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Brazil Trade Unions Condemn Gerdau's Anti-Union Posture in North America

Sao Leopoldo, Brazil - Some 440 trade union leaders, representing 210 metalworker unions in Brazil unanimously passed a resolution on May 7, condemning the “anti-dialogue and anti-union attitude,” expressed by the Brazilian steelmaker, Gerdau, in its relations with workers in the U.S. and Canada.

The union leaders were meeting in the 11th Congress of CUT (Brazilian Metalworkers Federation), and following an address from Ben Hallas, vice president of Local 7263 in St. Paul, Minn., passed the resolution.

“Jorge Gerdau is no different than George W. Bush,” Hallas told the delegates who roared with applause.

The resolution called for solidarity among Gerdau's workers in Sapucaia, Charqueadas and Porto Alegre, with USW members in the U.S. and Canada, considering the fact that Gerdau is aggressively expanding in North America.

Labor agreements expired last year at Gerdau's Wilton, Iowa; Beaumont, Texas; and St' Paul, Minn., plants but workers remain on the job. In addition, Gerdau is purchasing Sheffield Steel where contracts have expired at all three plants – Joliet, Ill., Sand Springs, Okla., and Kansas City.

Jim Whitmore, a member of the negotiating committee at Local 8581 in Wilton, Iowa is scheduled to visit workers at Gerdau's Brazilian mills in June.

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