



INFORMATION UPDATE #23

July 4, 2011

The People vs U.S. Steel

NDP Leader Andrea Horwath Joins Locked-Out Steelworkers on the Line

"I'm certainly not happy that a company like this can tell your retired sisters and brothers that the pensions they thought they'd earned aren't going to be there. That's just not the way we should be doing business in Ontario or Canada," Ontario NDP Leader Andrea Horwath told locked-out steelworkers on the line on June 28.

Andrea, who is also the MPP for Hamilton Centre, was accompanied by David Christopherson, MP for Hamilton Centre, USW National Director Ken Neumann and introduced by Local 1005 President Rolf Gerstenberger. They were given a militant reception by about 100 workers.

Before introducing Andrea, Rolf addressed the attempts of U.S. Steel to extort concessions from the workers saying the company locked the gates of the plant to back its demands even though workers offered to accept a stand pat agreement.

"We did whatever we could last fall. The only thing we wouldn't do is sacrifice our pensioners and new hires," he said.

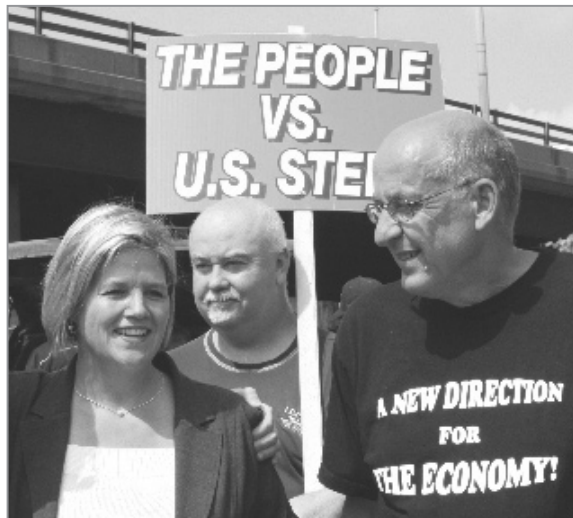
Rolf upheld the Spirit of '46, saying that Local 1005 does not accept that there is no solution to these problems other than the workers giving up.

He expressed the steelworkers' appreciation for the support of the NDP leader and her Party and opposed the recent back-to-work legislation against the Canadian Union of Postal Workers. He specifically opposed government and media attempts "to make everything ideological, a question of right wing versus left wing."

Rolf explained that this is done to divert the workers from the fact that there are alternatives to how the economy can be organized and there are solutions to the problems which exist without resorting to law and order measures and declaring that "unless we accept concessions, we – those who have been deprived of their livelihoods and are the victims of extortion attempts, are the ones damaging the economy."

"This was also raised by John Surma who tried to attack our just stand as being 'ideological'," Rolf said.

"The point of all this talk about being ideological is to stop the workers from finding an alternative – they want us to believe that the writing is on the wall and we have no alterna-



Andrea Horwath, Ontario NDP Leader and MPP Hamilton Centre; Tony McLaughlin, Treasurer, USW Local 1005; and Rolf Gerstenberger, President, Local 1005 at the Wilcox Gate picket line, June 28, 2011.

tive but to agree to cuts, to give up our indexing of pensions, to a two-tier pension regime. They want us to believe that we are fighting a losing battle."

"First, just on the pension issue, it is not true that all companies are giving up their defined benefit plans," Rolf said. There are companies that want stability in their workforce. They are not using solvency deficiencies to crater pension plans," he said.

(The facts show that as soon as interest rates go up, these pension plans will once again suffer from an embarrassment of riches, not solvency deficiencies. The companies are purely self-serving, using any excuse to take more away from the

workers so as to increase their profits – *Information Update*).

"As we approach the Ontario election [scheduled for Thursday, October 6, 2011], we want to go all out to find an alternative," Rolf said. He once again upheld the Spirit of '46, saying that there is a solution which does not involve making the workers pay for the rich to become richer.

Andrea said an NDP government would protect workers wages and pensions when employers go bankrupt and also pass anti-scab legislation.

"These represent fundamental values we believe in and support. This election offers people a pretty basic choice – do we want an Ontario where ordinary families fall farther and farther back or are we going to bring change that puts people first?" Andrea asked.

USW National Director Ken Neumann said it was a travesty that Hamilton workers have been locked out for eight months by an employer that was supposed to bring a "net benefit" to Canada.

"It's clear there's no net benefit for Canada when a foreign company like this comes in. They should get the hell out of Canada. This is not the kind of foreign capital we want here," Neumann said.

Following the remarks by each speaker, discussions carried on with the assembled workers. Andrea told *The Spectator* in an interview that she was impressed by the positive spirit which imbues the workers despite being locked out for eight months. She praised their commitment and repeated the support of the NDP.

Quality of Support Steelworkers Receive: Priceless

This week we want to profoundly thank the sisters from the Regional Women's Committee of the Public Service Alliance of Canada/Union of Taxation Employees Local 00014 who joined us on the line on June 28 to show their support for our fight. Isabel Wrotkowski presented cheques worth \$2158.41 to USW Local 1005 picket captain Kevin Pomeroy (pictured at right). The sisters spent time discussing the issues with the locked out workers.

We also want to express our profound appreciation for the sister from the Canadian Union of Postal Workers who dropped by the union hall on June 22 and donated her lock-out cheque. She had been saving for the day Canada Post would force a strike or lockout, she said and had decided to donate her first strike pay to Local 1005 to show her appreciation for our principled position in defence of pensioners and new hires. She also conveyed the appreciation of her fellow workers for Local 1005's support on their picket lines.



Local 1005 is very grateful that as this phoney lock-out imposed by U.S. Steel to extort concessions enters its ninth month, the support of the labour movement and community continues to grow.

A special thanks once again from all of us to the businesses and community organizations without whom our anniversary celebration would not be possible. Thank you all.

And Why Would We Give Up Indexed Pensions?

Consumer prices continue to rise, Statistics Canada reports



The Alleged Dream



The Reality for Some



Ten Years Later

Consumer prices rose 3.7% in the 12 months to May, Statistics Canada reports. This is the largest increase since March 2003. This follows a 3.3% increase posted in April. While most of this increase is attributed to rising energy costs, excluding gasoline, the Consumer Price Index (CPI) rose 2.4% in the 12 months to May, following a 2.2% rise in April.

Prices for food purchased from stores rose 4.2% in the 12 months to May, following a 3.7% gain in April. Prices increased for many staples, such as meat, bread and fresh milk. Prices for food purchased from restaurants increased 3.2%, following a 2.8% rise in April.

Increases among food items were widespread. The cost of meat rose 5.4%, as prices increased for beef, pork and chicken. Consumers paid more for both bakery and dairy products, including bread (+10.6%), fresh milk (+4.3%) and cheese (+3.2%). Prices for fresh fruit and vegetables also rose.

Of eight provinces which recorded an increase in prices, Ontario recorded the largest increase in gasoline prices (+35.6%); food purchased from stores increased 5.4%. Passenger vehicle insurance premiums and homeowner's replacement cost also increased. Prices for natural gas fell.

Join Local 1005 to Celebrate Its 65th Anniversary!



Keep the Date!
Saturday, July 23, 2011
Gage Park
Noon to 11:00 pm

To contact USW Local 1005: Call 905-547-1417 or e-mail info@uswa1005.ca.
Visit the website: www.uswa1005.ca

Steelworkers at the Ballpark!

Hamilton Thunderbirds vs Kitchener Panthers
Friday, July 8, 2011, Game time: 7:30 pm
Bernie Arbour Memorial Stadium

Jake Lombardo, Chair of USW Local 1005's Political Action Committee, will throw out the ceremonial first pitch.



Last month members of the Thunderbirds organization gave Local 1005 steelworkers and pensioners over 500 tickets for future games. For those without free tickets, regular prices will be in effect. Children 12 years of age and younger will be admitted free of charge.

All out to support the Thunderbirds!
For information: www.hamiltonthunderbirds.org