

Local 75 Members Exercise Their Rights on The Job, Achieve New Contract

UFCW Local 75 members in negotiations with Kroger in Greater Cincinnati took a stand for free speech on the job and demonstrated to the company their unity and union pride. One way the members helped signify their support for each other was through wearing UFCW stickers at work, a proud show of force to the company that workers were active, informed, and knew what rights were afforded to them by their contract.



UFCW Local 75 members Jamie Whaley, Karen Bedinghaus, and Jim Kelly display their solidarity by wearing UFCW stickers.

Days after workers started wearing stickers, they were able to reach a tentative agreement with Kroger. “To get an agreement like this in such a challenging economic environment is really a testament to the strength and solidarity of the membership,” said Lennie Wyatt, President of Local 75.

On November 4th, the Cincinnati workers overwhelmingly ratified the new three-year contract. The new contract includes compensation increases, benefit improvements, and additional pension contributions.

Soon after the sticker campaign began, a co-manager at-

tempted to physically remove the stickers from uniforms—a clear violation of not only the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) but also Local 75 members’ contract—and the manager subsequently acknowledged their right to wear the stickers and apologized to the members. Companies cannot prohibit stickers or buttons based on no-strike clauses because most no-strike clauses do not explicitly prohibit members from specifically wearing stickers or buttons—a prohibition rarely, if ever, agreed to in contracts. The NLRA also provides workers with the right to engage in speech-like activities, for example wearing stickers or buttons. **OP**

Landmark Case Extends Protected Speech to Social Media

In a landmark case regarding the rights of workers and social media, the NLRB has accused a company of illegally firing an employee after she criticized her supervisor on her Facebook page.

Companies and individuals alike have struggled to adapt and anticipate how existing laws might apply in new media. The NLRB case is the first incidence in which the labor board has stepped in to argue that employers would be violating the law by punishing workers for statements made criticizing their bosses or companies on social networking sites.

The case involves an ambulance service, American Medical Response of Connecticut, that fired an emergency medical technician, accusing her, among other things, of violating a policy that bars employees from depicting the company “in any way” on Facebook or other social media sites in which they post pictures of themselves.

Lafe Solomon, the board’s acting general counsel, said, “This is a fairly straightforward case under the National Labor Relations Act—whether it takes place on Facebook or at the water cooler, it was employees talking jointly about working conditions, in this case about their supervisor, and they have a right to do that.”



For more details on the case, you can find the link to the recent NY Times article on the UFCW Blog, www.ufcwblog.org. **OP**

Why, Big Y?

The Big Y grocery company bought six A&P stores and has been reopening them as Big Y stores in Connecticut—but has barely hired back any of the experienced, long-time A&P workers who were already working in those stores. At the same time, Big Y has laid off many of its own workers, and has encouraged full-timers to take voluntary layoffs.

It's terrible any time someone loses a job, but when a company is expanding--what sense does that make? Why get rid of experienced workers from our communities, only to hire new ones to replace them? Full time or part time, these grocery jobs should be good jobs—jobs that offer good wages and benefits and a path to advancement.

With your help, we want to hold Big Y accountable—by asking Why, Big Y? Please join us in asking the tough questions on Big Y's Facebook page and Twitter feed, like:

- Why did Big Y lay off so many of its own workers, and ask others to take voluntary layoffs—when the company is expanding and hiring?
- Why did Big Y refuse to hire back most A&P workers when it reopened old A&P stores under the Big Y banner?
- Why won't Big Y listen to loyal A&P shoppers—who've asked repeatedly for Big Y to re-hire the A&P workers who customers have come to regard as family?
- Why won't Big Y reward years of hard work and loyalty, so full-timers AND part-timers alike can have the opportunity they deserve?
- Why is Big Y making these tough economic times even tougher for laid-off workers and their families?

You can find Big Y's Facebook page here <http://www.facebook.com/bigyworldclassmarket>

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And Big Y's Twitter feed is @BigYFoods and the hashtag we'd like to use is #whybigy **OP**

Merger of the Textile and Garment Council with the ICWUC Announced

International Chemical Workers Council (ICWUC) President Frank Cyphers announced the merger of the Textile and Garment Council with the ICWUC at the Fifth Regular Convention of the ICWUC/UFCW.

“This merger puts growth as our number one way of helping our present members gain marketshare and strength in bargaining with their employers, and helps the unorganized gain a voice in their own workplaces,” said Cyphers.



The Executive Board being sworn in by UFCW Executive Vice President Patrick O'Neill. From left to right: Pat O'Neill, Chuck Denny, Neal Dillard, Greg Villanova, Frank Cyphers, Art Stevens, Gerry Setley and John Lewis.

The merger will become effective January 1, 2011 and will bring approximately 7,300 new members into the ICWUC. The convention was held at the Paris Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas, Nevada. **OP**