

Roundtable C12: Sustainability Bargaining, "Green Reps" and the Greening of the Workplace

Discussion Leaders: Robert Sneddon, Community, - U.K.; Lynn Hinkle, United Auto Workers (UAW)-Local 879; Caroline Molloy, Trades Union Congress, TUC - U.K.; Ron Carver, International Brotherhood of Teamsters, Ports Division

Facilitator: Art Wheaton, Cornell ILR

PRESENTATIONS

Lynn Hinkle of the United Auto Workers (UAW) Local 879 began the discussion on sustainability bargaining pointing out that unions must drive the issue home, utilizing a comprehensive approach that internalizes sustainability into the collective bargaining process. Among several suggested aspects of this strategy were the retrofitting of union properties as a means of raising membership awareness on environmental issues and directing the financial capacity of unions towards investments in renewable energy. One example of successful sustainability bargaining noted was Local 879's negotiation of a four day work week relieving the community of approximately two thousand carbon emitting vehicles over the road per week.

Ron Carver from the International Brotherhood of Teamsters- Ports Division, reported on a Teamster campaign to organize owner-drivers involved with cargo shipment from the ports to distribution centers using vehicles that pre-date environmental protection standards on diesel emissions. Through these organizing efforts the Teamsters are addressing the matters of expense and responsibility in regards to retrofitting and replacing these outdated high pollutant vehicles, bringing the bargaining process to workers traditionally unrepresented.

Robert Sneddon representing Community - U.K. described the various initiatives of Labor in the United Kingdom to gain statutory recognition for 'green reps' and to re-focus the bargaining agenda, bringing sustainability to the table as part of health and safety and training and education packages.

Caroline Molloy of the Trade Union Congress (TUC) - U.K. addressed the importance of grass roots worker involvement in the negotiation of work site environmental policy. The development of leadership amongst the rank and file around environmental and energy issues was stressed as a key factor towards sustainability bargaining, citing the example of the British Museum where worker participation was encouraged by linking energy waste to worker discomfort.

DISCUSSIONS

Much of this roundtable focused on Labor's need to reorganize its membership's perception of sustainability and its place in the bargaining process. Various tactics to thrust the issue to the forefront of collective bargaining were discussed including; energy efficiency and occupational health and safety serving as an impetus to bring employers into alignment with the measures needed for both the 'greening' of the workplace and the recognition of Labor's right to bargain along environmental concerns.

The need for resources to examine negotiated contract language where unions have successfully bargained issues of sustainability was put forth, with **Cornell ILR Facilitator, Art Wheaton** offering Cornell's **Catherwood Library** as one means of examining a large catalogue of existing labor agreements.

Participants explored the need for global health and safety standards, the public relations value of 'greening' the workplace, and the challenges of corporate externalization in regards to sustainability bargaining. There was also a good deal of coalition building experience, offering promising results.