

## **Purple Bargaining Update # 12**

### **Purple Threatens Wage Cuts**

*September 26, 2013*

Unsafe productivity standards have always been the overriding issue in the negotiations between Purple Communications and ASLIU. That was the reason we organized and that was the issue that was overwhelmingly given the highest priority in our bargaining survey. Wages have never been given nearly as much weight - until now.

Instead of making a legitimate counter to the union's wage proposal, Purple negotiators told the union team on Tuesday in Denver that if they were to counter now with their own wage proposal "it's something that you will not like."

Management also refused to budge on our proposals to soften what we believe to be dangerously demanding performance requirements.

Predicting that Sorenson and Z will be decreasing wages in the near future, company negotiator Bob Kane said "We are not willing to pay wages for what we believe will be substantially above the market. After conferring with the company leadership, what is best for these circumstances is to maintain wages and productivity standards through the end of 2013 as long as we agree to get back together in early to mid December to see what happens with the market and company initiatives in response to the (FCC) rate cuts."

To make matters even worse, in yet another blatant attempt to devalue the VRS interpreting profession, management announced on Tuesday that it intends to expand its "pilot program" of hiring non-certified interpreters to all centers.

After a caucus, Union negotiator Bruce Meachum, speaking for the ASLIU team, told Purple negotiators "We believe this company is making a big mistake and it's going to cost you. We intend to get a contract."

"We didn't want to go down this road - it's an economic reality," Kane responded.

Meachum challenged the company to prove it had a problem with the economic reality by showing us the books. "We haven't claimed inability to pay," Kane responded, "it's a lack of willingness to pay above the market."

Translation: Purple can afford to pay decent wages, but the "company leadership" doesn't want to see any decrease in their very cushy profit margin. This isn't new. Every time the FCC determines that VRS vendors are making ridiculous amounts of money and makes changes to the program, management insulates itself from decreases by having the people who actually earn that money take the hit.

Up until now, management has gotten away with that approach because employees had no real way to fight back. That all changed the day these four centers voted to unionize.

So, fight back we will, and we won't do it alone. This contract has been given a very high priority by the Pacific Media Workers Guild and by the international union. Resources will not be lacking for this campaign.

Just so we are all clear: We have no plans to ask the membership to authorize a strike. We believe we can be much more effective by putting serious economic pressure on the company in other ways.

We will begin the campaign by asking each and every employee at the four unionized centers to show their colors and to take part in other legally protected concerted activities when asked.

At the same time, we will be working to enlist the support of the people who can have the most impact on the company's attitude: Purple's consumers. They, after all, are the ones who will be most affected by the decrease in interpreting quality caused by the one-two punch of KPI-caused fatigue and injury and the use of uncertified interpreters.

On a more visible front, Purple-sponsored events will now have a new feature: Union informational pickets and leafleters. Talk to your unit officers about where and when so you can join us on the picket line. Bring your friends and we will bring other friends from labor and community groups. It's legal, it's protected activity so you can't be disciplined or otherwise retaliated against, and it's fun.

It won't end there. More later. And remember, however long it takes to get a fair resolution, we will last one day longer.

#### **PMWG ASLIU Unit**

#### **National Bargaining Committee:**

Mary Jane Moore, Arizona: National Unit Chair  
Margie Brooks, Oakland: National Vice Chair  
Martin Yost, San Diego: National Vice Chair  
Denver AVC Jo Linda Greenfield joined the team for this session.

Lindsey Antle, Denver: National Vice Chair  
Michelle Caplette, Arizona: National Vice Chair  
Bruce Meachum, PMWG Representative: Chief Spokesperson