

Picket line heats up

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By [NORMAN DE BONO](#), THE LONDON FREE PRESS

Locked-out workers at London's Kellogg Canada plant charged yesterday replacement workers are being bused across the picket line, a claim the company denies.

Workers on the line said buses crossing the line earlier this week carried managers, but yesterday the windows were blacked out and pickets did not recognize those who got off the bus.

"The company is denying the allegation. I asked them point blank, and they told me it is not happening. But I have members telling me that it is," said Bob Martin, president of the Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers Union, Local 154-G.

Kellogg officials did say they will not have buses entering the plant today as a sign of goodwill, said Martin.

Workers say they followed the bus when it left the plant yesterday at 12:30 p.m. and when it unloaded its passengers at the former Sam's Club store in north London, replacement workers were on board.

Penny Savoie, Kellogg spokesperson, also denied the allegation.

"The individuals being bused across the picket line today at our London plant are salaried workers. Our main focus is on quickly resolving the outstanding issues and we are hopeful that the work disruption will be brief and that an agreement is within reach," she said in a statement.

The union and company remained at the bargaining table yesterday and are expected to return today, said Martin.

"It is tough. Any time you have workers walking outside the plant it is difficult, but once they locked us out the dynamics changed," he said.

The London and District Labour Council also has thrown its support behind the locked-out workers, saying cereal sales remain strong, and the lockout is the company's attempt to cash in on an economic downturn.

"This is an example of blatant corporate greed. It is shameful. The labour council stands in total support with the local and we will do everything we can to support them," said council president Patti Dalton.

Tim Carrie, president of Canadian Auto Workers, Local 27, said his union is prepared to bolster the picket line by sending in workers from its plants, to make sure buses do not cross.

"This is becoming a tense situation. We have asked all our members to support the picket lines at Kellogg. If they are using scabs, it is a declaration of war on workers," said Carrie.

Martin declined comment on what issues are on the table, but said the union's proposals centre around job security.

"We have a big concern over job losses in the plant," he said.

Kellogg in London employs 488 unionized workers and 80 salaried staff. It recently cut about 11 salaried jobs and there are more than 20 hourly workers on layoff.

The plant has been shut down for two weeks so far this year, in April and May, five more weeks are scheduled for the rest of the year, said Martin.

While demand for Kellogg cereal is up, the plant has lost production to plants in the U.S., said Martin.

<http://lfpres.ca/newsstand/Business/2009/06/12/9771951-sun.html>