

Local Lodge 1529 Newsletter

Editor: John Murray D49/2nd shift

www.iam1529.org

February 25th. 2010

President's Message

As we get closer to contract time I think it's important to explain the process by which our contracts are created. Your five member Negotiating Committee is elected the year prior to the expiration of each three year contract. They start meeting early in the year to discuss contract language and financial issues, and those meetings continue on a monthly basis until we start meeting with the company. In the spring, our members are requested to fill out a survey to better identify their concerns. These surveys are sent to the Grand Lodge who creates an analysis of the data. Every written statement included in those surveys is also read by the Committee to provide more information to base our proposals on. In August, a meeting is held at the Sidney High School where proposals are read to our members for their input and approval. Around the third week in September, your Committee starts meeting with the company. Contract language changes are always discussed first, followed by financial issues. While time spent varies from one negotiation to the next, it averages about five weeks, with roughly half the time spent on contract language, the other on financial issues. Negotiations on that last Friday run well into the evening, with the 2007 Negotiations concluding around 10:30pm. Due to our contractual arrangements with the company we must present a proposal to our members the Saturday morning following the expiration of the contract. At this point your Negotiating Committee has NOT agreed to the contents of the proposed contract. Your Committee has worked hard for many hours to bring to the membership a contract as close to our original proposals as it can. The company's goal is to get the absolute cheapest contract they can get. The Union's goal is to keep benefit costs such as insurance as low as possible while working to get the greatest increases in items such as wages and pensions. Somewhere in the middle the two parties ultimately meet. It's not a matter of presenting a list of demands to the company with them readily agreeing, any more then we can readily agree on many of the changes they have proposed over the years. That's why it's called negotiating. It's unfortunate that everyone can't be on the Negotiating Committee at least once so they could have a better idea on how the process works.

My first negotiations were in 1998 as a member of the Negotiating Committee. I wanted to be a part of the Committee partly because it drove me crazy not knowing what was going on during those last few weeks leading up to the contract vote. As it turned out I found that being a part of the process didn't necessarily mean I had any greater insight as to the final outcome! Many have asked why can't we keep the membership informed as to the progress of the negotiations. The simple answer is things change on a daily and sometimes hourly basis. Something agreed to by the parties on one day is off the table on the next. There were days right up to the last when I felt we were so far apart that there was no way that we would even get close to our proposal objectives. Sometimes we did, sometimes we didn't.

Coming off the 1995 negotiations and subsequent strike, the membership was looking for a good contract, and the general consensus was they got one. I remember walking into the high school gym to the applause of a large part of the membership. Three years later in 2001 the membership was presented a virtual carbon copy of the 1998 contract. No applause this time, and I actually had people come up to me to say what a lousy job the committee did. So I passed on the 2004 Negotiations, but decided to get back into the game in 2007. We all know what the feelings on that contract were. It's an interesting aspect of the process that on the day of, and in the months following the ratification meeting it is almost impossible to find anyone who voted for the contract. It's not until a year or two after the vote that members feel comfortable enough to speak out favorably about a contract. Considering the anger that was expressed at the

last ratification meeting I have been surprised by how many people who have expressed to me that they felt it was actually a good contract.

In my opinion the 1992 contract, which included the elimination of the entire piecework system, was the worst contract in the history of this Union. In addition to creating substantial financial losses for many of our members, it dealt a devastating blow to our facility's productivity from which we have never really recovered. It was a monumental blunder on the part of the company, not that they have ever, or will they, acknowledge their gross shortsightedness.

I think we have done a poor job presenting contract proposals to our membership over the years, primarily because negotiations run so late there is no time to prepare anything more detailed. That's unfortunate, because it's very difficult to make a logical decision on a proposal when you are presented with a set of figures without having sufficient background information to base them on. Hopefully the process can be adjusted so that there is time to prepare a better presentation for our membership.

All indications are that the upcoming negotiations will be one of the most difficult we have ever encountered. Be involved by completing the surveys when you receive them and participate in all meetings leading up to the ratification vote. Be assured your Negotiating Committee will do its best to maintain costs and increase benefits. Its important to keep in mind your Negotiating Committee is comprised of members just like you. They have the same aspirations and interests, and they know better than any outsider would about the issues we deal with on a daily basis. Regardless of the outcome, any anger you may have should NOT be directed towards them. It should be directed towards the folks we work for. Having been through three negotiations I can say this. If you think any of those contracts were bad, you have no idea how bad they could have been!

Women's Committee Report

The Women's Committee of LL1529 would like to print their second cookbook with the membership's help. They welcome favorite recipes from union members and office personnel alike. Please print or type recipes clearly and turn them into your union steward, officer, or a member of the Women's Committee (Nancy Hornbeck, Alice Ziglar, Star Winchester, and Pam Gascon). Recipes need to be turned in by Monday, May 3rd., 2010.

The Women's Committee has T-shirts for sale at \$5.00 each. There is an assortment of sizes They also have some of the 1st. release cookbooks for sale. They are also \$5.00. Please see a Women's committee member.

Note from the Trustees

The semi-annual audit of the finances of our lodge was successfully done Monday, Feb 1. The Audit Committee and the Trustees thank our Financial Secretary, Cindy Stacy for her hard work which allowed the audit to go smoothly. Also much work was done to get the lodge building cleaned out and cleaned up.

March and April regular meetings of Local Lodge #1529
25 Sherman Ave.
Sidney, NY.

All members are welcome to attend.

Tuesday, **March 9, 2010 at 3:45p.m.** and Tuesday, **April 13, 2010 at 2:00p.m.**

Visit our local lodge web site at www.iam1529.org