



'ANGUS BARKS'

By Jeff Francis
AEG Executive Board

Round-Up

CONTRACT- The best feature of the new contract is the permanent raise negotiated for our retirees. For years GE claimed the Union couldn't represent pensioners. So this is a breakthrough we can build on in future years.

Also, the vacation improvements for short service employees will help young families. Some of us still remember how lousy it felt to work at year-end with no vacation time, while our kids were home for Christmas. Our new members will no longer be forced into this position.

The worst feature of the new contract is steep medical increases for active employees and recent retirees, and the loss of post-65 medical coverage for new-hires. During the next four years, the average union member in Lynn with working spouse, will gain \$21,437 in straight-time wages, and lose \$5,163 in medical deductions. By comparison, during the four years of the 2003 contract, the same union member gained \$19,435 in wages and lost \$1,365 in medical deductions. Those figures don't include co-pay increases.

We are right to expect better from the world's wealthiest manufacturer. Especially when the locomotive, aircraft and turbine businesses are doing so well. But the truth is, we will face medical cost shifting in future contracts. And we will again see a campaign by GE to strip retirement benefits from new-hires. Those trends will repeat until the year arrives when our national negotiating committee walks into bargaining and tells GE, this is the year we strike, like they did in 1969.

Unfortunately the Company controls the negotiating process. From the shop floor to the small table, they use persuasion, intimidation and manipulation to get their way. It works because the 20,000 union members at GE are split up into 14 different unions. This division causes our weakness at the national level. Certainly all GE workers would be better off in one union, under one leadership willing to encourage local action at contract time.

Fortunately, several Locals conducted membership actions that saved the 2007 contract from disaster. Three UE locals used strike numbers during negotiations. Our UE brothers and sisters in Erie Local 506 hosted the CBC national rally and led the fight against GE's plan to screw the next generation of workers. IUE Local 1004 at Strothers in KS, and Local 161 in Salem VA used very creative shop floor tactics to support our negotiators. These Locals have strong leadership, and members who understand that actions speak louder than words.

Local 201 members supported every action requested by the Executive Board with greater enthusiasm and greater numbers than we expected. That includes the Post 6 educational meetings, Pensioners Rally and collection, the Plantgate Standout, and the Last Weekend Off. Those actions made a difference in the final package, and showed our new members the type of solidarity actions we'll need from them in the future.

For those of you concerned about our national structure, or concerned about local management's involvement in our contract process, our regular union meeting is the place to start rebuilding the unity that GE workers need.

PAYCHECK- The new paystub is unfriendly to hourly workers. It is a billion dollar Corporate bungle. When you have problems understanding your payrates or deductions, it is very important you go to Payroll and take the time to get answers. Do it on the clock.

JOB POSTING- On any computer monitor in Plants I,II,IV,GP, you can hit the Start Menu to find a "Job Postings" icon that will access the current posting without waiting for the screen saver. The Company is working on bringing this icon to other buildings.

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