

FEBRUARY 2010



# USW LOCAL 1137

*Representing the Maintenance, Storeroom,  
Transportation and Fire Control employees of  
International Paper's Courtland, AL Mill*

**OFFICERS:**

*President: Johnny Phillips  
Vice President: James Messer  
Recording Secretary: Edwin Smith  
Financial Secretary: Ray Boston  
Treasurer: Bill Flippo  
Trustees: Keith Hensley, Junior Hol-  
den, Kevin Messer  
Guide: David Dutton  
Guards: David Garrison, Robert  
Poellnitz*



## A Response to President Obama's State of the Union Speech

*Leo W. Gerard, International President*



**Upcoming Meetings:**

**Monday February 8**  
**Monday March 8**  
**Monday April 12**  
**3:45 PM**

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*James Messer  
was the  
winner of the  
USW jacket  
at our December  
meeting.*

**Stewards Meeting**  
**Friday Feb. 5**  
**7:30 a.m.**  
**Maintenance**  
**Training Center**

We are encouraged by President Obama's focus on jobs and agree that getting people back to work should be our nation's top priority. With unemployment in double digits, there is no time to waste. But not just any job will do. We need quality jobs that give our families a real shot at a better life, that support our communities and that serve as the solid foundation for a healthy economy.

We need a long-term strategy to create jobs that create real wealth. We've seen the devastation of an economy that relies too heavily on artificial wealth created on Wall Street, an economy that has suffered because of the decades' long decimation of our manufacturing base. It's urgent that we keep Main Street in mind as we move forward. Our members are losing patience with talk; they desperately want action now.

Reinvesting in clean, efficient and modern domestic manufacturing must be a key part of our nation's recovery, just as it has been a priority for China, Germany, India, France and other countries. Manufacturing jobs pay 10 to 50 percent more than service sector jobs and every manufacturing job supports five more jobs. Creating 2.5 million new manufacturing jobs in the United States would mean at least \$100 billion for our economy over the next decade.

The president did not back down from big ideas and neither should our nation or our elected leaders. Now's not the time for short-term, piecemeal solutions. We need a sustained strategy for green jobs that are also good jobs right here at home; infrastructure projects that will take us into the next century and encourage long-term investments in our manufacturing base; *continued on Page 2*

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*Continued from Page 1* and health insurance reform that truly lowers costs to help us create jobs, provides quality coverage for all Americans and does not tax anyone's benefits.

We urge the president and Congress to not let bad trade deals undermine the creation of good jobs. We've heard the vow before that trade deals would be good for us. Unfortunately, we've felt the pain of those broken promises first-hand. When these agreements are not enforced, it not only costs us millions of good jobs, it's counterproductive to our commitment to a cleaner environment and human rights worldwide. And it's deadly for trade unionists in places like Colombia and South Korea.

We need job-creating action that is bold, swift and sustained. The United Steelworkers are ready to roll up our sleeves and help President Obama get our economy back on track by getting Americans back to work. Let's get started.

**By-Laws Change** The by-laws change, concerning the salaries of our Financial Secretary and Treasurer, was read at our November and December meetings. It was read again at the January meeting, voted on and approved. Updated by-laws are available on our Local's website [www.usw1137.org](http://www.usw1137.org)

**Maintenance Sick Fund** It was decided at a January meeting of Sick Fund members to raise dues from \$8 to \$10 per pay period. This was done to prevent having to reduce benefits. The change should take effect in February.

**Support Our Troops** If you have family or friends serving in the military, please give us their names and addresses. We will be sending packages to servicemen and women again soon and would like to include them. Just give their name, relationship and address to Johnny or Edwin.



*Robert "Babe" Wilson of C-Shift Maintenance:*

SPC WILSON, ROBERT  
HSC 877TH EN. BN.  
TASKFORCE BUILDER  
FOB SHARANA  
APO AE 09311

ROBERT.WILSON24@US.ARMY.MIL

Everyone, especially our stewards, should check out our website at [www.usw1137.org](http://www.usw1137.org) fairly often. We try to keep it updated with the latest information for our members. If you have anything you would like to see posted there, let us know and we will try to do it. We have links to several interesting websites for union members.



An individual has not started living until he can rise above the narrow confines of his individualistic concerns to the broader concerns of all humanity.

*Martin Luther King, Jr.*



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## Catching up ...

We, as a mill, had a terrible time at the end of 2009, with 8 recordables in a 6 week period. Management, under a lot of pressure from Memphis to 'fix' safety at Courtland, and to increase employee engagement in safety, issued a plan to require every employee to generate a list of 3 safety initiatives to be responsible for this year. This created a groundswell of resentment and served more to disengage those who had been engaged. This has since been modified to be more of a crew effort and will hopefully be more successful. We ALL want Courtland to be a safer place to work and I know that every crew out here can, working together, find things they can do to make that happen. I am also aware, and have told management on several occasions, that it is hard to convince people you want them 'engaged' in safety when (it appears to the employee) that the company only listens if our ideas fit in with their plans. It's hard to get a guy to volunteer to participate in extra safety stuff while he is telling you he feels his job is unsafe due to added responsibilities and reduced manpower. It seems management has confused participation with engagement. You can mandate participation by job assignment but that does nothing to improve engagement.

Although we still have some problems and some members who are still fighting to get their FMLA or STD straightened out, we also have had a few successes. One member, after having his claim denied and being told his appeal would be denied, managed (with the help of the USW staff) to get his appeal handled by a different appeals manager. His appeal was approved, he has received his backpay and he has since had an extension approved so his STD benefits can continue for the full 26 weeks.

I know this doesn't help any if you are one of the ones arguing with Sedgwick but I assure you Courtland isn't the only place having these problems. Sedgwick is being talked about at higher levels and will be a major point of discussion during any 2011 Master Agreement talks.

The first round of 2010 vacation scheduling is complete and available weeks are now being filled on a 'first-come first-served' basis. Due to the confusion and fussing caused every year by the 'waiting list' for full weeks, and in lieu of a contractually mandated way of making such a list, we will be doing something different and, we believe, more fair this year. The waiting list has been compiled as the schedule was being filled out. When a week got full, the next person who put in for it and didn't

get it went on the waiting list. This will allow the senior most person, the person who would have gotten that week if it wasn't full, to be first on the list. Of course, if I had it down as my third choice and someone junior to me had it as their first, he is ahead of me on the list as he would have gotten it ahead of me if it had not been full.

The company put out a communication recently that the mill's gain sharing plan has received all necessary approval, the only thing we have to do now is become 'Safety' eligible. One way of doing this is to have our rolling 24 month TIR get down to 1.23. I hope we reach this goal but I'd rather not have gain sharing than to have people not reporting injuries. Another way to become eligible is to become a VPP site. Everyone knows we did everything right and should have been accepted into VPP last year but our timing was just so bad ... we had OSHA here just after IP had had 2 fatalities and also just as the Department of Labor was undergoing political changes. There is a belief among a lot of folks that if we reapply we will be accepted. We will be able to reapply by July and that is being discussed as a possibility.

Mr. Bruner's new boss, Kirt Cuevas, visited the mill recently. In meetings with me and officials from the other Locals, he expressed how impressed he was with Courtland; not just the mill but the people he had talked to during his tour. More than once, he made comments about how Courtland is the kind of place and has the kind of people that the company should be willing to invest money in for the long-term.

Robert 'Babe' Wilson has been home for a couple of weeks but is now back in Afghanistan. His assignment, unless they get extended, will be up in April. He will have some leave time built up and lots of things to catch up on but he plans to be back at work in May or June. He brought us an American flag as well as returning the USW flag we had sent him, along with certificates declaring that both had flown over their headquarters in Afghanistan. We will be displaying both flags at our union hall.

 **Check the Union Plus website to learn about discounts and services available to Union members - [www.unionplus.org](http://www.unionplus.org)**

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**New towers are clear as Chinese glass**

*Jim Hightower*

You can knock us Americans down, but you can't keep us down.

For example, the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York City were crashed to the ground on 9/11. But now, a new tower is rising from those very ashes — a soaring steel and glass monument to the American spirit, a powerful symbol of our national resiliency!

OUR JOBS. OUR CHOICE.



**BUY AMERICAN.**

Well — except for the glass. A company named Beijing Glass got the government contract to provide the window panes that'll cover the first 20 stories of the tower. Yes, the monument to our national spirit is being sheathed with made-in-China glass.

What? Can't Americans make glass?

Of course — but our biggest corporations, like Corning and Guardian, have been quietly and quickly moving their production and our jobs to China. In just the past nine years, 30 percent of these jobs have been lost.

"Those who're looking through the rearview mirror waiting for the glass industry to come back, should know it isn't going to come back," the chairman of Guardian told the *New York Times* in January. Indeed, Guardian now employs more workers in its 36 foreign plants than it does here.

Well, chirp the usual flock of free trade economists, it's all about China providing "economies of scale" for manufacturers. Hogwash.

The glass industry's rush abroad is all about getting cheap labor and massive subsidies from the Chinese government. For example, shipping heavy glass from Beijing to Manhattan would be prohibitively expensive — except that China subsidizes the transportation.

This is not free trade, it's a raw deal. There should be a stiff tariff on all subsidized glass coming from China — and the new World Trade tower is so symbolically important that every inch of it should be American made.

**Homer Wilson Scholarship for Steelworker Children**

**Any high school student graduating this Spring is eligible to compete for this \$1,000 Scholarship if they are the son, step-son, daughter, step-daughter or legal ward of a member in good standing of a Local Union in District 9, USW. See Edwin Smith or Johnny Phillips for complete rules and an application.**

**Union Hall Lawn Care**

Later this month, bids will be taken for lawn care at the union hall from March 2010 through February 2011. Watch the bulletin boards for details on how and when to submit your bids.

**Suggestions and ideas for the newsletter can be turned in to any of the officers. We want this to be interesting and useful for the members of Local 1137 so let us know what you want and need to see in the newsletter and on the website!**



*Whenever someone in your crew has a death in their family, please contact Johnny or Edwin so we can take care of the flowers and/or Bibles. Don't just assume we know, we'd rather be told several times than not at all.*

Say something **GOOD** about your Union today