

BCTGM

MARCH/
APRIL 2017

VOLUME 19
NUMBER 2

News



SAFE JOBS:
EVERY
WORKER'S
RIGHT



the PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The **BCTGM**: Always out front in the **FIGHT** for **SAFER** Workplaces

On April 28th, Workers Memorial Day, the BCTGM joined with all in the labor movement to honor those workers who have paid the ultimate sacrifice at their place of employment. This annual commemoration is a powerful reminder that a safe and healthy workplace is a right still not realized for far too many workers. For the BCTGM, it is a right for which we will always fight.

Workers in the North American food processing and agricultural sectors are subject to some of the most harmful hazards faced by workers in any industry from fatal combustible dust explosions to exposures to deadly chemicals.

Because of this workplace reality for our members, the BCTGM places a high priority on aggressively confronting these threats through a wide range of action initiatives, including:

- Comprehensive and rigorous health and safety training at the International's annual week long New Officers Training and in local union stewards training programs that focus on hazard identification and root cause analysis;

- Resolute bargaining to secure strong health and safety language in our contracts;

- Effective utilization of the International's website and other information platforms to ensure that local union officers and members have access to the most current and accurate workplace health and safety information available;

- Active participation with the AFL-CIO and other unions in the federal regulatory and legislative processes to advance the labor movement's health and safety priorities.

These efforts help explain why BCTGM-represented workplaces are safer than non-union workplaces in our industries. But, for most American workers, their daily reality is an unsafe workplace.

In 2015, nearly five thousand workers in the U.S. died while on the job. Nearly 60,000 workers lost their lives due to occupational diseases. And, another 3.7 million work-related injury and illnesses were reported. These are staggering numbers for the world's most advanced economy.

The AFL-CIO's annual report on the state of health and safety in the United States, *Death on the Job: Toll of Neglect*, includes one set of statistics that tells a very important story.

The report lists the states with the highest fatality rates: North Dakota, Wyoming, Montana, Mississippi, Arkansas and Louisiana.

Five of the six are Right-to-Work (For Less) states. The Department of Labor has reported that workers in right-to-work states are 54% more likely to die on the job or suffer an occupational disease or workplace injury compared to workers in states that do not have these anti-worker laws.

This should come as no surprise. Workers in these states are far less likely to be covered by a collective bargaining agreement and therefore don't have a legitimate say about

their working conditions. They also are paid less and are less likely to have a pension and affordable health insurance.

Thus, right-to-work not only increases income inequality and undermines the standard of living of working families, it also threatens workers' health and safety.


Despite campaign promises to be a friend to working people, in his first 100 days in office, President Trump has taken direct aim at longstanding, vital workplace safety and health laws and regulations. And, he has proposed a federal budget that would dramatically cut funding for the Department of Labor which will devastate OSHA's enforcement capabilities. In addition, Republican leaders in Congress are pushing for a national right-to-work law.

Going forward, the BCTGM will continue to confront the difficult challenges to protecting workers' health and safety on the job with the determination and commitment necessary to achieve our Union's goals.

We will organize non-union workplaces and increase BCTGM density in our industries, including in right-to-work states. We will mobilize, along with the rest of the labor movement, at the national level to beat back national right-to-work legislation and secure adequate funding for OSHA investigation and enforcement. And, we will engage our local unions at the state level to stop the economic, social and health scourge of right-to-work from spreading beyond the 27 states in which it already is in place.


The BCTGM will stay at the forefront in the fight for safe and healthy workplaces because it is crucial to our members and their families. To do any less would dishonor all of those good, hardworking men and women who have paid the ultimate sacrifice on the job.

— David B. Durkee, BCTGM International President




BCTGM

News




Official Publication of the Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers International Union
10401 Connecticut Avenue, Kensington, Maryland 20895-3961
(301) 933-8600
www.bctgm.org



Canadian Association of Labor Media

David B. Durkee, Editor

Corrina A. Christensen, Assistant Editor



INTERNATIONAL LABOR COMMUNICATIONS ASSOCIATION

BCTGM General Executive Board

President David B. Durkee • Secretary-Treasurer Steve Bertelli
Vice Presidents Shad Clark • Jethro Head
Arthur Montminy • Ron Piercey • Anthony Shelton

BCTGM General Executive Board Members

Joyce Alston • John Bethel • Thomas Bingler • Butch Henley
Paul LaBuda • Stephane Langlois • Terry Lansing
Earl Lublow • Letitia Malone • Gary Oskoian • Paula Steig
Doyle Townson • Jeff Webb • Donald Woods

BCTGM News (ISSN 1525-4860) is published bi-monthly by the Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers International Union, 10401 Connecticut Avenue, Kensington, MD 20895-3961. Periodicals postage paid at Kensington, MD and at additional mailing offices. Subscription to new members only. Postmaster: Send address changes to BCTGM News, 10401 Connecticut Avenue, Kensington, MD 20895-3961.

Lifeway Workers Achieve *Dignity & Respect* with 1st Contract

After more than two years, Local 1 Lifeway workers in Chicago finally have their first collective bargaining agreement.



procedures and seniority rights.

According to BCTGM Midwest Region International Vice President Jethro Head, these new members will experience a sense of security that they have never had before. "When Local 1 organizers first met these workers, they had nothing: no paid holidays, no vacation, no internal system to achieve justice at work," Head recalls.

"And now? Most importantly, workers will have a grievance procedure. They will have the peace of mind knowing they can't be

Most BCTGM members have worked in non-union workplaces at some point in their lives before finding a job in a BCTGM represented facility. And many of these workers can provide vivid testament of what it was like in those non-union environments: favoritism, sexism, unsafe working conditions, erratic scheduling, low pay, few benefits, and little respect.

But for those workers who refuse to give up, braving the hostile work environment attributed to most anti-union campaigns, the rewards of becoming a union member and achieving a first collective bargaining agreement are enormous.

Just ask the workers at Lifeway Foods, a Chicago-based kefir beverage company, who triumphed over an extreme anti-union campaign to vote to join BCTGM Local 1 (Chicago) in January 2015. However, after winning their union representation election, the new members were ignored as the company refused to negotiate a union contract and continued to violate federal labor law.

After a lengthy, and sometimes public dispute, the company finally agreed to come to the bargaining table. In March, an agreement was reached and the workers celebrated their very first union contract.

For nearly all of the Lifeway workers, this is their first time working under the protections of a union contract. The agreement includes guaranteed wage increases, vacation, a grievance system, job bidding

wrongly fired or unfairly disciplined. Workers will have work rules that make sense. They will have regular, substantial and guaranteed wage increases. Their entire working life is going to change for the better," Head reflects.

The Local 1 members also elected stewards to help enforce the terms of the contract. Christian Lopez, a newly-elected steward, reflected on the hard-fought union victory.

"I feel very happy with this great achievement and very grateful that my co-workers gave me the opportunity to represent them," says Lopez.

Lifeway Local 1 negotiating committee members Juan Gomez (left) and Luis Molinero.



BCTGM International Orga

“Organizing MUST be a priority of every member of the BCTGM in order to grow and build our strength,”

BCTGM International President David Durkee said in opening remarks to the International’s special organizing meeting in late February.

The one-day event included all International Vice Presidents, International Representatives, Organizers and International Staff. The important meeting focused on developing an agenda to expand the Union’s efforts to organize non-union workers within BCTGM industries. A significant part of the strategy session included discussion about ways to identify and develop local union organizers.

“Organizing is hard work. But it is something



BCTGM Intl. Pres. David Durkee explains the importance of identifying local union organizers.



Intl. Strategic Campaign Coordinator Ron Baker notes the vital importance of coalition building during organizing efforts.



BCTGM Intl. Canadian Vice Pres. Ron Piercey discusses Canadian Labour Laws pertaining to organizing.



BCTGM Intl. Dir. of Organization John Price notes the importance of building the Union’s membership through organizing unorganized workers within BCTGM industries.

Organizers Develop 2017 Agenda

that each and every local union needs to embrace and expand,” BCTGM International Director of Organization John Price explained.

The meeting was led by Price and BCTGM International Director of Research and Education Matthew Clark. The duo reviewed the various valuable resources available to organizers from the President’s Office, as well as those offered by the International Union’s Research & Education, Public

Relations/Communications, and Digital Media Departments.

As part of the organizing agenda, the group pledged to assist local union leaders in identifying targets and recruiting rank-and-file organizers; include an organizing curriculum in steward training; incorporate organizing education and activities into the agendas of the BCTGM’s regional and industry conferences.



The meeting included all Intl. Vice Presidents, Representatives, Organizers and Staff.



Intl. Organizer Hector Rosa shares a recent organizing experience in Chicago.



Intl. Rep. David Woods discusses utilizing new techniques in organizing workers in non-union workplaces.

CANADIAN LOCALS **EMBRACE** **ORGANIZING** **PROGRAM**

Faced with plant closings and the relentless outsourcing of North American manufacturing jobs, BCTGM local unions in the United States and Canada are renewing their commitment to **organizing** and establishing programs to bring non-union workers into the BCTGM.

In the last 10 years, BCTGM locals in Eastern Canada have suffered significant membership losses. In 2007, the Hershey Company closed the iconic Moir's bakery in Halifax, Nova Scotia and moved production to a facility in Mexico. More than 550 BCTGM Local 446 (Halifax)



Intl. Dir. Research/Education Matthew Clark and L. 406 Officers participated in a rally supporting Sackville, N.B. public sector workers. Protesters stormed the town council meeting at the Sackville City Hall and demanded city officials bargain fairly with its unionized workers.

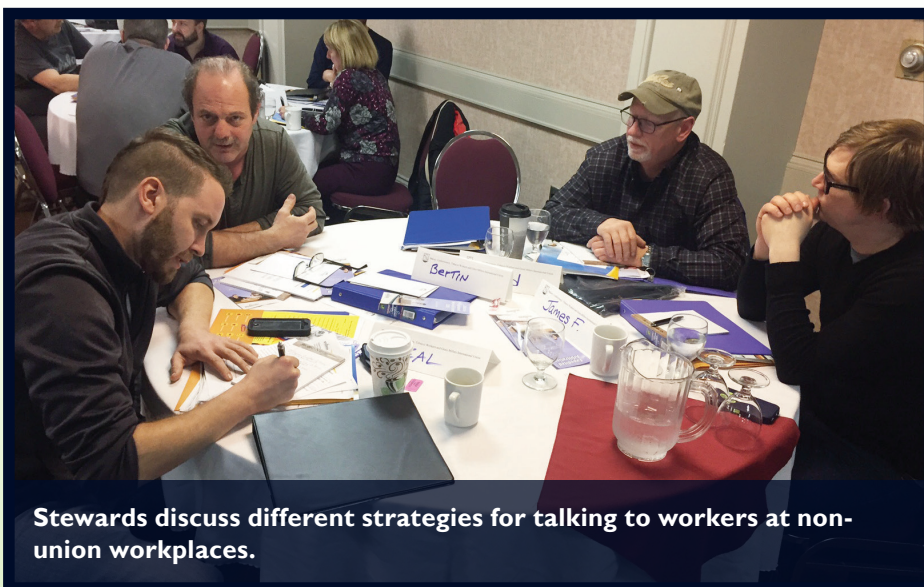
members lost their jobs. In 2015, more than 100 members of Local 446 were laid off when Canada Bread closed its Halifax bakery. Subsequently, Local 446 merged with Local 406 in

Moncton, New Brunswick in 2016.

Meanwhile, Local 406 has not been immune to the same challenges. Hundreds of union members were lost when

Canada Bread closed bakeries in Moncton and Grand Falls, while also eliminating sales route drivers and making them independent operators.

According to BCTGM International Canadian Vice President Ron Piercey, the only way to confront such membership losses is to organize. "There are thousands of non-union workers in Eastern Canada who want to belong to a union. In fact,



Stewards discuss different strategies for talking to workers at non-union workplaces.

many of these workers are friends or family of our very own members. So, it is our job to reach out to them, educate them on the benefits of belonging to the BCTGM as well as the larger labor movement, and organize them into our union,” said Piercy.

In an effort to assist the Eastern Canadian locals in rebuilding their membership through organizing, the International Union conducted a comprehensive organizing program in April. More than 35 stewards from New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland participated in the intensive two-day program that focused on teaching stewards and rank-and-file union members how to organize.

Part of the education program helped stewards identify non-union

Stewards practice “talking union” in role playing exercises.



workplaces that they had family or friends working in, as well as other non-union workplaces of interest. The program also focused on teaching the stewards how to “talk union” with non-union workers. Stewards participated in role playing sessions to hone their skills.

The program was run by International Vice President Piercy, International

Representative Karl Walker and International Research & Education Director Matthew Clark.

As part of the International’s education efforts, Clark accompanied the local union leadership on site visits to non-union targets, helped create an organizing target database, and networked with other Canadian worker organizations in the region.

According to BCTGM International Director of Organization John Price, the International Union will be doing similar programs throughout North America in an effort to encourage more grassroots organizing. “Our local unions want to help organize and many have embraced the challenge. They want to be part of a rejuvenated labor movement that will help working families across North America,” concludes Price.



Shop Stewards from New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland gathered in Moncton, N.B. for a two-day steward training focused on organizing non-union workers and utilizing shop stewards in the process.

AFL-CIO Executive Council Launches New **GOOD JOBS** Campaign: Chooses to Highlight **Mondelēz Fight**

United around the principle that every worker deserves a good job and the power to determine their wages and working conditions, the AFL-CIO Executive Council concluded its annual winter meetings in March approving a new National Good Jobs campaign. The labor movement-wide effort will expose and challenge the corporate philosophies of American companies that outsource jobs, choosing Mondelēz International as its first example.

The Executive Council, on which BCTGM International President David Durkee serves as a vice president, is comprised of the three top officers of the AFL-CIO and 55 vice presidents representing affiliated unions. The Council unanimously voted to fully support the Nabisco/Mondelēz campaign as the labor movement's first solidarity campaign.

The Executive Council members pledged to continue to support and promote the BCTGM's Check-the-Label campaign and boycott of Nabisco products made in Mexico.

Nabisco Worker Invited to National Press Club Speech

AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka gave a major address on American jobs before the National Press Club in Washington D.C., calling upon President Trump and leaders of both political parties to not only pursue an agenda that benefits working people across the country, but that also strengthens the right of every American to negotiate for better wages and benefits.

As part of President Trumka's formal address on jobs, Nabisco/Mondelēz laid off worker Michael Smith was asked to attend as a special guest. President Trumka also invited Smith to meet with him in his office at AFL-CIO headquarters prior to the speech.

During his address to the National Press Club, President Trumka urged President Trump and members of Congress to take action on behalf of American workers like Smith. "We want to rebuild the ladder and change the rules of our economy for workers like Michael Smith. Michael worked at the Oreo plant on the South Side of Chicago. Yet Mondelēz, the parent company of Nabisco, decided to move his job to Mexico. And NAFTA helped pave the way," he proclaimed.

"The members of Mike's union, the BCTGM, want to make Oreos in the United States. This isn't just about a few cookies. That factory is an icon. It was a place where you could make decent wages and raise a family, and this shouldn't be a thing of the past.

"Irene Rosenfeld, the CEO of Mondelēz, makes over \$9,000 an hour. In that same hour, Nabisco workers in Mexico earn barely more than a dollar. This is unacceptable.

"President Trump, do what is right. Stand with us. Stand with Michael. Stand with the Bakery Workers. Bring the jobs home, protect our pensions and invest in America."



AFL-CIO Pres. Richard Trumka (left) met with former Nabisco/Mondelēz worker and L. 300 member Michael Smith (right) prior to the event at the National Press Club in Washington D.C.



BCTGM Nabisco 600 members and UFCW representatives held a candlelight vigil and demonstration to highlight the job destruction by Mondelēz in North America.

Mondelēz Workers **WORLDWIDE MOBILIZE**

The BCTGM is among IUF member unions around the world that participated in a week of global solidarity March 27-31, to signal a collective commitment to defending quality jobs against the destructive corporate philosophy of Mondelēz International.

An impressive number of worker actions took place in 10 countries during the global week of action. In the U.S., the BCTGM joined forces with the UFCW (which is also an IUF affiliate) to hold a joint solidarity candlelight vigil to highlight the lost jobs of union members at Mondelēz. The event was held during the UFCW's annual leadership conference in Kansas City on March 29.

Additionally, unions in the United Kingdom,

Austria, Australia, Belgium, France, Korea, Lithuania, Norway, and Pakistan – some of the company's major markets – organized work stoppages, demonstrations and media events to signal global worker solidarity to save Mondelēz facilities and the skills and experience of the workers who built the company.

In a press release reflecting on the driving force behind the worldwide week of action, the IUF notes that in 2016 alone, Mondelēz eliminated 9,000 jobs worldwide. The BCTGM has lost close to 6,000 Nabisco/ Mondelēz members in last 20 years with the closing of eight union plants, line closures and the outsourcing of jobs from existing plants.



KCTWU Dongsuh Foods Union Chapter in Korea.



Norway Union (NNN) Mondelēz workers



Cadbury Pakistan Progressive Employees Union



Solidarnosc union in Poland.



First-time Shop Stewards Get Trained to DEFEND NEW CONTRACT

Two years ago, workers at the Golden Peanut shelling facility in Headland, Ala. began a courageous journey to join the BCTGM. Working under unfavorable conditions, made worse by harassment, favoritism, and prejudice, the workers decided to take action. Despite a vicious anti-union campaign waged by the company, the workers prevailed and voted overwhelmingly on May 29, 2015 to join BCTGM Local 42 (Atlanta).

On March 29, 22 months after bravely voting to become union members, the Golden Peanut workers overwhelmingly ratified their very first collective bargaining agreement and elected shop stewards to defend the contract.

“The Golden Peanut workers overcame extreme company tactics and demonstrated persistence and courage to achieve victory,” reflects Local 42 Business Manager Zack Townsend, who was first contacted by the workers in early 2015. “It has been rewarding to watch these workers grow into strong BCTGM union members and leaders,” he adds.

According to International Representative David Woods, who led the organizing effort and helped negotiate the first agreement, the workers stood strong in the face of the company’s stalling. “Despite the company’s best efforts to delay negotiations, these workers stood strong and showed great resolve,” said Woods.

The new four-year agreement covers workers from May 2015 through May 2019. The Local 42 members will receive two-years in back wages in addition to the benefits of the new union contract that includes annual raises, holidays, vacations, a defined contribution pension plan, seniority

and the protection of a grievance procedure.

“Although the process took a while, we at Golden Peanut have started with a strong union foundation,” says Randy Williams, chief shop steward. “Thank God for the BCTGM Representatives that helped us achieve our goal,” adds Williams.

Woods said that with a union contract finally in place, it was imperative to get the shop stewards up to speed quickly so that they would have the tools to defend the contract that they worked so hard to obtain.

On April 24 and 25, Woods led a training for all of the new stewards at Golden Peanut. “Our new members have never worked under a collective bargaining agreement before. There is a learning curve and they need to understand how to defend the rights of our members,” said Woods.

The training focused on the roles and responsibilities of being a steward, communicating with the membership, how to deal with supervisors and managers as a steward, and how to use the grievance procedure effectively.

Golden Peanut, a subsidiary of Archer Daniels Midland (ADM), is a shelling plant for Runner peanuts, as well as a hull and fiber processing plant.



The newly-elected shop stewards practiced grievance handling and how to handle plant managers and supervisors during the one-day steward training.

BCTGM, AFL-CIO Join Forces with Mexican Labor Leaders to **STOP** Worker **EXPLOITATION**

BCTGM International staff and representatives from the AFL-CIO International Affairs Department met for two days of meetings with visiting leaders of Mexico's independent National Workers Union, Unión Nacional de Trabajadores (UNT). The UNT represents telephone workers (STRM), pilots (ASPA), University workers, and workers in other industries.

AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka welcomed the UNT Presidents, Francisco Hernandez Juarez and Mario Alberto Gonzalez Aguilera, and defined the purpose of the meeting of the two labor federations: to develop a working dialogue on labor issues faced by both nations, including guest worker programs, human rights, Mexican migration, U.S. immigration actions, the proposed construction of a border wall and the renegotiation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

BCTGM International Research and Education Specialist Paul Lechtenberg represented the BCTGM International at the meeting held at AFL-CIO National headquarters in Washington D.C.

In discussing the possible renegotiation of NAFTA, the labor representatives found common ground in the fight to defend workers who are increasingly exploited by global corporations.

"The shameful state of unions in Mexico is mostly due to the complicity of the Mexican government with multinational corporations only interested in squeezing the maximum from their global workforce for the lowest possible wages and cheapest possible working conditions," notes Lechtenberg.

Lechtenberg points out that while it is fact that

many unions in Mexico are simply controlled by the corporations and workers have no real collective bargaining power, the good players in Mexico's labor movement are the independent unions, such as UNT. There is a huge difference between Mexico's fair and independent unions, who work to defend the real voices and labor rights of workers, and company unions that utilize protection contracts.

NAFTA, implemented in 1994, pledges to "enhance and enforce basic workers' rights." And on paper, Mexican workers are beneficiaries of some of the continent's strongest labor laws. In fact, most factory workers in Mexico belong to a union. They just don't know it.

Lechtenberg explains these are Mexico's "ghost" unions, organizations that live in the shadows of Mexican industry. Their purpose, says Lechtenberg, is not to fight for fair pay or enforce labor standards, but ensure they are ignored. Since unions are very difficult to displace under current Mexican labor law, Lechtenberg says signing up a "ghost" union essentially serves as a protection contract for factories — ensuring that workers will never be able to independently organize.

The AFL-CIO and the UNT will continue meeting and agreed to work collectively to develop an accord that will serve to protect human and labor rights in both nations. "We have many common goals in our mutual fight to improve wages and working conditions on both sides of the border," concludes Lechtenberg.



BCTGM Intl. and AFL-CIO staff are pictured here with the leaders of Mexico's independent National Workers Union, Unión Nacional de Trabajadores (UNT).

You can confidently call BCTGM Local 53 President and GEB member **Joyce Alston** a **WILD** woman.

Alston was among more than 250 union woman participants of the New Jersey State AFL-CIO's 14th Annual Women in Leadership Development (WILD) Conference in East

Brunswick, N.J. on March 3-4. The WILD Conference is traditionally held during March, Women's History Month.

"It is an invigorating few days, filled with the unity and solidarity of my union sisters. Together we focused on ways to reach out to more women workers, strengthen skills and build diversity of leadership within the labor movement," notes Alston. The New Jersey State AFL-CIO is the only state federation in the country to host an annual union women's conference.

According to Alston, every year, WILD offers new and enlightening insights in the fight for economic security for working women. This year's conference featured various accomplished speakers in the areas of leadership and civic engagement, including keynote speaker, Esther López, UFCW International Secretary-Treasurer. López is a nationally recognized voice for women and minorities and the first woman elected to serve as Secretary-Treasurer of UFCW International. Additionally, the Conference featured a leadership forum led by Jeanne M. Fox, Adjunct Professor, Princeton University and Jeannine



Pictured here are WILD participants (from left to right) N.J. AFL-CIO Secy-Treas. Laurel Brennan, OPEIU 32 Pres. Mary Short, OPEIU 32 Bus. Mgr. Sharon Eastwick and BCTGM L.53 Pres./GEB member Joyce Alston. A custom cake was donated by the talented BCTGM L. 53 bakers at Zadies Bakeshop in Fairlawn, N.J.

LaRue, the founder of the well-known blog, LaRuelist Report.

BCTGM International Strategic Campaign Coordinator Ron Baker was invited to speak during the Conference. Baker presented information on the boycott of Nabisco products made in Mexico as it relates to the exploitation of women workers on both sides of the border.

In her address to the WILD Conference, New Jersey State AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Laurel Brennan reflected on the election of President Donald Trump and stated, "Unions will continue to play a critical role in lifting up the voices of working families. Your leadership in our collective mission to build

the labor movement will be as important as ever. And while these may be challenging and unprecedented times, we have survived before and this time will be no different."

Four Bangladeshi women labor leaders also participated in the Conference as part of an international exchange program. The women traveled to the United States to gain an understanding of the challenges facing working women in the U.S. and to acquire tools to empower workers in Bangladesh.

"We take great pride in knowing that the lessons and connections these women made at WILD will have a global impact," concludes Brennan.



BCTGM Activists Join Thousands for March on Mississippi

On March 4, BCTGM International Representative Jason Davis and Local 149 (Memphis) President and GEB member Letitia Malone joined thousands of activists for the “March on Mississippi”

in solidarity with Nissan workers in Canton, Miss.

The event was organized by the Mississippi Alliance for Fairness at Nissan, a coalition of civil rights leaders, ministers and working people advocates. The two mile march concluded outside the Nissan vehicle assembly plant where activists demanded that the automaker halt its anti-union campaign and respect workers’ right to vote to join the UAW in an election free of fear and intimidation.

Representatives of the Mississippi Alliance for Fairness at Nissan delivered a letter to Nissan officials “demanding the company halt its ongoing harassment of African-American workers who are organizing to form a union.”

Both Davis and Malone said they were inspired by the courage of the Nissan workers who stood up to speak out against Nissan’s attacks on their civil rights at the plant. “The fight for justice is taking place by workers all across this nation. We can’t let corporations stop workers from forming a union. Like these brave

Nissan men and women, every worker deserves fair pay, equality and respect on the job,” said Davis.

Longtime worker advocates Senator Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) and actor Danny Glover led the March, which also included AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Liz Shuler, Rep. Bennie Thompson (D-Miss.), NAACP President Cornell William Brooks, hundreds of workers, civil rights leaders and social justice advocates.

A delegation of a dozen Nissan workers traveled to Canton from Brazil, to support UAW activists who have faced illegal retaliation in a 13-year struggle to unionize the 5,000 Nissan workers at the assembly plant.

Roughly 80 percent of the workers at the Canton plant are

African American, and the march followed several rallies across the South at Nissan dealerships, documenting the unsafe working conditions, mistreatment of workers and anti-union hostility. The event was reported to be the largest protest in Mississippi in many years.

Sanders reminded the supporters, “Today, all of us, need to send a very loud and a very clear message to Nissan and other large, profitable corporations: Stop the threats. Stop the intimidation. Stop the harassment. Stop the coercion. Start treating your workers with the respect and the dignity that they deserve. Give your workers a seat at the bargaining table. Give your workers the freedom to join a union. Stop the race to the bottom!”



BCTGM Intl. Rep. Jason Davis (left) and L. 149 Pres./GEB member Letitia Malone (right) proudly introduce themselves to Sen. Bernie Sanders (center).

ELIMINATION OF PAYROLL TAXES **could** **ELIMINATE Social Security Fund**

Amid reports that President Trump is abandoning the tax plan that was a part of his campaign, the Trump Administration reportedly is planning to propose eliminating Social Security’s primary source of funding: payroll taxes in the form of employee payroll deductions.

According to an April 10 report by the Associated Press, without the 12.4 percent employee and employer pay roll contribution to the Social Security trust funds, Social Security would have to compete with every other federal program for funding.

“Social Security is a contract between workers and the government that says the funds we put in will be returned to us. We will fight any attempt to take these guaranteed benefits away,” said Robert Roach, Jr., President of the Alliance for Retired Americans.

Throughout the campaign, President Trump promised not to cut Social Security — or Medicare or Medicaid. However, House Freedom Caucus Chairman Mark Meadows (R-NC) said in February that he thought Trump would be open to making changes that would affect future Social Security beneficiaries.

“His rhetoric on the campaign was blunt and straightforward. He said he was not going to touch it,” says Fiesta. “But now it seems like he’s going after the very core of the funding of the system. That’s crazy and dangerous.”

Considering the Republican Congressional willingness to cut Social Security, the guaranteed benefits that Social Security offers current and future retirees and people with disabilities would be in jeopardy. Eliminating the program’s funding source would be a gateway to eliminating the program, says Richard Fiesta, the Executive Director of the Alliance for Retired Americans.

Fiesta said the Alliance for Retired Americans’ three million members played a major role in helping to tank the Republican bill to repeal the Affordable Care Act, making tens of thousands of calls to congressional offices, writing letters, and showing up to hundreds of rallies, town halls, and protests. If the plan to eliminate the payroll tax goes forward, Fiesta said, “We’ll be in their offices and in the streets like there’s no tomorrow.”

Social Security’s Payroll Tax

In 1935, Congress passed and Democratic President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed into law the “Social Security Act.” This law created “a system of Federal old-age benefits” for workers and their families. The “contributory” nature of Social Security, through which beneficiaries pay for their eventual benefits via the payroll tax, dates back to its very origins in 1935.

President Roosevelt explained, “We put those payroll contributions there so as to give the contributors a legal, moral and political right to collect their pensions. ... With those taxes in there, no damn politician can ever scrap my social security program.”

Social Security’s creators thought that the contribution system would not only ensure that benefits would be reasonably large, but that they wouldn’t get too large. As it happened, Social Security proved to be so popular that the public remained on board through several expansions, including coverage of spouses and dependents, and the addition of disability insurance in 1956.

As FDR foresaw, endowing Social Security with its own revenue stream has protected it since 1935, despite several political efforts to gut the program. The weekly or bi-weekly payroll deductions that go to the program have given workers a proprietary interest in benefits that has been difficult to undermine.

– *Social Security Administration, Historical Background And Development Of Social Security*



Mortgage Program:

Helping Union Families Achieve Homeownership

Whether you're a first-time homebuyer, looking to buy your next home or refinance your current one — the BCTGM Power/Union Plus Mortgage program, with financing available through Wells Fargo Home Mortgage, can help with exclusive union member benefits.

The program is available to union members, their parents and children.

Buying a Home

You'll receive special benefits including a **\$500 My Mortgage GiftSM** award from Wells Fargo Home Mortgage after closing and, from Union Plus, special hardship assistance in the event that it is needed.

Through the union members only program, you have access to Wells Fargo's full range of home financing programs, including a low down payment option with the opportunity to earn a lower interest rate through homebuyer education.

Refinancing a Home

Looking to refinance? The Union Plus Mortgage program might be able to help you lower your monthly mortgage payments and/or shorten your loan term.

When you refinance, you'll receive a **\$300 My Mortgage GiftSM** award from Wells Fargo Home Mortgage after closing.¹ Union members will also be eligible for special hardship assistance from Union Plus.

Call 866-802-7307 for a phone consultation or visit www.unionplus.org to request an online consultation.

WORKER'S MEMORIAL DAY APRIL 28, 2017

The important worker safety and health gains that the BCTGM and the American labor movement have fought for and won are now threatened. The Trump administration has launched an all-out assault on regulations. The president has ordered that for every new protection, two existing safeguards must be removed from the books. At the same time, Republicans in Congress have moved quickly to overturn new rules issued by the Obama administration. Agency budgets and enforcement programs are on the chopping block. The safety and health of workers and the public are in danger.

The Occupational Safety and Health Act promise workers the right to a safe job. Unions and our allies have fought hard to make that promise a reality—winning protections that have made jobs safer, saved hundreds of thousands of lives and prevented millions of workplace injuries and illnesses.

We must fight back. We cannot and will not let them turn back the clock and destroy the progress we have made to make jobs safer and save lives.

On April 28, the BCTGM together with the unions of the AFL-CIO observe Workers Memorial Day to remember those who have suffered and died on the job and to renew the fight for safe jobs. This year we will come together to defend hard-won victories by working people from attacks by right-wing Republicans and business groups. We will commit to fighting until all workers have safe jobs and the freedom to form unions.

Mourn for the Dead. Fight for the Living.

