



THE OILWORKER

National Oil Bargaining 2008-09

www.oilbargaining.com

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From the Vice President's Desk

Welcome to the First Edition of *The Oil Worker*

This round of oil bargaining is expected to be intense. We have not engaged in a full round of bargaining where every issue is on the table since 2001-02.

The industry is getting ready for us and is already trying to find out what our bargaining strategy will be. *Oil Worker* editor Lynne Baker reports that she received a phone call from a person who was working for one of the oil companies and was assigned to get the contracts our union negotiated in other pattern settlements with other industries. Now we know that the tire and aluminum industries are nothing like the oil industry, but that does not stop the oil companies from trying to compare their contracts to industries with entirely different circumstances. Lynne was also asked for our union's strategy in bargaining. She said that when the companies divulge their strategies, then we will as well. That ended that question.

So you can see that the industry is already taking steps to prepare for negotiations. We have to be ready for the oil companies as well. Doing that requires that we engage in Building Power training to learn how to mobilize, engage and communicate with each other effectively and create communication vehicles like newsletters

and websites.

This is where *The Oil Worker* comes in. *The Oil Worker* is a newsletter for all the oil locals, and is devoted to informing and mobilizing the membership during oil bargaining and beyond. It will include bargaining updates; industry news; material about Building Power training; information about the health care crisis and health and safety, including news about health and safety incidents and the industry's progress toward a safe workplace; and news about what is happening internationally in the oil sector and with oil workers around the world.

The publication will come out twice a month and be two to four pages in length depending on how much material we have. When we get closer to oil bargaining, we will publish more frequently.

When you get your copy of *The Oil Worker*, be sure to make enough copies for your members and distribute it during non-work time using your Communication Action Teams, steward system or Rapid Response network. Be sure to leave copies in areas like lunchrooms and break rooms.

It is important that we get this information out to the membership. If we are going to get improvements in

health care and health and safety—two items you all have said are the main issues for this round of bargaining—we need to be informed and mobilized. This newsletter is a vehicle for creating worker solidarity, which we must have if we are going to make some real gains in bargaining.

Be sure to check out our oil bargaining section of the USW website. Type in www.oilbargaining.org or go to "Campaigns" at the top of the USW home page (www.usw.org) and scroll down to "Oil Bargaining Campaign." On it you will find the 2002 national oil bargaining settlement, press release on the 2005 contract extension, history of oil bargaining from 1965-2005 and photos from the 2007 conference. More items, including each issue of *The Oil Worker*, will be posted as time goes on.

February 2, 2009 at 12:01 a.m.—our contract expiration date for the national oil bargaining pattern settlement—will be here before we know it. Let's get informed and mobilized so we can create a better future for ourselves, our families and our communities.

Gary Beevers
International Vice President in charge of national oil bargaining

Building Power Training Creates Stronger Local Unions

Since receiving Building Power training, Local 13-243 members at the ExxonMobil refinery in Beaumont, Texas, have a monthly newsletter, tripled the number of stewards, increased participation in the union, improved attendance at union meetings and sent the message to management that they are getting united.

This training is one of the best ways to build our union and improve our ability to get better contracts. It is based on building membership support around our union's bargaining issues. The way to do that is to involve our members in contract negotiations by focusing on activities they can do away from the bargaining table to increase the leverage of the bargaining committee.

Building Power training teaches the local how to communicate with every member by building a Communication Action Team (CAT) with representatives from every area, crew and shift. By the end of the training your local will have developed a newsletter and an overall strategic plan for upcoming bargaining.

Training Pays Off

"It was well worth the money for the training, and the training was interesting all the time," said Local 13-243 CAT Coordinator Jesse Herin.

Local 13-243 Secretary-Treasurer Darrell Kyle said it is hard to get 850 people at the refinery motivated, but that the communication process started from the Building Power training has gotten more people to the union meetings and more of them interested in running for office and becoming involved in the union.

Kyle said he recommends the training to other locals. "It's a great way to keep all the members involved with the local and what the local leadership is doing, which makes your members

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more vocal, more informed and involved in the day-to-day business of the local. This all makes your local stronger.

"I've gotten nothing but a positive response from the membership," he added.

Herin said several former members rejoined the union that had gotten out and that a lot of the younger employees are asking more questions and are asking how to get involved.

More Positive Feedback

Kyle said that with the increase in stewards more of the union's business is being taken care of. "People are seeing it and are feeling more positive about the union," he said. "The whole process of Building Power has turned a lot of negative feedback into positive feedback regarding the union."

The monthly newsletter also is drawing in more involvement, Herin and Kyle said. Members ask what will be in the next newsletter and when is it coming out.

The 47-member CAT team hands out the newsletter and union merchandise like hats and pins—a job that used to take a long time before the CAT team was formed.

Herin and Kyle said management is also taking notice of the new activism.

"We heard that upper management in Fairfax, Va., is questioning what the CAT team is and what we're doing. We kind of like that," Herin said.



Building Power Training Sessions

June 18-20
Lima, OH

June 19-23
Salt Lake City, UT

June 23-25
Port Arthur, TX

July 15-17
New Orleans, LA

July 22-24
Houston, TX

July 29-31
Fort Wayne, IN
Philadelphia, PA
Anacortes, WA
Denver, CO

If your local would like to have Building Power training, contact International Vice President Gary Beevers at (409) 838-1972.

Building Power in Texas at ExxonMobil Refinery

By Jesse L. Herin

We have progressed in ways not thought possible by many of our members at the USW Local 13-243 in Beaumont, Texas. Many of the improvements in the last six months have come behind the Building Power campaign. We thought long and hard about our upcoming negotiations set for the beginning of 2009. With many people in our Refinery & B&P retiring and an abundance of new hires, our communication, morale, and unity was low.

We knew a change was needed and it started with Ron and Melinda coming from Pittsburgh to set us on our Building Power journey. We received three days of training at the local union hall which proved to be an invaluable learning experience. We trained 22 union members from ExxonMobil and

one union member from Firestone at the Power Workshop. These members now form a part of our Communication Action Team (CAT) at ExxonMobil. The next month we set up a one-day training for 25 more of our members who also work for ExxonMobil.

CAT Team Unites Workers

Our CAT team is used to pass information by paper and word of mouth within hours through the 800-plus members at our site. It will also be a valuable and necessary tool during our contract negotiations coming next year. This CAT team has united people from all areas of our workplace who otherwise would have no contact or connection to each other. Our 47-member CAT team works together with call lists and distribution

schemes to make sure all USW members receive the information they need to stay informed and make their opinions count.

With increased union activity in our workplace, we also have seen a dramatic increase in member involvement. We have more than doubled the amount of union stewards in our complex in the last few months. We now have more than 60 union stewards helping us with our daily issues.

More Communication, Organization

Another aspect of Building Power that we have utilized is our right to communicate with our members. For the last five months we have put out "The Bottom Line" newspaper which has contained

information important to our members. It has really brought everyone closer and brought the morale up. It has really caught the attention of our management and helped increase involvement through our local.

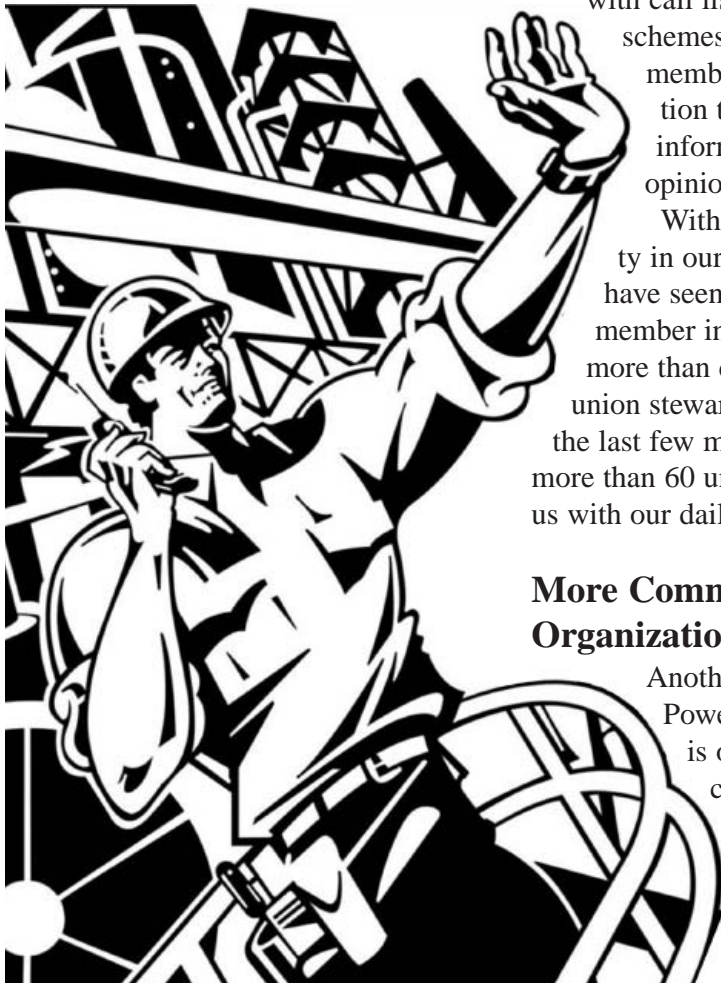
Through Building Power we have also created a calendar for the next year of upcoming events and activities we would like to make happen. This has really helped us to stay on track and know where we are at in our process. It also breaks things down over a year and helps us to take one action at a time so that we do not feel so pressured all of the time to do everything at once. We have a good plan and dates that we can give our members. This really helps to ease their minds and as a result, they have more confidence in us as union leaders.

Future Plans

We have plans in the next two months to provide training in three main areas. We will provide another Building Power workshop (for not only ExxonMobil employees but several other companies in our local also), union steward training, and grievance handling training. We have more than 50 people set up to be trained and are really looking forward to watching our people unite even more. We believe in the union way and will continue to promote it in any way possible. Building Power has been an important asset to our future and our goals and we are proud to be a part of it.

We have a long year ahead of us and we will continue to push forward, not only for ourselves, but for our young, our old and those who have gone before us who have given us what we have today. We believe that our work will pay off and are looking toward a better future and a better life.

(Jesse L. Herin is on the Local 13-243 workman's committee and is a union steward.)



OSHA Refinery Inspections Yield Numerous Violations

This past spring, OSHA visited 17 out of 81 targeted U.S. refineries in its national audit of refining operations and found 146 violations, many of them described as potentially life-threatening.

OSHA's director of enforcement found the results so disturbing that he does not intend to end the refinery inspection program after two years and wants to extend it to chemical plants.

Decades of refinery deaths prompted OSHA to initiate a nationwide audit of refineries last June. In the next two years 64 more refineries will be inspected.

OSHA said that 52 refinery employees have died in the past 15 years. This figure, however, does not represent the deaths of contract workers at refineries.

The Houston Chronicle reported that at least 29 people have died in U.S. refinery incidents from 2005 to 2008, including 18 in four separate incidents at BP Texas City alone. BP refineries in Texas City and Washington account for 20 of those 29 deaths. The remaining nine deaths were at refineries of different companies in Texas, California, Minnesota, Delaware and Louisiana.

So far, 11 proposed violations have been uncovered at Total Petrochemicals USA's refinery in Port Arthur; 45 at a Canton, Ohio, refinery; and 19 at a Kansas refinery, among others. In eight months, inspectors have proposed \$896,300 in penalties.

OSHA proposed levying a \$153,500 fine against the Frontier El Dorado, Kansas, Refining Co. for 19 violations. OSHA alleged that the company committed one "willful violation" by locating a permanently occupied structure in a high hazard zone among refinery processing units. The agency also alleged that the refinery failed to address fire, explosion and chemical

OSHA defines a "willful violation" as an alleged blatant disregard of or indifference to an obvious safety hazard.

hazards. Many of those killed in the March 2005 BP Texas City explosion were in offices that were too close to a processing unit.

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While Frontier is contesting the fines and violations, three other companies in Ohio, Illinois and Wisconsin have agreed to pay more than \$600,000 in fines and to correct the unsafe conditions and practices.

At a Marathon Petroleum Co. refinery in Ohio, OSHA inspectors found, among other problems, that piping was inadequately protected from corrosion.

In Illinois, OSHA found safety problems at Citgo's Lemont refinery, including potential fire hazards and inadequate training.

OSHA inspectors had not been seen for 10 years when they showed up at the Murphy Oil USA refinery in Wisconsin. Among the problems

they found were safety alarms that had been deactivated. One of the problems contributing to the Texas City disaster was malfunctioning alarms that failed to alert operators of dangerous conditions.

BP's five U.S. refineries are under OSHA's "Enhanced Enforcement Program" because of repeated and persistent violations of federal safety rules. BP was the first major energy company to be included in the EEP, which was created in 2003 for companies found to have willful violations of workplace safety laws.

Sixty refineries are exempt from the ongoing audit in part because of their companies' past participation in other OSHA programs. Only about half of Texas' refineries will be included in the audit.

