

Local Lodge 1529 Newsletter

February 2011



Editor: John Murray D49/2nd shift Next meeting is March 8th. at 3:45 P.M. Visit our web site at www.iam1529.org

President's Editorial

Even though work is low in most departments, management has decided to increase overtime hours by mandating weekend overtime, and requiring employees to work eight hours, on one of the three conventional shifts. As is often the case, the necessity for such a move and the rules under which it was to be administered were not articulated properly, nor were they followed uniformly by all supervisors. The reason I was given for the change from "flex-hours" on the weekend to the more ridged weekday shift hours was because the facility needed more structure and it was virtually impossible to determine whether an employee was on a legitimate break or lunch time. For those of us who have been here 30 or more years this is really nothing new. For the first several years I worked here I was never *asked* if I wanted to work a Saturday. The boss came around with a small yellow pass and either handed it to you or left it on your machine or workbench. You had to have something REALLY special going on to be able to work less than eight hours or to work on a shift other than your own. In the mid 1980's the company finally realized that they had a far more productive workforce on the weekends, and got greater participation, when our people were allowed to volunteer their services. Over the course of many years the concept of flex-hours evolved to give our members an even greater ability to work weekends while still being able to participate in life's many activities. It was a win/win situation for both the company and the Union. As if this change to the "old ways" wasn't irritating enough, some departments were allowed to work eight hours on any available shift, further frustrating our members. Sometimes communications do get lost in translation here at Amphenol. The official management position is they will work with employees when possible to accommodate them on shifts other than their own, when possible.

There are a lot of questions surrounding the solicitation of, and rules governing, overtime. This happens every time overtime is mandated on a large scale in the Plant as we are now seeing. We are in the process of preparing an Overtime Question & Answer handout to clear up the most commonly asked questions. This handout will also be formally presented to supervision so that hopefully everyone is on the same page when it comes to matters pertaining to overtime.

There has been a tremendous amount of controversy surrounding the most recent Department 48 Work Flow Center (WFC) Post & Bid. Twelve Grievances were filed as a result of the company's selection process for this WFC. With the Work Flow Centers being a new job in the facility no one is qualified. Therefore everyone is hired as a trainee. As such some believe since no one is qualified then all successful bidders should be selected purely by seniority order. That's never been how the company has selected individuals for jobs, as they have always looked at an individual's past work history to determine who would be the "best" candidate for a job opening. Unfortunately, in this most recent job posting it quite often seemed that an individual's work history had no bearing on who was chosen, with the company also looking at more vague "qualifications" as someone's ability to work well with others and their ability to be trained on new machines. This obviously infuriated many of our people, especially in Department 48, and created a lot of hard feelings. We feel that someone's work history should be looked at in conjunction with their seniority when choosing individuals for these WFC's, and when qualifications are "relatively equal", seniority should prevail, and that's where we come into conflict with management's inherent rights as described in Article III on page seven of our contract which gives the company "sole and exclusive rights of management... to: hire; transfer; promote; demote; etc." In the beginning the company expressed a desire for our more senior employees to post & bid on these WFC jobs, but few did. Many wanted to wait and see what was going to happen, and now that it's apparent the WFC concept is the direction the company is taking for many of our members it's looking like 1:45am on the Titanic and there aren't many lifeboats left. That feeling is particularly true in Dept. 48 which has seen the most WFC's created. The company now recognizes their selection process was seriously flawed and is taking steps to improve how individuals are chosen for future WFC's, as well as for any new Post & Bids. For the sake of all our members, I certainly hope these improvements do take place as more departments and machining areas are designated to become Work Flow Centers. *(continued on next page)*

(President's Editorial cont)

The proof-reading of the new contract is underway by your Negotiating Committee and should be complete by the end of February. The entire contract, from cover to cover, must be proof-read before it can go to the printers. It is anticipated that the new contract should be back from the printers for distribution by the middle to end of March. We will be distributing them to our members as soon as we get them.

**Submitted Testimony of Thea M. Lee on "NAFTA at Year Twelve" September 11, 2006
She is the Policy Director for the Legislation Department of the AFL-CIO**

The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) was sold to the American public and American workers as a market-opening agreement that would create high-paying export-related jobs here in the United States, bring prosperity to Mexico, and spur economic growth and political stability throughout North America. The outcome has been quite different.

While it is true that trade and investment flows between the three North American countries have grown rapidly since NAFTA was implemented in 1994, on measures of much more importance to the average North American citizen, NAFTA has been a dismal failure. Workers in all three NAFTA countries have seen their wages fall or stagnate (failing to keep pace with productivity increases), as job insecurity and inequality have grown. At the same time, NAFTA rules have disadvantaged North American family farmers, many small businesses, consumers, and the environment relative to multinational corporate interests.

Rather than encouraging sustainable and equitable growth, NAFTA has contributed to the loss of jobs and incomes of workers, while enriching the very few. NAFTA's main outcome has been to strengthen the clout and bargaining power of multinational corporations, to limit the scope of governments to regulate in the public interest, and to force workers into more direct competition with each other, while assuring them fewer rights and protections. The increased capital mobility afforded by NAFTA has hurt workers, the environment, and communities in all three NAFTA countries.

Loss of American Jobs

Advocates of NAFTA promised better access to a market of 90 million consumers on our southern border and prosperity for Mexico, yielding a "win-win" outcome. Yet more than twelve years after NAFTA went into effect, our combined trade deficit with Mexico and Canada has ballooned from \$9 billion to \$127 billion. The Labor Department has certified that well over half a million U.S. workers lost their jobs due to NAFTA (through 2002, when the NAFTA-TAA program was merged with other trade-displacement programs), while the Economic Policy Institute estimates that the ballooning NAFTA trade deficit contributed to the loss of more than one million jobs and job opportunities. Even workers who have kept their jobs have seen wages, benefits, and bargaining power eroded under NAFTA. Professor Kate Bronfenbrenner at Cornell University found that since NAFTA was put in place, employers have increasingly used the threat of shifting production to stifle union organizing drives or to block first contracts.

Benefits for Mexico?

One of the main advantages of NAFTA was supposed to be that it would alleviate poverty and low wages in Mexico, helping bring the U.S. and Mexico closer together. However, on this front also, it has fallen short. Real wages in Mexico are actually lower today than before NAFTA was put in place, and the number of people in poverty grew from 62 million to 69 million (through 2003)¹. The number of people crossing the border illegally is estimated to have doubled, contrary to predictions of NAFTA boosters, including then-President Salinas.

Furthermore, Mexico now faces difficult transitions in its farm sector, as the last round of NAFTA's agricultural tariffs are phased out. And the rapid maquiladora employment growth of the 1990s is fading fast, as multinational corporations shift more production to China and other low-wage locations, where workers' rights are severely repressed. These are the logical consequences of a free trade agreement that relied solely on lowering trade barriers and protecting corporate interests, but failed to build an adequate social dimension.

The NAFTA Model

NAFTA undermines our laws by allowing corporations to sue governments and challenge statutes protecting the environment, public health and consumers. In some cases, corporations have even collected compensation from governments for lost profits or other damages. Legislators and ordinary citizens have no effective voice in the dispute resolution process, even though it is the laws they have voted for that are under attack. NAFTA restricts the ability of governments to regulate services delivered across borders and by foreign investors. Under NAFTA, we have had to open the border to Mexican trucks even though we cannot ensure that each of these trucks meets our health and safety standards. Public services have been threatened as well – a case against Canada's postal service under NAFTA is still under way, and has disturbing implications for our governments' ability to regulate and support other essential public services. NAFTA doesn't allow governments in Canada, Mexico and the U.S. to include local preferences or workers' rights criteria in making purchasing decisions. President Clinton issued an executive order banning the federal procurement of goods made with the worst forms of child labor in 1999, he had to exclude Canada and Mexico from the order, because banning goods made by child slave labor would have violated NAFTA's government procurement provisions. ***(To be continued next month)***