



**For Immediate Release**

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**Citizens Committee in Germany Says Continental Tire Damages the Dignity of Mankind**

A committee formed from prominent citizens in Hannover, Germany, where German tire manufacturer Continental Tire is headquartered, issued a statement today on its findings of worker and human rights abuses by Continental in the United States and Germany.

The committee met on April 21 to hear testimony at a public hearing from retired members of the United Steelworkers (USW) and the Union of General Tire Workers of Mexico (SNTGM). Continental Tire was invited to attend the hearing but declined.

Retired USW members gave testimony about the dramatic rise in retiree health care insurance that was forcing many Continental retirees, who are not yet eligible for Medicare, to pay as much as three-fourths of their pensions for health care or to drop health care altogether.

Larry Little, a retired USW member from Charlotte, North Carolina and Vietnam veteran, talked about his health problems, including arthritis and life-threatening heart problems, after working at the tire plant for over 30 years and lifting hundreds of tires per day, and about not being able to get another job to pay for his health care. "My biggest fear is not being able to pay for an operation if I have a heart attack and lose my health care insurance," said Little. "I will probably die from this heart condition, but I would like to die for fighting for something rather than from Continental's greed."

Sidney Lowe, another retired USW member from Charlotte, recounted how he and other retired members are also being impacted by the dramatic rise in prescription costs, since many Continental retirees must take three or four prescriptions which can cost hundred of dollars per month.

There are over 3,500 Continental retirees and their families in the U.S. who have been forced to pay as much as \$14,000 for the health insurance and prescription drugs offered by company.

Efrin Escorza, the General Secretary of the SNTGTM, told the citizens' committee about how Continental had violated labor rights at its plant in San Luis Potosi in Mexico including the illegal firing of four workers after the union engaged in a legal work stoppage. He also discussed how the company was forcing an increase in the work week from 40 to 48 hours and shortened vacations, "Why does Continental have two faces,"

asked Escorz, “willing to engage in dialogue with the union in Germany but refusing to work cooperatively with the SNTGTM in Mexico?”

Professor Manfred Schweres of the University of Hannover commented after hearing the testimony at the hearing, “over 200 years ago the United States helped Europe overcome feudalism through its Declaration of Independence and Constitution, and now we have to demand that these feudal conditions are not be brought to North America.”

The following is the statement issued by the committee: