

LOCAL 8888

BULLHORN

Issue #2

Bargaining News on the Yard

July, 2008

SPECIAL TWO-PART SERIES

BARGAINING BOOT CAMP BEGINS

We are less than a month from the first negotiations meeting between representatives of USW Local 8888 and Northrop Grumman Newport News on a new collective bargaining agreement that will cover 8,000 shipyard employees.

So what does that really mean to you, especially if you are a newcomer who wasn't around in 2004 when we negotiated our last contract with the company? What can you expect and what should you not expect to happen?

Let's be clear from the git-go - perfect agreements are never reached. Our goal is to get the best contract possible NOW and build the union to get more in the future. How we get there is what this round of negotiations is all about. This two-part series hopefully will get you up to speed on understanding the negotiations process and some basic bargaining concepts. Future BULLHORN leaflets will deal more specifically with issues that our negotiations team will raise at the bargaining table.

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Negotiations is that process where the union and the employer come to the bargaining table as equals with common and conflicting interests to exchange proposals in good faith. The topics of bargaining include wages, hours, benefits and other terms of employment, as well as the conditions under which employees represented by Local 8888 do their work in the shipyard.

Negotiations Committee - The Local 8888 Negotiations Committee represents the shipyard workforce covered by the contract. It is your voice at the bargaining table. The committee works on all phases of preparation and bargaining, including developing proposals and strategies, communicating with members, making tentative agreements during bargaining and assisting in the ratification process.

Contract proposals usually fall into the following categories:

- Economic Proposals (have fixed cost to the employer)
- Non-Economic (no easily determined cost)
- Cooperative and Mutual Interest (easier to agree on)

Stages of Negotiations

Let's take a closer look at what normally happens during the stages of negotiations:

During the PRELIMINARY stage, the two sides try to establish a positive, productive "climate" for negotiations. The ground rules of the talks, if any, are discussed, and most importantly, the union's bargaining committee establishes its equal status and authority.

During the OPENING stage, the union presents proposals, listen to the other side's proposals, and attempting to "understand" what the important issues will be.

The EXPLORATORY stage is where most of the bargaining takes place, and is the longest stage. This is the heart of the process, where issues are discussed, where parties caucus and change positions, make counter proposals, test out ideas, look for solutions to problems.

Hopefully, if things go well, we reach the CLOSING stage, where both parties agree on issues, at least in principle, write out what they have agreed on, and spend time clarifying any questions about the agreement. At this point, either the process has worked, and we have a tentative agreement, or agreement in principle, or we conclude that we are unable to reach an agreement and we consider alternatives.

Support Your Local 8888 Negotiations Committee!

Alton Glass, Sr. - Local 8888 president
Danny Keefer - Grievance Committee Chair
Arthur Keyes X31
Vincent Harris 053

Linwood Parrish X43
Verna Chamberliss X42
Ralph Baker X18

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Part 2: Ratification of the Contract, Pressure Points, and Your Involvement