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Conifer Walks Away From Contract Talks

By 250 News

Wednesday, August 19, 2009 11:59 AM

Prince George, B.C. – Contract talks between the United Steelworkers and Conifer have broken off.

Steelworkers negotiating spokesperson, Bob Matters says Conifer walked away from the bargaining table this morning "Conifer told us they were not prepared to continue and left the bargaining table".

Matters says other companies in the bargaining process have come with proposals, but that was not the case with Conifer "This is very frustrating, we had an agreed upon bargaining process and they changed that. It is unacceptable to us for them to demand the workers give, without telling us what it is they're looking for."

There had been information circulated previously that indicated others at the bargaining table were proposing cost cutting measures that include a wage roll back of 20%, but Matters says that was not the case with Conifer "Basically they want us to give them the farm."

Bargaining on behalf of 10,000 workers through "pattern" bargaining, the Steelworkers say they have a commitment to seniority retention but that is the only item agreed upon.

The contract with Conifer expired July 1st.

Matters says the bargaining ball is now in Confer's court "We are prepared to return to the table with them and continue negotiating as per our agreed upon process."

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Posted on Wednesday, August 19, 2009 11:59 AM in News by 250 News

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Comments

Posted by: thereasonableman on August 19 2009 12:04 PM

They are trying to provoke a strike, isn't that obvious ?

Posted by: Loki on August 19 2009 12:16 PM

This economic turmoil is gong to shake up the unions badly. Companies cannot continue the egregious compensation and benefits demanded by unions.

Hopefully the union leadership will pull their collective heads out of their collective behinds and work towards sustainable employment for their members instead of trying to max out their wages.

Companies want to stay in business and need employees. However, if costs exceed revenues, the plant/mill/factory will be closed and possibly moved to another area. There is not much more to cut other than wages. Sure,

upper management can often be trimmed the same as the front lines. It likely should happen, but those that make that decision will not end their own tenure.

Posted by: wavoes on August 19 2009 12:38 PM

unions have put our economy in this situation...get rid of them

Posted by: ammonra on August 19 2009 1:02 PM

It was the greedy US banks that put us in this situation, driving the world into a recession. Unions and their members are as much victims as the companies are.

Posted by: Loki on August 19 2009 1:19 PM

Unions are needed to keep companies from abusing their employees. It was abuse by companies that lead to the idea of collective bargaining. So if you want to get rid of unions, you must first ensure that companies will not abuse their employees or give preferential treatment to favorites. This is impossible in today's labour market.

Before you go off half-cocked, I am not nor have I ever been in a union. I am too prideful to work in that environment.

It is because of unions that other workers get reasonable wages and benefits, not to mention other social safety programs.

It is too bad that they have managed to push wages and benefits to the point where our products are now priced out of the global market. Why do you think most products are now manufactured in China and India? That is great to have great wages, but great wages for no job is still nothing.

Posted by: mythoughts on August 19 2009 1:19 PM

Unions are the only thing employees have to protect them from corporations. The employees didn't cause this mess in the forest industry; it was the banks & business.

Posted by: thereasonableman on August 19 2009 1:23 PM

"Unions are the only thing employees have to protect them from corporations. The employees didn't cause this mess in the forest industry; it was the banks & business."

I agree and so does the rest of the world, if you do some more reading.

We have had strong unions for so long, that people don't remember what the conditions were like that spawned unionization in the first place.

Posted by: Mercenary on August 19 2009 1:32 PM

Goods are produced in countries like China and India because they have poor regulations regarding worker rights and compensation. Lax environmental laws allow North American companies to move shop over there and bypass labour and environmental standards found here in Canada and the US.

I think if most people knew how employees were being exploited in these other countries they wouldn't be lining up at the Wal-Marts and Zellers of the world to buy their products.

Posted by: Loki on August 19 2009 2:53 PM

People know good and well what living and working conditions are. The key

here is that everyone wants top wages for themselves and still have the ability to purchase a less expensive gizmo. That is the catch, isn't it?

Walmart et el, were born in the USA because someone listened to consumers screaming for better prices, so they went shopping around the world and found those cheaper products. There was and is no way that a North American made product could be as cheap as something made "offshore". We brought this on ourselves. Yes, the banks and investment firms brought down the global economy to which all companies are responding with layoffs, closures and wage roll backs. The however here is that we still wanted to spend less and have more. Well now we have it.

The answer my friends will not be easy. We have a global economy and our wages impact the price charged for our products. The only real solution now IMO is a global government which it has been said the UN is the predecessor of. It is coming, like it or not. There you go Gus, look that up, psst (Bilderberg Group, Bilderberg conference, or Bilderberg Club). We also need these same unions to go over seas and fix up their employment standards. that would raise their prices to be more in line with what we must charge. So in the end we will all pay more for less.

It used to be the wage disparity between continents that allowed us to get high wages and to buy cheap goods. Now it is coming to bite us in the back side. The other alternative is to roll back to their wage levels. That would make it pretty tough to pay that quarter million dollar mortgage. So I guess housing prices would have to tumble, and so on.

One cannot have their cake and eat it for long.

Posted by: Born in BC on August 19 2009 3:14 PM

I assume that the union made there standard offer to reduce salary and wages for post baby boomers (ie screw them) while the most senior and least productive members of the workforce continue to be over compensated!?

After all the unions have proven again and again they arent against eating their young (Overwaitea, UAW, etc, etc).

Could it be that the standard practice of screwing junior members has run its course and the senior people are actually gonna have to make some sacrifices? Oh NO!

Posted by: Born in BC on August 19 2009 3:23 PM

"It is because of unions that other workers get reasonable wages and benefits, not to mention other social safety programs."

BS! I earned my higher wages through self improvement. I give absolutely no credit to unions.

This is a pretty standard comment (its included in the recent radio campaign). It may be debatable for unskilled labor (but then how do you explain $8 per hour?) but its right out to lunch on professionals. They have always went out of their way to make sure they arent union (interesting isnt it that some people actually view union membership as a stigma). The NHLPA is a great example. Clearly its a union, but they make the distiction that they are a 'players association' to avoid being grouped with union members.

Posted by: dogs on August 19 2009 3:59 PM

Lets see them go on strike- no cares- will be off for a couple of years before anyone notices. The end is near for this Union.

Posted by: Loki on August 19 2009 4:33 PM

Born in BC: the comment was directed at unskilled labour and not

professionals such as yourself and me.

I am guilty of thinking union membership as a stigma. The statements I made were a regurgitation of propaganda that I have received from my resistance to unions. They do have a basis in fact.

I would never want to be one of those sheeple and so have missed out on toys and nice home because of it. These union members are now facing reality as they have few marketable skills for other employers.

Posted by: diplomat on August 19 2009 5:11 PM

I am in full agreement with the statements made by ammonra and mythoughts earlier on.

Why bash the so-called unskilled worker (who has no control over anything) when those so-called skilled decision makers at the top ran the whole entire train off the rails?

The poor and unemployed people don't pay much in taxes, the corporations don't pay their fair share (so it is claimed) and the rich people have ways of avoiding paying taxes - that's why they keep getting richer!

That leaves only the increasingly stressed unionized *middle* class that works in the mills, mines and forests to carry the largest part of the load because up to now they have been making fairly decent wages.

Why attack them?

Posted by: acrider54 on August 19 2009 5:56 PM

Conifer/Confer which is it, to be honest never even heard of the outfit.

Posted by: thereasonableman on August 19 2009 7:05 PM

Conifer. They are a labor relations outfit for forestry companies.

Posted by: Denaljo on August 19 2009 8:26 PM

What ever happened to corporate responsibility? You know ; where companies could rape the forests, pollute the rivers, poison the skies and kill and maim workers and in return they provide good paying jobs and pay taxes. Now these same corporations can still legally pollute, poison, rape maim and kill but whine and snivel and negotiate through the compliant medias so they can get away
from good paying jobs and paying taxes.
It amazes me that there are so many morons out there that just lap this propoganda up!!!

Posted by: lost it all on August 19 2009 9:48 PM

Denaljo, that's a great post!

Posted by: supertech on August 19 2009 10:10 PM

Does anyone know that the BC Teachers Federation was forced into being union by government of the day? Then government cut wages,then they call them an essential service and took away their right to strike. Should I go on?? Guess who the culprit is??

Posted by: Eagleone on August 20 2009 6:42 AM

I'm surprised it took so long. Everyone knew Canfor would play hard ball and that the mills are looking at lockouts most likely as soon as the mills

have a firmer knowledge on the US summer construction sales going into the fall.

A lockout will allow the employees to collect EI and Canfor to cut production if needed. A strike would be on the employees dime, and would destroy the union and they know it.

Therefore in a lockout situation I would say the union would be smart to hold fast on the benefits and negotiate wages only with a sunset clause on any potential short term roll backs. Wages can get back a lot easier than benefits and it fills the companies 'short term' needs?

IMHO

Posted by: cougs78 on August 20 2009 7:43 AM

What do other sectors do? Mining and oil companies shut down production if prices are too low to make money. At some point the commodity increases in value to a let them restart. What does the Forest Industry do? Fire up more shifts and build inventory to sell at half the price it is actually worth. We have been giving the U.S. and Japan our wood for nothing for far to long. I am not a union member, but I do work in the forest industry and the workers are not at fault here.This was coming long before the recession started. This started when so much fiber was put in the hands of so few corporations. The guy who owns 30-40% of Canfor would love all of us to work for minimum wage, as long as he has his billions.

Posted by: gus on August 20 2009 8:28 AM

Loki said: "The only real solution now IMO is a global government which it has been said the UN is the predecessor of. It is coming, like it or not."

I am not sure why a global government would be a solution. Look at the disparity within the different regions of the USA, even Canada, as well as other large countries such as Russia, China, Brazil, etc. There are geographical realities that even most countries cannot deal with.

I would like to think that countries in the world will continue to work together.

Linking the Bilderberg group to this is like saying that the several local groups who get together at Winston's and other locations in the city have great influence over the local government. I see no real evidence of that although it might appear to outsiders that is the case.

Here is the list of this year's attendees. Sort it by country and see who attended from Canada and the USA.

http://www.conspiracyarchive.com/NWO/Bilderberg-Participants-2009.htm

Onassis used to have a group of "thinkers" get together each year as well. I am sure that there are many others with a variety of objectives.

Posted by: mythoughts on August 20 2009 9:46 AM

Well said cougs78!!! Thank you!

Posted by: thereasonableman on August 20 2009 11:15 AM

This has nothing to do with workers, this has everything to do with companies bleeding red ink in 45 gallon drum sizes, and trying to reduce the flow any way they can. It was only a matter of time before they looked at the workers.

Here is some food for thought though:

For every lift of lumber we sell below what it costs us to produce, that removes the possibility of selling that same lift of lumber for profit at a later

date.

We are not only losing money right now, but allowing people to purchase and/or stockpile cheap lumber, which removes some future sales at a profit, further lengthening the recovery time for the industry.

LET'S REMEMBER TO BE KIND TO THE WORKERS, IT WAS NOT THEIR FAULT.

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