

July 29, 2016

**70th Anniversary of USW Local 1005**  
**Salute to USW Local 1005**  
**and the Spirit of '46**



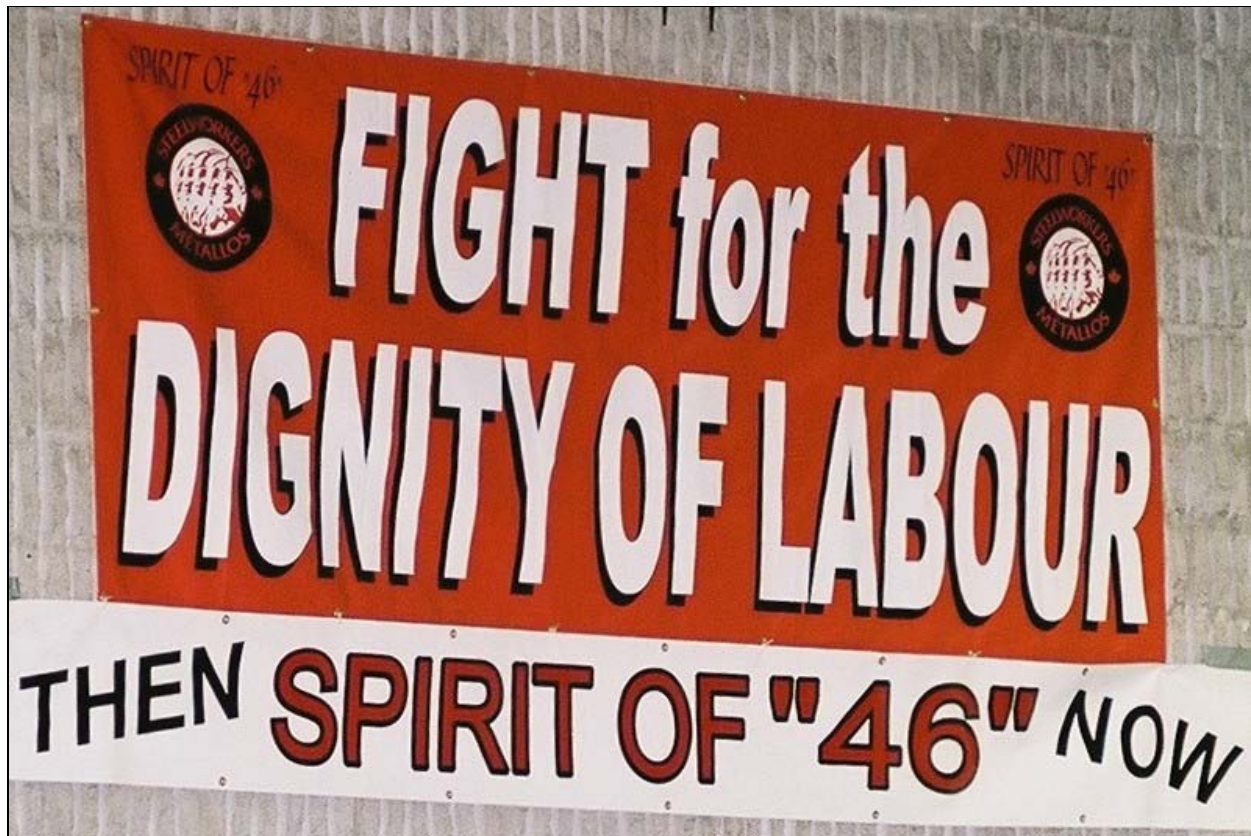
June 2013: Local 1005 celebrates 10 years of holding Thursday Meetings which continue to be held each week.

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## 70th Anniversary of USW Local 1005

# Salute to USW Local 1005 and the Spirit of '46



The Communist Party of Canada (Marxist-Leninist) sends its warmest greetings to USW Local 1005, to all its members, leadership and retirees on the 70th anniversary of its founding. Located in Hamilton in the heartland of industrial Canada, Local 1005 has played and continues to play an important role in the working class movement.

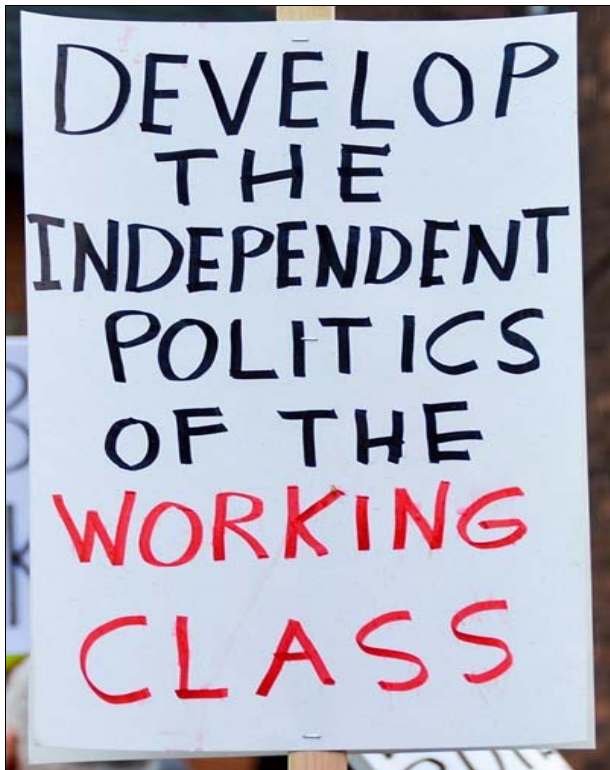
Right from the beginning in 1946, the leaders, activists and supporters of Local 1005 proved to themselves and others that organizing a defence collective of, for and by workers themselves could be done. They did not seek the permission of any authority in power; they demanded their recognition as a defence collective of workers as a matter of right. They held high the banner of the actual producers with concrete demands and claims arising from their social and working conditions. They proved in practice the importance of having a workers' defence organization independent of those who own and control the facilities and state, a union of, for and by the steelworkers themselves.

The steelworkers of '46 had a special spirit arising from the times. They were part of the international contingent of the working class that had defeated the anti-worker anti-people hordes of Nazis, fascists and militarists led and manipulated by those who owned and controlled the monopolies. Workers and their allies throughout the world had united with the Soviet Union in a great flow of revolution to defeat those in power who were committing atrocities against the people.

The flow of revolution and spirit of '46 captured the imagination of millions of industrial workers. Today this spirit is upheld by those who see the necessity to engage in actions with analysis, think for themselves and organize independently of the ruling elite. This is the key to defending our rights and the rights of all in Canada. Only through organizing a collective of, for and by ourselves using our own working class thought material as a guide to action can we advance the fight for our rights and have a say over our working and living conditions and open a path forward for the country.

From the spirit of '46 arose the struggle for public health care, education, unemployment insurance, pensions for all and the realization that these social programs are not gifts from the ruling elite but rights and a way of life that must be fought for and defended with organization and actions with analysis. From the spirit of '46 arose as well the contention that only through eliminating class privilege and by empowering and bringing the working class into the centre of control over Canada's economic, political and social affairs can a modern country be built that guarantees the rights of all and stands for the same internationally.

Steelworkers pose in the present an important question: What is the use of producing all this steel, all this value if the actual producers have no say or control over its production and how the social wealth is used and distributed? The workers' claim on the value they produce both individually and socially is their right as workers, and that claim is for a lifetime not just while they are healthy, uninjured and in the prime of life. The state has the social obligation to uphold the workers' claim throughout their entire lives on the value they produce. If the state refuses its social obligation to the working class then it loses all credibility and raises the necessity of its replacement with a modern state that guarantees the rights of all.



Life itself since '46 has proven concretely that without constantly renewing the organized battle for rights and the broad public interest, those rights can be crushed under the relentless pressure of those who own and control the socialized productive forces and state. They use all their social wealth, connections, class privilege and power to push their narrow private interests and monopoly right and refuse to address the economic, political and social problems that are the conditions of recurring crises and war.

The essential kernel of the spirit of '46 is the resolve to solve the problems of organizing the working class to defend its rights in the face of all obstacles. The key today is to develop the independent thinking, theory and organizing of the working class in opposition to the interference of the ruling elite and their state.

Today the power of the monopolies and state has increased exponentially and the resolve of the class to organize to defend its rights has to meet the challenge. To its great merit, Local 1005 has constantly renewed itself to meet the obstacles and power of the ruling elite under today's

conditions. The leaders, members and retirees have developed new methods such as the Thursday meetings, where they put all issues on the table, hash them out collectively to decide on a course of action, accept individual responsibility to carry out the decisions and engage in mass work to mobilize other workers and the community to overcome the difficulties faced under the concrete conditions of monopoly right and neo-liberal state power. In spite of all problems, the leaders and members of Local 1005 have never dropped the banner of independent thinking, theory, actions with analysis and organizing of the working class in defence of its rights.

The current generation of members and retirees of Local 1005 has strengthened the spirit of '46. Local 1005 and its supporters have redoubled their efforts to organize to defend themselves and the steel community against those who would deprive them of their rights. Today they are facing enemies in U.S. Steel and the state that are more brazen in their attacks on workers' rights. Despite this, Local 1005 has remained a beacon of hope for the working class. Their experience shows that no matter what difficulties modern workers face in production, in defence of their rights or in politics, they are more than capable of finding a solution by organizing their class through actions with analysis using their own thinking and theory.

The Canadian working class and its allies sincerely thank and salute Local 1005 for its courageous 70 years of struggle on behalf of themselves and fellow workers. Local 1005 is an example of what the workers are capable of doing in the struggle to defend our rights and to keep the working class movement marching forward despite all difficulties.

On behalf of CPC(M-L) and all those Canadians engaged in nation-building, fighting to defend the rights of all and organizing to renew the political process, we wish you well and extend to you whatever support we can provide.



**Steelworkers picket outside CCAA Court hearing in Toronto, July 27, 2016.**



## Rights by Virtue of Being Human



Local 1005 began in 1946 with a whisper and was sustained with a roar. The roar has always been the determined organized voice of Stelco steelworkers in defence of their rights. When the Strike of '46 took place, the sacrifices and victories of the war against fascism had changed the world and awakened millions to the prospects of a Canada where the dignity and rights of all must be recognized and guaranteed.

The struggle for rights is most concentrated at the place of work, where those who own and control the productive forces declare they have management rights to deprive workers of their rights. *No!* roar the steelworkers. Management does not have the right to deprive us of our rights! Government does not have the right to deprive us of our rights!

People have rights by virtue of being human. That is what the war against fascism taught us. No one, company or state institution has the right to deprive people of their rights.

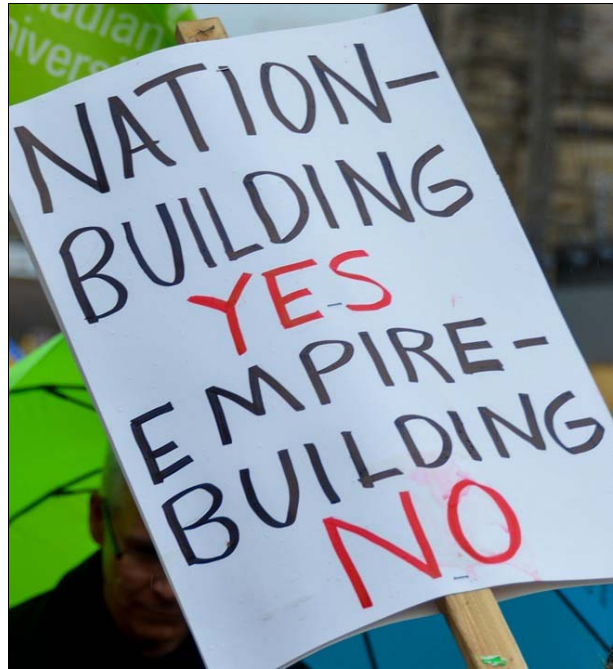
Steelworkers have rights by virtue of their work producing steel, which contains the value so needed for their living and to ensure a vibrant economy and nation-building. No one, company or state institution has the right to deprive steelworkers of their right to claim value from the social product they and all other workers produce throughout their lives. That is the arrangement a modern world requires in exchange for our capacity to work.

The rights of steelworkers begin through work at the workplace but continue throughout their lives until they and their dependents pass away. They exchange their capacity to work, their sweat, blood and in many cases their health for a guaranteed claim on the value they produce and on the value other workers produce once they retire.

The right to negotiate collectively the terms of employment for wages, benefits, pensions, other

post-employment benefits and working conditions is inviolable. No one, company or state institution has the right to deprive steelworkers of their right to a collective say on the terms of employment or unilaterally change those terms or force changes against their will.

In 1946, steelworkers demanded what was theirs by right through the exchange of their capacity to work for a recognized say and guaranteed claim on the value they and others after them produce throughout their lives. That is the arrangement they demanded in 1946 and continue to demand today. The necessity to defend their rights compelled steelworkers then to organize Local 1005 in the first place. The failure to recognize their organization grew into the roar of the strike of '46, a roar which has been sustained since then. The necessity to affirm their rights in the conditions of the present, 70 years later, is all the greater as the owners now in control of Stelco are even more powerful and devious. They are organized as global cartels and racketeers aided by corrupt state institutions and supranational arrangements such as NAFTA and other active and proposed free trade agreements as well as self-serving laws such as the *Investment Canada Act*, the *Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act* (CCAA) and governments that conspire to deprive workers of what belongs to them by right.



With courage and organized determination, steelworkers overcame the attacks of the owners and their henchmen in 1946, forcing them with a mighty roar to recognize their union. Today, they are more experienced and convinced of what is theirs by right. They have allies in the community and throughout Canada, and they are better organized with activists and supporters from all generations and from all walks of life and a voice that will not be silenced.

With the organized power of steelworkers both active and retired, with the support of their allies in the community and throughout Canada, they have embarked on the historic task of depriving those in control of Stelco and the state of the power to deprive them of their rights. They pioneered this path when they organized Local 1005 and forced those in control to recognize their union and negotiate on their behalf. It can be done again under the new conditions because it must be done. It is the only way forward.

On this occasion, the Communist Party of Canada (Marxist-Leninist) salutes the memory of all those who organized Local 1005 and sustained it into the present. Their actions to organize Local 1005 and defend their rights are crucial in the fight to defend the rights of all and for modern nation-building. Let us together redouble the organized efforts to defend their rights -- for the sake of ourselves, our communities, the economy and the well-being of all, at home and abroad!



## It Started as a Whisper



It started as a whisper on the shop floor! Building a union was not an easy task. Everyone knew that the Company did not take kindly to union activism. Unemployment was the consequence of being caught, yet many workers pushed for a union that would give them some power over their situation. It is a testament to their perseverance and courage that the Union survived those first years. It also underscores the conditions that prevailed on the shop floor that so many people would risk their job to fight for change.

Local 1005 of the United Steelworkers of America (u.s.w.a.) was officially chartered in 1942, yet had little success since Stelco refused to officially recognize or bargain with the union. Stelco continued to do everything in its power to stop the growth of unionism. So it was not surprising that the whisper finally grew into a roar . . . with the great strike of 1946!

*— from the Introduction, It Started with a Whisper*





(Photos: *It Started with a Whisper*; Toronto City Archives.)

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