



2019 Forest Industry Bargaining

USW LOCAL 1-1937 UPDATE

2019 BARGAINING UPDATE #20 – September 14, 2019

Coast Bargaining Committee - News Release

WFP DOUBLES DOWN ON CONCESSIONS ENDING MEDIATION

On Friday, September 13th USW Local 1-1937 Bargaining Committee members met with mediators Vince Ready and Amanda Rogers in Nanaimo. The Union proposed a revised set of proposals including a revised wage proposal in our mediated talks with WFP.

The mediators then spent 4 hours of the 6 hours in mediation meeting with WFP, returning on two occasions to advise that WFP's position was relatively unchanged. Massive concessions remained on the table and they refused to address the Union's issues in any significant way.

As a matter of fact, WFP even withdrew two proposals that were positive in nature, effectively going backwards in bargaining!

Major WFP concessions remaining with no sign of movement include:

1. Contracting out WFP operation to phase contractors (effectively allowing all company employees to be contracted out).
2. Eliminating almost all Training Agreements, Local Agreements, Practices and replacing them with WFP policies that they write and impose (allows management to dictate who gets to train and guts decades of rights earned by our members).
3. Two-Tiered Wages (something every union should avoid at all cost).
4. RSP Plan replacing Pension Plan (still on the table even though WFP knows it is legally not possible and demonstrates their anti-union attitude).
5. Removing the Trusteed Health & Welfare Plan (this is all about controlling the details of the benefits which ultimately lead to claim denials and lower benefits for employees and lower costs for the company).
6. Eliminate the ability to improve the LTD Plan (people are working longer and deserve better coverage – WFP wants to stop any improvements for those on Long Term Disability).
7. Conditions added for Leave of Absence approval (the company wants to control who gets a leave of absence effectively taking away your rights to leaves).
8. Long Duration (removes the ability to address issues in bargaining like the last five-year agreement prevented addressing alternate shifts and the Drug & Alcohol Policy etc. in a timely fashion).
9. Eliminating Job Training Guidelines (takes away the basic rights of having a training agreement).
10. Changing the cut-off date for Vacation Pay (preventing wage increases from applying to vacation pay).

It bears repeating that these concessions are outrageous and unwarranted in today's markets which are not depressed as WFP would lead people to believe. The fact is WFP and the rest of the forest industry is upset with the Government's new regulations on economic zones and waste standards which were designed to reduce log exports. They also do not like the stumpage rates. We believe they are involved in a coordinated effort with the forest industry to undermine those Government efforts. They didn't go from record profits year, over year, over year, to the poor house, in one quarter. Bottom line; purporting bad Government Policy and bad markets works as a narrative for them with Government and in negotiations. The problem with their plan is that they are exaggerating greatly on both fronts and the Local Union is not buying it.

We cannot say we were surprised with WFP's refusal to move off its major concessions. It has become crystal clear that WFP has not wanted to negotiate with the Local Union since the inception of bargaining. While WFP has publicly claimed that they were working in earnest to prepare for the mediation and that they want to reach a deal, their actions tell a far different story.

“WFP is not bargaining. They are using an American Style bargaining by litigation strategy, which messages that they are interested in bargaining to the media, but are actually bent on inflicting damage to the Union and its members. It is a strategy that will fail” stated Brian Butler, President USW Local 1-1937.

“It did not come as a surprise that mediation did not produce any results yesterday. We firmly believe WFP has an agenda from the beginning to break the Union and blacken the eye of the BC Government over policies it doesn't like. They are sadly mistaken if they think it will work, as our members are prepared to do whatever it takes to reach a fair deal for coastal forest workers” stated Rick Nelson, 1st Vice-President USW Local 1-1937.

“WFP's bully tactics will do nothing but strengthen the members resolve in our fight for a fair coastal agreement” stated Richard Arnason, 2nd Vice-President USW Local 1-1937.

The Union has been clear from our first meeting with the Company back on April 15th and at every opportunity since, that concessions will not be accepted in this round of bargaining. That position came from the membership and is fully supported by the USW Bargaining Committee and reinforced at our recent WFP and Contractor Chair meeting last week. The position is supported by the fact that WFP is in better financial shape than they were in 2014 when the last Collective Agreement was negotiated with no concessions. The sooner WFP realizes that their concessions must be withdrawn, the faster we can deal with the real issues and reach a fair agreement for our members.

WFP must also understand that they need to seriously address USW Local 1-1937 member issues, including those on Alternate Shifts by mutual agreement, Drug & Alcohol policy changes, Contractor Compliance, Wages above the cost of living, Benefit (including LTD) improvements, increased Shift Differential, and shorter contract term, to name a few. To date there has been very little to no response from WFP on these important issues.

The bottom line:

USW Local 1-1937 cannot and will not bargain with itself.

The Union knows that mediation is needed and we want to reach an agreement, but WFP's complete lack of movement, numerous concessions, outstanding and ongoing WFP LRB applications and court litigation have made mediation pointless at this time.

We know it is disappointing to hear that mediation has failed to this point. We believe it has been WFP's plan to raise the hopes of mediation in our members; knowing all along that they were not interested in reaching an agreement in order to undermine your resolve.

We are sure this anti-union company will soon be messaging to our members that it is the Union that isn't bargaining. When they do, know that they are only saying it to try and divide members and undermine your will to fight. We know our members are smarter than that. **Stay strong. Every generation of workers has had to fight against corporate greed and this is our time.**

This bully will not be taking anything from us and we will ultimately reach a fair deal.

Solidarity, Brothers and Sisters.

Reminder to Members: When management tries to talk to you on the picket line; no more kid gloves; tell them they are not welcome and tell them to get their concessions off the table. If you are having trouble with management disturbing you on the picket line please advise your Business Agent.



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