



Hamilton Day of Action ***The People vs. U.S. Steel***

Breaking New Ground in the Fight for the Rights of All **Governments Must Do Their Duty!** **Public Right Yes! Monopoly Right No!**

- Rolf Gerstenberger, President, USW Local 1005, January 29, 2011 -

Local 1005 sincerely appreciates everyone's presence here today. We consider this a historic gathering because it makes a historic statement that Canadian workers and people from all walks of life are determined to resolve the all-sided crisis, with economic crisis at the base, in favour of the people not the rich. Let us together set an agenda to demand that governments do their duty by upholding public right, not monopoly right.

We are gathered here for this day of action to defend and affirm our rights. In the modern world people have rights by virtue of being human. All governments and those who employ humans must recognize those rights and guarantee them. Our rights at this time can be broadly expressed as public right. They include the right to a livelihood and security in retirement because we are the producers of all the wealth society depends on for its existence. Our rights include the right to control the decisions that affect our lives, livelihoods, security and pensions, but this right to decide has been usurped by the rich and their governments.

The monopolies, including the big banks and other private financial enterprises and governments in their service, have their own view of rights and more importantly they have the political and economic power to enforce their interests and crush public right. Their view is that the people's rights by virtue of being human have reasonable limits and they get to decide what is reasonable. When it comes to the kinds of rights a modern society should uphold and enforce, rights are considered privileges only to be granted if they serve the narrow interests of the monopolies. This can be expressed as monopoly right.

Last December, we witnessed the most disgusting example of the politics of monopoly right trampling the politics of public right in the events surrounding the national meeting on pensions in Kananaskis, Alberta. The Harper government without warning reversed its pledge to strengthen the indexed defined benefits of the Canada Pension Plan and instead promoted yet another registered savings plan so loved by the private financial enterprises. That is a betrayal of the federal government's social responsibility to guarantee indexed defined-benefit pensions for all.

The bankruptcy protection of Nortel Networks and the all-out assault on the retirement, disability and other benefits of Nortel workers stand as a grievous example of monopoly right using this method to trump public right. Countless other companies have used and are using bankruptcy protection, including some of the richest monopolies, to skip out on their pension and other social obligations. AbitibiBowater just exited bankruptcy protection and the workers are being shafted big time. This is unjust and governments must do their duty and stand up for Canadians and public right in opposition to these companies and monopoly right.

The assault on the security of all in retirement includes dark suggestions that the next target will be the defined-benefit pensions of municipal, provincial and federal public workers. The most pro-monopoly neoliberal forces have seized power in the federal government, many provinces and big cities such as Toronto. They are determined to privatize public services such as the Post Office and municipal, provincial and federal services. This attack includes the negation of the right to security in retirement for all and the very conception of a modern

society that guarantees the rights of all, where public right is defended in opposition to monopoly right as a primary responsibility and duty of government.

The people's struggle versus U.S. Steel closely mirrors that of the people versus the global mining monopoly Vale. These global monopolies and others such as Xstrata pledged employment and production levels when they seized Stelco, Inco and Falconbridge and quickly broke those commitments. U.S. Steel specifically entered into a pension agreement with the Ontario government wherein it guaranteed steelworkers' indexed defined-benefit plans. The global monopoly has already destroyed the agreement on employment and production levels, wrecked the pension plan at Lake Erie Works and now dictates the same for Local 1005. It must not pass and will not pass!

These monopolies are abusing and pushing Canadian workers too far. With this Day of Action, workers are warning all the global monopolies and the politicians who do their bidding that this abuse must end! Workers are the producers of all wealth and providers of all services. We are the source of the wealth that the rich and monopolies so covet and enjoy. Workers warn them not to bite the hand that feeds them; this Canadian working class should not be underestimated.

Workers' social consciousness includes the conception that security does not lie in a Canada annexed to the U.S. Empire, a false security that serves monopoly right and is out of the people's hands and essentially out of control. Workers' social consciousness believes the security of all lies in the fight to defend the rights of all, the struggle for a sovereign Canada with a diverse self-reliant economy based on manufacturing and meeting the needs of the people and general interests of society, a Canada that engages in trade for mutual benefit and is a factor for peace, not war. We wish the same for the workers and people of the United States, Mexico and all other countries.

We have gathered here today because we dare to break new ground in our thinking, organizing and resistance to the monopolies and governments in their service. We are the inheritors of our forebears who broke new ground after World War Two. Our duty is to do the same within the new conditions of neoliberal globalization and the unprecedented power and dominance of the rich and their monopolies. Our duty is to break new ground especially in the realm of holding governments to account. Governments must do their duty! They must uphold public right not monopoly right!

We can defend our pensions, wages, livelihoods, security and way of life if we depend on our own efforts and the people, and break new ground in affirming our political rights as the producers of all wealth and the providers of all services. We are the backbone of the socialised economy. We must become the backbone of decision-making as well.

Public Right YES! • Monopoly Right NO!

Whose Economy? OUR Economy • Who Decides? WE Decide!

Manufacturing YES! • Nation-wrecking NO!

Hands Off Pensions and Benefits! • Increase Investments in Social Programs!

Steel Not Steal!

Governments Do Your Duty! Uphold Public Right!

Keep Stelco Producing! • Keep Hamilton Producing! • Keep Canada Producing!

Canadians Stand as One!

To contact USW Local 1005 CALL: 905-547-1417 or e-mail: info@uswa1005.ca
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