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International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers
25 Cornell Ave., Gladstone, OR/503-656-1475 or 503-238-5550

AWPPW rejects Georgia Pacific/ Koch Industries contract offer

The Association of Western Pulp and Paper Workers (AWPPW) Local 5 and Georgia Pacific (GP), wholly owned by Koch Industries, have been in contract negotiations for over three years, as the labor agreement expired May 31, 2014.

AWPPW Local 5, located in Camas Washington, overwhelmingly rejected a contract offer that was voted on by the members, simultaneously giving strike authorization. It is likely that customers such as Walmart, Costco, Staples, and Kroger's would have supplies affected should a labor dispute arise at the GP facility.

The company offer proposed that employees hired after ratification would come under a new wage rate scale that reduces wages an average of 20 percent. New hires would not be eligible for any general wage increases. New employees would not be eligible for the defined benefit pension plan, they would have fewer holidays, and vacation pay would be reduced.

As part of GP's proposal, current employees would receive general wage increases on average 1 percent per year, which is far less than the 2.5 percent industry average.

The company's proposal also contains language that allows for contracting out of all work, maintenance as well as production.

The proposal replaces current health care plans with plans that reduce benefits and have high deductibles. This shifts the burden to the employees to cover their health care, the union said.

Additionally, the proposal establishes a two-tier wage system that would cut wages and benefits for the workers, while Georgia Pacific continues to make record profits for parent company Koch Industries.

The union and the company were scheduled to meet again on Aug. 16 (after this issue went to press).

AWPPW is affiliated with the United Brotherhood of the Carpenters & Joiners of America.

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