

STRIKE

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production committees that discuss how to raise production, will be established, with half of the members appointed by each side. When profitability is restored, there will be profit sharing. All of the workers who want their jobs back will be able to return, but over a span of two years, while scab workers will not stay on. Initially about a quarter of the over 100 strikers will return to work. Workers who struck also have the option of buying out and getting severance. Use of temporary workers will be curtailed.

Management at the company has changed eight times in the past three years, after Atlas Holdings LLC bought the plant from Weyerhaeuser in December 2004. In a statement on

the end of the strike, Atlas managing partner Tim Fazio said "Over the last 10 years, Atlas Holdings has forged a strong, positive working relationship with approximately 10 unions and 17 locals that represent employees at our businesses.

Indeed, the mutually beneficial alliances we have formed with organized labor have helped us create or save hundreds of jobs in troubled businesses." Moncure seems to be the only one of the three plants in the Wood Resources LLC subsidiary with a union. The union has existed for 40 years. According to Cameron, the Company sought to bust the union, and at the time said they would close before negotiating.

In one-on-one encounters, management allegedly tried to divide the workers by ethnicity. Black workers were told no more blacks would be


hired and Latinos were told they would be reported to immigration if they supported the strike, though Cameron believes most or all of the workers are citizens. Before the strike, the workforce was about 60 percent black, 30 percent Latino, and 10 percent white. The first Company publication in Spanish was anti-union. A few months ago someone left a noose inside the facility in view by the strikers, allegedly to intimidate. There were about 20 supervisors, one black and the rest white. Without explanation three black supervisors were fired after the sixth change of management, two years ago, according to Cameron.

In October 2007 OSHA fined Moncure Plywood \$37,000, and some things have since improved. The violations included cutting machines without guards, holes in the floor, standing water under equipment, and

excessive dust, which is a fire hazard. In 2007 seven workers suffered serious injuries, including a lost thumb, and two workers needed surgery for repetitive motion injuries. Workers also have had to work while ill. Cameron also said management tried to impose an impractical dress code.

Moncure Plywood employs about 206 workers and produces hardwood plywood for upholstered furniture frames, starting from raw logs. The logs are cut into blocks, lathed into thin strips and cores, the sheets are dried, glued, pressed at temperatures above 300°, and cut to size and graded.

Michael Pollock is a freelance writer living in southern Durham who founded Northeast Creek Stream Watch. He studied biology and anthropology at UNC and has an interest in Fortean phenomena.



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