

## TRUTH, LIES AND SOLIDARITY



*CAW 2301 representatives joined Steelworkers members on the picket line on Friday, January 20th.*

On Thursday and Friday, January 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>, the CAW 2301 delegation to Alma met with CAW and United Steelworkers representatives and Alma smelter workers.

All of the meetings between the CAW 2301 delegation and Quebec representatives were moderated and translated by Pierre Deschenes, President of the Mine/Mill Council. These meetings would not have been possible without Brother Deschenes' assistance.

On the Thursday, the CAW 2301 delegation, comprised of Ed Abreu – President, Sean O'Driscoll – Business Agent and Martin McIlwrath – Trustee and bargaining committee member, met with CAW leadership from the region, ahead of Friday's visit to Alma, to discuss the main issue in the Alma dispute, which is contracting out. Talks were focused on comparing the situation in Alma with how contracting out has been addressed in CAW collective agreements.

CAW workers in Quebec have pulled together with a financial contribution to the Steelworkers of 1 million dollars in support of their fight against our common employer, RTA.

It was made clear that RTA has become much more aggressive in its desire to contract out as much production and maintenance work as it can. Alain Gagnon, President of CAW Local 1937, explained that CAW contracts utilize a model known as a "recipe" to identify what work belongs to the bargaining unit. This recipe is subject to modifications through bargaining.

On the Friday, your CAW 2301 contingent spent time on the picket line with Alma workers. It must be reported, Brothers and Sisters, that the Alma workers greeted your representatives warmly and with an incredible outpouring of solidarity. Solidarity knows no language barriers!

Regional Director Denis Lepage issued a press release on behalf of CAW, Brother Abreu addressed the media and there was extensive television, radio and internet coverage of the visit.

A meeting was held with Steelworkers officers, including Marc Maltais, President of the Alma Local. It was important for CAW 2301 to clearly understand what the real issues behind the dispute were and what it would take to resolve it. Contracting out is the only outstanding issue at the Alma smelter.

The Steelworkers' collective agreement has contracting out language almost identical to ours and the foreign-owned RTA has applied a much more repressive interpretation of the language than the former Alcan ever had.

One approach that RTA has taken is that if a service is being contracted out at more than 50% of its smelters then it will push to contract out the same service in ALL of its smelters. This is why the fight to preserve bargaining unit work is important to the Alma workers as their struggle transcends Alma's situation and impacts smelter workers across the country.

The Alma workers on the picket line expressed very passionately that their struggle was to preserve bargaining unit work for future generations and for unionized RTA workers from coast to coast.

RTA has reported in the media that it is not looking at contracting out its "core business", such as casting and reduction operations, but the Steelworkers have been given no guarantees of this in writing and showed us proposed language which is commonly referred to as "weasel words" with regards to so-called core services.

Months ahead of the lockout by RTA of its Alma smelter workers it was obvious that RTA was making more than just contingency plans in preparation for a labour dispute. To begin with, RTA began hiring additional staff months before the December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2011, contract expiry date and had over 120 hired thugs on hand to clear out the plant once the lockout was declared.

The Quebec Ministry of Labour has now found that RTA was in violation of the province's labour law by hiring extra staff, to be used during a labour dispute, after the legislated deadline.

The bottom line is that when it comes to contracting out RTA cannot simply be trusted and the only way to preserve bargaining unit work is through strong contract language. This is exactly what the CAW 2301 membership has mandated its Bargaining Committee to achieve in 2012 negotiations by declaring contracting out as a strike issue.

CAW 2301 was also given a heads up to be on guard for the next wave of company initiatives known as the New Business Model; like LEAN, this program must be resisted in Kitimat just as it is in Quebec.

The CAW and Steelworkers unions representing workers in RTA plants have forged a very strong relationship in recent months and will continue to do so as we now communicate via social media and have been set up for teleconferencing at the hall.

These improved relations will further enable RTA's unionized workers, regardless of union affiliation, to develop a unified, aligned approach to meeting challenges from our common employer.

For more information on the Alma visit, please be sure to attend the next membership meeting, this **Thursday, January 26<sup>th</sup> @ 7pm.**

***FIGHTING BACK MAKES A DIFFERENCE!***