

Pulp *Special Edition* truth



August 23, 2012

Please copy Pulp Truth front and back and distribute it during non-work time using your Communications and Action Teams, steward system or Rapid Response network. Be sure to leave copies in lunchrooms, break rooms, etc. We want to hear what's happening in your workplace. Send your news to Lynne Hancock, editor, at lhancock@usw.org

Paperworkers Set Bargaining Direction for Next Two Years

At the national paper sector conference held July 10-12 in Pittsburgh 500 delegates met in their company councils to determine bargaining goals, policy objectives and action items for the next two years.

They decided to continue two bargaining goals from the 2010 paper conference: building power at the bargaining table by setting and adhering to priorities and improving safety by stemming the high number of injuries and fatalities in the paper workplace.

The rest of the goals dealt with job and economic security items. Other objectives focused on building power and confronting trends in the workplace.

"My bargaining goals are to improve our insurance," said Local 572 Vice President Jason Barnwell, who works at Graphic Packaging's Macon, Ga., plant. "I hope we don't lose our defined benefit pension plan. There's a lot of language pertaining to seniority that we hope to modify to give more power to the local. We have to get stronger language in there to insure that."

The paper conference theme, "Stronger Together!" reflected the progress that paperworkers have made by working together in pursuit of the same bargaining goals.

Since the last paper conference paperworkers, with the assistance of our international union, negotiated new master agreements at Domtar, Boise, and Wausau and even at NewPage, which was in bankruptcy. They also negotiated new master agreements for the mills and converters at International Paper and Georgia-Pacific.

"Coordinated bargaining is a whole lot better," said Local 572 Vice President Alexander Perkins. "When the mills bargained separately you could see the difference. Now, you know everyone is on the same page."

"The company doesn't try and surprise us. They know we're communicating at these conferences. It's pretty much fair bargaining now because we're not blindsided by company objectives. We are now working together," Perkins said.

Many delegates were moved by hearing Local 274 President Lyle Fleck and two of his members tell what happened last Memorial Day when there was an explosion and fire at their Verso Paper mill in Sartell, Minn. The explosion killed Local 274 member Jon Maus, 50, and injured four others. The dele-

gates collected over \$2,700 to help the Maus family.

Since the conference, the mill announced it will not reopen, causing a loss of nearly 260 jobs. This is why health and safety matters; if your facility has a massive fire and explosion there is no guarantee you will have a job to go back to.

Local 572 President Oscar Goings said the slide presentation about where the Verso explosion happened felt eerie to him because his facility's air compressor units are also at the back of the warehouse. When he returned to his Graphic Packaging plant in Macon, Ga., he said he talked with the safety supervisor about the Sartell explosion and if it could happen at their facility. He said he also shared what he learned about hazard mapping.

The safety presentations also made an impact on Local 10-1303 treasurer Mitchell Michael, who works at the P.H. Glatfelter plant in Spring Grove, Pa. He said he liked the safety seminar offered during the conference and the presentation by the Sartell local.

"I was impressed by the local unions that got up and spoke. I could relate to that. I loved his (USW staffer Steve Sallman) enthusiasm and I liked how he spoke and stressed the safety aspect."

Michael said his local will talk with Glatfelter about having a safety seminar.

Conference delegates also attended a workshop on legal strategies and heard presentations on industry trends, the economy, politics and public policies affecting the paper industry. They also heard international labor leaders talk about the status of paper workers in their countries. For many delegates, the conference was a chance to meet workers across the sector and establish contact with them.

"I got a lot out of the paper conference," Barnwell said. "We took a lot of good notes, got good information, exchanged numbers and passed out cards to keep in touch with one another."

Connect with USW Paper Sector

Email: papersafety@usw.org, uswpaper@usw.org

Website: www.usw.org/paperworkers

Flickr: www.flickr.com/photos/unitedsteelworkers

YouTube: www.youtube.com/steelworkers