

JBS Workers in Souderton Overwhelmingly Choose Union Representation

Nearly 1,200 workers at the JBS plant in Souderton, Pennsylvania, voted to join the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 1776 on October 5th.



“I am delighted that we stood together and made the right choice to form a union,” said Bernard Coneghen, who has worked at the Souderton facility for 27 years. “We had the opportunity to speak with representatives of the UFCW about the benefits of having a voice at work and were able to make an informed choice about forming a union.”

The workers’ victory was the successful conclusion of a months-long campaign designed to give a voice to the nearly 1,200 JBS workers in Souderton, but also as part of a UFCW-led nationwide effort aimed at raising wages and benefits for all workers in the meatpacking and poultry industries.

“The outcome of this election shows that when workers get a free and fair process, they choose union representation,” said Wendell Young, IV, UFCW International Vice President and President of Local 1776. “The UFCW applauds JBS for taking the high road to allow the workers to have a free and fair process. Having a union makes it better for everyone, workers, the company, and the larger community.”

The Brazilian firm JBS, S.A. acquired the former Moyer Packing Company’s Souderton facility with the purchase of the Smithfield Beef Group in 2008. JBS, out of respect for its workers, allowed a free and fair process for workers to decide about union representation.

“We achieved our victory because we stood together and that’s what made us strong,” said Melina Martinez, who has worked at the plant for the last six years. “Now that we have a union, we want to get right to work on a contract that protects our rights and improves our working conditions.”

UFCW Local 1776 represents thousands of packinghouse and food processing workers in Pennsylvania at plants such as Empire Kosher Poultry in Mifflintown, Cargill in Hazelton, BC Natural Chicken in Fredericksburg and Citterio USA in Freeland. **OP**

Walmart Associates Make Huge Gains in Canada

Canadian Walmart associates made three tremendous gains this week. One hundred fifty UFCW Canada Local 500 members in Gatineau, Quebec became the third group of Walmart Canada associates to gain the benefits of a union contract. The new collective agreement comes after several years of efforts, including a lengthy mediation and binding arbitration process. The new contract awards the unionized associates annual wage increases, benefit enhancements, seniority protection, and an impartial and binding grievance procedure.

Meanwhile, associates at the Walmart store in Weyburn, Saskatchewan saw their union certified by the highest court in the province and will be represented by UFCW Local 1400. The certification had originally been issued by the Saskatchewan Labour Board in December 2008. Walmart took extensive legal steps to block the union effort in Weyburn, including its failed attempt to ask the Supreme Court of Canada to intervene. In Saskatchewan, UFCW Canada Local 1400 has applications pending before the Labour Board for Walmart stores in Moose Jaw and North Battleford.

Nearly 200 former Walmart associates in Jonquière, Quebec are one step closer to justice after an October 13 decision by the Quebec Superior Court, which upheld an earlier arbitrator's ruling that found the world's largest retailer acted illegally by laying off 190 employees at its Jonquière store on April 29, 2005.

Shortly after UFCW Canada Local 503 was certified as the Jonquière associates bargaining agent, and the par-



ties were ordered by the Labour Minister to participate in binding arbitration, Walmart shutdown the unionized location – claiming that the busy store was losing sales.

“This is a very good decision that gets the Jonquière workers a lot closer to a just settlement,” says Louis Bolduc, Executive Assistant to UFCW Canada National President Wayne Hanley. “The decision is also a big step forward for all workers in Quebec, because going forward employers will have to explain why they are closing a business – which might make some companies think twice about putting people out of work for reasons that undermine labour rights and hurt working families.” **OP**

H & L Poultry Workers Choose Union Representation

H & L Poultry workers in Warren, Arkansas voted overwhelmingly on October 8th to join UFCW Local 2008. Workers, fed up with the conditions at the plant, were quick to sign cards expressing their desire to join the UFCW, with the vast majority of workers signing on in only a few days.

The plant had been closed, but was reopened as H & L Poultry after acquisition by a private owner. Currently there are about 35 workers at the plant, but it is expected to increase production and add more workers in the near future. With a union voice, workers now have the power to make sure any new jobs are the kind of good jobs needed in their region and the UFCW looks forward to working with H & L Poultry as the company grows. “This could be a real boon for the community,” said Steve T. Gelios, President of Local 2008. “People were very much for it. It’s a real victory.”

By choosing UFCW Local 2008 as their bargaining representative, workers at the H & L Poultry plant in Warren will be joining together with 250,000 meatpacking and poultry workers across the country who already enjoy the benefits of union representation with the UFCW. **OP**

Notice To Temporary Protected Status (TPS) Re-Registrants from El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua

Workers from El Salvador, Honduras or Nicaragua who have successfully re-registered for TPS should be aware that new Employment Authorization Documents (EADs) may not be issued until early November 2010.

While awaiting new EAD, workers may provide their existing EAD as proof of employment authorization. They may also provide their employers with a copy of their country's most recent Federal Register notice announcing the TPS six-month extension and the auto-



extension of EADs. To get copies of the Federal Register notice go to www.uscis.gov. Automatic extensions are valid for six months from the expiration date on the face of the card and workers are authorized to work during this period.

The Department of Justice's Office of Special Counsel for Immigration Related Unfair Employment Practices (OSC) can assist:

Employees - Work authorization and automatic extension questions from employees can be directed to the employee hotline at 1-800-255-7688.

Employers - Work authorization and automatic extension questions from employers can be directed to the employer hotline at 1-800-255-8155. **OP**

UFCW Remembers Huguette Plamondon

The UFCW is very saddened to learn of the passing of Huguette Plamondon, who dedicated over five decades to building the union, improving the lives of working families, and breaking down barriers for women in Canada.

Sister Plamondon died in Montreal on September 29, after succumbing to a heart attack. She was 84.

"Huguette was a trailblazer," says UFCW Canada Na-

tional President Wayne Hanley. "She spent her whole adult life fighting for fairness and defending the interests of working families. She was a champion for UFCW Canada women and their sisters in the broader labour movement and beyond. Her efforts made a lasting difference and we will always be grateful for her tremendous legacy." **OP**

Local 540 Members Ratify Industry Leading Red Meat Contract with Cargill Meat Solutions

Nearly 1,850 members of Local 540 who work at the Cargill Meat Solutions plant in Friona, Texas, ratified a new five-year contract. The new agreement, which is retroactive to April 24th, maintains affordable health care and increases wages \$1.60 over the term of the contract. The settlement improved labor grades, resulting in immediate wage increases of \$1.00 to nearly \$4.00 an hour for approximately 200 workers. "We took our time in these negotiations, and we stayed united," said Chief Steward Lionel Martinez, who has worked in the plant for more than a decade. "I'm proud of what we accomplished." **OP**