



The Covington USW Local 8-675

NEW INFORMER

A STRONGER, WISER, DEMOCRATIC, & FOCUSED LOCAL UNION

Trusting The Company

A quickie contract is all risk...

There is understandable frustration in Covington because of the long time it is taking to get a fair contract. The Company knows how to keep that frustration level growing and hopes it will reach a point where we'll accept anything to just get it over with.

Any quickie contract ready to be signed with an independent union, that would be acceptable to the Company, would be a "cross your fingers and hope it all works out" kind of deal. We need to ask ourselves some questions:

- Do we want to give the Company the legal opportunity to put a worse contract offer on the table.
- Do we want to lose our right to Arbitrate contract violations during the negotiations period?
- Do we want to weaken our bargaining position on retroactivity?
- Do we want to entertain the Company's six-year "supposal" that simply stretches out three years of wages?
- Do we want to face MeadWestvaco without a Strike Fund?
- Do we want to bargain without any links with Mahrt, Evadale, Low Moor and other MWV facilities?
- Do we want to concede to the Company healthcare changes, which mean more out of pocket costs for us?
- Do we want to leave the Company free to sell Covington without ironclad contract protection language that would require us to be rehired by the new owner and our keep our contract in place.
- Do we want the Company continue to hand our production and

maintenance work over to contractors?

- Do we want to have an under funded independent union representing us that won't have the resources to arbitrate or go to court if the Company decides to ignore a contract?

Do we believe that MWV won't take advantage of all this freedom to rip us off? Don't we have to have a massive amount of trust in the Company to put ourselves in this position?

It's time to look at what the USW has done and is doing all over the paper industry.

- The best contracts in years that are ratified by strong majorities of members.
- Building solidarity and communications between locations to build power.
- When necessary, employing "corporate campaigns" to leverage the company with stockholders, the public, government and other pressure points.
- A long term strategy, developed and voted on by paper local unions, that builds from one contract to the next.

Why has the USW been able to produce these kinds of negotiating strategies and contract improvements at every other company? Why would Covington be any different? Why should we accept less?

The USW strategy uses the power of solidarity to achieve much better wages, benefits, working conditions and long term job security.

The USW's strategy doesn't require us to trust John Luke, Mark George, and the MeadWestvaco Global Corporation.

Here Comes

The Judge

The National Labor Relations Board notified the USW that they have decided to hold hearings on ALL the fifteen election objections the USW filed after the disaffiliation vote.

The hearings will be held in the Council Chambers at the City



Hall in White Sulphur Springs, WV (34 W. Mains Street) and are open to the public. The date is April 15, 2008 at 10am and the hearings will continue until all objections have been heard. The hearings will be conducted by an Administrative Law Judge.

The USW urges every MeadWestvaco union employee to attend these hearings. It's a rare opportunity to understand your Labor Law rights and see first-hand how the appeals process works.

The NLRB has the right to dismiss objections they do not feel warrant investigation. By ordering a hearing on all fifteen of the USW objections, the Board indicated the seriousness of the USW claims. Detailed objections are available at the USW LU 8-675 Union Hall for review.

USW Local Union 8-675 Names Interim Leadership Committee

Covington, VA– The United Steelworkers announced today that a new leadership Committee has been put in place at USW Local Union 8-675 in Covington, VA. “We are pleased to announce the formation of a Interim Leadership Committee (ILC) made up of USW members who all work at the MeadWestvaco Covington paper mill”, said Staff Representative Louie Mendoza. “The ILC is a critical step forward as we rebuild the Local Union” added Mendoza. The former officers of the Local Union abandoned their positions October of 2007, in an effort to form an independent union. The Local has been without leadership since that time. The ILC will serve until local union officers are in place.

“We are really excited about the Interim Leadership Committee,” said ILC member Charlie Anderson, “because it is made up of Local Union members from

every area of our Mill.” “The prior Officer group was limited primarily to one area of the Mill and that was one of the big reasons we have had these troubles in Covington”, said Ralph “Rocky” Lane, a MWV Covington employee.

According to Mendoza, the primary duties of the ILC will be to set a strategy to get the right Contract for MWV Covington members, deal with the National Labor Relations objections the USW has filed on behalf of Covington members, rebuild solidarity within the Local Union, and tend to the day to day administration of the Local Union and the collective bargaining agreement. Another ILC member Helena Hubble said, “What we need is to get a first-class contract that addresses all the members’ concerns and protects members as the paper industry goes through all kinds of plant and ownership changes.” “This is the right move

at the right time,” said ILC member Shannon Moore.

The Interim Leadership Committee includes (with some spots yet open): Charlie Anderson (#1 Paper Machine); Daryol Booth (Bleached Pulp); Wesley Brown (Recovery); Tom Buzzard (Production/Carbon); George Clinebell (Woodyard); Dennis Fury (Bleached Pulp); Tim Givens (Maintenance Oilers); Bobby Harrison (#8 Paper Machine); Helena Hubble (QA); Roger Hunter (Production/Carbon); Jeff Kirk (Environmental Services); Mike Lipos (#2 Paper Machine); Shannon Moore (GMS&S); James “Andy” Terry (Unbleached Pulp); A.J. Wolf (Power).

The USW is an International Union with 850,000 members, including 130,000 in the paper and forestry products sector. It represents more than 4,000 MeadWestvaco workers at 19 facilities throughout the U.S.

USW Contract Protection Works for Weyerhaeuser Members

If Weyerhaeuser had decided two years ago to sell its packaging and recycling business to International Paper, the 14,300 people that worked in that division would have faced a new employer without a labor agreement. Prior to the latest USW Contract, those employees did not have adequate contract protection (successorship) language that requires the new owner to recognize the existing contract.

The sale included nine container board mills; 72 packaging locations; 10 specialty-packaging plants; four kraft bag and sack locations; and 19 recycling plants. IP is paying \$6 billion in cash for these facilities.

In a letter to Local Unions, International Vice President Jon

Geenen wrote, “*Many of you know that since the merger a few years ago we have redoubled our efforts at strengthening our bargaining position in the paper industry. We have accomplished this in a number of ways. First, we have brought continuity and discipline to a process that was fairly chaotic; second, we began to redefine our agenda to include security items like successorship (which is really a contract protection clause); and... , our local unions stepped up the level of coordination within their companies and established goals and frameworks for bargaining. Two years ago, we would not have been able to say that your seniority is protected or that your contract is secure for that matter—today we can.*”

Doesn't Covington deserve this same level of protection and security?

IP Converter Locals All Endorse Contract

United Steelworkers (USW) local unions attending an International Paper (IP) converter meeting in Cincinnati on April 2 unanimously voted to take back to the membership for ratification the proposed converters national agreement negotiated between the USW and IP, covering key economic and security issues.

“The unanimous support of the tentative accord with IP and USW converting facilities says a lot about the amount of progress that we continue to make in bargaining in the paper industry, and underscores the importance of local union activism and unity,” said USW International Vice President Jon Geenen who is responsible for national paper bargaining.

The proposed deal covers major economic issues such as wages, pension, health care, and a number of job security provisions, but leaves the local and non-economic bargaining a matter for local discussions.

Covington Voices

How do you feel about the election results and what do you think MWV people should do now?

Timmy Givens: I feel very upset with the way the results went. For the most part it's just how split we are as a whole. Somehow, somehow we need to be reunited as brothers and sisters. I think we should move forward in the way as to go ahead and form our Committee (Interim Leadership Committee) to show that we (USW Local Union 8-675) will be ready to fight MWV when we get to the table.

Daryol Booth: The election results prove the CPU are not supported by enough of a majority to be successful going against MWV. They have only split this Local, our families and our community. We need to go all out to keep the USW 8-675 in control and not allow an Independent (union) in charge.

Alicia R. Gordon: We need to reunite as one Union and reorganize our leadership. Focus on the issues that face us as an industry and workforce and move forward. United We Stand as USW!

George Clinebell: A divided union will not stand. We need to come together, CPU, USW Local 8-675 and the USW International Union. (We need to) show the company they can not divide us with one departmental issue. M.R.I. Get back to the contract issues, Health Insurance, Pension and across the board wage increases. Keep our bylaws. They were there as checks and balances against what has happened to us.

J.D. Kirk: When I hired in as a United Steelworker at Newport News Shipyard they were on their 1st USW contract there. An independent, stand-alone union (The Peninsula Shipbuilding Association) had been in place with very low dues, no effective grievance procedure, no funeral leave, poor benefits, isolated representation, etc... Their workforce was over 20 times (the size) of ours, something like 12,000 dues paying members at that time. Wake up Covington.

Helena Hubble: I feel hurt and upset that people would want to give away a lot of what they worked for.

Clivie W. Nicely: I think that there were some bad things that happened between the Company and the CPU to have the vote go their way. The Company needs to stay neutral. We've got to stick together to get a good contract from this Company. John Luke won't give us anything without a fight.

Wesley A. Brown: So close were the election results, that the only winner was MeadWestvaco. We need to have some strength and solidarity here at this Local with the USW.

Larry D. Cook: I feel like my union of 42 ½ years has been destroyed and I don't know whether the pieces can be put together again or not. Perhaps a Union for just the production workers would somewhat do the job. I don't want to join the CPU, I don't want any part of them.

Shaun M. Vass: The election results were the worst possible result for either side. It showed how divided we are and the only clear winner in it was Mark George and the Company.

Michael L. Lipos: I feel with the election results so close, so divided, there is no way a small local union can ever make it. We need the support of the 850,000 member USW union to fight the big global company MWV.

William Armentrout: I didn't like the election results. I think we should talk things out and pull together to get a fair contract. But I don't think we can do it without an International Union. We are more divided now than ever. I'm sure MeadWestvaco is happy.

C.E. Gaines: We must proceed to be able to get the union together, to work for and by the people.

George Catlett Jr: The election results were very dangerous. It showed how divided that we are. I think that the CPU and the USW need to talk and do whatever is reasonable to join as one, under the USW.



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Covington Voices (continued from Page 3)

How do you feel about the election results and what do you think MWV people should do now?

April 9, 2008

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Unification Committee Meeting Schedule

**The USW 8-675
Unification Committee
Meets Every Tuesday
Five Meetings Starting At
7 am, 11 am, 2:45 pm,
3:45 pm, 4:45 pm
All Covington MWV workers and
their families are encouraged to
attend**

R. Craig Madison: The election results show MVW that the hourly workers are a divided union. This gives the Company more leverage on the contract. Not sure where we should go from here but I for one will not join the CPU.

Eddie Toombs: The NLRB election results were a travesty. The only winner was MWV. We have done to ourselves what they could never do. They (the Company) also had a large part in this situation because they did not bring forth a fair contract for everyone. and are also trying to exploit and expand the division that is present. We all need to find some way to come together to get a contract that is fair for everyone, not one group or the other. This contract should have protections for ALL 900 plus hourly employees at the mill and secure a future for generations yet to come to the mill. We need to find a way to eliminate or at least minimize contracting out of bargaining unit work. I personally would like to see multiple apprenticeship programs be started to prepare us for the retirements that are coming in the next few years. We need to do everything we can to keep ALL OF THE JOBS we have here at the mill and hopefully create some more. We have proved that we are

one of the best workforces in the industry. What happens here also affects thousands of people for hundreds of miles in each direction. Do we have the courage to work this situation out for the benefit of everyone involved? I sincerely hope that we do. I want what's best for everyone involved. I believe that my involvement in the Unification Committee and support for USW Local Union 8-675 best protects everyone involved in this situation.

Tom Buzzard: I was disappointed that the USW had lost. But also realized that the only thing the CPU had accomplished was splitting our union. This was something that the Company had not been able to do in three contract proposals. Yet Roy Hall and the CPU accomplished this for the Company, in their willful and reckless endeavor. We as employees need to come together and we need to be with our other brothers and sisters at Marht, Evadale, Low Moor and Charleston to combat the Company as a whole. Not as isolationists on our own. If MWV has to choose between a fight with the other Mills, all together and backed by the USW, or little Covington on its own with the CPU and Fishwick, which one will they go after?

Interim Leadership Committee Begins Training and Contract Strategy

The new USW Local Union 8-675 Interim Leadership Committee held its first meetings on April 6th and 7th.

The ILC reviewed the Communications Action Team (CAT) training and began strategic discussions that prepare the Local for contract bargaining.

The Company refused to cooperate on scheduling, fur-

ther signaling their support of the CPU. But the ILC reworked the schedule and did their initial meetings on volunteer time.

"We are not going to let the Company, the CPU or anyone else get in the way of putting our Local Union back on track," said Charlie Anderson, a ILC member.

"This is an important milestone for the Local Union," said Staff Representative Louie Mendoza. **"This is the first opportunity for a team of local leaders to lay out the issues we face and begin to work out a plan to get**



to a unified local union and a fair contract for Covington members."

The Interim Leadership Committee is providing temporary local leadership until it is possible to have a real membership election.