

UFCW Local 1208 Members Approve First Contract with Smithfield Packing in Tar Heel



(Above and bottom right) Workers at the world's largest pork processing facility in Tar Heel, N.C., ratified their first contract by 85 percent.

UFCW Local 1208 members voted overwhelmingly to approve their first-ever contract with Smithfield Packing in Tar Heel, N.C. The four-year agreement covers approximately 5,000 workers at the world's largest pork processing plant and immediately lifts wages, benefits, and working conditions.

The new agreement took effect July 1 and includes:

- ✓ \$1.50 wage increase over the next four years;
- ✓ Improved sick leave, bereavement leave, and vacation benefits;
- ✓ Affordable employer-provided health care;
- ✓ Retirement security through protection of a defined-benefit pension plan;
- ✓ Joint worker/management safety committee, including company-funded safety training for workers;
- ✓ Guaranteed weekly hours that protect full-time, family-supporting jobs in the community.

"We are living in historic times right now," said Terry Slaughter, a seven-year employee at Smithfield. "People really didn't think that the Tar Heel plant was going to be

unionized because of the long battle. We have some good language in the contract that will ensure we will be treated fairly and our voice will be heard."

Bargaining committee member Pam Norris is pleased with the agreement because it guarantees hours of paid work per week. Norris said she previously worked 57 hours one week and 24 hours another week within a month span. "We never knew what our paycheck was going to be," said Norris.

The contract brings the Tar Heel workers' wages, benefits, and working conditions in line with other UFCW-represented Smithfield plants. With the Tar Heel workers, the UFCW now represents almost 17,000 workers out of Smithfield Food's workforce of 38,000. While the new contract improves the lives of Tar Heel workers, it also builds greater bargaining strength among all UFCW Smithfield workers across the country.

Jim Olson, a UFCW Local 304A steward and 35-year employee at Smithfield's John Morrell plant in Sioux Falls, S.D., says he knows the difference a union contract makes.

"The more meatpacking workers who join our union, the more power we have to raise wages and benefits—in our local unions, and for everybody who works in the industry," Olson said. **OP**



UFCW Local 1036 Members Merge with Local 770 and Local 8-Golden State for Greater Bargaining Power

Effective July 1, members of UFCW Local 1036 merged with UFCW Local 770 and Local UFCW 8-Golden State in California. Local 1036 members in Ventura, Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo and Los Angeles Counties merged with Local 770, while members from Inyo, Mono and Kern Counties merged with Local 8GS.

In May, members of all three local unions voted overwhelmingly to join forces and become stronger bargaining units. Local 770 and Local 8GS now represent close to 35,000 members a piece.

Merging Local 1036 with Locals 770 and 8GS gives their members greater strength at the bargaining table and creates more opportunities for organizing. **OP**

UFCW Members Rally at PriceRite Stores in Four States

UFCW Locals 1, 328, 371, 919, and 1445 held rallies in four states before the Fourth of July holiday to send the message that PriceRite should live up to American values. UFCW members joined with community leaders for informational pickets in front of PriceRite stores in Connecticut, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and New York, and asked customers to sign a letter urging the company to allow workers the freedom to choose a union.

“Price Rite calls itself an American company and says their parent, Wakefern, has a commitment to the community. But many PriceRite workers are given only part-time hours without the job security that’s so important in these economic times,” said UFCW Local 1445’s Jim Carvalho at the Lynnway, Mass., rally. “Workers want to improve their jobs, but Price Rite won’t allow workers the freedom to choose a union without company interference.”

In Bridgeport, Conn., two former Price Rite workers attended the rally with UFCW Local 371 and spoke out about how they were fired after talking to the union. **OP**



Bridgeport, Conn., Mayor Bill Finch joined UFCW members and community members in signing a letter asking PriceRite to allow workers the freedom to choose a union. He reiterated his support for good jobs in the community, saying he learned as a young student that the best social program was a job.

UNI Issues Report Condemning Tesco's Anti-Worker Approach in U.S. and Other Countries

UNI Global Union released the first in a series of reports last week criticizing British retailer Tesco for its labor practices in the U.S., South Korea, and Thailand. UFCW International President Joe Hansen is the president of UNI, which represents 900 trade unions and 20 million workers worldwide.

While Tesco has a positive relationship with the union that represents its workers in Britain, the company operates abroad with another set of labor standards. UNI’s report condemns Tesco for refusing to allow U.S. workers their right to choose a union at the company’s Fresh & Easy stores. The research also shows the company forced workers in South Korea and Thailand to work unpaid overtime.

“Tesco’s employment practices fall short of its published global labor principles in many countries. What we want to see is local consistency with Tesco’s global standards, which is not happening at the moment,” said Alke Bossiger, the head of department for UNI’s commerce unit at a press conference last week. **OP**