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By Defending Their Rights Workers Uphold the Dignity of Labour and Take Up Social Responsibility

Rally in Support of Coastal Forestry Workers



Hospital Workers join striking forestry workers at Western Forest Products Cowichan Bay Division

RALLY
Campbell River
Thursday, September 26 -- 1:00-4:00 pm
Offices of Western Forest Products, 1334 Island Highway

United Steelworkers Local 1-1937 has issued a call to workers and communities on Vancouver Island to rally at the offices of Western Forest Products (WFP) in Campbell River on Thursday, September 26 from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. The workers have been on strike since July 1 to stand up to the massive concessions demanded by the company.

The union issued its latest bargaining update on September 14, the day after the last mediation session. Several days of mediation had taken place with mediators Vince Ready and Amanda Rogers but throughout the process the company had refused to give up its demands for concessions. On Friday, September 13, the union met with the mediators with a revised set of proposals, following which the mediators met with representatives of Western Forest Products who not only did not withdraw any concessions, or address the union's issues in any significant way, but even withdrew two prior proposals that the union considered positive.

Bargaining Bulletin #20 from September 14, lists "the concessions remaining with no sign of movement," including, among others:

1. Contracting out WFP operation to phase contractors...
2. Eliminating almost all Training Agreements, Local Agreements, Practices and replacing them with WFP policies that they write and impose...
3. Two-Tiered Wages...
4. RSP Plan replacing Pension Plan (still on the table even though WFP knows it is legally not possible and demonstrates their anti-union attitude).
5. Removing the Trusteed Health & Welfare Plan...

The union points out that it is clear that WFP has not wanted to negotiate from the outset: "WFP is not bargaining. They are using an American style bargaining by litigation strategy, which messages that they are interested in bargaining to the media, but are actually bent on inflicting damage to the Union and its members. "It is a strategy that will fail" according to Local 1-1937 President Brian Butler.

The union reiterates the position that the members have endorsed with their strike, that concessions will not be accepted in this round of bargaining.

The rally on September 26 is being widely promoted by Labour Councils on Vancouver Island and by union locals in health care, education and manufacturing sectors, through Facebook and other social media. The fight of the 2,300 striking members of USW Local 1-1937 in defence of their rights, their negotiated conditions and their dignity is the fight for the rights of all workers.

All Out for the September 26 Rally!

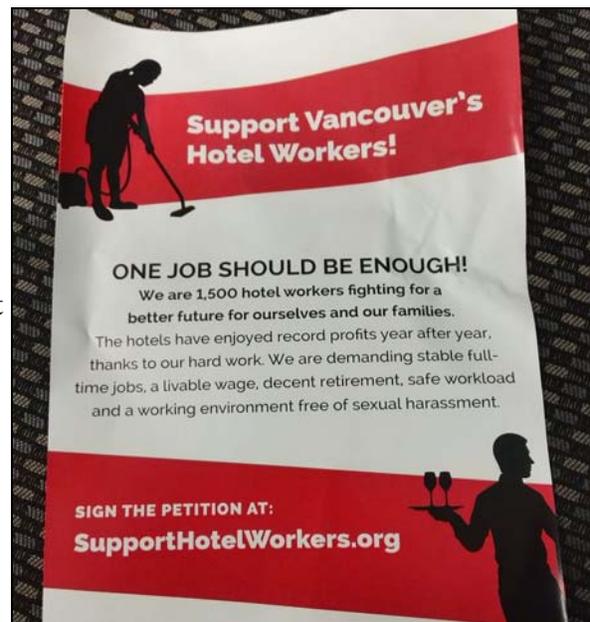
Vancouver Hotel Workers' Strike in Defence of Their Rights and Dignity



On September 19 several hundred hotel workers from the Hyatt Regency, Westin Bayshore and Pinnacle Harbourfront hotels, represented by UNITE HERE Local 40, walked off the job. The outstanding issues, after fourteen months of bargaining, include workload, safety and job security. A press release issued on September 19 states: "Many of the city's hotel workers are struggling to provide for their families with precarious, on-call shifts caused by the systemic cutting of hours in these hotels. Safety remains a priority in this dispute, as many workers have stepped forward with complaints of sexual harassment faced on the job, and extreme under-staffing has led to unsafe and unsustainable workload levels. Vancouver's downtown hotel workers stand together for better quality jobs and an improved quality of life."

The workers are cooks, servers, front desk agents, maintenance workers, bellmen, kitchen staff, room attendants, housemen, etc.

In August the workers voted 89 per cent in favour of strike action if necessary to back their demands for more stable work hours, safer working conditions and protection from on the job sexual harassment. One worker who has been employed at the Hyatt Regency as a room attendant for 11 years told *Star Metro Vancouver* that the most important issue for her is "workload." The hotel has reduced the hours of housemen who help with heavy lifting and moving beds. These tasks now fall on room attendants, resulting in numerous injuries. "Every day the hotel pushes us harder." Room attendants who used to work full time, five days per week have seen their work week cut to as little as two days per week. Union spokesperson Sharon Pawa said the workers "are fighting for safe and sustainable jobs...that includes increased safety protections-including women's safety and workload protections, including proper staffing. What's happening as the hotel industry expands and grows, and generates more profit the hotels are cutting hours, reducing staff and this is increasing the



workload."

A survey conducted by the union in July in which 190 workers, 98 per cent of them women, participated, revealed that 56 per cent of the workers at the Hyatt reported "unwanted touching from guests." As a result of the resolute stand taken by the workers three of the hotels have agreed to measures to protect workers from on the job sexual harassment.

(Photos: UNITE HERE 40)

Glencore Brunswick Smelter Workers Oppose Demands for Concessions

- Interview -- Bart Dempsey, President, United Steelworkers Local 7085 -



Workers at the Glencore smelter in Belledune, New Brunswick are now in their sixth month of lockout. The company locked workers out on the morning of April 24, as they prepared to go on strike that evening to oppose Glencore's dictate for concessions. The company obtained court orders severely limiting the ability of workers to hold effective picket lines. Since the beginning of the lockout, Glencore has been using scabs to run the plant. The workers, however, are maintaining their stand for negotiations, not dictate, and for the removal of Glencore's demands for concessions. Posted below is an interview with Bart Dempsey, President of USW Local 7085, which represents the smelter workers.

Renewal Update: Can you tell us how many workers are at the plant and what they produce?

Bart Dempsey: There are 281 workers. They work in a lead smelter and deal with molten metals: lead, copper, zinc, and silver. They operate the entire plant on a continuous basis, which includes an acid plant, a blast furnace, a sinter plant and a refinery.

RU: Your workers have now been locked out since April 24. What are the issues and the most recent developments?

BD: The main issue is that the company is looking to eliminate two full-time union positions currently paid by the company. This is representation of our workers, their voice, and the company

is looking to eliminate it. (*See the article below detailing the concessions Glencore is demanding.*)

We went to early bargaining at the company's request in April of 2018. None of the concessions on early retirement, the two union positions and the pension plan were on the table at that time. After disagreeing with the company in 2018 on what they were offering us, they hit us with this. Basically, management wants to get rid of union representation. They say they are not looking at removing it, but that they just do not want to pay for the offices anymore. However, it is not possible to represent the workers without the office.

We went for early bargaining in 2018, but it did not work out. We resumed regular negotiations in January 2019. We bargained for about 30 days and when it came to monetary issues a mediator was appointed. Since then they have been trying to eliminate our paid offices; take away the early retirement; and to hit on seniority when it comes to vacations. They offered nothing to about 75 per cent of our work force, which now has the new pension plan. After that, we bargained for about 30 days and met with the mediator twice, but there was never any movement.

At the mediator's request, we put forward another proposal to the company a couple of weeks ago. In our proposal we did withdraw some of our previous demands with regard to making headway on various aspects. But we kept all of what we are determined to keep.

On September 18, the company presented us with a new offer. The main thing is that they are still looking to take away the union's offices and to limit union representation. The company has moved a bit on the pension plan and on early retirement, but they are doing this to make us accept their demands on the union offices and union representation. Our members are refusing to go for that. The employer wants us to do the union work on our own time. The main issue in the dispute is that management wants to break the union. We had a membership meeting on September 20. We have 281 members and a lot of them have left to find other work. At the meeting, 160 workers showed up, which is very good given the circumstances. We asked the members if they were ready to vote on the new offer. In a vote of 150 to 10, they decided not to even vote on the offer. In other words, we have basically voted on the the same offer three times and each time it has been strongly rejected.

Following that most recent vote, we have again put the proposal we made a month ago back on the table. And we are now waiting for the company to reply.

RU: The smelter workers and their allies have organized several actions in opposition to the Glencore lockout.

BD: Yes, we have organized at least three different information pickets at various companies whose scabs have been working at the plant since we have been locked out. We organized a rally and were very fortunate, as one local donated \$10,000 so that we could supply all the children with school bags and gift cards to purchase their school supplies. We have received a lot of support, which we are very thankful for, and it's ongoing. Every week we are receiving support from all the different locals.

RU: You are also receiving a lot of support from the community.

BD: Very much so. A lot of the stores in the community are putting up signs calling for an end to the lockout. They are voicing it out there. We had the radio stations coming to us and we have put ads on the radio stations explaining our situation. We have a tremendous amount of support and are very happy about it.

Belledune is a small community next to the Baie des Chaleurs. The Glencore smelter is more than

likely the biggest employer in the region, together with New Brunswick Power.

It is a small community. Basically, we all pretty much know each other. We have workers all the way from the Acadian Peninsula right to Edmundston. Everybody knows what is going on.

It is like every labour dispute. You have some people on your side and some people are against what you are fighting for. We want to make it clear that this fight is not and has never been about money.

One of the main issues is the health and safety of the workers and of the community and union representation.

Right now, the company is trying to run the plant and it is just a mess. You can see the smog coming out of there. It is not the right people running the plant. There is a lot of needless pollution that should not be out there. The company should sort out the issue; resolve it, so that we go back to work.

RU: Do you want to say something in conclusion?

BD: When we went out, we knew ahead of time that they were going to be hard to deal with. We prepared ourselves for as long as it was going to take. We are hoping to go back to work, but we need a form of health and safety in place. We have to have representation for our workers. We have to keep things like early retirement. Whenever we speak out about the fact that they are trying to remove the safety offices, they keep saying that there is no other plant in New Brunswick that has them. There is no other plant in New Brunswick that is a lead smelter. In a lead smelter, you are dealing with carcinogens, chemicals, reagents on a constant basis. You need to have health and safety there.

I want to thank you for your support. I wish you luck with the elections, in the work you are doing there. We will keep in touch and keep you informed about what is going on.

RU: Thank you very much. We wish success in your fight, which is everyone's fight.

For further information on the struggle of the workers at the Glencore smelter see the following articles in *Workers' Forum*: cpcml.ca/WF2019/WO0616.HTM#5, cpcml.ca/WF2019/WO0617.HTM#1, cpcml.ca/WF2019/WO0618.HTM#4 and cpcml.ca/WF2019/WO0621.HTM#5.

(Photo: USW District 6)

Information on Concessions Glencore Is Dictating

On its website, United Steelworkers Local 7085 explains that Glencore's dictate of anti-worker concessions has been ongoing since it acquired the Brunswick smelter in 2013, when it merged with Xstrata.

On June 29th, United Steelworkers Local 7085 posted a report entitled "Information about our Bargaining."

Referring to concessions imposed on workers in the last collective agreement in 2014, the report informs:

"In 2014 the company negotiated more concessions with the Union claiming that we had to take concessions (again) to try to get an investment of approximately 230 million for a New Plant. After

we agreed to take concessions of 20 million the new plant was never approved and we never got our money back. Instead they built the first of three phases of a new acid plant that cost approximately 20 million dollars, so in theory the Union paid for this phase."

The report then details some of the concessions that were forced on workers in their last collective agreement in 2014. Amongst others, concessions were made on vacation pay, tool allowance, the drug plan, with the biggest concession of all on the pension plan.

The report states:

"The biggest concession that we took was our Pension Plan, we went from a plan [in] which the Company paid the pension, to a new Direct Contribution (DC) plan (new employees and employees with 12 years or less service) where the company pays five per cent of your Base earnings (no shift premiums, overtime or any other earnings). Then the Employees have an option of paying up to four per cent and if they contribute the company will match .5 per cent per each one per cent that the employee contributes. All this will total 11 per cent of their base hourly wage, all other earnings are excluded.

"So, with that said, some employees in five years have not caught up to their salary that they were receiving before the last contract."

Current Concessions Being Demanded of Workers by Glencore Management

The following is a summary, taken from the same June 29 report, of the concessions that Glencore is presently demanding of workers, which they are rejecting.

"Union President's 40 hours a week has been paid by the company since the early 1990's."

"They want him to go back on his job and give him 24 hours (2 shifts as he is a shift worker) to take when he chooses."

In the company's last offer dated September 18, which the workers refused to even vote on, that demand remains unchanged.

"Safety Officer: Our Joint Health and Safety Committee have a 'Terms of Reference' that allows The Union Chairman 40 hours a week 'To ensure the health and safety of employees and ensure compliance with applicable Acts, Policies and Procedures 'this has been in place since 1990 and the company wishes to have it removed and only have him involved when they decide to."

In its most recent offer, Glencore is proposing that the Union Chairman be provided with paid leave of 6 hours per week. The company has arrogantly declared that this is a positive move because it allegedly moves the issue of safety to the floor level and promotes interaction between supervisors, co-workers and support staff, instead of workers having to call the safety office when a safety issue arises. This is a denial by the company that it exercises its dictate on the shop floor by preventing workers from interrupting production when a safety issue arises. Workers are reporting that they have to continuously fight to even get authorization to go to the office to explain what happened and discuss what to do. Without an office managed by a worker's representative on a full-time basis, the situation is bound to get worse.

"Discipline: Our Collective agreement states that if you receive a written warning, it will be removed in 6 months, and if you are suspended it will be removed in 10 months. Now the company wants to keep your suspension on your record for 15 months 'provided that no further disciplinary

action has been recorded during this period.' This is another strategy that the company wants to use to Terminate employees."

The company's new offer, after over five months of lockout and militant worker opposition, is that suspension letters be kept in employee files for 14 months and only removed at that time if no further disciplinary action is recorded during that period.

"Voluntary Early Retirement Plan: The company wishes to eliminate this program which has been negotiated since the early 1990's. There are a minority of employees left on the plan and it is 110% funded, so we are asking to let the plan run itself out."

In its most recent offer, the company is still intent on terminating the plan by 2024. It has proposed that the plan be made available to those who are 59 and have 32 years of service (rather than 58/32) in 2023.

"The 'DC' pension: We are only asking for a 2 per cent raise from 11 per cent to 13 per cent or let the employees use all their premiums, overtime and other benefits to go towards their pension so that they will have a fair pension.

In the latest offer, the company is claiming it cannot improve its contributions to the DC plan at the smelter because the same plan exists at many other Glencore sites, which means that they would all have to be changed. Instead, the company is proposing a one-time payment of \$800 (less income tax withholdings) towards a Group Tax-Free Savings Account.

"Sick and Injured: We always had negotiated language to protect our sick and injured. During the last contract the company fired all of our sick and injured employees who were so disabled that they couldn't come back to work. They still received their Long-term Disability or Workers' Comp, but did not have their right to use our benefit plan for medication or dental. We lost this case in Arbitration so we were trying to have language to protect our employees in case of tragedy."

The company is offering no remedy to the situation in terms of language in the collective agreement that would protect workers in case of tragedy.

The report concludes:

"These are the main reasons that we voted in the high 90's against this offer. All we want is a fair offer and to be treated with the RESPECT that we deserve."

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