

June 20, 2006

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

We wish to take this opportunity to address the misleading “30-day” pledge of the USW. You may have seen the USW’s flyer asking you to “give the Steelworkers the opportunity to represent you in negotiations with AK Steel.” The USW promises to be available for “round-the-clock, marathon negotiations,” and to provide you access to the USW Strike & Defense Fund. The USW further promises that “if, 30 days after those negotiations begin, there is no Contract Settlement acceptable to a majority of the Membership, and YOU tell us, by secret ballot vote, that YOU are not satisfied with the progress being made, then the United Steelworkers will step aside.”

First and foremost, read the USW pledge closely. It does not kick in until USW-led “negotiations begin.” Those negotiations *cannot* begin unless and until you choose the USW to represent you. This choice can only be made in one of three ways: 1) by affiliation, which requires 75% of all members choosing to affiliate with the USW; 2) by the USW winning an NLRB election with a majority of all votes cast, or; 3) by the USW obtaining signed authorization cards from 50% of you, and receiving the voluntary recognition of AK Steel (something AK Steel has already denied the IAM). All three options are time-consuming, and all 3 options are unlikely. At this writing, it appears that the USW does not enjoy the support of even 10% of the membership; certainly, it has yet to file a showing of 10% support with the NLRB (contrast this poor showing with the 58% support the IAM has achieved to date). So, even assuming this “pledge” is made in good faith, it won’t happen tomorrow – or any time soon. So much for 30 days.

But perhaps that is why the “pledge” requires closer reading – it doesn’t kick in until USW “negotiations begin.” This brings us to our second point. It is the Company’s negotiating committee, not your negotiating committee, that has not been available for “round-the-clock marathon negotiations.” The USW fails to explain by what black magic it will suddenly convince the Company to be available for “round-the-clock marathon negotiations.”

But let us assume the USW can win an election, an affiliation drive, or even obtain 50% support of the membership. And let us further assume that the USW can entice the Company to engage in “round-the-clock, marathon negotiations” (we hesitate to ask what they will offer up as an enticement). The USW then – and only then – promises a contract settlement within 30 days “acceptable to a majority of the Membership.” We can only assume this means the USW would submit such a settlement to a ratification vote (the USW does not specify whether they mean by 50% of the total membership or 50% of those participating in a ratification vote, or perhaps some other percentage altogether). If the contract settlement is rejected by a majority of the membership, then and only then does the USW promise to “step aside” – but wait. According to the USW, that will require a “secret ballot vote.” Is the USW referring to a “secret ballot vote” following the filing of a decertification petition which requires the signatures of 30% of the membership, and cannot be filed for 1 full year after certification of the USW as your representative under NLRB law? They don’t say. Nor do they say who will represent you following such a vote. The answer is no one – not until another Union is certified as your bargaining representative, or until 75% of the membership votes to affiliate with another Union (assuming the affiliation option is still available). Again, the USW doesn’t say.

Kind of like buying a used car from a stranger, isn’t it. Ignore the slick promises – get the underlying facts.

Fraternally,

Your Executive Committee