It’s long past time for a new approach to trade. Our current policies are failing. We need a new approach that restores manufacturing as the engine of America’s economic growth and prosperity.

International President Leo W. Gerard, Feb. 3, 2016

STEEL BARGAINING
USW members at U.S. Steel ratified a new three-year contract while talks continued for new agreements at ArcelorMittal and Allegheny Technologies, Inc.

DOMTAR PAPER
USW members ratified a four-year umbrella agreement with Domtar Paper that retains the current health care plan, improves retirement benefits and provides wage increases.

ALUMINUM CRISIS
The aluminum industry is shedding jobs and production capacity in the United States and other western countries as it copes with a wave of low-cost imports.

B&H PHOTO
Warehouse workers at New York retailer B&H Photo voted overwhelmingly to join the USW. First contract talks are underway.
USW Kept Fighting

I started working at the coke plant in Follansbee, W.Va., in June 2002. Our union was Local 1190 out of Steubenville, Ohio.

The effect that RG Steel’s 2012 bankruptcy had on the workers and families in the region was tremendous. I lost my house, and it was very difficult for any of us to find work.

Many of RG Steel’s workers were forced to file bankruptcy as well. We had vacation pay and severance pay coming to us, but we were told that we wouldn’t receive anything due to the bankruptcy.

Since the bankruptcy, it has been a struggle not only for me but for thousands of other employees. It was a very sad time, but I am glad that the USW kept fighting for what was right.

I truly commend the USW for continuing to fight for us through such a terrible situation. I’m a proud member of the USW and always will be.

Brian Anderson, Martins Ferry, Ohio

Right to Work Stinks

State legislators in Ohio and West Virginia are reviving efforts to pass “right-to-work” laws to weaken unions and hinder the ability of workers to organize and bargain collectively by allowing non-members to enjoy the benefits of union contracts without paying their fair share.

In Ohio, the deceptively named “Workplace Freedom Act” threatens to drive membership down by virtually guaranteeing the right to freeload. Workers and communities throughout the Ohio Valley are already struggling, and these anti-union initiatives will do nothing to repair our damaged economy.

Our elected representatives need to focus on fixing the problems of widespread unemployment and poverty instead of seeking out new and creative ways to lower our standard of living.

Frank Papini, President SOAR Chapter 23-9 St. Clairsville, Ohio

Change of Heart

I live in Alabama and have always leaned toward “right to work” over unionized labor, but a recent event has me thinking how good it is to have unions to stand up for workers.

I’m conservative and a Republican but tune in to NPR when I can, and was recently listening to Tom Ashbrook’s On Point program. The topic was the Allegheny Technologies Inc. lockout. Something is seriously wrong with that, a true case of corporate greed. The workers and the USW have my utmost respect and will be in my prayers that y’all can be triumphant.

God bless the USW for standing up for the little guy.

William Christian
Maplesville, Ala.

GM Imports Cars from China

General Motors has announced it intends to import from China some 30,000 to 40,000 Buick Envisions, a small SUV, to fill a gap in their product line.

I have written to the GM CEO and board of directors to let them know how I feel about it. At a time when our steel mills are suffering because countries like China are dumping into this country, I don’t believe we need to import more of their steel.

I am a proud union member, a retired Steelworker and a member of SOAR.

David Blouir, Local 1014 retired Valparaiso, Ind.

Made in America

The paper mill I currently work in has been a staple in the community for over 150 years and faces daily challenges when we can’t compete with imports that are being sold below the cost of production.

We should all be aware that we need to think about what we are buying and where it is being manufactured when purchasing envelopes, copy paper and books, to name a few of the items produced at our mill.

Keep it made in America. We can’t afford any more bad trade deals such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP).


Long Overdue Beryllium Rules

I’m writing about an article that appeared last fall – “OSHA Moves Forward with New Beryllium Rules.”

May I say, it’s long overdue. I was first diagnosed with beryllium disease in 2001. By Nov. 2, 2002, I had to retire. I was lucky enough to have worked at the Piketon, Ohio, atomic plant for 28 years.

According to several of our local representatives, I may be the first person to be diagnosed at the plant. For many years, this didn’t make me feel very comfortable.

I never have been able to understand why a sub-contractor of the federal government was able to get away with something like this. Slow is better than never, I guess.

Donna Christman, retired Waverly, Ohio
USW members on Feb. 1 ratified a new three-year agreement with U.S. Steel that covers 18,000 workers at more than a dozen facilities across the United States.

Contract talks for another 13,000 USW members at ArcelorMittal were ongoing as USW@Work went to press in early February.

The USW and U.S. Steel reached a tentative agreement in December after six months of often difficult negotiations held during an extremely challenging environment for the domestic industry.

“This year has been a difficult one for the steel industry, for USW members and for manufacturing towns all across the country,” International President Leo W. Gerard said in announcing the ratification.

U.S. Steel and its competitors idled plants, furloughed workers and posted huge losses in confronting a host of unfavorable conditions including unfairly low-priced and subsidized imports from China and other countries, global overcapacity, and falling U.S. demand exacerbated by a decline in oil and gas drilling.

While resisting demands for major cuts in pay and benefits, the USW is fighting wherever possible to level the playing field for American workers forced to compete against countries that cheat on trade laws and manipulate currencies.

“The key to weathering this crisis is to work together to find solutions to our common problem, namely the severe imbalance and unfairness in our trade system,” Gerard said.

“We’re not just bargaining. We’re initiating trade cases and aggressively pursuing legislative changes. We take every chance we get to challenge an unworkable trade system.
and the countries that are stealing our markets.”

**Opening demands**

U.S. Steel’s opening proposal contained demands for major cuts in pay and benefits, along with changes to work rules and other concessions that could have cost workers and their families thousands of dollars per year.

After agreeing to an extension, the two sides continued to exchange proposals well past the previous contract’s Sept. 1 expiration date.

U.S. Steel initially insisted on forcing workers to pay significant health care premiums while providing less coverage to new hires. The company also sought to put retirees on private exchange programs, to eliminate protections on scheduling and overtime, to decrease vacation pay, to control the USW’s safety and health professionals, to eliminate protections against contracting out, and to separate pipe and tube operations from the rest of the agreement. The list of demands went on and on.

Ultimately, it was the solidarity and strength of the entire union, acting as one, that made the difference and allowed the USW bargaining team to achieve a majority of its goals.

“Our members were determined throughout this process not to be made scapegoats for the problems of unfair trade and global overcapacity,” said International Vice President Tom Conway, who chairs the union’s U.S. Steel bargaining committee.

As bargaining continued, USW members held a series of solidarity events in steel towns across the United States.

On Sept. 1, thousands of USW members and supporters took to the streets of Pittsburgh, Chicago and Burns Harbor, Ind., to demand fair treatment for steelworkers at U.S. Steel, ArcelorMittal and Allegheny Technologies Inc. (ATI).

The USW’s contract with ArcelorMittal also expired Sept. 1, and the two sides agreed to keep working under the terms of the existing agreement while bargaining continues. The union’s contract with ATI expired on June 30, and the company locked out 2,200 members at 12 plants on Aug. 15.

**Fairness and justice**

“This is about fairness and justice, but it’s about more than that,” said District 1 Director David McCall, who chairs the ArcelorMittal bargaining committee. “It’s about our children and our grandchildren.”

ArcelorMittal came to the bargaining table over the summer with demands for concessions similar to those of U.S. Steel. The two sides continued to exchange proposals, but at press time the company was still refusing to move off of some of its most onerous proposals.

On Jan. 27, about 100 USW members, retirees and supporters rallied at rush hour outside ArcelorMittal’s corporate offices in downtown Chicago and delivered a loud, clear and unified message directly to CEO Lakshmi Mittal, “We deserve a fair contract now!”

A delegation of USW members who were invited inside by Mittal and ArcelorMittal Americas CEO Lou Schorsch told the executives that tens of thousands of active and retired Steelworkers stand in solidarity against company demands to take away well-earned rights and benefits.

“The company’s demands would immediately lower the standard of living for our members and retirees,” McCall said. “Further, these proposals are clearly designed to undermine our ability to defend our benefits in future negotiations.”

Earlier in January, the ArcelorMittal bargaining committee returned to the table hopeful that the U.S. Steel agreement would push the company closer to compromise. Unfortunately, that was not the case.

Instead, ArcelorMittal continued to insist on drastic changes to the designs of the USW’s active and retiree benefits plans and on tripling our retirees’ health-care premiums.

“We know that our industry is facing difficult times, but attacking hard-working union members will do nothing to solve our shared problems,” McCall said.
The USW and Allegheny Technologies Inc. (ATI) resumed talks in January at the union’s headquarters after the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) announced intentions to prosecute the steelmaker for illegally locking out 2,200 workers in six states.

On Jan. 26, a few weeks into the renewed discussions, International Vice President Tom Conway called on ATI to end the lockout after the specialty steelmaker reported a larger than expected fourth-quarter loss of $226.9 million.

“It’s immoral and a disgrace that ATI continues to keep 2,200 workers illegally locked out of their jobs while behaving as if this is business as usual,” Conway, the union’s chief negotiator, said.

“ATI’s weak fourth quarter follows an equally bleak third-quarter report. This should come as no surprise to anyone who has been paying attention. The key to any company’s success is a skilled, experienced work force,” Conway noted.

“For the past six months, ATI has turned its back on these dedicated employees and their families. Sadly, the company seems intent on doubling down on its failed strategy of intimidation and manipulation.”

**NLRB plans complaints**

The regional NLRB office in Pittsburgh informed the USW on Dec. 18 that, pending a negotiated settlement, it would issue a complaint against ATI alleging the lockout has been illegal since its Aug. 15 inception.

The USW was later informed by the NLRB that its Region 19 director in Seattle intends to issue another complaint that would charge ATI, again absent a settlement, with unlawful labor practices during an organizing drive at the company’s cast products plant in Albany, Ore.

After imposing the lockout, the company brought in hundreds of scabs that management had arranged to hire before negotiations even began.

“In all my years as a negotiator, I have never seen a company engage in such obvious bad-faith bargaining,” Conway said then. “We are delighted that the regional director agreed with us on every major point that we made.”

Coming shortly before Christmas, the NLRB announcement raised the possibility that ATI would be liable for back pay and lifted the spirits of USW members protesting the company’s unfair labor practices.

“I love it,” Brad Stivers, a member of Local 1196 in Brackenridge, Pa., said after hearing the news at a plant-gate rally. “They’re (probably) going to appeal, but it means a lot. Hopefully, it will get... them back to the table and we can go back to what we do best.”

**Tough, frank discussions**

The NLRB’s actions prompted tough and frank discussions.

With two federal mediators in attendance, union and company representatives spent hours during their first closed-door session reviewing each other’s positions and discussing the NLRB actions and other events. More meetings were scheduled to determine if a path toward settlement could be found.

“ATI needs to cease its bad-faith bargaining and return to negotiating a new contract with the union that is fair to its workers and all of its stakeholders,” International President Leo W. Gerard said.

If there is no settlement and the NLRB issues a formal complaint, a trial date would be set for the case to be heard before an administrative law judge. Typically, though, the agency first seeks a voluntary settlement.
Federal labor law requires union-represented employers to negotiate in good faith. They must demonstrate a sincere desire to reach an agreement, and not just go through the motions with no intent to settle.

The lockout at plants in Connecticut, Massachusetts, New York, Ohio, Oregon and Pennsylvania were the result of a long campaign by management to take advantage of a downturn in the market to force draconian and unnecessary concessions onto its workforce.

**Classic union busting**

Before negotiations began, ATI engaged classic union and strike-breaking companies, including Strom Engineering to plan the lockout and supply replacement labor, and the Phillips Group for security and guard services. Union members were forced to sit through captive-audience meetings aimed at intimidating them into accepting concessions.

While ATI complained of high labor costs, CEO Richard Harshman thought it was appropriate to increase his own pay in 2014 by 70 percent.

With the lockout in place, ATI proposed sweeping and draconian changes to fundamental contract provisions that have over the years worked for both parties. Demands included dramatic changes to health care plans for the active workforce, retirees and future employees.

ATI sought cutbacks in pension agreements for current and former workers, and changes in the way production incentives are calculated and the way overtime is calculated and paid. Other proposed changes in contract language would give management the ability to load its plants with outside contractors.

Robert S. Wetherbee, president of ATI’s Flat-Rolled Products division, told *The New York Times* that management needed to drive a hard bargain because of market shifts including lower prices and inroads by Chinese competitors. They sought a two-tier contract and other concessions knowing many workers were approaching normal retirement age.

“We’re faced with a once-in-a-generation opportunity to bend the cost curve on a major part of our costs,” Wetherbee told the newspaper.

**Domestic industry under attack**

The USW understands what the steel industry is facing. Steelmakers around the country are under attack from illegal and unfairly traded imports from China and elsewhere. Global overcapacity has sent prices spiraling downward.

“These trends call for immediate and long-term direct action from Washington to save jobs and preserve a vital industry,” Conway said. “However, locking out workers and forcing them to accept deep, permanent and unnecessary cuts in wages and benefits will do absolutely nothing to solve this crisis.”

Throughout the bargaining with ATI beginning last spring, the USW put forth proposals that would save the company millions of dollars over the term of the contract. The union repeatedly offered to stay on the job while negotiations continued, but ATI insisted on implementing its failed, unnecessary and illegal lockout.

“The company is throwing money away on inexperienced replacement workers rather than relying on its own experienced and dedicated employees who have proven track records of efficiently running these plants,” Conway said. “That approach, as well as potential liabilities for this illegal lockout, could end up costing ATI and
Several days before Christmas, laid-off Steelworker Dan Hill delivered an emotional plea to White House Chief of Staff Denis McDonough seeking help for the slumping taconite iron ore industry in Minnesota.

One of 400 workers who were laid off last August by United Taconite because of low demand for its iron ore pellets, Hill called for fast action from politicians in Washington, D.C., to save America’s troubled steel industry and the mining industry that supplies it.

Speaking directly to McDonough in a private meeting attended by CEOs and national and local politicians, the millwright and Local 6860 member said he wants the industry to survive not just for himself, but for his 7-year-old son Riley, who told his pre-school graduation class that he wants to be a miner like his dad.

When it was his turn to speak, Hill got right to the point, asking McDonough if he could ensure “that my kid, our kids, have a future up here, that we’re not the last mining generation.”

“Mr. Chief of Staff, can you make that happen?” Hill recalled asking McDonough. After that remark, the meeting, called by Minnesota Gov. Mark Dayton, erupted with applause.

Hill made such an impression at the two-hour meeting that he and his wife, Heather, a nurse and USW member, were invited by U.S. Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D-Minn.) to attend President Barack Obama’s State of the Union address in Washington, D.C.

“This was a moving meeting in so many ways, to hear from the workers and what they are going through,” Klobuchar said after the closed-door session also attended by U.S. Sen. Al Franken, among others.

Klobuchar later said she hoped Hill’s presence at the State of the Union would strengthen his call to action. Hill, Klobuchar said, helped to make sure that the White House understands the dire situation Steelworkers are facing.

“On a level playing field, Minnesota’s Steelworkers can compete with anybody in the world,” she said. “But illegal trade practices have thwarted our domestic industry and left many workers on the Range without a job to support their families.”

Iron ore layoffs

More than 2,000 iron ore miners have been laid off during the current crisis as the industry suffers from a glut of foreign-made steel, a strong dollar and low fuel prices that have reduced demand for pipe and other steel materials used in oil and gas exploration.

“The economy up here is dead right now,” Hill said of the Iron Range. One of his laid-off neighbors had to take a low-paying retail job with no benefits, while another, a plumber, lets his truck sit at home for lack of work.

District 11 Director Emil Ramirez accompanied Hill and other USW members from the Iron Range to the leadership summit called by the governor.

Ramirez said the USW and American steel producers have had some modest success in pressing for duties on dumped and subsidized steel imports from China, but he warned that there is a tsunami of steel products from many other steel-producing countries that continue to threaten steel sector jobs in the United States.

The director called for “swift, concerted government action.”

“We appreciate Gov. Dayton’s assembling of concerned political leaders and policy makers from Minnesota’s congressional delegation and state legislatures, but we need immediate relief for our iron ore mining families who have been on layoff since this past spring,” he said.

International Vice President Tom Conway, who led the most recent round of contract negotiations with U.S. Steel, called for a major overhaul of U.S. trade policy and enforcement. Citing global overcapacity in steel, Conway said the trading system has been abused by foreign companies and their governments.

“For decades, American workers have paid the price of failed trade policies and inconsistent enforcement of flawed trade agreements,” Conway said.

“Congress and the administration need to take responsibility for changing the system that has cost more than a million manufacturing jobs and shuttered thousands of factories, mainly in industries that employ USW members.”
A new contract ratified by Local 7477 members at True Temper Sports in Amory, Miss., a maker of steel tubing used in golf shafts and other products, does more than improve pay and benefits.

The agreement covering some 200 USW-represented workers in Amory requires True Temper to close a plant in China and bring that work to Mississippi. The provision related to China is anticipated to create some 50 new permanent jobs in the coming months in Amory and up to 100 jobs over the term of the contract, which runs through July 2020.

District 9 Director Daniel Flippo said the agreement, ratified in December, is a clear victory for USW members in Amory, their families and the community.

“In the age of globalization with so many industries suffering the consequences of unfair and often illegal foreign trade, we cannot overstate the importance of our ability to reclaim this work and these jobs,” Flippo said.

The previous contract ran until July 2016, but the union and True Temper Sports agreed to early negotiations after management said it had too much capacity at its two steel facilities due to a downturn in demand.

“In a time of uncertainty, the USW and True Temper Sports together have made the future more secure for the workers in Amory,” Flippo said.

### China plant to close

In 2007, True Temper Sports acquired CN Precision, a steel golf shaft manufacturing company in Suzhou, China, that was founded in 2005. At the time, the company said the Chinese facility would expand its global manufacturing footprint closer to the then growing Asian golf market. The plant is expected to close later this year.

The union agreed in negotiations to a lower wage tier for new employees who will be hired to do the work coming from China to the United States. Flippo said the union will work to eventually raise new hire wages through quarterly labor-management meetings called for in the new contract.

Local 7477 President Dennis Fears said solidarity among the members in Amory was key to reaching the agreement, which includes a $1,250 signing bonus plus hourly wage increases.

“I’m proud of our union and what we have accomplished through the years, especially in these negotiations,” Fears said. “With the company’s commitment to our plant, we expect future generations of Steelworkers to continue this proud tradition.”

True Temper Sports is a sports equipment manufacturer based in Memphis, Tenn. It specializes in OEM and consumer golf club shafts, and also manufactures parts for bicycle frame builders, ice hockey sticks, lacrosse sticks, baseball bats and other products.

Steel shafts produced in the United States are made in Amory at a manufacturing facility first opened in 1965. Customers include major club manufacturers including Adams, Bridgestone, Callaway, Cleveland, Cobra, Mizuno, Nike, Ping, TaylorMade, Titleist and Wilson.
Water transmission and fire protection have been part of organized society since ancient times. Today, USW members at Local 13-243 play a vital role in advancing that basic human endeavor, producing fire hydrants and valves for water delivery at a factory in Beaumont, Texas.

Workers at the American Valve & Hydrant (AVH) plant manufacture a variety of hydrants for both municipal and industrial fire protection. In addition, they produce valves that range in size from 4 inches to 66 inches in diameter, along with other water and wastewater accessories.

AVH products are sent to vendors that ship them to municipalities and industrial customers across the United States, as well as to countries in South America, Asia and elsewhere.

Tyson Hidalgo, chairman of the Workman’s Committee for the Local 13-243 unit at AVH, works as an assembler specialist. He will mark his 10th year at the plant in July.

Cooperative environment

Hidalgo said the presence of the USW at the factory has helped make AVH a place where workers can build rewarding careers and earn the kind of wages and benefits that allow them to raise families and retire with dignity.

“It is a great place to work,” Hidalgo said. “A lot of our employees have been here for 30-plus years. They have the opportunity to make good money and have a good deal of financial security and good benefits.”

In addition, he said, the union has built a collaborative relationship with AVH management, which has allowed the factory to operate more efficiently, and provide USW members with a higher quality of life.

“We are successful with a limited amount of manpower. With the union in the facility, it allows management to concentrate more on the business side of things because we have the union there to concentrate more on the human side,” Hidalgo said. “We work with management to help come up with solutions. They decide what we need to do, and we help them figure out the best way to do it.”
The local union’s contract with AVH covers about 180 workers and expires in mid-April. Hidalgo said he expects negotiations to go smoothly.

The USW chapter at AVH is part of a larger amalgamated local union that includes USW members at ExxonMobil, Chemtrade, Equistar, Sampson Steel and elsewhere.

**Long history**

AVH, in Beaumont, about 80 miles northeast of Houston, was founded in 1902 and operates as a subsidiary of American Cast Iron Pipe Co., based in Birmingham, Ala.

AVH’s predecessor, Darling Valve, was originally located in Williamsport, Pa. In 1969, American purchased the Darling company. Despite the changes in name, ownership and location, the “Darling” moniker still adorns hydrants the company produces.

Retired District 13 Director J.M. “Mickey” Breaux serviced the local at American Valve and Hydrant during his years as a staff representative. Breaux said the company and union have a cooperative relationship that goes back decades. He pointed to the company’s longtime profit-sharing plan, in which top executives and rank-and-file workers receive the same percentage.

Breaux also recounted the story of a former union worker at the plant, Dalton Babineaux, who returned to school and eventually rose through the ranks to become company president.

The workers at AVH also play an active role in the Beaumont community, said company President Tim Sudela. USW members are active in the United Way, March of Dimes and Habitat for Humanity, among other local educational and charitable organizations.

“AVH stresses a ‘Golden Rule’
philosophy,” Sudela said, making health and safety a priority for workers both on and off the job.

**Varying shapes, colors**

In addition to the ever-present fire hydrants USW members produce in Beaumont, workers also make valves for municipal water mains and other uses, some of which are more than 13 feet high and weigh 37,000 pounds.

The manufacturing process includes machining, assembling, painting, testing and packaging. The company operated its own foundry until 1993, but now purchases castings from outside suppliers.

AVH fire hydrants come in varying widths, lengths and colors depending on where and how they will be used. Cities often have long-standing color schemes for their hydrants, and AVH workers do their best to meet those customized requests.

Houston, for example, still asks for hydrants that match the colors of the city’s long-departed football team, the Oilers, even though the city now has another NFL team with a different color scheme.

“Hydrants are so specific to regions,” Hidalgo said.

USW members perform different tasks to assemble and put the finishing touches on each AVH hydrant, depending on the style and size of the product. Some are more labor intensive than others, but all go through a rigorous testing and quality-control process before they are shipped out, with workers overseeing each step.

“No body wants to buy an ugly product,” Hidalgo said. “We don’t just make the hydrants. We make sure everything is cosmetically and aesthetically pleasing.”
“This demonstrates how labor and management can work together to retain jobs with good wages, benefits and working conditions.”

International Vice President Jon Geenen
USW members ratified a new four-year umbrella agreement with Domtar Paper that retains the current health care plan, improves retirement benefits and provides 3,000 workers at nine locations with wage increases that exceed industry averages.

The new contract, approved in December, will automatically provide updated wages, benefits and other negotiated economic and security issues to each Domtar location as individual local agreements expire.

The agreement covers USW-represented employees in Ashdown, Ark.; Hawesville, Ky.; Johnsonburg, Pa.; Kingsport, Tenn.; Nekoosa, Wis.; Owensboro, Ky.; Plymouth, N.C.; Port Huron, Mich., and Rothschild, Wis.

Up until 2008, Domtar locals bargained site by site even though most companies approached bargaining with their own national strategies. This is the third time the union has successfully settled economic and security issues with Domtar at a national table.

“Everyone can have a voice when all of the local unions bargain together at the same time, as we again did here,” said International Vice President Jon Geenen, who oversees the union’s paper sector bargaining. “This demonstrates how labor and management can work together to retain jobs with good wages, benefits and working conditions.”

As their respective expiration dates approach, each local will negotiate four-year renewal agreements covering important issues not included in the master umbrella agreement. The local agreements will bring contract language up to date and resolve issues and work practices important to each location.

**Wage increases**

Wage increases in the umbrella agreement will take effect as the local agreements are renewed. Increases include 2.5 percent in the first year, 2.25 percent in both the second and third years, and 2 percent in the final year.

Overall, bargaining was difficult. At times, the USW’s committee did not think an agreement was in reach, but perseverance led to a settlement that recognizes the hard work and contributions of USW members.

“The activism and participation of our local unions made a positive difference in the negotiations,” said Leann Foster, assistant to International President Leo W. Gerard and chair of the Domtar Council. “This is one of our most active and engaged bargaining councils in the USW paper sector. Solidarity does matter.”

During a time of unprecedented change around health care, the union’s bargaining committee was able to maintain the current health insurance plan with no changes through the life of the local renewal agreements, in some cases as far out as 2023.

The bargaining committee also negotiated improvements in Domtar’s pension programs. In addition, the agreement extended bereavement time in certain circumstances to five days from the current three days, in line with company policy for salaried employees.

Safety in the paper industry is a preeminent issue as the USW seeks to end life-altering and life-ending accidents that tragically occur more often in this sector than in others.

The agreement continues an annual safety conference and establishes a safety working committee with union and management representatives from each facility, plus leadership from Domtar and the international union.

**Safety training**

It also provides for labor-management safety committee training at each mill with the curriculum to be jointly developed. For its part, the union will rely on the USW Tony Mazzocchi Center for Health, Safety and Environmental Education.

One of the most difficult issues was management’s insistence on eliminating premium pay practices across Domtar. The bargaining committee, however, was able to push system-wide changes off the table. In the end, changes were made to certain Sunday premium and pyramiding practices at particular mills in return for cash settlements and lump-sum 401(k) contributions.

The new contract gives preferential hiring consideration to laid-off or former members affected by machine or mill shutdowns for hiring at other USW-represented Domtar locations. Seniority will travel with those members for benefit purposes such as pension and vacation allotment.

For locations that did not have the right for local union leaders to welcome new hires and explain to them the benefits of the USW and its role in the workplace, the agreement provides two hours of paid time for such discussions.

The USW also achieved groundbreaking improvements related to organizing employees at non-union company facilities. Domtar agreed to permit organizers on company property and promised not to retain union-busting organizations to spread disinformation.

The agreement also allows for pilot programs to attract new qualified employees to replace senior members who may retire over the next decade, and to consider strategies for partial retirement so experienced workers can help to develop skills in younger employees.
Thousands of USW members know firsthand that the domestic steel industry is in the midst of a major crisis as it attempts to deal with waves of low-cost imports from China and other countries.

That wrenching story is being repeated in aluminum, another important USW industry. Aluminum smelters are closing in the United States and in other western countries as the result of global production overcapacity, unfair trade and low prices.

China, which now produces half of the world’s aluminum is largely to blame. Its overproduction, illegal subsidies and dumping of aluminum below fair value in the U.S. market are behind the collapse.

“America shouldn’t let this happen,” said International President Leo W. Gerard. “We are putting our future in jeopardy by making our national defense increasingly reliant on foreign producers.”

China continues to operate 120 aluminum facilities as America’s capacity to make primary aluminum shrinks to a few locations. Russia has 14 facilities. Even Saudi Arabia has gotten into exports with a massive $10.8 billion joint venture with Alcoa that includes a bauxite mine, a refinery, a smelter and a rolling mill.

The United States is effectively “on the cusp of no longer producing its own primary aluminum,” a strategic material used in aircraft and other defense equipment, said International Vice President Tom Conway.

“Do we really think we should allow our nation’s Air Force and defense industries to potentially have to rely on foreign sources? Our country needs to stand up and fight back,” Conway added.

“What happens in the future if our Air Force, Navy or even the nation’s drone force needs aircraft-quality aluminum? I guess we can get that material from China, Russia or the Middle East.”

Trade taskforce

The USW has joined forces with Century Aluminum in the newly formed China Trade Taskforce, which is asking the U.S. Trade Representative to enforce trade laws and preserve the American industry.

“Many of our members would still be employed if our government proactively enforced international trade regulations and if our laws allowed sanctions on unfair trade before our industries and workers suffer terrible losses,” Gerard said.

Since the turn of the century, China has seized ever-increasing portions of the market while primary aluminum production and employment in the United States has plummeted.

In 2000, the U.S. industry operated 23 smelters that employed 17,200 workers and produced 3.66 million metric tonnes of primary aluminum. By the end of 2015, only eight smelters were operating in the United States, employing about 3,700 workers and producing 1.3 million metric tonnes.

All but two of those eight smelter operations – an Alcoa facility in Massena, N.Y., and a Century Aluminum operation in Sebree, Ky. – will run at reduced capacity or close this year.

The largest of the eight, Alcoa’s 269,000 metric-tonne Warrick smelter
in Evansville, Ind., is scheduled to permanently stop operations in the first quarter, eliminating some 600 jobs. A rolling mill and power plant will continue to operate.

By the end of the second quarter, Alcoa will reduce alumina production by one million metric tonnes, including 810,000 metric tonnes of capacity at Port Comfort, Texas.

In addition to aerospace and defense, aluminum is increasingly used in truck and car parts to lower vehicle weight and increase fuel mileage. "If Americans and our legislators stop to think for a moment about the role aluminum plays in our nation’s defenses, such as aerospace, the role it plays in carbon-reduction initiatives, the role it plays in research and development in our country, and the role it plays in employment opportunities in our communities, they will quickly conclude we are on a very bad path," Conway said.

**Alcoa splitting in two**

Counting previous curtailments announced in November, Alcoa told investors it is on track to curtail 25 percent of its smelting capacity and 20 percent of its refining capacity worldwide.

These moves come on the heels of Alcoa’s announcement in September that it will separate into two independent, publicly traded companies.

The shutdown of Warrick will leave Alcoa with one active smelter in the United States, it’s West plant in Massena, N.Y., which was saved from closure by $70 million in state aid.

Untouched by the cutbacks are smelters in Canada, Norway, Iceland and Saudi Arabia, which Alcoa described as being “cash positive.”

Noranda Aluminum Holding Corp. announced on Jan. 14 that it is idling production capacity at its New Madrid, Mo., smelter and curtailing production at a bauxite mine in Jamaica and an alumina refinery in Gramercy, La.

The list of closures in recent years involving USW members includes Ormet’s smelter in Hannibal, Ohio, and Alcoa’s Massena East plant in New York.

Sherwin Alumina Co., a unit of Glencore Plc., filed for bankruptcy court protection on Jan. 11. In 2014, the company locked out 450 USW members in Gregory, Texas.

Sherwin entered bankruptcy with a plan to sell its assets to another Glencore unit called Corpus Christi Aluminas, in exchange for debt forgiveness and cash.

**USW expresses concern**

The USW expressed concern that the proposed sale could be used to sidestep employee, retiree and pension obligations. If this is Glencore’s intention, the union said, it would be a gross misuse of the bankruptcy process.

“We are well aware that the current crisis in the commodities industry has made this a difficult time for the aluminum industry,” the union said in a statement.

“Still, we are disappointed that Sherwin has taken this course of action, given that the USW has been trying for more than a year to take a cooperative approach in working through these issues with the company.”

The USW is reviewing the company’s court filings and expects to be an active participant in all aspects of the Sherwin bankruptcy.

Last summer, Century Aluminum said it would never reopen its closed plant in Ravenswood, W.Va., which employed 650 when it was idled in 2009. Century also reported it would idle its Hawesville, Ky., aluminum plant, costing 565 workers their jobs.
What was planned as a community rally to save Alcoa’s Massena West plant in New York turned into a celebration when the company announced an agreement to continue operating the aluminum facility for at least three and one half years.

In November, Alcoa announced that it would close the factory, resulting in massive layoffs and dealing a potentially devastating blow to the small community of Massena in upstate New York.

In the days following the news, members of Local 420 sprang into action, contacting lawmakers and members of other unions in the region and urging them to help save the factory, the oldest continuously operating smelter in the United States.

“The members of Local 420 never lost sight of what was possible and never stopped fighting until they achieved it,” said International President Leo W. Gerard. “They know what it means to be Steelworkers.”

Through an agreement brokered by New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo, Sen. Charles Schumer, Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, state Sen. Joseph Griffin and others, New York State will provide Alcoa with nearly $70 million in savings on power costs and cash for capital and operating expenses. In exchange, Alcoa said it would continue to operate the plant and guarantee 600 jobs for at least 42 months.

“This is exactly the kind of cooperation between the public sector and the private sector that workers in this country should expect,” District 4 Director John Shinn said.

“Factories like this one are a lifeline for our families and our communities. Unfortunately, not enough of our current leaders recognize that truth. They talk about jobs, and then they stand by and watch them disappear.”

An example of teamwork

The Massena West plant produces aluminum for use in the automotive, transportation, aerospace and industrial distribution markets. Alcoa, one of the largest employers in the region, said in company documents that the plant contributes $340 million each year to the local economy.

“We hope that this victory can provide an example for other communities facing similar crises: an example of teamwork, of persistence in the face of overwhelming odds, and of putting the needs of everyday Americans ahead of the needs of corporations and millionaire CEOs,” Gerard said.

Still, Local 420 members acknowledged that while the deal was good news, it was in fact just a three-year band aid, and that more long-term changes, including new trade rules and stricter enforcement of existing laws, are necessary to ensure long-term success not just for the Massena West plant but for the entire aluminum industry.

That means USW members in Massena and elsewhere must work hard to stop new “free trade” agreements, such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership, which would only provide more of the failed policies of the past, Gerard said.

“This agreement is not going to solve the crisis our industry is facing, but what it will do is give us time to address the problems behind it, without having to sacrifice our jobs in the process,” Local 420 President Robert A. Smith said.

“We know that we have more work to do, both here in Massena and in Washington, to make sure this lasts.”
The National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) filed a new complaint against ASARCO alleging the copper producer unlawfully implemented portions of its so-called “last, best and final” contract proposal on Dec. 1 when there was no bargaining impasse.

The complaint, filed on Jan. 7 by the NLRB’s Region 28 office in Phoenix, also accused ASARCO management of discrimination and other practices aimed at interfering with workers exercising rights that are guaranteed by federal labor laws.

It was the third consolidated NLRB complaint charging the company with unfair labor practices in dealing with the USW and seven other unions that together represent nearly 2,000 ASARCO employees in the United States.

Among the conditions ASARCO unilaterally changed were provisions affecting workers’ scheduled hours and overtime pay calculations as well as modifications to quarterly bonus payments based on the price of copper.

The two previous consolidated complaints cited ASARCO for unfair labor practices that include “failing and refusing” to negotiate with the unions representing workers at the Grupo Mexico subsidiary’s five U.S. facilities.

Negotiations began in 2013

Union members have been fighting ASARCO for a fair contract since negotiations began in 2013. Their unity and solidarity have been essential in the fight to win a fair contract with an employer that appears willing to break the law in order to avoid bargaining in good faith.

On Dec. 1, the same day ASARCO illegally implemented its contract proposals, USW members joined members of the other unions for a rally outside the company’s headquarters in Tucson, Ariz. It was the second headquarters rally held by workers last year. The first was on June 1.

“It’s uncalled for,” USW representative Manny Armenta told local reporters at the rally. “We are the ones who make the profit for this company, and this company would rather spend its money on attorneys’ fees than on its own employees.”

More than a year ago, the unions won a multimillion-dollar arbitration award for hundreds of employees that the company refused to pay negotiated bonuses based on the price of copper. The unions and ASARCO are scheduled to face off in federal court in February, as the company refuses to follow the arbitrator’s order.

Working conditions changed

Hourly production and maintenance employees represented by the eight unions have continued to work at ASARCO’s copper mines and processing facilities under the terms and conditions of a labor agreement that originally expired in June 2013 but was extended until the parties terminated it in June 2015.

Since then, as the NLRB spelled out in its complaints, ASARCO management unilaterally changed working conditions at the facilities on multiple occasions without first negotiating over the changes with union representatives as required by law. In some cases, the NLRB noted, ASARCO management did not even notify the unions before changing the terms and conditions of employment.

The NLRB has scheduled a hearing on March 15, when an administrative law judge will review evidence against ASARCO and listen to testimony in the case.

Grupo Mexico, ASARCO’s parent company, is the same employer that is working against the USW’s partner, the National Miners’ and Metalworkers’ Union of Mexico, also known as Los Mineros.

The mining company is also behind one of Mexico’s worst environmental disasters. On Aug. 6, 2014, a Grupo Mexico subsidiary spilled a large amount of copper sulphate acid into public waterways near Cananea, in the northern Mexican state of Sonora. The toxic leak contained high concentrations of heavy metals and continues to affect communities that are home to more than 24,000 people.
Warehouse workers who complained of unsafe working conditions, discrimination and wage theft at giant New York City retailer B&H Photo voted overwhelmingly to join the United Steelworkers.

District 4 Director John Shinn welcomed the B&H warehouse workers to the USW and said the union was looking forward to addressing their concerns at the bargaining table.

“It was obvious that employees at B&H needed collective bargaining representation in order to address dangerous working conditions and discrimination in the workplace,” Shinn said.

Workers at B&H warehouses in Brooklyn’s Bushwick neighborhood and in the Brooklyn Navy Yard voted 200 to 88 on Nov. 5 for USW representation. An organizing effort is also underway at another company warehouse.

The election was certified by the National Labor Relations Board. Bargaining for a first contract was underway as USW@Work went to press.

The company ran an aggressive anti-union campaign prior to the vote but the workers were not deterred.

“We decided to change the conditions in our workplace. We demand respect and to be treated as human beings,” said Raul Pedraza, a B&H warehouse worker for more than six years.

Mostly Latino immigrants

B&H operates one of the world’s largest camera and video stores, located in New York a block from Madison Square Garden. Widely known as a Hasidic-owned and operated retailer, its warehouse workers are mostly Latino immigrants from Mexico, Guatemala and Honduras.

Popular with photographers and tourists, the store daily attracts thousands of shoppers and onlookers. B&H also sells photo, video and electronic equipment online and through a large catalog.

During the election campaign, the predominantly Latino laborers complained of discrimination and of being forced to work long and unpredictable hours in dirty, unsafe environments without rest or meal breaks and proper training.

Critical to the success of the campaign was the participation of the Laundry Workers Center United, a community-based advocacy organization in the New York City area.

The Laundry Workers Center is a grassroots organization that trains workers to take action to improve their jobs and communities. Organizers held workshops on workers’ legal rights and explained to them that they have more strength together than alone.

Rosanna Aran, co-director of the Laundry Workers Center, called the election victory a “huge step for the workers movement, and for the Laundry Workers Center as it continues to develop worker power and leadership in New York City and beyond.”

The election campaign was officially announced on Oct. 11 during a rally attended by about 300 people on the sidewalk outside the company’s Manhattan store.

“We decided to change the conditions in our workplace. We demand respect and to be treated as human beings.”

Complaints of discrimination

USW representatives delivered a letter addressed to B&H owner Herman Schreiber and Sam Goldstein, chief executive officer and president, asking that they acknowledge the union as the sole and exclusive bargaining representative for the workers.

Another letter asked the company to act on complaints that employees had been subject to discrimination because they are Hispanic and had been pressured by managers to sign English-language forms releasing the company from medical claims.

In addition, the letter charged employees had been forced to work long hours in hot and dirty warehouses where emergency exits were blocked and noxious dust appeared to cause rashes and nose bleeds.

“My nose bleeds two or three times a day sometimes,” Silverio Cano, a warehouse worker, told local media during the campaign. “I went to the doctor, and she told me that the nosebleeds were caused by the dust in the warehouse.”

Employees also complained of carrying extremely heavy loads without sufficient help or safety training in warehouses where merchandise can be stacked more than 15 feet high.

The week after the campaign announcement, the Laundry Workers Center issued a statement saying workers were pulled aside during work hours to meet with anti-union consultants demanding information about the union campaign and its leaders. Some said they were told to leave the premises when they refused to sign paperwork.

Workers recorded managers shouting at employees who would not comply with their orders, with one senior employee smashing the cell phone of a worker who was recording the incident. A management representative was heard saying, “There will not be a union, over my dead body.”

Community support

Workers who said they were ordered off the premises rallied outside the Navy Yards warehouse. When workers at the other warehouse heard of the retaliation, they demonstrated in solidarity.

B&H claimed no one was fired and all could return to work.

“They threatened us by saying that if we don’t stop organizing, we will get fired,” said Kevin Vega, a shipping department worker. “What reassured us was that we are united and that we have community support and cannot be defeated.”

Despite alleged unlawful anti-union activity by management during the campaign, workers maintained confidence that they would win the election by a wide margin.

Spirits were high on the morning of the vote, with some workers chanting in Spanish, “What do we want? Union! When do we want it? Now!”

Jorge Lora, a B&H warehouse worker who was active in the campaign, said after the vote that he and his co-workers were confident that they would win by a large margin.

“Today, we won because the workers voted with their conscience,” he said.
TALKS UNDERWAY
AT B&H PHOTO
Warehouse Workers
at Famed N.Y. Retailer
Join the Steelworkers
USW members have joined dozens of oil workers from around the world to form a global network to address concerns about working conditions at Royal Dutch Shell.

The USW and more than 60 union leaders from 21 countries with Shell facilities met for two days of meetings in Singapore sponsored by the IndustriALL Global Union.

“The Singapore meeting was an excellent kick-off for building union power at Shell operations worldwide,” said Kemal Özkan, assistant general secretary of IndustriALL. “It is already time for Shell workers to fight back against many challenges and the deterioration of employment conditions.”

Representing the USW at the meeting were Jeremy Walker, unit chair of Motiva at Local 13-423, a Shell joint venture, in Port Arthur, Texas; staff representative Richard Landry of Beaumont, Texas, and Health, Safety and Environment specialist Kim Nibarger, who has since been named to lead the National Oil Bargaining Program.

The meeting last September came just after Shell announced plans to cut 6,500 jobs because of declining oil prices. Pricing turmoil has caused a wave of job reductions throughout oil exploration and production.

One consistent issue the participants raised was Shell’s continued use of unrepresented workers, an issue that contributed to the USW’s selective strike against the U.S. oil industry in 2015. Other topics of concern included wages, health care costs, and retirement and other benefits.

The group agreed to work more closely on organizing campaigns, member education, collective bargaining strategies, gender equity, health and safety, and environmental issues.

Shell operates worldwide

Shell employs about 90,000 workers in 70 countries, including 3,800 USW members. In all, the USW represents 30,000 workers in the oil industry at 230 facilities, including 65 refineries and dozens of terminals, pipelines and petrochemical plants.

In February 2015, the USW launched an unfair labor practice strike against the industry after oil companies, led by Shell, walked away from the bargaining table. Before the strike, Shell made several woefully inadequate offers that the USW bargaining committee rejected.

“Oil companies are too concerned with profits to make positive changes in the workplace without the solidarity of the workers pushing them in the right direction,” International Vice President Tom Conway said. “By acting globally, we can improve conditions for all workers.”

The Federation of Trade Unions (FNV) of the Netherlands, where Shell is based, will act as the group’s coordinator, and the network’s steering committee will include union leaders from each continent.

The coalition adopted an action plan that includes maintaining regular communication through email and social media, as well as establishing an internal database of working conditions at Shell operations. In addition, the network will explore the possibility of fundraising to increase international solidarity and will seek to establish a dialogue with company management.
Kim Nibarger to Head
NATIONAL OIL BARGAINING

International President Leo W. Gerard appointed Kim Nibarger, a union safety specialist and former refinery unit operator, to head the USW’s 30,000-member National Oil Bargaining Program (NOBP).

Nibarger took over the job as chairman of the NOBP on Jan. 1 from International Vice President Gary Beevers, who retired in 2015 after running the program for nine years. Gerard made the appointment on Dec. 18.

Gerard cited Nibarger’s experience as both a safety expert and a local union president in the refinery industry and said he will bring “crucial leadership and experience to this vital position.”

Through the NOBP, the union negotiates industry pattern wage agreements that standardize wages and benefits at oil refineries and chemical plants around the United States where USW members work.

As a safety representative, Nibarger participated in national oil bargaining in 2009, 2012 and 2015. He developed the health and safety proposals that were presented to the industry in 2015 as part of national bargaining and ultimately ratified by the membership.

Over the years, Nibarger has represented the USW in testifying at House and Senate committee hearings on issues related to refinery safety. He has also testified before the U.S. Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board.

Shell operator

Nibarger worked in the industry for 17 years. He was a chief operator for Shell Oil Products at its Puget Sound refinery in Anacortes, Wash., prior to taking a leave of absence in 2004 to work as a safety program coordinator for the former PACE union, which merged into the USW in 2005.

“The oil industry is my home and where I came from,” he said. “I have a lot of feelings and concern for the industry and the workers who earn their livelihood in it.”

While at Anacortes, Nibarger served as both president and financial secretary of his local union and was a member and co-chair of the health and safety committee at the Anacortes refinery for eight years.

During that time, he was the union’s lead investigator on a team that probed the November 1998 explosion and fire that killed six refinery workers. He also was the USW’s lead investigator into the 2005 explosion and fire at BP’s Texas City refinery that killed 15 workers and injured over 180 others.

As coordinator of the union’s successful Triangle of Prevention (TOP) safety program, Nibarger analyzed the root causes of over 50 serious petrochemical accidents nationwide. In that role he trained over 250 union accident investigators.

Beevers retirement

Beevers served as an International Vice President in charge of the NOBP from 2006 until his retirement. He began his career in 1971 at Texaco, where he became active in the former Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers Union (OCAW), which merged with the United Paperworkers International Union to form PACE.

In 2012, Beevers led the way in mobilizing oil sector members across the country to build solidarity for bargaining a new agreement that included economic gains and made health and safety improvements a top priority.

In 2015, under Beevers tenure, the USW launched a series of selective strikes at key refineries and petrochemical facilities that led to a four-year national pattern agreement.

Beevers served on the executive board of the International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers’ Union (ICEM), a predecessor to the IndustriALL Global Union.
In Liberia, the USW and the nonprofit Solidarity Center continue to partner with workers in the rubber, mining and timber industries to help labor unions there better serve members and organize new workers.

International Vice President for Human Affairs Fred Redmond and Mike Zielinski, a member of the USW’s Strategic Campaigns staff, were in Liberia last November as part of a delegation sponsored by the Solidarity Center, which assists workers around the world who are struggling to achieve safe and healthy workplaces, family-supporting wages, social protections and a voice on the job.

They worked with the Firestone Agricultural Workers Union of Liberia (FAWUL), a union representing 6,000 workers at Firestone’s massive rubber plantation, and the United Workers Union of Liberia (UWUL), which represents some 1,000 workers at ArcelorMittal’s iron ore operations in Liberia.

“The gains that FAWUL and UWUL have achieved in collective bargaining were simply unimaginable a decade ago as the country emerged from years of civil war and conflict,” Redmond said.

“Most recently, the Ebola epidemic and the decline in commodity prices
worldwide have presented the entire Liberian society and the labor movement with a new round of challenges.”

The USW, which represents tire and rubber workers in North America, spent two days with FAWUL, which ousted a longtime company union at the Firestone plantation in 2007 with fair elections.

Since that election, FAWUL, with help from the USW and the Solidarity Center, has worked to change conditions at the Firestone plantation.

Some of the biggest successes include lowering the daily quota for rubber tappers, improving living conditions, building the plantation’s first high school and improving conditions at the plantation’s hospital.

**Firestone negotiations**

With new leadership elected in 2014, FAWUL is now facing a round of negotiations with Firestone to replace the current contract that expires at the end of March.

Redmond and Zielinski met with FAWUL’s executive committee on the first day of their visit to review their bargaining plans. On the second day, they facilitated an all-day discussion with key activists and bargaining team members regarding contract priorities and membership mobilization.

While FAWUL clearly intends to address a wider range of issues related to safety, housing, rice rations and health care, the bargaining team identified improved wages as their top priority.

Closely related to better wages is the scope of work performed by rubber tree tappers. The union has successfully reduced the mandatory amount of trees that must be tapped for latex, eliminating child labor that occurred when a tapper enlisted family members to help meet Firestone’s production quotas.

The tappers, however, continue to struggle with additional tasks, including cleaning hundreds of cups used to gather latex from rubber trees. Many tappers are compelled to pay helpers from their own wages or enlist spouses to do the work.

The union wants to see either increased pay for performing the extra work or have the company take the task away from the tappers and employ more people to carry out the job.

**Research support**

FAWUL requested research support from the USW concerning Firestone’s finances and worldwide rubber production as the union prepares to discuss employee compensation in the negotiations.

Redmond and Zielinski discussed with them the need for membership engagement and visibly showing support for the bargaining committee during contract discussions.

FAWUL knows management becomes alarmed whenever the union shares bargaining information with the membership. The union intends to do that through radio broadcasts, the shop steward system and membership meetings. In addition, FAWUL hopes to produce stickers and placards that can be used as part of a series of escalating visibility actions during the bargaining.

Leaving FAWUL, the USW delegation met with the newly elected leadership of the UWUL Local 4 at ArcelorMittal’s port operation in Buchanan.

At ArcelorMittal, UWUL is preparing to bargain a new contract to replace an agreement expiring at the end of March. UWUL had just concluded local union leadership elections and the new leadership has little union experience.

ArcelorMittal, the world’s largest steel and mining company, established commercial mining operations in Liberia in 2006 and produced its first million tons of iron ore in 2012. That same year it signed a collective bargaining agreement with UWUL, solidifying the union.

The launch of commercial mining was an important milestone in the recovery of Liberia’s economy, which had been devastated by 24 years of civil war.

**Mining, forestry and energy**

UWUL has emerged as one of the strongest and most wide-ranging unions in Liberia, organizing mining company employees and workers in the forestry and energy sectors.

Redmond and Zielinski met with UWUL members and management at ArcelorMittal’s port operation in Buchanan and spent time with the union’s leadership at their offices in Monrovia.

The bargaining environment for UWUL promises to be extremely difficult as the union’s new leadership will be negotiating with the company in the midst of a worldwide slump in commodity prices.

It is expected that the local union negotiators will need help from UWUL’s national leadership and from international partners to prepare for the upcoming challenges.

Redmond and Zielinski participated in a meeting with Liberian Minister of Labor Neto Zarzar Lighe, who supports attempts by the Liberian Labour Congress to establish stronger sectorial unions.

Lighe’s office is working with the Liberian Labour Congress in planning a major labor conference this year that will work to develop trade union leadership in the country.

The hope is the conference will help to facilitate a restructuring of the labor movement along sectorial lines as well as strengthen labor’s role in Liberia’s tri-partite structure, which also includes government and business.

Lighe acknowledged that the labor movement in Liberia is “too scattered” and has a “divided focus.” He said “it will take time to mature and get stronger.”
USW members who make coated and uncoated paper got good news on trade cases in recent months, receiving extended tariff protections on one and new protections on another.

In the uncoated paper case, filed by the USW and four paper-producing companies, the U.S. Department of Commerce announced antidumping and subsidy margins, validating the union’s allegation of predatory trading practices by corporations in five countries.

In the coated paper case, the Commerce Department determined in a required five-year sunset review of existing tariffs that dumping of coated paper would likely continue or recur if those tariffs were revoked.

International President Leo W. Gerard expressed relief at the good results in both cases and pledged that the union would continue to confront any and all illegal foreign trade practices that threaten USW jobs.

“The USW is fighting for every job in the paper sector. These are good, family-supporting jobs that have created a path to the middle class for tens of thousands of Americans,” Gerard said in response to the ruling on coated paper.

In that case, the Commerce Department extended duties charged to the heavy-weight, often glossy paper imported from Indonesia and China. It set penalties on coated paper from Indonesia at 20.13 percent and from China at 135.84 percent.

The original now reviewed decision to impose duties on coated paper came in 2010 and was based on petitions filed in 2009 by NewPage Corp. (since acquired by Verso), Sappi North America, Appleton Coated and the USW.

Uncoated antidumping margins

In the case of uncoated paper, the matte-finish sheet type typically used in copy machines, the Commerce Department set antidumping margins ranging up to 222.46 percent and anti-subsidy margins of up to 176.75 percent against unfairly traded imports from China, Indonesia, Brazil, Portugal and Australia.

All uncoated exporters in these countries are accused of dumping, which is selling the product in the United States at a price below what it costs to produce or below its price at home. China and Indonesia are also charged with providing illegal government subsidies.

The four companies that filed the case on uncoated paper with the USW in January 2014 are Packaging Corporation of America (PCA), Domtar, Finch Paper and P.H. Glatfelter Co.

“The flood of unfairly traded imports since 2012 has taken an enormous toll on our domestic industry and its workers,” said Leeann Foster, assistant to International President Gerard.

Foster, testifying at a hearing in the uncoated paper case before the U.S. International Trade Commission, said eight uncoated mills have closed or shut down machines costing thousands of jobs.

The decisions in these trade cases ensure that fair prices can be restored to the market and that USW members have a fair chance to compete, said International Vice President Jon Geenen, who oversees the USW’s paper sector.

“Today, our members are fighting for their jobs against illegally dumped and subsidized products. Essentially, they find themselves competing against both foreign companies and foreign countries, which subsidize producers to expand exports and retain jobs,” he said.

In addition to pursuing trade cases, the USW is meeting with members of Congress and the Obama administration to discuss dealing with the problem of paper overproduction in China, which prompts them to dump the excess in the United States.
The United Steelworkers joined domestic tire manufacturer Titan International in filing petitions for relief from imports of off-the-road (OTR) tires produced in China, India and Sri Lanka.

The petitions filed on Jan. 8 allege that the three countries are dumping OTR tires at below fair market value in the United States. They also allege imports from all three countries benefit from improper government subsidies.

“This circumvention and intentional abuse of trade laws is destroying jobs here in America,” International President Leo W. Gerard said in announcing the petition filings.

The petitions were filed with the U.S. International Trade Commission (ITC) and the Department of Commerce, which will each play a role in investigating the allegations.

International Vice President Stan Johnson, a former tire worker, told the ITC at a hearing that the industry provides high-paying, high-skill jobs with benefits that are now in jeopardy.

“Many of our members have been working at the same plants for decades, and their hard work has helped families buy homes, send their kids to college and save for retirement. All of that is now at risk because of these dumped and subsidized imports,” he said.

This is the second time the USW has joined a case against dumped and subsidized imports of OTR tires. In 2007, Titan sought and won antidumping and countervailing duties.

“The first time we were successful, but Chinese producers and importers appear to be gaming the system to avoid the duties they owe,” Gerard said. “And now, subsidized producers in India and Sri Lanka have stepped in to get their own piece of the U.S. market.”

The petitions cover OTR tires for agriculture, industry, construction, mining and industrial applications whether they enter the United States mounted on wheels or unmounted.

Imports from the three countries have grown significantly since 2012, even as demand has fallen.

Titan’s experience is repeated at other OTR companies. As imports have increased, domestic production and jobs have declined across the industry.

The USW represents workers producing OTR tires at Titan International, Inc., Bridgestone and Goodyear at six plants in Illinois, Iowa, Kansas and Ohio.

“Our union represents the majority of workers in the U.S. OTR tire industry, and this action is essential to protecting these jobs from further erosion,” said District 7 Director Mike Millsap, who chairs the union’s negotiating committee with Titan.

The USW filed a new trade case on Jan. 29 that seeks relief against unfairly dumped and subsidized truck and bus tires from China that are flooding into the U.S. market.

“Once again we are taking action to stop the unfair trade practices of China from damaging our members’ good jobs and the U.S. manufacturing base,” International President Leo W. Gerard said.

The USW represents some 6,000 workers at five facilities in Tennessee, New York, Virginia and Kansas that account for more than two-thirds of the domestic capacity for truck and bus tires. The plants are operated by Bridgestone-Firestone, Goodyear and Sumitomo.

Despite expanding overall demand for truck and bus tires, American production fell by 7.8 percent from 2012 to 2015, while China’s share of the market jumped to 36.4 percent.

Bus and truck tire imports from China increased 33 percent from 6.3 million in 2012 to 8.4 million in 2014, according to the petitions filed by the USW with the U.S. Commerce Department and the U.S. International Trade Commission. The first 11 months of 2015 saw a further 7 percent hike.

“We need prompt action by the administration to prevent further harm to the domestic tire industry, just as we have been pursuing relief for our members in sectors threatened by illegal imports of steel, paper, aluminum and others,” Gerard said.
United States trade officials are challenging tax breaks that China quietly provides to its growing aircraft industry but fails to give to competing airplanes made in other countries.

The USW applauded U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) Michael Froman for pursuing action at the World Trade Organization over a 17 percent value added tax (VAT) that China applies to imported aircraft.

“USTR lawyers have obtained evidence that China was exempting an array of domestically produced Chinese aircraft from paying the 17 percent VAT, while forcing foreign producers to pay it,” International President Leo W. Gerard said.

Gerard said the aircraft industry, which supports manufacturing jobs across the United States, is another example of China’s relentless targeting of American industry with unfair and often secret subsidies.

“Tens of thousands of USW members working in the aluminum, steel, glass and tire sectors produce and supply materials and parts used in the domestic aerospace industry,” Gerard said.

Gerard noted that China’s current five-year economic plan outlines its intentions to be a major competitor in airline manufacturing. Its aircraft industry is one of the fastest growing in the world.

The case is the first against China’s aerospace industry.

“The USTR worked diligently and patiently to uncover China’s subsidy programs,” Gerard said. “This action is an important step in demonstrating that America intends to enforce the rules and hold China accountable for stealing jobs in this and other industries.”

After details of the once secret Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) were made public, the USW’s International Executive Board rejected the proposed 12-nation trade deal as detrimental to workers and vowed to “put every effort” into its defeat.

The full text of the sweeping agreement offered few surprises, yet it did reveal once and for all that the proposal would shift even more power away from working people and into the hands of multinational corporations.

“It is now clear that the TPP would be a dagger to the heart of American manufacturing,” International President Leo W. Gerard said. “Even the Wall Street Journal predicted that the deal would cause a massive trade deficit in manufacturing, resulting in hundreds of thousands of job losses.”

The TPP, like the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) did 20 years earlier, would make it easier for U.S. companies to move production and jobs to Pacific Rim countries with poverty wages, lax environmental protections and little to no health and safety standards.

“American workers have been on the losing end of trade agreements for far too long,” Gerard said. “This deal would only give us more of the same.”

Among other flaws, the TPP relaxes rules of origin to allow more cars and auto parts to be made outside the United States; fails to address currency manipulation; fails to protect the rights of workers; fails to enact adequate environmental protections, and gives foreign corporations the right to challenge government policies intended to protect the public.

While the White House has made the TPP a priority for the president’s last year in office, passage is not guaranteed. Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell has said that Congress may have to wait until after this year’s presidential election before taking a vote.

“The TPP has been promoted as a 21st century trade agreement,” Gerard said. “But this free trade deal would take American workers backward, not forward.”
**USW Applauds Continued Duties on China Steel Plate**

The U.S. International Trade Commission (ITC) voted to maintain antidumping duties on steel plate imports from China, protecting USW jobs in Pennsylvania, Indiana and Louisiana.

The USW applauded the decision, made in November at the conclusion of a sunset review of trade duties that are required by international agreements. “Enforcement proceedings against dumped and subsidized steel products from China are critical if America is to have a steel industry supporting good jobs,” International President Leo W. Gerard said.

In its decision, the ITC found that the American industry would be harmed if it revoked existing antidumping orders on cut-to-length steel plate from China.

**Preliminary Duties Set on Cold-Rolled Steel Imports**

To counteract illegal subsidies, the U.S. Department of Commerce has set preliminary duties of 227 percent against cold-rolled steel products exported to the United States by Chinese companies.

In the same decision, released in December, the government also set duty rates of 7.4 percent against subsidized products from Brazil, 4.4 percent against India and 6.3 percent against certain Russian companies.

International President Leo W. Gerard called the decision a “small step toward the immediate action America’s steel industry needs” against countries that illegally subsidize exports.

“State-owned steel companies in China have grossly expanded steel production capacity to stratospheric, uncontrolled levels that are wrecking American steelworkers’ jobs and the communities where they live,” Gerard said.

Gerard noted that thousands of USW families were suffering from layoffs at iron ore mines in Minnesota and steel mills in Granite City, Ill., Birmingham, Ala., northern Indiana and elsewhere.

The petitions in the U.S. trade case were filed in July by AK Steel Corp., ArcelorMittal USA, Nucor Corp., Steel Dynamics Inc., and U.S. Steel Corp.

Final determination orders are due in May from the Department of Commerce and the U.S. International Trade Commission.

“Tens of thousands of American steelworkers should know their jobs and the industry will get some protection from this preliminary duty order from our government to level the playing field for steel sold in our market,” said International Vice President Tom Conway.

**Import Duties Placed on Corrosion-Resistant Steel**

The U.S. Department of Commerce has taken major steps toward stemming the flood of unfairly traded corrosion-resistant steel from China, India, Italy and South Korea.

In a preliminary decision issued in December, the Commerce Department concluded that those four countries had illegally dumped corrosion-resistant steel into the U.S. market at below fair prices and are, therefore, subject to antidumping duties.

“The egregious high volume of illegal, corrosion-resistant steel dumped in the U.S. market from China was found to be so substantial that all producers in China will have a maximum duty rate that should take them out of the market,” International President Leo W. Gerard said.

According to the government determination, the rate applied to China for dumping will be 255.8 percent. The remaining countries under investigation will have rates in the single digits: India, 6.6 to 6.9 percent; Korea, 2.9 to 3.5 percent, and Italy, 0 to 3.1 percent.

The decision authorized U.S. Customs and Border Protection to require cash deposits from importers based on the duty rates. The rates will be applied retroactively where “critical circumstance” was found for certain exporters.

Last November, the Department of Commerce imposed countervailing duties on corrosion-resistant steel from China, India, Italy and South Korea after concluding exports from those countries benefitted from unfair government subsidies.

The preliminary decision set duties up to 235.6 percent on imports from China, while imports from India face duties of up to 7.71 percent. Most South Korean companies had duties set at 1.37 percent. Duties for most Italian companies were set at 13.06 percent.

The USW represents some 35,000 workers who produce corrosion-resistant steel at facilities owned by U.S. Steel, ArcelorMittal and AK Steel.

International Vice President Tom Conway said global overcapacity in steel and continued abuse of the system by foreign companies and their governments requires a major overhaul of U.S. trade policy.

“Congress and the administration need to take responsibility for changing the system that has cost more than a million manufacturing jobs and shuttered thousands of factories, mainly in industries that employ USW members,” Conway said.
After decades of activism on the part of USW members and allies, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) is preparing to impose updated safety rules that will cut workers’ exposure to silica dust by half.

Breathing silica dust has been shown to cause the incurable lung disease silicosis and other life-threatening conditions. The new rule would reduce the amount of the material to which most workers could be exposed, with the construction and maritime industries facing the strictest limits.

OSHA said it expected to finalize the new rules in February.

“This is a welcome change, and one that is long overdue. Silica dust has been a known health hazard throughout history,” said Mike Wright, director of the USW’s Health, Safety and Environment Department. “This change will save the lives of workers, and the longer it takes to get into place, the more people are at risk.”

According to OSHA, about 1.7 million American workers are regularly exposed to silica dust on the job. The agency has said the new regulations could save as many as 700 lives and prevent 1,600 new cases of silicosis each year. OSHA also says that the rules could save as much as $4.7 billion in health care costs.

Exposure to silica dust is common in a number of USW workplaces. The most severe exposure occurs in metal making and foundries, oil and gas drilling, cement, brick and asphalt manufacturing, glass, china and ceramic manufacturing, and the tool and die industry.

“The best employers are already doing what OSHA has proposed,” said International President Leo W. Gerard. “But everyone deserves strong protections from deadly workplace diseases.”

Moving slowly

Current rules governing silica are based on research conducted in the 1970s. Some businesses that will be forced to follow the new rules worked for years to delay or derail a new standard. Even with a supportive administration in the White House, the new rules moved slowly.

“When I got my job at the foundry I made $62,000 the first year and thought I was set. I was ready and willing to give my all to work,” White said. “I never realized that that included my life.”

The new rules will finally update silica regulation for the 21st century, preventing hundreds of people like White from contracting deadly diseases.

“If this important new rule goes into effect as planned,” said Jessica Martinez, deputy director of the National Council for Occupational Safety and Health, “millions of workers will breathe easier.”
showing that good can come from bad, local unions in Ohio and Louisiana have negotiated positive health and safety improvements following OSHA job site inspections and citations.

The settlements, reached in late 2015 with help from the USW’s Health Safety and Environment (HSE) Department, give local unions and their employers the tools to work together and prevent future accidents.

“These are nice wins for all involved because they direct resources toward improving overall safety and health management systems, and invest in our members as well as their workplaces,” said Steve Sallman of the HSE department.

The settlements involve Local 4427 at Ball Aerosol and Specialty Containers in Hubbard, Ohio, and Local 654, which represents workers at two companies – Bancroft Bag and Graphic Packaging International – in West Monroe, La.

“Unfortunately, these workplaces had system failures that can lead to serious accidents and violations,” Sallman added. “It is our plan that effective union-management safety and health committees will address those failures to prevent recurrence.”

Progress can already be seen at the Ball plant in Hubbard, where USW members produce steel cans used by paint manufacturers and in general industry.

“The company is serious about the settlement agreement,” said C.B. Miller, president of Local 4427. “Their feet are being held to the fire.”

Unguarded machines

Ball was cited in 2013 with 11 safety violations, seven of them willful, and three repeats, for exposing workers to unguarded machines. The employer had been cited by OSHA for the same problems on the same equipment in 2009.

In addition to a fine, the settlement requires safety training and the establishment of a union-management safety and health committee that must meet regularly to discuss plant-related safety and health issues and conduct inspections and accident investigations.

The committee is required to complete safety and health audits and inspections once a month to identify and correct hazards and to ensure compliance with OSHA regulations.

Mike Jones, a new plant manager at Hubbard, said the company is working with the union to reform the safety committee and is meeting its obligations to correct the safety issues identified.

“In the end it’s going to make people safer, so it’s all good,” Jones said.

In Louisiana, Graphic Packaging International in West Monroe was cited for 28 safety violations – 26 of them serious – after an employee was severely injured when his hand was caught in a moving printing press.

At Bancroft Bag, also in West Monroe, OSHA initiated an inspection after a printing press operator who was performing a repair had an index finger amputated as his hand was pulled into moving gears. The company was cited for 16 serious violations.

Inspections and training required

In both cases, the companies agreed to cooperate with the USW in safety inspections and in training and to hire a full-time safety and health professional.

Daryl Johnson, president of Local 654 in West Monroe, said both companies have a history of disciplining workers involved in accidents rather than fixing hazards. One employer had machine guards in storage that could have prevented injuries but did not install them.

Despite the victories, the process made some employees fearful for their jobs.

“I told them OSHA is not your enemy,” Johnson said. “They are here to help you. They are here to make sure you have a safe workplace so you can go home safely every day to your family.”

Since the settlements, Johnson said he has faced resistance from both employers. He quoted one manager with authority as saying during a training session, “We have to discipline our way to safety.”

“The trainer responded, ‘No. We accomplish safety in your plant through safeguarding equipment and training,’” Johnson recalled. “I see a brick wall, I really do.”

But Johnson holds out hope that the processes sought by OSHA in the settlements will eventually turn things around at both locations.

“It’s a building process,” he said.
Civil/Human Rights Conference Honors Dr. King, Promotes Dialogue on Racial and Economic Justice

More than 1,000 workers, including a large delegation of Steelworkers led by International Vice President Fred Redmond, attended this year’s AFL-CIO Civil and Human Rights Conference to honor Martin Luther King and build on his work.

Workers of all ages, religions and colors joined labor and community activists in celebrating the life and legacy of Dr. King and sharing tactics and strategies for constructing a collective civil, human and women’s rights agenda for 2016.

The conference, entitled “Change the Rules, Be the Power,” was held in Washington, D.C., from Jan. 15 until Martin Luther King Day on Jan. 18.

Redmond, co-chair of the Labor Commission on Racial and Economic Justice, and AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka called on workers to unite around a common agenda of raising incomes and equality for all, regardless of race, color or sexual orientation.

“When they divide us up, they can beat us. When we stick together, they can’t,” Trumka said, noting that unity should not obscure the fact that a difficult and honest discussion on race must continue.

Workers’ common interests of better wages and better lives for themselves and their families are much more significant than differences in skin tone, place of worship or gender, Redmond said.

Yet, the wealthiest class in America has used those differences to create a culture of hate that pits workers against workers and divides the country to the benefit of those at the top.

During the conference, the commission released a report entitled “Race and Economic Jeopardy for All” by Ian Hanley Lopez, a University of California, Berkeley, law professor and director of the Racial Politics Project at Berkeley’s Haas Institute for a Fair and Inclusive Society.

The report explains how politicians’ deliberate use of racism has hurt workers – black, white, Latino, gay, straight, male or female – while simultaneously advancing the agenda of the richest 1 percent.

“We have to move beyond this issue of race and we have to embrace each other as brothers and sisters,” Redmond said. “We have to just reject the politics of race and religion and unite behind a common cause of economic and social justice.”
Verso Files for Bankruptcy Court Protection

The USW has formed a team of experts to guard the financial interests of more than 2,300 members at Verso Paper Corp. as the company reorganizes its debt in bankruptcy court.

Verso’s Jan. 26 Chapter 11 filing was inevitable because of its highly leveraged balance sheet, unfair international trade and structural changes in the coated paper market it serves, said International Vice President Jon Geenen, who oversees the union’s paper sector.

“This bankruptcy has serious implications for the Verso employees, other workers involved in the supply chain and the entire coated paper industry,” Geenen added.

The USW represents over 2,300 workers at Verso plants in Luke, Md.; Wickliffe, Ky.; Escanaba, Mich.; Wisconsin Rapids, Wis., and Stevens Point, Wis.

Women of Steel Conference Set

The 2016 USW International Women’s Conference will be held in Pittsburgh at the Wyndham Grand, a downtown hotel, from March 7 to 10. Go to www.usw.org to register.

The conference is entitled “Women of Steel – Stepping Up.” It will focus on skills enhancement, global solidarity and strengthening the labor movement.

Although the conference is not restricted to women, local unions are encouraged to seek female members who reflect the union’s diversity, as well as to develop the potential in members not currently active. There is no limit to the number of delegates a local union can send.

USW Watches Dow, DuPont Merger

The USW is monitoring developments at Dow Chemical Co. and the E.I. DuPont DE Nemours Co., which announced on Dec. 11 their intention to merge operations and then split into three companies.

The merger is subject to antitrust review. If regulators approve, the new company, DowDuPont, will merge this year and split 18 to 24 months later into businesses focusing on agriculture, materials and specialty products.

Since the merger is a straight-up stock swap, USW contracts are expected to follow the merger. That could change, however, if regulators require business unit sales for antitrust reasons.

The USW intends to make sure any transactions structured as asset sales are done in a way that protects jobs, wages, benefits and working conditions. Where appropriate, the USW will work with other unions to preserve standards.

Corporate executives have announced intentions to lower costs by consolidating operations. No layoffs had been announced as of press time.

Locals Form 3M Council

USW locals representing 1,400 3M workers at facilities in the United States met in Minnesota in December to form a council and build solidarity.

District 11 Director Emil Ramirez joined the locals at the meeting hosted by Local 11-418 in Cottage Grove, Minn., to show the new 3M Council will have the union’s full support.

After hearing about the USW’s ongoing work with chemical sector locals, the 3M Council decided to join in with similar union councils at DuPont, Dow and BASF, said Mike Schanks, president of Local 11-418.

Local unions in the council exchanged contracts and discovered they contained drastically different language on attendance, sick time, union leave, overtime and other policies. A more thorough comparison is planned.

In addition to host Local 11-418, the meeting was attended by Local 9-675 of Guin, Ala., Local 186 of Hartford City, Ind., Local 11-75 of Saint Paul, Minn., and Local 2-666 of Wausau, Wis.
Strike Grant Offered

During the selective oil strike last year, Local 13-1 member Michael Gould applied for and received a $300 strike grant from Union Plus, the AFL-CIO benefits program.

“The strike grant helped to buy a few more groceries and pay a couple more bills,” said Gould, who uses the Union Plus Cash Rewards Credit Card.

Steelworkers who have had the Union Plus Credit Card for a minimum of three months and are involved in a union-sanctioned strike or a company-imposed lockout are eligible to apply.

Information on the strike grant program is available online at www.USWCard.com. For information on Union Plus programs and services, visit www.UnionPlus.org.

Daniel Roy Resigns as Director

District 5 Director Daniel Roy stepped down on Dec. 31 to accept a position as vice president of membership development at the Fonds de solidarité FTQ, the Quebec labor federation’s development capital fund.

The International Executive Board appointed Roy’s assistant, Alain Croteau, as interim district director until the next board elections.

A Steelworker for 39 years, Roy became a staff representative in 1991. He was appointed director in 2007 and was re-elected to the position in 2009 and 2013.

“The Métallos taught me everything I know,” Roy said, referring to the union by its French name. “They gave me everything. I grew up within this organization, in this family.”

During his tenure, Roy made creating and saving jobs and organizing new members into the union his highest priorities. Politically, he advocated for preserving public services in Canada.

University Organizing Drive Launched

USW-affiliated campaigns to organize 5,000 faculty and almost 3,000 graduate employees at the University of Pittsburgh are officially underway.

The USW is coordinating efforts with two campus groups hoping to form separate bargaining units, one for adjunct professors and tenure-stream faculty and the other for graduate workers. Organizing efforts will involve the main Pittsburgh campus and four branch campuses.

“Everybody at Pitt needs this union because our working conditions impact the learning conditions of our students, the quality of our research, and frankly, the strength and position of Pitt as a world-class institution,” said Hillary Lazar, a Pitt graduate employee.

The USW has so far in Pittsburgh organized adjunct professors at Point Park University, Robert Morris University and Duquesne University, although Duquesne continues to challenge the union, citing its Catholic mission.

Part-time professors at Point Park who are represented by the Adjunct Faculty Association of the United Steelworkers overwhelmingly ratified a first contract late last year.

The Pitt effort was announced at a Jan. 26 news conference. Speakers, including some individuals hoping to join bargaining units, cited fairness, job security, transparency and workplace justice as key themes.

NLRB Plans A.P. Green Complaint

Region 9 of the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) in Cincinnati notified the USW in January that absent a settlement, the board would issue a complaint against A.P. Green, a subsidiary of HarbisonWalker International, for regressive bargaining and illegally locking out members of Local 2324-5 at the company’s Oak Hill, Ohio, refractory plant.

Unless the company negotiates a settlement to resolve the unfair labor practice charges, the NLRB will prosecute A.P. Green before an administrative law judge.

Although the lockout started on April 15, 2015, the NLRB decided that the company’s regressive bargaining began on May 14, making the lockout illegal from that point forward.
NOTICE TO ALL EMPLOYEES COVERED BY A UNION SECURITY CLAUSE

All USW represented employees covered by a union security clause have the right, under NLRB v. General Motors, 373 U.S. 734 (1963), to be and remain a nonmember subject only to the duty to pay the equivalent of union initiation fees and periodic dues. Further, only such non-member employees have the right, under Communications Workers v. Beck, 487 U.S. 735 (1988), to limit payment of union-security dues and initiation fees to certain moneys spent on activities germane to a union’s role as collective bargaining representative. This latter statutory right is embodied in the USW’s Nonmember Objection Procedure.

The Procedure is available to any USW represented employee who is subject to a union security clause but who is a non-member and who objects to his or her union security fees being expended on nonrepresentational activities. Paragraph 1 of the Procedure states:

“1. Any individual, who is not a member of the United Steelworkers and who is required as a condition of employment to pay dues to the United Steelworkers pursuant to a union security agreement but objects to supporting political or ideological expenditures by the United Steelworkers which are not necessarily or reasonably incurred for the purpose of performing the duties of an exclusive collective bargaining representative shall have the right upon perfecting a notice of objection to obtain an advance reduction of a portion of such individual’s dues obligation commensurate with expenditures unrelated to collective bargaining as required by law.”

An eligible employee who objects to the USW expending monies for nonrepresentational activities such as charitable or political activities may choose to perfect a notice of objection under Paragraph 2 of the Procedure, which states:

“2. To perfect a notice of objection, the individual must send an individually signed notice to the International Secretary-Treasurer during the thirty days following either the individual’s initial date of hire into the USW represented unit or an anniversary date of such hiring: provided, however, that if the individual lacked knowledge of this Procedure, the individual shall have a 30 day period commencing on the date the individual became aware of the Procedure to perfect a notice of objection; and, provided, further, that a member who resigns membership shall have the opportunity to object within the 30 day period following resignation.1”

Objectors are not USW members and have no right to vote in union elections or to be a candidate, no right to participate in union meetings or activities, and no right to vote on contract ratification.

Upon perfecting properly a notice of objection, the objector is entitled to an advance reduction of a portion of his or her union security obligation commensurate with expenditures unrelated to collective bargaining, as required by law. International Secretary-Treasurer Stanley W. Johnson has determined, based upon expenditures for the calendar year 2014, that the reduction percentage under the Procedure is 14.30% (23.54% if organizing expenditures were to be included).

There are court decisions holding that organizing activities are non-representational activities. The USW does not agree with those rulings. However, without intending to waive its position that its organizing expenditures are not subject to objection and without intending to waive its right to assert its position if there is a challenge to the reduction percentage, the USW has deemed it expedient to apply the 23.54% figure to most current and future objectors. Therefore, an objector will be charged 76.46% of the regular dues amount. Each objector will be given a detailed breakdown between representational and non-representational activities with a report by an independent auditor.

The Procedure contains an appeals system under which challenges to the reduction percentage determination must be filed within 30 days of the Notice of Determination and are to be decided by an impartial arbitrator appointed by the American Arbitration Association. Disputed amounts are escrowed pending appeal.

While a notice must be individually signed and timely mailed, there is no form for a notice. Processing is faster, however, when the notice contains the objector’s name, address, local union number, and employer.

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1 Any right of a resignee to pay a reduced amount under this Procedure may or may not be superceded by the resignee’s check-off authorization.
Have You Moved?
Notify your local union financial secretary, or clip out this form
with your old address label and send your new address to:

USW Membership Department,
60 Blvd. of the Allies, Pittsburgh, PA 15222

Name ______________________________________
New Address ______________________________________
City ______________________________________
State _________________________   Zip _________