



INFORMATION UPDATE #5

February 22, 2011

May First on Parliament Hill

STOP Harper! Demand that Governments Uphold Public Right, NOT Monopoly Right!

On May First join USW Local 1005 and workers from all main sectors of Canada's economy to tell Harper with one voice that we oppose his government's program to pay the rich and trample the rights of the workers in the mud! The Rally and Demonstration on Parliament Hill on May First will express the workers' determination to resolve the crisis in favour of the people, not the monopolies. If a federal election is called at the end of March, the Rally will be an historic event. During a federal election the workers, irrespective of political affiliation, as the producers of the wealth and providers of the services Canadians depend on for their living, will be in Ottawa to directly speak in defence of their interests for the security of all.

Across the country and internationally workers are spearheading a fight against measures which shift the burden of the crisis onto their backs. In the U.S., attempts to brazenly attack unions also take away benefits and guaranteed pensions and are even called "right to work" measures! In Canada, the Harper government keeps telling us such things are good for us even as we watch the jobs disappear and foreign monopolies abuse their dominant positions with impunity.

Even if a spring election is not called, such a Rally on Parliament Hill will still represent the interests of working Canadians from coast to coast to coast. It will take to Ottawa a crucial statement that governments are duty bound to provide the rights of all with guarantees. It will also be an important occasion for every section of workers to express their support for one another. This action also recognizes that we have a common cause not just within the country but also with the workers in all countries who are fighting to provide their rights with a guarantee.

On May First, demonstrate in front of the Parliament to tell the Harper government to STOP serving the interests of domestic and foreign monopolies and claiming it is for the good of Canada and its people. Remind Harper that without our work there is no Canada and we will not tolerate the kinds of governments we have today that do not uphold public right, no matter what high ideals and values they claim to represent.

***Manufacturing Yes! Nation-Wrecking No!
Our Resources Stay Here!
Stop Harper!***

Toronto Rally for Locked Out Hamilton Steelworkers

On Monday, February 14, close to 200 workers rallied in front of the Bank of Nova Scotia's headquarters in Toronto to support locked out Local 1005 steelworkers and oppose the monopolies' theft of pensions facilitated by the government. The speeches, slogans, banners and signs made it clear that the fight for pensions for all is the fight of all Canadians. At present, 63 per cent of Canadians will have only the Canada Pension Plan and their personal savings to rely on in retirement. Furthermore, the Harper government has reneged on its pledge to expand the CPP and has instead come up with a new pay-the-rich scheme in the form of a government-run savings plan.



A contingent of active and retired workers from Local 1005 joined workers from many unions and sectors of the economy, including the Steelworkers Toronto Area Council, the Canadian Auto Workers, the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada, the Canadian Union of Public Employees, the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Toronto, the Society of Energy Professionals, and the Alliance of Canadian Cinema, Television and Radio Artists. John Cartwright, President of the Toronto and York Region Labour Council which called the action noted the negative role of banks and financiers, such as the Bank of Nova Scotia and Brookfield Management. Both companies are represented on U.S. Steel's board of directors, and so are part of the attacks on pensions.

Local 1005 President Rolf Gerstenberger emphasized that pensions is one of the key issues in U.S. Steel's lockout of the Hamilton steelworkers – the company is demanding 900 active workers agree to de-index the pensions of 9,000 pensioners and exclude new hires from the defined benefits pension plan. He denounced the legalized theft of what belongs to the workers by right and urged everyone to step up the fight to hold the monopolies and governments accountable to the people. He urged everyone to join Local 1005 on Parliament Hill on May Day to demand that governments uphold public right, not monopoly right.



Mary Fiori, the widow of a steelworker who was part of the '46 Stelco strike also spoke. Recalling the strike she said, "It was worth it. It was my pleasure to participate and assist the strikers ... but today I am very upset over the attacks on our pensions." Stelco retiree Larry Perrins, pointed out that, "We must not lose sight that we are not only fighting for our own pensions but for our wives' survivorship pensions. I paid 5 per cent of my pension to support my wife when I am gone and this is what they are also trying to take away today."

The rally moved from the Bank of Nova Scotia's headquarters to the Brookfield Asset Management headquarters. Brookfield was denounced for its nefarious role in forcing forestry monopoly Fraser Papers into bankruptcy protection in 2009 during which it cut retirees' pension benefits by close to 40 per cent and then closed some of the mills. When it restarted the company under a new name it forced concessions on its remaining workers.

Local 1005 Participates in Action to Defend Mexican Workers

In Toronto on February 14, following the action at the Bank of Nova Scotia and Brookfield, Local 1005 workers and others rallied in front of the Mexican Consulate to condemn the repression of workers by monopolies and the Mexican state and to defend their right to organize. The case of the February 19, 2006 an explosion at the Grupo Mexico's Pasta de Conchos coal mine in the northern state of Coahuila was highlighted. This tragedy resulted in the deaths of 65 miners. Almost five years later, the Mexican government refuses to investigate or prosecute those responsible and has never compensated the families. Instead, it has stepped up its illegal and violent attacks on the Mexican Miners' Union, which is demanding justice for the families. Other speakers demanded an end to the repression of workers in other sectors, such as the mass firing of Mexico City's 40,000 electrical workers in 2009 and attacks on workers trying to organize in call centres.

Demand that U.S. Steel Stop Its Arrogant Refusal to Settle a Respectable New Contract with Local 1005!



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