

Locked-out workers reject Kellogg offer

Sat, June 20, 2009

The cereal giant's London workforce has voted against a deal that its union says would cost 100 jobs

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

Kellogg's workers are staying out on the picket line.

The locked-out employees of the U.S. cereal giant's London plant turned down a tentative deal yesterday, sending the company and union back to the bargaining table.

"It is very frustrating dealing with a company as profitable as they are who want to change the lives of its workers without good reason," said Bob Martin, president of the Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco and Grain Millers union Local 154-G.

There were 453 union members at the meeting yesterday and 290 voted against the tentative agreement.

"That is a pretty solid rejection number," Martin said.

The deal offered workers a 7% salary increase over three years and improvements to the pension and benefit package, but it also would have cut more than 100 jobs from a total of 488, Martin said.

That cut would have meant the elimination of the "weekend shift" where 105 senior workers work 12 hours Saturday at time-and-a-half pay and 12 hours Sunday at double time. They do not work the balance of the week, having earned the equivalent of 42 hours straight pay.

That would have seen 105 with the least seniority laid off and the balance of the workforce shifted into working weekends on a rotating basis, Martin said.

"The top 100 were unhappy, the bottom 100 were unhappy, the middle guys didn't like it because they had to work overtime. I told them at the table I would not be able to sell this," he said.

"Let's just say it left a bad taste in their mouths."

In a prepared statement, Kellogg said it will weigh its options after the vote.

"Kellogg Canada is disappointed that the employees at its London, Ontario plant have voted not to accept the latest offer recommended by their union leadership. We will be reviewing our options and next steps over the weekend," said a message from company spokesperson Penny Savoie.

The Kellogg plant will be a rallying point tomorrow for an Ontario Federation of Labour caravan.

Ontario NDP Leader Andrea Horvath will lead the convoy touring 50 Ontario communities this month protesting job cuts and plant closures.

The caravan will meet at the plant at 2 p.m., said Patti Dalton, London and District Labour Council president.

"We will have a mass show of solidarity, we will send a strong message. Corporations think it's open season on unions, and if they think we will just sit and take it, we will not," Dalton said.

"We are solid, stronger than ever."

Information on the caravan can be found at www.drivetowork.ca

The local Kellogg plant manufactures about 65 million kilograms of cereal a year, down from 100 million kilograms in 2005.

But cereal demand and Kellogg profits remain high, as London workers have seen production here shifted to American plants, and there hasn't been a drop in demand, Martin said.

<http://lfpres.ca/newsstand/News/Local/2009/06/20/9868836-sun.html>