

Steelworkers ratify new contract at Halsey mill

Union solidarity helps restore main provisions of former Pope & Talbot contract

HALSEY, Ore. — Union solidarity — national and international — produced a big win for 95 Steelworkers at the Cascade Pacific Pulp LLC paper mill here.

Following protests that stretched from Oregon's mid-Willamette Valley to the swank Twin Cities suburb of Wayzata, Minn. — home of the private equity investment firm that bought the mill — members of Steelworkers Local 1189 got a new six-year contract that not only restores virtually all job rights, but immediately cuts the worker share of health care premium costs from 50 percent to 20 percent.

The contract was ratified Oct. 16 by a 5-1 ratio. It will expire Oct. 31, 2014.

The Oregon workers' campaign drew support from Minnesota unions, when Local 1189 leaders flew to the Land of 10,000 Lakes to bring the contract struggle to the front door, literally, of the head of Wayzata Invest-

ment Partners, a specialist in private equity and hedge funds.

The United Steelworkers also mounted solidarity campaigns abroad.

Wayzata bought the plant last June for \$31 million after longtime owner Pope & Talbot filed for bankruptcy. There was not a successorship clause in the union contract, so Wayzata forced all workers to reapply for their jobs under the terms offered by the new owner. Wages and benefits were cut 12 to 28 percent, out-of-pocket health care insurance costs tripled, and the traditional pension plan was eliminated.

That led to the union protest in the Twin Cities suburb — where the workers were surprised and gladdened by the large turnout, honking horns and favorable press coverage.

Local 1189 Financial Secretary Jim Gourley said the union was able to get a contract "because of the solidarity of our membership, our community allies, and USW brothers and sisters from Canada and Minnesota. They supported us in our rallies at Wayzata headquarters in Minnesota and at the plant gate."

USW negotiators were "very suc-

cessful in not only improving the package, but getting it front-loaded as well," District 12 Representative Fernie Mirelez told the Minneapolis Labor Review. The company "knew they weren't dealing with just a small local in Halsey, Oregon, but with allies throughout the country."

One of the most important provisions the union obtained was successorship. If Wayzata sells the pulp mill in the future, the new owner will have to abide by the existing union contract for the term of the agreement, and workers would get to keep their jobs.

The new pact provides for an immediate 12 percent wage increase. Workers will be paid the difference between their old wage rate and new wage rate for the five months they were without a contract. Wages will

increase 2 percent in each of the next two years. In 2011, 2012 and 2013, pay raises will be based on the average of wage increases negotiated at other Pacific Coast mills.

The company agreed to pay a 50-cent-per-hour shift differential for the 7 p.m. to 7 a.m. shift instead of its original proposal to start payment in 2009. An additional 25-cents per hour will be added Nov. 1, 2010 instead of a year later. Approximately 75 percent of the membership is affected by the change.

Prior to the new agreement, workers had to pay 50 percent of their health care premiums. In the new pact workers will immediately pay 20 percent of the cost. This increases to 22 percent in 2010 and 25 percent in 2012.

Local 1189 was able to retrieve all the contract language under the old contract with Pope & Talbot, except for a few minor modifications. Those with 15 years or more of service under Pope & Talbot and Cascade Pacific will automatically get five weeks of vacation without having to re-earn it under the new owner.

The defined benefit pension workers had under Pope & Talbot will be replaced by a Steelworkers 401(k) plan. Cascade Pacific will match up to 6 percent of a worker's contribution beginning Nov. 1, 2008. This will increase to a 7 percent match on Nov. 1, 2011, and an 8 percent match on Nov. 1, 2012.

(Editor's Note: Press Associates Inc. and the Minneapolis Labor Review contributed to this report.)

...Machinists settle Boeing strike

(From Page 1)

for current and future employees, pension improvements, and work-rule changes designed to improve productivity.

Medical costs will remain the same, ensuring no new out-of-pocket expenses for current or retired workers. In the first offer, much of the lump sum payment would have been spent to pay for medical cost shifting, the union said. That money now stays in workers' pockets.

And, after not receiving a general wage increase for four years, Machinists won a 15 percent wage hike over the next four years. Workers with fewer than six years of service received a raise from \$12.72 to \$15 an hour.

Additionally, workers will get a bonus totaling at least \$8,000 over the next three years. The first year lump sum of 10 percent of previous year's earnings or \$5,000, will be paid by Nov. 7, 2008.

On the pension side, Machinists will receive an increase of \$11 over the first three years of the contract (from \$70 to \$81 per month for all years of credited service), and an additional \$2 in the final year. Petroff said it is the

largest dollar increase in union history, and leads the aerospace industry.

Boeing retreated from its take-aways and proposals to cost-shift medical benefits, and reverted to the 2005 contract levels and language, thus eliminating language that would have been detrimental to retirees currently on retiree medical benefits.

Also as part of the settlement agreement, insurance and benefits will be considered continuous for all returning employees and their dependents. Boeing will return all insurance premiums that were paid during the strike and all valid insurance claims will be paid. But the improvements in job security are "the major achievement of the deal," Petroff said. "We have prevented external suppliers from coming in to our factories and doing jobs that IAM members have done."

Except for final assembly of the 787, outside vendors are limited to delivering products to designated areas only. From there, bargaining unit employees will track use, disbursement, acquisition, and/or inventory of parts, materials, tools, kits and other goods or products.

"This agreement is the result of hard work and great sacrifice by many

people," said IAM Aerospace Coordinator Mark Blondin. "But no one deserves more credit than the workers at Boeing, who conducted themselves with dignity and determination throughout this ordeal. On behalf of the entire negotiating committee, I want to say it has been our honor to serve as their representatives."

- Of Lodge 63's 1,244 members who work at Boeing in Gresham, only two crossed the picket line.

- The 57-day strike is the second-longest of the Machinists' four strikes against Boeing in 20 years.

- The Machinists filed several unfair labor practice complaints with the National Labor Relations Board alleging that Boeing tried "direct dealing" with members. As part of the settlement, all ULP charges were withdrawn.

- Over the last five years, Boeing has enjoyed \$13 billion in net profits.

- Boeing has a commercial backlog of 3,725 planes to build, currently worth \$275 billion.

- Industry analysts estimate that the company lost at least \$2 billion in profits due to the strike.

- Boeing reported that its third-quarter profit was off 38 percent because of the strike.

- Some 20,300 engineers and technical workers at Boeing, represented by the Society of Professional Engineering Employees in Aerospace Local 2001, began negotiations Oct. 29 after eight months of preliminary talks.

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