



**USW**  
Local 8586

# Beaumont Bargaining Update

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## Union Challenge Brings Gerdau Back to the Bargaining Table

*If Gerdau really wants “an agreement that would bring our workers back to the mill,” our union’s Negotiating Committee is ready, willing and able to bargain for as long as it takes to reach the “fair and generous contract” Gerdau says it wants by negotiating a compromise between the company’s concessionary last proposal and our last proposal.*

That’s the challenge our union made to Gerdau in a full-page ad that began running in the Beaumont *Enterprise* last Friday. The ad examined the honesty of management statements about negotiations and the company’s last contract proposal. Not surprisingly, it didn’t find much.

But the ink was barely dry on Friday’s paper when Gerdau’s attorney was on the phone, saying that the company would be back at the bargaining table on Monday, July 11.

Does this mean that Gerdau is finally ready to bargain in good faith to reach a fair agreement? Or is the company worried that they’ll look foolish after running those newspaper ads blaming the union for “holding up negotiations?”

Only time will tell. But here’s what’s happened so far.

Our Negotiating Committee was ready to begin on Monday morning, but Gerdau wasn’t available until the afternoon. (The company says they “recognize the difficult circumstances that the negotiations and work stoppage at the Beaumont facility have created for our employees, their families, and our customers.” They also say they locked us out “fully expecting union negotiators to be at the table working for an agreement.” But those things don’t seem to mean that Gerdau’s negotiators will travel to Beaumont on Sunday so they can start work first thing Monday morning.)

Talks continued on Tuesday morning. Though our negotiators wanted to bargain all week, the company’s negotiators said they had to leave town on Tuesday afternoon — and couldn’t be back for the rest of the week! (So much for “ready to get back to work in Beaumont.”)

If you watched the evening news on Monday, you had a pretty good idea when bargaining ended for the day. It’s when Phil Bell ran to the TV stations — one more time — complaining that our committee is “wasting time” instead of trying to reach an agreement.

How can Phil Bell do this with a straight face? Give it a rest, Phil. It took a full-page ad in the paper just to get you guys back to the bargaining table. Isn’t it about time for you to dream up a different story for the media?

If this wasn’t bad enough, wait until you hear the capper. We asked the company to meet every day next week, but guess what? They are only available on Monday afternoon and Thursday afternoon.

Look! We all know that this is a transparent and incredibly stupid trick by the company to create division in our ranks by trying to convince us — or some of us — that our Negotiating Committee doesn’t have our best interests at heart. That’s why Phil Bell keeps reading from the same old, tired script, no matter how much the situation changes.

But do they really think we are that stupid?

**Once the company realizes that we are rock solid in our unity, that’s when they’ll start to bargain seriously.**

(over)

In bargaining this week, we discussed a number of major issues — the length of the contract, Gerdau’s proposals for job combinations and changes to the rate structure, and the company proposal to eliminate overtime pay (except when required by law). None are resolved at this point. We also spent a considerable amount of time trying to clarify what the company is trying to accomplish with its health-care proposal.

For a full report on the status of negotiations, plan to attend next week’s Local Union meeting, which starts at 9:00 a.m. on Tuesday, July 19 (see story below). Negotiations are scheduled to resume on Monday afternoon, July 18.

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## **Gerdau Flunks Honesty Test, Again**

Phil Bell is at it again, still trying to undermine our solidarity by blaming the Negotiating Committee for delays in bargaining. Today (July 13), he’s complaining about “five weeks of waiting for [the union’s] health care proposal.” And once again, Gerdau flunks the honesty test, because Phil forgot “the rest of the story.” Here it is:

- June 2: union asks company for health care information
- July 7: company finally sends information
- July 8-10: union negotiators work overtime to analyze the company’s information

The company did spend “five weeks of waiting,” but they weren’t waiting for the union’s health care proposal. They were waiting to respond to the union’s information request.

**It’s time to end The Big Lie. It’s time to end Gerdau’s illegal lockout.**

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## **Top Negotiators Will Attend July 19 Union Meeting – Spouses Invited**

Our next Local Union meeting, at 9:00 a.m. on Tuesday, July 19 at the PACE Hall on 11th Street in Beaumont, will feature presentations by two of the USW’s top negotiators: Bernie Kleiman, Special Counsel to International President Leo W. Gerard; and John Patrick, the USW’s Houston Sub-Director.

Bernie and John bring a wealth of experience and knowledge to our Local Union Negotiating Committee, and they made special arrangements to attend Tuesday’s meeting to give Local 8586 members and spouses a first-hand report on bargaining, answer your questions, and discuss your priorities and concerns.

**USW Local 8586 Meeting**  
**Tuesday, July 19, at 9:00 a.m.**  
**PACE Hall, 11th Street, Beaumont**  
**Special Presentations by:**  
**Bernie Kleiman, USW Special Counsel**  
**John Patrick, USW Houston Sub-Director**  
**Spouses invited**