

# Steelworkers target Home Depot stores in solidarity with striking B.C. workers

The United Steelworkers demonstrated at Home Depot stores in Sherwood and Albany, Oregon, Sept. 29 in support of striking forestry workers in British Columbia, Canada. It was one of more than 150 similar events held that day in the U.S. and Canada as part of a National Day of Action.

Some 7,000 wood products workers in the coastal region of British Columbia have been on strike at more than 30 companies since July 20 in an effort to restore concessions that were imposed by a government-appointed mediator/arbitrator following a three-week strike in 2004.

The Industrial Wood and Allied Workers (IWA), representing wood products workers in British Columbia, as well as other provinces across Canada, merged with the Pittsburgh-based United Steelworkers of America in 2004.

Home Depot was targeted because it is a major retailer of wood products the struck companies produce. The union is asking consumers not to purchase products labeled by Western Forest Products, Interfor and Weyerhaeuser (Cedar One).

A key issue in the strike is job safety. In 2004, a government-appointed mediator put into place a work schedule that allowed logging companies to go to

a six-day workweek with three days off. This meant that loggers could be scheduled for six consecutive days at straight time pay with work days running as long as 10 hours per day. Including travel time to remote logging sites, workdays oftentimes exceeded 12-14 hours.

On average, 25 workers are killed each year in the coastal forestry industry of British Columbia, the union said. There were 46 logging fatalities in 2005, and the Steelworkers attribute the increase, in part, to the imposed work schedule.

"The strike is about undoing this horrible scheduling provision forced on our members in 2004," said Ed Eskola, financial secretary of Local 1-85 in Port Alberni. "Our members are very angry and even though this strike is dragging out, they are as solid and strong today as they were the first day of the strike."

The Steelworkers say Home Depot is selling "bloody lumber" produced by the struck companies.

Another key issue in the strike involves severance pay packages when a company closes down a mill or logging operation. The union has a proposal on the table that would require the company to pay out severance packages when there's been a substantial reduc-

tion of the work force. The union said that some companies have tried to avoid severance payouts by shutting a mill but leaving one or two workers in place.

"They claim this is not a complete closure that triggers severance payments. We're determined to close that loophole," the union said.

## Bricklayers back Clinton

The Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers is the fifth union to endorse Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-N.Y.) for president. The executive council of the 100,000-member union voted unanimously Sept. 23 to support Clinton after she came out the favorite in a member poll. The Bricklayers join four other unions in their endorsement of Clinton — Letter Carriers, Machinists, the Transportation-Communications Union and the United Transportation Union. Former Sen. John Edwards (D-N.C.) has won the support of four unions — Mine Workers, United Steelworkers the Transport Workers and the Carpenters. Sen. Chris Dodd (D-Conn.) is backed by the Fire Fighters Union.

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