

Building Power

at the Bargaining Table



Our Union's greatest successes in bargaining have resulted when we clearly state the principles that define our strategic goals in bargaining, and bolster these objectives with sound research and planning.

Among these principles has been the belief that saving basic industries in North America involves decisions far too important to our members' survival to be left to management alone.

This approach began with the Report of the Committee on Future Directions of the Union in 1988, followed a decade ago by New Directions bargaining, and has proved essential for saving jobs and even companies in virtually all of the sectors in which we negotiate.

As the global economy has evolved, our strategy of winning contract provisions such as effective successorship protections and strict limitations on contracting out of our work has been crucial, as has our success in preventing the skyrocketing costs of health care from being dumped on our members.

Now we need a strategic plan that encompasses global as well as domestic activism.

Strengthening this strategic approach as we move forward demands that we take steps to ensure that these and other protections are expanded.

Key Strategic Objectives

- ⇒ Develop industry-wide bargaining councils where they do not yet exist.
- ⇒ Establish company councils where there is sufficient opportunity.
- ⇒ Extend pattern bargaining to all economic sectors.
- ⇒ Expand the Health and Safety Advisors Program to increase the number of safety and health representatives trained as instructors, workplace inspectors and lead activists.
- ⇒ Significantly improve health and safety on the job through programs that empower our members to identify hazards, demand their correction, and refuse unsafe work.
- ⇒ Continue to expand current global alliances to all economic sectors.
- ⇒ Build community-based alliances to strengthen contract, legislative and political activism.
- ⇒ Enhance negotiating capabilities by educating all staff and bargaining committees about benefit programs available through the Steelworkers Pension Trust and the Steelworkers Health and Welfare Fund in the United States, and through the Steelworkers Trusteed Benefit Plan in Canada.
- ⇒ Demand the return of all contracted out work that can be performed by bargaining unit members.
- ⇒ Increase the role of the Union in planning and implementing workplace training to ensure fair advancement and job security.

- ⇒ Build on our success in bargaining neutrality agreements to increase union density throughout a corporation's operations.
- ⇒ Organize new members throughout each industry's supply chain to stop the erosion of bargaining power and retain domestic manufacturing.
- ⇒ Build on our success in producing the current turnaround in steel by launching a full-scale campaign to revitalize and expand North American manufacturing.
- ⇒ Continue to build on the great success of the Institute for Career Development (ICD) and the Canadian Steel Trade and Employment Congress (CSTEC) programs we have established in the steel and tire industries that help our members prepare for advancement on the job and obtain skills which enhance their personal development and growth.

Strengthening Strategic Campaigns and Global Solidarity

While the names may be the same, the corporations we face at the bargaining table today are larger, richer and far more powerful than the companies our Union has traditionally met in negotiations. To cite just *some* examples:

- ⇒ Alcoa employs 131,000 workers at more than 350 operations in 43 countries around the world.
- ⇒ Bridgestone/Firestone, the world's largest manufacturer of tires and other rubber products, operates 105 plants in 24 nations.
- ⇒ The proposed acquisition of ISG by Mittal will create a global company that will operate on four continents, employ 165,000 steelworkers and produce 70 million metric tons of steel per year.
- ⇒ Weyerhaeuser Corporation is the third largest integrated forest company in the world with 55,000 employees working in 18 countries.

To adapt successfully to this consolidation of our basic industries in a global economy, the Union must substantially increase its engagement internationally on multiple fronts — some through traditional means, others through more innovation.

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Promoting Global Solidarity

We must constantly emphasize both to our brothers and sisters abroad, and to our own members, that:

- ⇒ The need for extending the right to collective bargaining to every worker is imperative.
- ⇒ The Steelworkers Union is an organizing union.
- ⇒ The labor movement in the United States is under siege and union density in Canada is also on the decline.
- ⇒ In a global economy, the weakening or destruction of labor in one country or region will weaken unions and workers in most of the world.
- ⇒ Working together to build a global labor movement to fight corporate power is in everyone's interests.
- ⇒ Continue to forge global alliances of unions in companies that are core employers in their sectors.
- ⇒ Develop exchanges among activists in order to refine our global alliances and develop joint strategies.

Our Union should continue to lead by example and build global solidarity and bargaining power by mobilizing our members to:

- ⇒ Oppose so-called "free" trade agreements (both existing and proposed), and highlight their negative impact on workers in other countries.
- ⇒ Work with and provide assistance to unions in developing countries on joint research and organizing projects, as well as documentation and investigation of human rights abuses.
- ⇒ Initiate joint projects with unions and progressive organizations in countries where employers are using low wages and the lack of labor, environmental and social laws and policies to unfairly compete against our members.
- ⇒ Launch cross-border organizing drives in the *maquiladora* plants, and support other such projects with our allies in Mexico and Central America.
- ⇒ Jointly campaign with our union allies for global framework agreements with core employers.

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Expanding Global Union Councils

We should expand these efforts by building on our successes in the aluminum, tire and mining industries. Our Union can achieve this by leading the formation of global union councils, both company-specific (like those at Goodyear, Alcoa, Alcan, Rio Tinto and Weyerhaeuser) and on an industry-wide basis.

Global councils should start carefully to ensure participation and input, then move decisively in the direction of effective, global collective action. Their actions should include:

- ⇒ Exchanging information.
- ⇒ Bargaining framework agreements with industries and companies that establish minimum international standards.
- ⇒ Cooperating on specific issues in bargaining.
- ⇒ Engaging in global collective bargaining and organizing campaigns.
- ⇒ Strengthening Global Union Federations and urging them toward greater global mobilization.

Our Union should work closely with unions in other countries — and with global union federations such as the IMF (International Metalworkers' Federation) and ICEM (International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers' Unions) and others — to develop the most effective structure for the councils. We should identify common agendas and strategies, and ultimately carry out actions based on plans for mutual support and victory.

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Establishing Global Standards

Experience in our strategic campaigns has repeatedly demonstrated that when companies mistreat their employees, that abuse invariably includes worker health and safety, and also extends to the environment. In this context, building global solidarity means we must:

- ⇒ Continue our efforts through the International Labor Organization and other agencies of the United Nations to develop international standards for safety and health, and work to extend these protections to all countries.
- ⇒ Expand our technical assistance to unions in other countries.
- ⇒ Continue our efforts to include labor and environmental standards as core provisions in all trade agreements.
- ⇒ Engage in global bargaining and strategic organizing

Our members are clearly impacted by international trade and global consolidation. But not every industry is affected the same way, or to the same extent. Therefore, our Union should identify, research, and develop global bargaining and organizing plans for:

- ⇒ Industries dominated by North American multinationals where we have a strong membership base and in which we can take the lead in forming active global committees and councils.
- ⇒ Industries concentrated and controlled by a relatively small group of multinationals that we can leverage through company-specific councils.
- ⇒ Industries in which we have a strong membership base and that are relatively more insulated from the threats of offshoring and overseas production.

In short, the global economy has created an even greater need for global activism and union solidarity — the need, moreover, for the Steelworkers to engage in wide-ranging activism beyond our borders.

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