

A promising approach to food talks

By **JIM DOUGHERTY**
President

“We have to move away from the fear that keeps you away from success.”

With this statement, Federal Mediator Barbara Rumph opened a training session at our recent Shop Stewards Seminar on the value of a new contract negotiating program called “Interest Based Bargaining,” a process we will be using in our upcoming GSLFEC negotiations with Schnucks, Dierbergs and Shop N’ Save. The mediator’s statement was telling because “fear,” in one form or another, is often sitting at the bargaining table:



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- The companies “fear” that union demands will bankrupt it or cause a work stoppage;

- The union’s “fear” that the company wants to gut the contact and force us to work for near to nothing and take away all our hard-won benefits.

And so “fear” often plays an unseen, misunderstood, and often powerful role in negotiations. . . and creates distrust and animosity between the parties even before negotiations begin. There has to be a better way.

Interest Based Bargaining (IBB) could be a better approach

IBB is not something the companies are trying to force on Local 655. This is an approach that Local 655 and the companies have mutually agreed to. How did it come to be? Last year in a conference sponsored by the Federal Mediation & Conciliation Service (FMCS) Judy Davidson and Dave Politte, both Assistants to the President and I attended a session on IBB. We were intrigued by it as a possible approach for our food talks.

When I returned, I mentioned this concept to Schnucks Director of Labor Relations Don Schaper as something we might want to consider. As coincidence would have it, Don had been to a conference and heard a similar IBB presentation. Given that we both felt this was a new, pragmatic way to try and negotiate our upcoming contract, we took it to our respective groups for further review. After both sides looked long and hard at the concept, we both agreed it would be an excellent way to create a “new beginning” in re-establishing a record of labor peace and successful contracts we’ve had with the local food chains before our 2003 job action, the first one in our Union’s history in the food industry.

A ‘WIN-WIN’ approach

The key, however, is that both sides go in with an understanding of the process that focuses on creating an outcome that’s a “win-win” for both sides, and doing it in such a way that we don’t destroy each other in the process. Now “win-win” doesn’t mean that both sides get everything they want; it does mean compromising on issues but not on principles.

One thing the process does not change: all members covered under the GSLFEC contract will still have a secret ballot vote on accepting or rejecting the final proposal.

To ensure that this new process has a chance at success:

- All members of the Negotiating Committee – rank and file and officers - and our key staff who will be involved in the talks, have all been trained on how IBB works;

- All our shop stewards at the recent Stewards Seminar went through an intensive workshop by the Mediation Service on the IBB process;

- We announced that IBB would be used at our two opening contract meetings for our members working in the three food chains;

- The management negotiating team has also gone through IBB training through the FMCS.

Our Negotiating Team

Our Negotiating Committee will include:

- Rank-and-file members: from Schnucks – Dennis Hayles Terry Spink, and Ron (Woody) Wilson; from Dierbergs – Cathy Johnston and June Small and from Shop ‘n Save – Ken Marshall and Janis Nickel.

- Local 655 officers/staff: myself, Director of Collective Bargaining Dave Politte, Secretary-Treasurer Dave Cook, Assistant to the President Judy Davidson and Randy Charboneau, Director of Retail.

Facilitating the IBB process will be Federal Mediators, Barbara Rumph and Roger Hendrix.

We began preliminary research late last month as the prelude to actual negotiations. Part of IBB is to ensure both sides have all the facts in front of them and are working from the same information. That means we’ll have access to data, which will help us see a true picture of where things are when contract negotiations begin later this month.

Given that no one wants to see another industry-wide strike if it’s at all possible to avoid, both sides, I believe, are going into these talks wanting them to succeed.

As always Wal-Mart and its aggressive expansion plans for this region will always be an issue. Every food dollar they take in, is another potential job lost in our union supermarkets. Estimates are that we’ve already lost over 6,000 union jobs in our area supermarkets.

While we’re not going to roll over and play dead for the companies because of Wal-Mart — and all three chains know we are prepared to fight hard to protect our members’ hard-won gains — no one comes into these talks with a chip on their shoulder. That’s a good start.

The IBB process has worked in contract talks here and across America. Similar negotiations brought about a successful contract between the Sheet Metal Workers and their contractors, featured recently in our Labor Tribune. My point is that IBB is not new or untested.

We’ll work hard to make it work for all our members and their families in the Greater St. Louis area.

An Exclusive Twice Monthly Report For UFCW Local 655 Members & Their Families

LOCAL 655 REPORT

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Affiliated with United Food & Commercial Workers International Union

Volunteers sought for 2007 Membership Improvement Committee

Through involvement, activism and an open line of discussion members of the 2006 M.I.C. group contributed to significant improvements for our local union. Expanded use of the Local 655 Web Site, News & Notes Flyer circulation, membership activation and telephone blasts are just a few of the topics the committee addressed over the past year.

As the Membership Involvement Committee came together they were also aware of an annual rotation of members on the committee. New faces bring new ideas and add diversity representing our membership.

M.I.C. needs your strength, input, ideas and

voice. We are looking for volunteers who are interested in meeting with our union officers, to talk about important issues and work to improve Local 655. If you care about your union this is the committee for you.

The committee will meet at least quarterly on dates determined by the group. Half of the committee will serve for a period of one year, and the other half will serve two years.

If you are interested in participating on the Membership Improvement Committee, please contact Dave Politte, Assistant to the President, at 636-736-2776 or dpolitte@ufcw655.org.

Local 655 member finds political action can pay off in more ways than one

When Greg Winkelman, a courtesy clerk at the Telegraph Road Schnucks store, joined the Active Ballot Club (ABC), he did so to try to make his own voluntary contribution to help Local 655 elect political candidates who would look after his rights as a union member and a citizen.

He knew he was lucky to be involved in a politically active union; he just didn’t know that joining ABC would bring him even more luck.

Last month, Winkelman’s name was chosen as a regional winner in the 2006 UFCW Region 5 ABC drawing, bagging a prize that will send him on an all expense paid trip for two to Las Vegas.

Winkelman, 25, celebrates his fifth anniversary at the store this month. He said he felt “very lucky and blessed” to have his name picked out of the thousands of members who belong to the ABC. He said that he wishes everyone would join ABC so that they have a chance to help politically, and maybe win a trip, too.

Winkelman, who lives with his parents, Sally and Ken Winkelman, in South County, will make the trip to Las Vegas with his fa-



GREG WINKELMAN

ther. He has two brothers, Brian and Kevin. Winkelman said he has never been to Las Vegas, but looks forward to seeing the Celine Dion concert.

He and his father anticipate making the trip later in the year.

“My dad goes there on business, so he knows his way around,” Winkelman said “Everybody at the store is wishing me luck.”

A rational approach to problem solving IBB in a nutshell

The Interest Based Bargaining (IBB) process represents a shift from the traditional, adversarial approach in labor-management negotiations to dealing with issues.

Instead of each side presenting their own positions, the parties jointly decide which issues need to be addressed and then discuss their interests on each issue.

Once all the interests have been explored, the parties jointly generate a number of options to resolve the issue. Participants must be willing to discuss a variety of options, on the understanding that they are not making commitments but simply discussing hypothetical possibilities.

The parties then evaluate various courses of action on the issue(s) by comparing each option against agreed standards, postponing final commitment on each issue until the end of the process.

Finally, with all options reviewed, a consensus is reached on specific solutions to specific issues.



Local 655 fights Arnold Wal-Mart Supercenter

Hundreds of Local 655 members and other union supporters filled Arnold City Hall recently to protest against a proposed Wal-Mart Supercenter. The city’s Planning and Zoning Committee denied a proposal to place a Wal-Mart Supercenter at a busy intersection after numerous speakers said the Big Box would put union grocery stores out of business and lower wage standards in the area. The decision is now in the hands of the Arnold City Council. Many members of Local 655 are gaining lessons in grass roots democracy by attending these Wal-Mart hearings around the Metro area.

Labor Tribune Photo

After reading this page take it to your break room.