

Bargaining Solidarity Update #18

May 7, 2012

Over the weekend and again this morning the IBEW and OPEIU worked on a “flexibility” proposal on the health care issue. Monday’s bargaining session was devoted exclusively to the health insurance issue. **The Unions presented a comprehensive approach that would provide a framework within which the Employer could establish numerous health insurance options and thereby to address their needs.** The Unions and the Company would negotiate a range of options and the Employer could establish those that were necessary to address whatever issues may arise over the course of the contract.

After a lengthy caucus the Company proposed to drop their “flexibility” option and replace it with one which would maintain the existing plans and bargaining rights – but would see the Union members’ premiums go to 20% in 2013 and absorbing 50% of any overall premium increase in 2014. If we want to avoid this, members could, individually, go into the salaried employees plan and take whatever the Company offers there in terms of plans and premiums. To avoid the drastic premium increases, employees would have to “escape” to the salaried plan.

The point of all of this appears to be the elimination bargaining over health insurance through a rather creative manner, but elimination is the apparent end game. It’s a very creative “Walkerist” proposal – the elimination of bargaining rights over health care by another means.

The Company no longer will meet with the Unions jointly. On Wednesday IBEW will bargain with MGE and on Thursday the OPEIU will bargain with MGE. It’s very hard bargaining. **It’s time for Union members to start thinking about what they are going to do to keep their rights and their health insurance.**

Please contact your **Solidarity Committee Representative** for more details and please check our website, www.ibew2304.com, in the Members Only section for additional exhibits.

In Solidarity,

IBEW 2304 Bargaining Committee