

STEEL UNIT

Stanley King, President

A NEW YEAR WITH THE SAME OLD PROBLEMS

As we start a new year, many of the same problems that threaten the U.S. Steel Industry still exist. Although the 201 Steel Tariffs gave some relief to ailing U.S. Steel companies, it was not enough to save Bethlehem, Weirton, and Geneva Steel from bankruptcy and a threat of permanent shutdown. The 201 tariffs drove up steel prices from their depressed state. However, the action has been attacked by high-end steel users and its foreign lobbyists, petitioning the Bush administration to cancel the imposed tariffs. At this time, there are more slabs being imported into the country than before the tariffs were imposed. The exemption list is getting longer and the modest increase of steel prices is being threatened by ISG (formerly LTV) and Weirton, who have been cutting steel prices to secure more market share.

In March, President Bush will review what impact the 201 tariffs have had on the U.S. Steel industry. If the President's findings are negative, he will be pressured to cancel the tariff in its final two years. A major hidden factor in the U.S. Steel Industry's demise has been the over-valued dollar. A recently released research report by American University economists documents the massive damage to the U.S. manufacturing sector, as a whole, and to the domestic steel industry, in particular.

The U.S. Steel Industry has been struggling for seven years with an over-valued dollar, which rose by over thirty percent in real terms between 1995 and 2002. In spite of huge investments in new technologies and vast improvements in productivity, U.S. Steel makers have been unable to make those achievements pay-off in the face of foreign products that are roughly thirty percent cheaper as a result of the over-valued dollar. The thirty percent hurdle is just too big to overcome regardless of how much domestic mills improve efficiency and quality. The high valued dollar reduced investments in U.S. manufacturing by thirty-seven billion dollars in 2001 alone. The U.S. Steel Industry will not be able to fully recover until the dollar is devalued to a much more reasonable exchange rate. That will not happen as long as financial forces remain in full control of U.S. government policies.

Of Special Interest

The Coalition of Black Trade Unionists celebrated its 27th Annual Award Banquet Sunday, November 17, 2002. Ron Gettelfinger, President of the UAW, was the Keynote Speaker. General Baker, Blast Furnace Keeper and former President of the Coke Oven Blast Furnace Unit, was the recipient of the Nelson Jack Edwards Award. General led wildcat strikes in Detroit in 1965 and 1968 and was the founder of the Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement (DRUM). General has helped organize union workers, raised consciousness to the homeless problem in Detroit, has spoken at numerous union conferences and demonstrations, including the protracted UAW strike against Caterpillar. General Baker was a Convener of the 1993 Conference in Detroit commemorating Malcolm X and celebrating the

25th Anniversary of the founding of the League of Revolutionary Black Workers. He has been a Keynote Speaker at MIT and the University of Illinois at Chicago, as well as many other University conferences concerning the impact of electronic technology on industry and the community. Finally, Brother Baker was part of the North American Delegation to the Seventh Pan African Congress in Uganda, and has addressed other International gatherings in Europe. The entire Steel Unit would like to congratulate General on his well-deserved award, and we are proud to have a union brother of General Baker's caliber in our Unit.

Retirements:

The Steel Unit would like to congratulate the following brothers and sisters on their well-earned retirements. May their retirements be long and happy.

Clyde Talley, Jr., Dept. 1910, Velmet Driver; Carlos Law, Dept. 2210, B.O.F Support; Freddie McKinley, Dept. 3650, Cleaner; Richard Cusson, Dept. 3664, Stan Operator; Robert Dollian, Dept. 6030, Laborer; Frank Collins, Dept. 1934, Material Checker; Roy Easley, Dept. 1936, Material Checker; George Freeman, Dept. 3680, Finishing Support; Barbara Toniolo, Dept. 3680, Inspector Clerk; George Kontos, Jr., Dept. 3695, Annealing Attendant; Lewis Jackson, Dept. 6200, Stove Keeper; Jerome Hengy, Dept. 7601, Electrician; and Erie Henderson, Dept. 2500, Ladle Hauler

Condolences:

The entire Steel Unit and its Committee would like to extend its heartfelt sympathies to all its sisters and brothers who have lost loved ones, including Art Ruffin, Store Attendant, Dept. 1623, who lost his mother; Kathy McFadden, Recorder, Dept. 3650, who lost her mother; Roy Flores, Sr. our benefits Rep. and brothers Tim and Roy Flores, Jr. who lost their mother/former wife; and Flo Hamblin, Furnace Team, Dept. 6300, who lost her husband, Robert Hamblin, retired Cleaner, Dept. 3695. May their Souls Rest in Peace.