

"We need to put an end to the lie, the myth, the hysteria that you can't have a clean environment and good-paying jobs. In fact, it's not one or the other. It's both or neither," Gerard told a packed meeting of labor leaders and elected officials at United Auto Workers Local 879 hall in St. Paul, Minn. across the street from a Ford truck plant that is slated to close in 2008.

U.S. lags behind

The United States is lagging behind other countries in taking advantage of new green technologies in markets that could be filled by U.S. companies and U.S. workers.

Japan, for example, controls 43 percent of the solar power market, an industry invented in the United States. European countries control an estimated 90 percent of wind turbine production.

"If we use existing science and create incentives to do inventions and research on the newest forms of energy efficiency, we could create tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, of new non-exportable jobs," Gerard said.

The USW and the Sierra Club are also jointly pushing for stronger worker and environmental protection in trade agree-

ments. We are working together, for example, to stop illegal logging in Indonesia that harms the domestic paper industry.

Gerard and Pope also called for higher fuel efficiency in domestic-made automobiles, arguing that better mileage standards would help create demand for American manufacturers as well as improve the environment.

The USW has an estimated 175,000 members making products that could end up in the domestic auto industry ranging from metals to tires, plastics, leather and glass.

Innovate or die

"We have a great stake in making sure we can make cars in America, cars that people want to buy, and unless we deal with fuel efficiency, they won't buy them," Gerard said.

"Don't tell me we can put a person on the moon and find out that Pluto is not a planet, but we can't put out a vehicle made in America with American workers using American products that gets 35, 40 or 50 miles to a gallon," he said to sustained applause.

Participants in the St. Paul meeting discussed the possibility of a community

effort to retool the Ford Ranger plant into a manufacturing site for green energy technologies such as battery-powered cars, windmills or solar panels. The plant, located along the Mississippi River, has its own hydroelectric plant.

Innovation and modernization of manufacturing and energy production and distribution are keys to building a better future for American workers, Pope asserted.

Hybrid and other clean cars, public transportation, efficient heating and lighting systems and clean renewable power plants using solar, wind and clean coal technologies are keys to energy freedom. Producing them can create more than 1.4 million jobs, according to the Apollo Project, and strengthen our economy while simultaneously making America more secure.

Wind employs thousands

In Germany, where more than 18,000 wind turbines are spinning, the wind industry employs more than 65,000 people and has overtaken coal mining as a major employer, according to the German Wind Energy Association.

The German wind energy industry is that country's second largest consumer

of steel, said David Foster, a retired USW district director who is the executive director of the Blue Green Alliance. "Imagine how that makes the heart of a Steelworker beat."

In the U.S., most of the progress being made in renewable energy is coming at the state level while the federal government under the Bush administration has dithered.

In Pennsylvania, where new state legislation requires electric generators and distributors to provide alternative energy to retail customers, a big enough market has been created to attract Gamesa Corp. of Spain, one of the world's largest wind turbine producers.

Gamesa has set up three new modern manufacturing centers on 20 plus acres of the defunct U.S. Steel Fairless Works near Philadelphia to produce towers, blades and other parts. It is also operating a separate manufacturing facility across the state in Ebensburg, north of Johnstown. Total employment is projected to be 1,000.

The USW won recognition at Gamesa and negotiated a first contract that included salary hikes, bonuses and benefits, as well as giving the union a leg up in the growing wind energy

industry. Gamesa spokesman Michael Peck called it a "world-class agreement."

"Our union is proud to partner with Gamesa to further grow their domestic manufacturing base and to promote wind energy as a source of clean, renewable energy and good jobs," said International Vice President Tom Conway, who negotiated the agreement.

The wind turbines that Gamesa makes in Pennsylvania can each turn out two megawatts of energy, enough to

power close to 700 homes. Their steel bases are 260 feet tall to the hub. The blade radius is roughly 130 feet.

"Right now we have a historic opportunity to forge a new direction," Gerard said. "Investments in environmentally friendly alternative energy programs at the state level, supported by federal initiatives, can create a new surge of quality job growth while significantly reducing our dependence on foreign oil."



Photo by Andy Betts

Stopping Plunder

If a tree is felled illegally in Indonesia, does a paper mill worker in Alabama feel it? How about a Sierra Club member in Colorado?

You bet.

They got together and did something about it too.

But let's start with the tree. The Pacific archipelago of Indonesia is covered with some of the largest forests remaining in the world. Vast swaths of them are in government-owned parks and reserves, where they serve as a mammoth air conditioner, sucking carbon out of the atmosphere and hindering global warming.

To criminals, however, those trees look like dollar signs. They're easily cut out of isolated parks and loaded onto tankers with falsified shipping papers. Too often, they're taken to China and converted into the same sort of slick paper used in this magazine, officially called coated free sheet paper.

It's cheap to make paper from stolen trees on which no taxes are paid and which do not have to be replaced with seedlings. It's hard to compete with that.

U.S. production closing

American companies that make coated free sheet paper from trees obtained legally and replaced with seedlings started closing parts of production lines and cutting about 750 jobs a year in 2004.

Illegal Logging Harms U.S. Paper Industry, Environment

Simultaneously, satellite pictures began showing whole mountain ranges of trees disappearing in Indonesia, and a study by the United Nations' Environmental Program found that up to 88 percent of Indonesia's logging was done illegally, clearing as much as 68 million cubic meters of timber annually, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

So when a tree is felled illegally in Indonesia, what both the Sierra club member and the Alabama paper mill worker feel is fear. They're afraid of global warming and frightened of American mills closing.

They acted together to do something about those fears. The USW and the Sierra Club, which had formed the Blue Green Alliance in June of 2006 for just this very sort of project, asked the federal government to impose extra costs on paper sent here from China and Indonesia.

The USW and Sierra Club argued that it was only fair to tack on the extra costs when the logs used in the papermaking process are stolen. They joined NewPage Corp., a Dayton-based paper company, in petitioning the U.S. Department of Commerce to impose trade sanctions against China's glossy paper products sold in the U.S.

Equalize competition

Any government's lax enforcement of environmental laws should be treated the same way as an illegal subsidy, they argued. When a country subsidizes a product, the U.S. may

impose trade sanctions on those imports to equalize competition for American companies.

In May, the Commerce Department agreed to impose trade sanctions on glossy paper products that China sells in the U.S. The decision reversed a 23-year-old U.S. policy that had excused China, and other communist countries, from anti-subsidy laws.

The Commerce Department did not consent to the same request for paper from Indonesia. That did not stop the Sierra Club and the USW, however. The team now is lobbying for legislation that would enable Congress to order the Commerce Department to investigate situations such as illegal logging in Indonesia, which could then lead to sanctions.

In addition to the devastating environmental damage done by the illegal logging in Indonesia, the Sierra Club recognizes the political and economic impact it causes. "This kind of logging does not sustain development in Indonesia," said Sierra Club Senior Representative Margrete Strand Rangnes, "Behind the illegal logging are criminals and large corporations. They are not individual farmers and families. The money and logs are shipped right out of the country, and the profit goes out of the country, and the jobs are lost in the U.S. as well."

What the USW and the Sierra Club want is for the illegal plunder of Indonesia's forests to end. Stopping unfair and illegal trade will protect both the environment and good-paying U.S. jobs.