Locked-Out ABI Workers Demonstrate at Alcoa Annual Meeting

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USW Tells Shareholders: "Good Business Means Respecting Workers"

PITTSBURGH, May 8, 2019 - The United Steelworkers (USW) today said that some 200 locked-out USW Local 9700 members from the ABI aluminum smelter in Bécancour, Quebec, drove more than 12 hours to demonstrate at Alcoa's (NYSE: AA) shareholders' meeting today. A delegation of union representatives equipped with shareholders' proxies also attended the meeting to address Alcoa's role in the 16-month lockout of 1,030 workers at the ABI smelter.

USW International President Leo W. Gerard pointed out that the lockout has brought no benefits to Alcoa over the last 16 months.

"The company's shares have lost half their value. Income losses have been significant, and Alcoa management should be held accountable for choosing the path of confrontation and conflict," Gerard said. "The company must end this lockout at once and negotiate in good faith with its workers for a fair contract."

USW Local 9700 President Clément Masse urged Alcoa shareholders to issue a mandate to executives and demand that they resolve the lockout at the bargaining table.

"Aluminum smelters that are currently performing well in the market are those that have the ability to add value to raw aluminum production, which is precisely what ABI does," Masse said. "Our smelter is a versatile, leading-edge casting facility with skilled workers who can produce complex alloys and a wide variety of high value-added products."

"This is a costly lockout that is depriving Alcoa of one of its largest production capacities at a plant with the lowest labor costs in North America," Masse said. "Yet Alcoa is leaving this multi-billion-dollar asset dormant."

"We know there are ways to improve certain aspects of the plant's operation, but these improvements must be pursued in co-operation with the workers, not by trying to shove unilateral changes down workers' throats," Masse said. "Workers are eager to get back to manufacturing quality aluminum, but that process must include a negotiated labor agreement and mutual respect."

Assistant to the USW District 5 Director Dominic Lemieux pointed out that ABI, a joint venture between Alcoa, which owns 75 percent, and Rio Tinto, which holds the remaining 25 percent, locked out workers in January 2018, even though the union had agreed to pursue pension plan changes to address issues raised by the company and its shareholders.

"Once this important change was accepted, Alcoa and Rio Tinto still opted to implement a lockout rather than pursue a negotiated settlement," Lemieux said. "Since then, the company has only made things worse by introducing new demands for concessions while rejecting further negotiations or arbitration."

"We are here today because we believe shareholders must demand action from management to restore these workers to their jobs, beginning with a return to good faith negotiations," Lemieux said. "It costs nothing to show respect for workers, but 16 months later, shareholders are paying dearly for the company's mismanagement at ABI."

The USW represents 850,000 men and women employed in manufacturing, metals, mining, pulp and paper, rubber, chemicals, glass, auto supply and the energy-producing industries, along with a growing number of workers in public sector and service occupations.

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