

Help support workers on strike at Moncure plywood plant

By Dick Paddock and Lucy Lewis

Organized labor supporters are calling for wider community support for the Moncure Plywood Workers, who are in the eighth week of their strike. Striking workers are members of the IAM (International Association of Machinists) Local Lodge W369. The plant is located at 306 Corinth Road, Moncure, about a 30 minute drive from Raleigh or Chapel Hill.



Striking Moncure plywood workers picket their workplace.

This strike is not about money, although raises are well-deserved. Workers voted overwhelmingly to strike after the company gave a take-it-or-leave-it final contract offer that would mandate 60-hour work weeks, weaken the seniority clause in a way that could lend itself to favoritism, discrimination and racism, increase health insurance premiums by over 300 percent and give fewer holidays off. Workers also raised concerns about unfair labor practices and safety violations. "With a 60-hour mandatory clause, they could work people seven consecutive days for weeks without a day off," said Melvin Montford, an IAM representative.

Lewis Cameron, Local W369 President, stated, "We are just trying to secure our rights to a decent job and to work with dignity."

Moncure Plywood Company has been in business 41 years and the Union has been there for 39 of those years with excellent management/labor relations until 2005. At that time the company was sold to new owners and it has been downhill ever since.

Negotiations for a new three-year contract began in April 2008, but broke down in July over the mandatory-hours issue.

The workers are 60 percent African-American, 30 percent Latino, and 10 percent white. Management has tried to divide the workers from each other on racial and ethnic lines, but the workers have held to unity in their struggle.

Now is the time for all of us who care about fairness and justice to help these struggling workers by bringing water, food, and

standing with them on the picket line for even a short time so they know they are not alone. The Triangle Chapter of Women's International League for Peace and Freedom has been leading one effort to support the union's struggle for justice with weekly visits to the strike line, and raising the visibility of the strike through publicity and opportunities for the workers to speak to the public.

They also desperately need financial support. They are receiving support from the IAM, but they can certainly use more for themselves and their families. You can make a contribution by sending a check to: IAM Local Lodge W369, P.O. Box 318, Moncure, NC 27559. For more information, contact IAM W369 President, Lewis Cameron, 919.770.5836; V.P. Allan Moore 919.302.3354.

Dick Paddock is a Chatham citizen and member of Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, as is Lucy Lewis.

Life in America is good

Harris-Teeter check-out clerks are trained to ask two questions: Did you find everything you wanted? And is plastic OK?

The first question recently opened a flood gate. Yes. I found everything I wanted. I found a long row of fresh vegetables and piles of fruit, none of it rotting. There was an endless supply of different breads, none of them from

Media Meditations

by R.L. Taylor

the state bakery. I found a 100-foot long meat counter free of maggots with an almost endless supply of fresh, cured, salted, cooked beef, lamb, pork and chickens. I found a huge variety of fresh fish. There was enough variety to fit any budget, from stew beef to a standing rib roast to shrimp and lobster to fat back and country ham, available.

I found an endless variety of milk, cheese, eggs and bacon untainted by bacteria and spoilage, refreshing soft drinks, pure and tasty fruit juices from almost anything that grows on a tree. Almost all the meats and surely all the vegetables were duplicated in the frozen food counter, all within my budget.

I found enough pre-cooked meals to supply any family in a hurry, rows and rows of wine and enough beer to get an army through the Super Bowl game. None of it was over priced. At the checkout counter I did not expect a woman wearing 20 pounds of dynamite under her dress to blow up the front end of the store and me with it.

Outside, there are no snipers shooting at me as I headed for my car, which was also within my budget. By the way, do all families have two cars these days? There were no land mines in the streets going home. My neighbors' children ride to school free of charge every morning without running over another land mine. They eat lunch in a sparkling clean dining room and if they can't afford lunch, they get it free and everybody gets a free ride home.

If any of them got sick, they are taken to a superbly equipped hospital that is always open to patients. I have never seen a long row of bleeding, sick people lying in the street on stretchers waiting to be admitted.

Of course, not everybody can afford a triple by-pass and lung transplant but if you are sick, you are admitted to a hospital no matter who you are.

About 10 years ago weeping hand wringers wailed that a million American children went to be hungry every night. Today, we moan because 12 million American children go to bed fat every night.

Did I find what I wanted? Yes, I did but the list is too long for this page. And plastic is fine with me. Supermarkets all across America provide this quality. The living in America is good.

What does this have to do with local journalism? Easy, you read it here first.

R.L. Taylor, a regular contributor to Chatham County Line, has been a newspaperman for more than 50 years, working as a reporter, editor and publisher.



POLITICS

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equation. Even though OI' Roy's office could not define what illegal pricing was, they were going to issue subpoenas anyway. This is the same OI' Roy that dragged his feet for months on the Duke Lacrosse case causing us to be the laughing stock both in sports and legal circles. Jim Black was perpetrating crimes right under his very nose for years – where was OI' Roy?? DOT?? The Agriculture mess?? And what does his investigation of Mary Easley show?

Apparently our First Lady was toiling away at North Carolina Central University teaching a

couple of courses and making \$70,000, a bit more than comparable instructors. Mary subsequently went to North Carolina State in another part time position and this spring received an \$80,000 raise to bring her total compensation to \$170,000. Once this egregious excess had been uncovered, one would have expected her to come clean and say that this represented a rip-off of the taxpayers and was unfair to every other state employee – but, alas, this is North Carolina. If Elliott Switzer had been governor of North Carolina, he probably would have thumbed his nose at the public and continued doing his thing.

How did MaryGate happen? It seems there is an operative by the name of McQueen Campbell who had some real estate "connections" with Mike Easley and "surprise, surprise" McQueen becomes Chairman of the Board of Trustees at North Carolina State. Then comes Mary and her outlandish raise because of her "unique qualifications." The dots are not that difficult to connect. Do you suppose OI' Roy will even try? Déjà vu all over again for North Carolina politics.

Don Lein, a Chatham resident, is a regular contributor to Chatham County Line. He is active in a number of civic organizations.

BRIEFS

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Front Porch and Chatham Arts Council.

In addition to gaming, there will be three Vegas-style acts including an Elvis impersonator. The General Store Café will provide a buffet meal. There will also be a cash bar. Tickets are available at www.bynumfrontporch.org and at the Chatham Arts Council, Chatham

Marketplace, Aria Day Spa, S&T Soda Shoppe as well as the General Store Café.



Elvis in Chatham? Come to Casino Night on Oct. 18 to see if you can make a sighting.

Vintage Fashion Show to benefit Artists Guild

On October 26, at the Barn in Fearington Village, artist Salinda Dahl will be one of the many artist/models at the Vintage Fashion Show Extraordinaire, a benefit for the Chatham Artists Guild. Designer Alexander Julian will welcome the models and audience with an opening commentary on his experiences in the fashion industry. The fashion show will be costumed and directed by Pam Smith of /Beggars and Choosers/, a vintage clothing shop in downtown Pittsboro. Tickets will be \$20. For info, contact Maggie Zwilling, Chatham Artists Guild, at 336.581.3763.

Got briefs? Email your news to chathamcoline@mindspring.com