSIB, M. Jee, S. Mantle)



**Montreal Transit Maintenance Workers Uphold the Dignity of Labour**  
**Bitter Fight for a Favourable Collective Agreement**  
**- Interview, Gleason Frenette, President, Montreal Transit Union -**



**Demonstration by Montreal Transit maintenance workers, September 13, 2018.**

*After 23 months of bargaining and 170 bargaining meetings, the Montreal Transit Union (STM-CSN) signed a new collective agreement on April 9 for the 2,400 STM maintenance workers. In a general membership meeting on March 10, the workers voted 96.5 per cent in favour of adopting the draft agreement, with a participation of about 1,600 workers in the meeting, a new record for the union. Given the fact that about 400 members were at work at the time of the meeting and that about 100 workers were off due to work-related accidents, the turnout was very high. The employer had come to the bargaining table with a long list of rollbacks, including the privatization of certain jobs. The workers were also subject to two new anti-worker laws adopted by the Quebec government, one on pension plans and the other on the bargaining regime in the municipal sector. Workers' Forum recently spoke with union president Gleason Frenette about the union's assessment of this intense period of activity and what workers have been able to accomplish.*

**Workers' Forum:** The union has a very positive assessment of what you have accomplished in this negotiation. Can you tell us more?

**Gleason Frenette:** We have been able to improve a number of premiums, including premiums for night workers and those who work weekends. At the STM, we are open seven days a week, 24 hours a day. We have no choice, there are people working at night and there are people working on the weekends. Premiums help to improve the lot of these workers.

We have made a lot of gains with respect to the day job guarantees, the positions called 5-2, five days of work, two days off. We guaranteed all these positions in exchange for allowing the employer to create night and evening shifts at the Crémazie plants, which repairs the bus parts. Before creating an evening or night shift, all day positions must be filled at all work locations. This is reassuring for workers who have less seniority, who are forced to work night and evening, because they know that at some point there will be room to work on days.

It is important that day jobs have been guaranteed. According to our agreement, the STM can cut a



position by attrition, for example when a worker retires. Employees who retire are often working on days. So we guaranteed these positions. This was important because when jobs are guaranteed, if there is a shortage of work, they have to keep their staff. In return, we also gave the STM the opportunity to create 12-hour positions, which did not exist before. We have regulated how these positions would be used. If the employer wants current STM workers to fill these positions, it has to offer them these jobs on a voluntary basis. The only ones who can be forced to take these positions is at hiring point. When you hire, it's a lesser problem because when you know that it's a twelve-hour job, you have the choice to work for the STM or not. Employees in these positions work 36 hours and are paid for 40 hours. This will start soon.

There will be massive hiring at the STM. That's why we managed to negotiate these job guarantees, because the employer knew that they would hire a lot of workers. There are many projects in public transit. The STM is growing in size. That was the time for us to act because the employer had a lot of demands. They want flexibility, including creating night and evening positions. The employer came to the table with more than 100 demands of rollbacks or changes in the collective agreement. We negotiated to make gains with job guarantees in exchange for what we decided to accept in terms of flexibility.

We made gains in terms of catching-up on the wages for tradespeople. We had trades categories whose wages were \$10-12 dollars less than in the private sector.

We managed to introduce a new premium, called the flex-premium. It is a premium that offsets the effects of Bill 15 on pensions in the municipal sector.[1] We will have a premium, which will increase gradually, which will compensate for the effects of Bill 15 which requires that we are now forced to contribute 50-50 in our pension plan with the employer. Previously, the contribution was 66-33, two-thirds by the employer and one-third by the workers. We had collective agreement language negotiated on that. We agreed to a lot of concessions in the past to improve our pension plan, but the law changed all that. Even though we had contracts with the employer, they were cancelled.



**WF:** You have negotiated under Bill 15, an *Act to foster the financial health and sustainability of municipal defined benefit pension plans*, and Bill 24, *An Act respecting the process of negotiation of collective agreements and the settlement of disputes in the municipal sector*. What was their impact on the negotiation?

**GF:** Regarding Bill 15, it was really complex. That was very costly because we had to have an actuary with us all the time to negotiate. Bill 15 increases our contribution to our pension plan on each pay.

With respect to Bill 24, which was passed in 2016, it governs the whole bargaining process. It imposes stages: there is so much time to negotiate, after that the employer can request the presence

of a mediator. Everything is framed, provided with its deadline. The employer used the act to request a mediator. The mediator intervened in our negotiation eight months after the expiry of the collective agreement. During the mediation stage, parties have 60 days to negotiate an agreement. The mediator himself can extend the mediation or can do so at the request of both parties. Once he has extended the mediation, both parties must consent to a further 60-day extension. We had to put a lot of pressure on the employer to get them to agree with this new extension. Once those 60 days were over, the employer was threatening to bring in the special mandatary, whose position was created by the act and who has the power to recommend that our working conditions be decreed. Under the Act we are constantly negotiating under threat. Also, the Act says that we have to sign contracts of a minimum duration of five years, whereas our tradition was three-year contracts.

In addition, the negotiation has been extremely judicialized. The employer has brought us to the Administrative Labour Tribunal many times. It constantly used the judiciary to help its balance of power. This actually happened seven times. Judicialization of conflicts is stronger than before because the employer knows he has the law on his side.

To counteract the effects of Bill 24, we negotiated and put into the collective agreement that in future we would begin to negotiate one year before the expiry of the agreement.



**Mass meeting of maintenance workers, May 27, 2018.**

**WF:** How did you approach this negotiation considering all these limitations and obstacles?

**GF:** We put a lot of emphasis on mobilization. We are the only one of the six unions at the STM where the president is not always at the bargaining table. Towards the end of the bargaining I was at the table all the time, but during the 23 months that negotiations lasted, I was involved in mobilizing work at the union office and in the workplace. We have been very active in the workplace, the entire executive. We have also organized demonstrations in the streets.

We wrote a lot of leaflets. We had given ourselves a guideline of writing a leaflet a month instead of a leaflet every two or three months as we often do. We distribute leaflets everywhere in the workplace. We also put them on our Facebook page. In these leaflets, we gave all the details of the negotiation, explained the problems, what the employer was asking for. We also used these leaflets because the employer wanted to privatize certain jobs, for example by giving the cleaning services of all STM office buildings to the private sector. In exchange, the employer was promising us financial compensation. They were trying to buy us off. We said it was out of the question, that we protect everyone.

We have tried to use the media to tell the truth about what is happening. For example, the STM changed the method of refueling buses with gasoline, which resulted in a lot of fuel outages. The STM said it was sabotage by the members. We also explained to customers and the public why there were so many buses off the road. It was not because of job actions but of management errors, poor



managerial decisions about vehicle maintenance, poor quality of the buses themselves. We used traditional media, especially newspapers, and social media to tell the truth, to explain what was really happening in order to get public opinion on our side. We made several on the record interventions in the media, including social media, about what the STM said. This is a first for us to have had public opinion on our side during our dispute. Also, we opted for an overtime ban instead of a full strike with essential services. We stopped everybody from working overtime for six days.

We have adapted to the new realities. We cannot negotiate in the same way as we did before these new laws.

It took a lot of energy, took a lot of our time. We have been very active in the workplace. The members appreciate that, that we are present where they work. We were not afraid to stand up to these laws. We did not collapse in the face of them. If we had not had the members with us, we could not stand up to the employer, that's for sure.

### Note

1. In December 2014, the Government of Quebec passed Bill 15, an *Act to foster the financial health and sustainability of municipal defined benefit pension plans*. Among other things, the Act imposed a 50-50 contribution in current and future pension plans and forced municipal workers to pay 50 per cent of past deficits, although these were often caused by deliberate refusal of the cities to put their required contributions in the plans. The law is part of the arsenal of the state to attack the right of workers to negotiate their conditions at work and at retirement.

(Photos: CSN)



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## **Brunswick Smelter Workers Enter Seventh Week of Lockout**

### **Steelworkers and Allies Hold Vigorous Mass Rally in Support of Glencore Workers in Belledune**



On Tuesday, June 4, the Brunswick Smelter workers in Belledune, New Brunswick held a successful community rally in which over 300 workers and community members participated. The 280 smelter workers, members of United Steelworkers (USW) Local 7085, have been locked out of their jobs

since April 24 by mining/metallurgical giant Glencore, which owns the Belledune plant. Glencore management is trying to extort drastic anti-worker concessions from the workers and workers are resisting these demands with their stand "It's Our Turn! No Concessions!"

The aim of the rally was to mobilize support for the Belledune workers. Workers report that the support of the community and of all USW locals in the province and of other workers has been very strong since the beginning and they also wanted to thank the community and all the workers for their support.



The rally started outside the Belledune Recreation Centre at 2:00 pm. From there the participants filled two buses to go to the picket lines to protest there for about an hour while others went by car. When they were back at the centre, together with the kids who had finished school and been taken to the rally by their parents, there were about 300 people present for the concluding part of the event. There was a BBQ and live music and games for the kids while people talked to the locked out workers, getting more information about the issues and expressing their support. Besides the smelter workers, participants included the leadership of USW District 6, which covers Ontario and the Atlantic provinces, a strong contingent of CUPE workers, as well as workers belonging to industrial unions from around the province, and people from the community. Support from the community included businesses in the community providing food for all and games for the kids. At the time that had been allotted for speeches, the weather turned to pouring rain so the President of the Local, Bart Dempsey, thanked the community for their ongoing support and informed the people that the District 6 Director will send out letters to all the members providing his thoughts on the situation.



Workers report that Belledune is a closely-knit community of just under 2,000 people where many Brunswick smelter retirees live. The retirees know what the workers are going through and had themselves experienced in their active years. They are keeping the people informed about the issues. The community is aware that it has always been a struggle at the smelter, whether it was owned by Glencore, Xstrata or Falconbridge before Glencore. There is also awareness of the anti-worker activities of the current management, especially in terms of health and safety. Those activities have been made public over the years as

workers vigorously fought to defend healthy and safe conditions for themselves and the community.

Workers also report that they have now made a counter offer to the company on monetary issues. They have also earmarked some concessionary demands that they want off the table before going back to the bargaining table, including keeping the two positions of full-time President and full-time union safety representative and leaving the early retirement provisions alone. Workers are also demanding some increase for those who are on the defined contribution pension plan.[1]

"We are in our seventh week right now. We are still together and we are still strong. We are still demanding that those concessions be removed. And then we are willing to go back and finish out this contract. There has to be negotiation, not dictate," Bart Dempsey told *Workers' Forum*.





## Note

1. To learn more about the concessionary demands of Glencore in this dispute and the stand of the workers, read "[Workers Stand Up for Their Rights and Dignity](#)," *Workers' Forum*, May 2, 2019.

(Photos: USW District 6)



## Canadian Workers Support Mining Workers in Idaho BC and U.S. Steelworkers Rally at Hecla Mining's Annual General Meeting



Vancouver, May 23, 2019

BC steelworkers and allies joined striking miners from Idaho on May 23 to protest the anti-labour practices of U.S.-based Hecla Mining. The action was launched as Hecla Mining held its annual general meeting in Vancouver.

Approximately 240 members of United Steelworkers Local 5114 have been on strike for over two years at Hecla's Lucky Friday mine in Mullan, Idaho. This is the longest labour dispute in the history of the state's Silver Valley. The miners worked under terms of an expired agreement for nearly 11 months before Hecla management's refusal to negotiate with the workers and demands for anti-

worker concessions forced the workers to go on strike in March 2017.

Lucky Friday is an underground silver, lead, and zinc mine located in the Coeur d'Alene mining district in northern Idaho. Hecla Mining Company operates silver mines in Alaska (Greens Creek), Idaho (Lucky Friday), and Mexico (San Sebastian) and operates gold mines in Quebec (Casa Berardi in the Abitibi region) and Nevada (Fire Creek and Hollister).

At the protest, workers told shareholders going into the meeting that Hecla's anti-worker activities are hurting workers, their families and shareholders. They demanded that the shareholders exert pressure on Hecla Mining executives to negotiate a collective agreement acceptable to the workers.



Workers report that Hecla's concessionary demands amount to having the mine operate without the union and without the workers having any say in their working conditions.

One striking worker wrote on the union local's Facebook page that, "The contract offer from Hecla is designed to break the union and gain complete and total control of the workforce, period! [...] A fair contract is one that respects our collective voice as a Union so as to retain job security and safety in the workplace. [...] I'm not going to go into detail on the disputed offer Hecla has laid on the table, that's for our negotiating team to do, but it is enough to say that it is a backwards step across the board in every way imaginable and the majority of our members will be making many thousands of dollars less per year [...] I can tell you this without hesitation; the overwhelming majority of this Union's workforce doesn't appreciate Hecla Mining Company's foot on our collective necks in their attempt to mute our voice. We demand more respect than that. We deserve more respect than that, and; through a long list of fellow workers who have lost their lives at the Lucky Friday, we have EARNED more respect than that."

Amongst the company's concessionary demands, workers have highlighted the following: workers will have to pay much more money for their medical coverage and Hecla wants to be able to make changes to the coverage without their approval; Hecla is demanding an end to the bidding regime to determine work teams and assignments at the mine; it wants to be the sole decider of who works at the mine and to be able to replace unionized workers with non-union workers without restriction; job progression would take place at the sole discretion of the company; on a daily basis, supervisors and management would assign where workers are to work; shifts could be anywhere between 8 to 12 hours, at the company's discretion, etc. Workers see this as having a union in name only, which they reject.

Lucky Friday mining workers have been waging actions in defence of their rights and dignity in Silver Valley, as well as in many cities across the U.S. and Canada.





Striking Hecla miners visit New Westminster, May 24, 2019, to speak about their struggle at the local labour council.

(Photos: USW District 3, USW Local 5114, New Westminster and District Labour Council)



### U.S. Alcoa and Arconic Workers Voting to Strike

## Workers Defend Their Rights and Dignity Against Unacceptable Demands Which Favour Narrow Private Interests

- Pierre Chénier -



Alcoa and Arconic workers rally in Massena, New York, May 14, 2019.

Workers at the May 25 mass family solidarity march in support of locked out ABI workers In Trois-

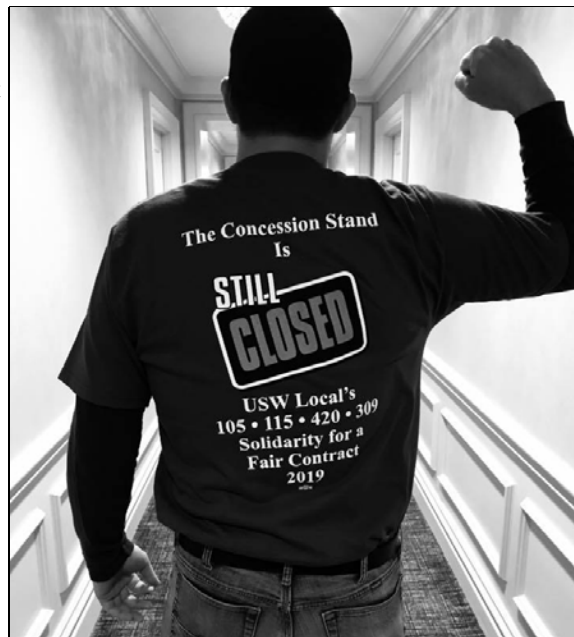
Rivières were pleased to hear that members of United Steelworkers (USW) Local 420A, representing Alcoa and Arconic workers in Massena, New York were with them on the march. Local 420A members reported that the day before, May 24, they had voted overwhelmingly in favour of going on strike to resist the concessions demanded by the same ownership gang as at ABI.

Since that time, U.S. Alcoa and Arconic workers have held strike votes in many other locations. On May 31, United Steelworkers' international website posted information that over 1,500 Alcoa workers have now voted to authorize strike actions at the companies' facilities in Warrick, Indiana; Gum Springs, Arkansas; Point Comfort, Texas; and Wenatchee, Washington. Meanwhile, 1,900 workers at the Arconic plant in Bettendorf, Iowa have also voted for a strike mandate and the workers at the Arconic plant in Lafayette, Indiana, will vote on June 6. Overall, it is estimated that around 6,000 workers are involved in this round of negotiations. The workers' collective agreement expired on May 15 and workers have continued to work under the terms and conditions of that contract since the USW and Alcoa and Arconic agreed to a temporary extension. There are no negotiations at this time between the union and the companies.

This is the first contract for these workers since Arconic was formed following the split of Alcoa into two separate entities in 2016. Alcoa retained the extraction and production of bauxite and the production of alumina and primary aluminum while Arconic focuses on the processing of aluminum and other light metals into manufactured products for the aerospace, automobile and other sectors. At the time of the splitting of the company into two entities it was decided by the companies and USW that there would be negotiations of a master agreement for all the workers, while local issues would be negotiated locally and local agreements implemented only when the master agreement is concluded.

Workers report that Alcoa and Arconic are demanding a whole set of anti-labour concessions in virtually every aspect of the collective agreement -- reduction of benefits, attacks on the defined benefits pension plans of the workers, increased out-of-pocket health insurance payments, elimination of health care coverage for retired workers not yet eligible for federal Medicare, and more.

As an Alcoa worker in Massena writes on the local's Facebook page, "We just want a fair wage that reflects the work we do. We want affordable health care. And we want a sound pension plan to help us after literally giving half our life to this company. The smelter in the summertime is literally hell on earth. It's not easy. We risk life and limb daily. Not just anyone can walk in there and do it. There is a high turnover rate in the smelter because it takes some badass men and women to run it. If our health care is expensive and there is no pension, would it be worth putting our bodies through it? [...] This is hard on your body and swing shift is hard on your family. Reward your people for that sacrifice don't penalize them by taking their pension. And my personal favorite, am I willing to go on strike to get a FAIR contract? You're damn right I am!!! I'm willing to stand up for what's right and FAIR even if it makes me uncomfortable."



The response of Alcoa's executives to the workers' concerns and demands is the same irresponsible neo-liberal claptrap that is being thrown at the ABI workers and at workers in general under the



nation-wrecking anti-social offensive of the global monopolies and the states they have at their disposal. "Our employees continue to report to work as normal, and we are ready to resume contract talks soon for a fair and competitive agreement that positions Alcoa and our employees for success," said an Alcoa spokesperson at the Warrick operations. Alcoa's dictate is that workers do not have any claim by right to the social wealth they create. They are supposed to line up behind whatever global companies such as Alcoa define as "competitiveness" and "success." This can even mean closures of whole facilities, smashing of unions and collective agreements, or long lockouts like the one that is being imposed on the ABI workers and their community.

The determination of the Alcoa U.S. workers to resist extortion of anti-worker concessions is a sign of the militancy of workers affirming that their dignity and rights and the dignity and rights of their communities comes first and must be upheld in negotiations.

*(Photos: USW Local 420A)*



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