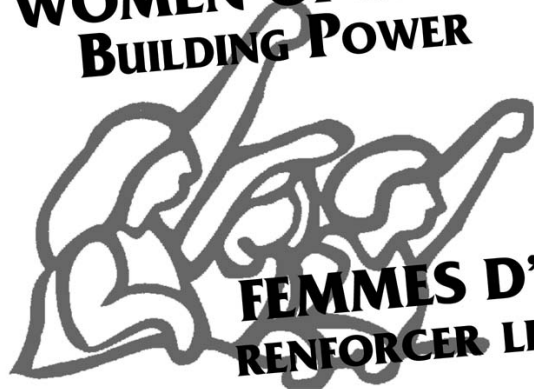


**WOMEN OF STEEL:
BUILDING POWER**



**FEMMES D'ACIER :
RENFORCER LE POUVOIR**



Women of Steel Building Solidarity

Building Power: Steelworkers Action Plan

BUILDING POWER: STEELWORKERS ACTION PLAN

Dear Sisters and Brothers:

The United Steelworkers was forged in the battles for industrial democracy – the fight of workers who courageously stood up to demand an end to the boss’s tyranny on the shop floor, who organized themselves in local unions to win guaranteed rights on the job, and who combined with millions of others in labour’s crusade to secure economic justice for working families throughout Canada and the United States.

Our union’s mission throughout its history has been to continually expand workplace democracy, fend off ceaseless corporate attempts to re-impose their domination, and promote equality for all workers.

In recent years, increasing globalization and an unprecedented concentration of corporate power has confronted us with grave new threats to the jobs and economic security of workers everywhere – and to the very existence of the labour movement. At the same time, economic and political realignments have presented new opportunities for building bargaining power to preserve jobs and enhance the financial well-being of our members and retirees.

Throughout the Steelworkers' history, we have faced daunting odds in every arena, from bargaining table to bankruptcy court, from contract campaign to election campaign. Yet time after time, we have found ways to fight back, to neutralize threats to our members' well-being by building the power of our union.

In virtually every instance, success depended on the involvement of an educated, mobilized membership and innovative activism.

There can be no better example of this activism than passage of the Westray Bill, an effort that forged success from our union's 11-year struggle, ensuring that serious neglect of worker safety will be punished by the criminal law, and that the 26 miners who lost their lives in the Westray Mine disaster did not die in vain.

This Steelworkers Action Plan carefully analyzes the challenges and threats we face in the coming years. More importantly, it specifies the actions we believe are necessary to build our union's power in successfully meeting those challenges, a detailed plan to build on the legacy of activism that has made us one of North America's most progressive unions.

Through our solidarity and renewed commitment to the activism that has been the hallmark of our union for more than 60 years, we can continue to improve the lives of our members, their families, and our communities.

In solidarity,



Ken Neumann

National Director of Canada

Building Power at the Bargaining Table

Our union's greatest successes in bargaining have resulted when we clearly state the principles that define our strategic goals in bargaining, and bolster these objectives with sound research and planning.

Global and domestic activism

Now we need a strategic plan that encompasses global as well as domestic activism.

Key Strategic Objectives

- Develop industry-wide bargaining councils where they do not yet exist.
- Establish company councils where there is sufficient opportunity.
- Extend pattern bargaining to all industrial sectors.
- Significantly improve health and safety on the job through programs that empower our members to identify hazards, demand their correction, and refuse unsafe work.
- Continue to expand current global alliances to all industrial sectors.
- Build community-based alliances to strengthen contract, legislative and political activism.
- Enhance negotiating capabilities by educating all staff and bargaining committees about benefit programs available through the Steelworkers Trusteed Benefit Plan.
- Demand the return of all contracted out work that can be performed by bargaining unit members.
- Increase the role of the union in planning and implementing workplace training to ensure fair advancement and job security.

- Bargain neutrality agreements to increase union density throughout a corporation's operations.
- Organize new members throughout each industry's supply chain to stop the erosion of bargaining power and retain domestic manufacturing.
- Working together to build a global labour movement to fight corporate power is in everyone's interests.
- Continuing to forge global alliances of unions in companies that are core employers in their sectors must be pursued.
- Exchanges among activists will refine our global alliances and develop joint strategies.

Strengthening Strategic Campaigns and Global Solidarity

To adapt successfully to this consolidation of our basic industries in a global economy, the union must substantially increase its engagement internationally on multiple fronts – some through traditional means, others through more innovation.

Promoting Global Solidarity

We must constantly emphasize both to our brothers and sisters abroad, and to our own members, that:

- The need for extending the right to collective bargaining to every worker is imperative.
 - The Steelworkers union is an organizing union.
 - Union density is on the decline.
 - In a global economy, the weakening or destruction of labour in one country or region will weaken unions and workers in most of the world.
- Our union should continue to lead by example and build global solidarity and bargaining power by mobilizing our members to:
- Oppose so-called "free" trade agreements (both existing and proposed), and highlight their negative impact on workers in other countries.
 - Work with and provide assistance to unions in developing countries on joint research and organizing projects, as well as documentation and investigation of human rights abuses.
 - Initiate joint projects with unions and progressive organizations in countries where employers are using low wages and the lack of labour, environmental and social laws and policies to unfairly compete against our members.

- Launch cross-border organizing drives in the maquiladora plants, and support other such projects with our allies in Mexico and Central America.
- Jointly campaign with our union allies for global framework agreements with core employers.

Expanding Global Union Councils

Global councils should start carefully to ensure participation and input, then move decisively in the direction of effective, global collective action.

Their actions should include:

- Exchanging information.
- Bargaining framework agreements with industries and companies that establish minimum international standards.
- Cooperating on specific issues in bargaining.
- Engaging in global collective bargaining and organizing campaigns.
- Strengthening Global Union Federations and urge them toward greater global mobilization.

**Global collective
action**

Our union should work closely with unions in other countries – and with global union federations such as the IMF (International Metalworkers' Federation) and ICEM (International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers' Unions) and others – to develop the most effective structure for the councils.

Our members experience the impacts of international trade and global consolidation. But not every industry is affected the same way, or to the same extent. Therefore, our union should identify, research, and develop global bargaining and organizing plans for:

- Industries dominated by North American multinationals where we have a strong membership base and in which we can take the lead in forming active global committees and councils.

- Industries concentrated and controlled by a relatively small group of multinationals that we can leverage through company-specific councils.
- Industries in which we have a strong membership base and that are relatively more insulated from the threats of offshore and overseas production.

In short, the global economy has created an even greater need for global activism and union solidarity – the need, moreover, for the Steelworkers to engage in wide-ranging activism beyond our borders.

Building Power Through Education and Mobilization

The cornerstone of union power is an informed and active membership that drives an increasingly effective union at the local, district, and international levels.

In addition to basic contract and grievance administration, such education should:

Informed and active membership

- Advance a specific program or goal, such as winning a better contract or stopping unfair trade.
- Explain how union members can help make a difference.
- Ask members to take a specific action, such as writing a letter, attending an event or walking a picket line.
- Continue to build awareness of the strength that flows from our union's diversity.
- Connect the objectives of a program with the broader goals of the Union.

Building on Success

This means:

- Designing and continually updating courses so they clearly relate to both the union's goals and, perhaps even more importantly, to issues and activities which impact the lives of members, retirees and their families.
- Ensuring courses build respect, understanding and appreciation for diversity.
- Making sure there is follow-up to see how members are using their skills to build collective action both inside and outside of their workplaces.
- Developing standardized training material that is easy to understand and that relates to members' needs and concerns.
- Improving coordination between the Education Department and district education programs. This should include conducting up-to-date surveys of existing programs and plans, as well as providing resources and materials for district programs.
- Making the most effective use of resources.

Improve Basic Training

It is important that local union officers, committees and stewards receive the education and resources they need to effectively represent our members and meet the challenges our union is facing.

To achieve these objectives, it will be necessary to:

- Standardize the courses and materials used to train local union officers, committees and stewards.
- Ensure course materials, resources and follow-up actions enhance the diversity of the union by increasing the participation of women and our multicultural membership.
- Make education and training available to local unions on the constantly evolving issues of paycheque economics, health care, safety and environmental issues, trade, pension security and global union solidarity.
- Provide locals with information on the improved political clout and financial strength that results from amalgamating.

Building on Rapid Response and SCAN

The Steelworkers Communication and Action Network (SCAN) and Rapid Response can be effective communication and mobilization tools vital for:

- Providing members with information and analysis on the economy, jobs and trade, information not usually available in the corporate-controlled media.
- Comparing where political parties stand on Steelworker issues.
- Mobilizing support in preparation for bargaining and building solidarity in disputes.
- Building international solidarity when bargaining with multinational corporations.
- Strengthening the union's internal organizing efforts.

Improving Communications

Over the years, our union has achieved success using various media to win public support and mobilize our members. In today's media environment, this requires more than expanding technical capabilities.

In addition to increasing the number of local union newsletters and expanding United Steelworkers Press Association (USPA) membership, we

must establish an integrated network that utilizes our creative and technical abilities to build more bargaining power.

To achieve this goal, we must build an array of communications and marketing capabilities that use new technology effectively.

Mobilizing Union Activists

Cutting-edge technologies can and should be used to educate and mobilize a new generation of Steelworker activists. We should:

- Use new technologies, including web site instruction, interactive CD-Roms, and interactive DVDs, to provide practical and effective training.
- Develop motivational videos to promote bargaining goals, to forge solidarity among members and their families, and to enhance the union's image and name recognition.
- Establish a presence and influence in news and talk radio that brings to these earned media the success we have enjoyed in using paid media to promote events, gain community support, and publicly confront irresponsible companies.

Bolstering Web-based Communications

In order to move into the next phase in the utilization of our websites, we must incorporate these websites into our strategic communications. Such actions should include:

- Increasing e-mail participation and list development through Rapid Response, SCAN, legislative initiatives, Associate Member recruitment, and public involvement in our issues.
- Expanding our web sites to provide for participation by local unions.
- Creating sections on the web for communicating to the full range of our diverse membership in all industries and services.

**Empower with
information**

Developing Interactive Participation

Expanding our ability to communicate and educate via the web will strengthen our message(s) by empowering our members with information valuable to them in bargaining, as well as in mobilizing for issue, legislative or electoral activism.

We can achieve these goals by:

- Incorporating streaming video messages and news into our web communications.
- Developing web-based interactive educational seminars.
- Providing interactive education modules that can be completed by members on an individual basis.

Member-to-Member Communication

While new technologies may serve useful purposes, they are no substitute for the most effective tool in developing local union activists – direct member-to-member communication. Members often initially become interested in the union in reaction to something they think is wrong, and can be urged to become active in correcting it. There is no substitute for face-to-face, activist-to-member communication.

Building Power Through Legislative and Political Activism

The decline in union membership over the past several decades has gone hand-in-glove with the routine violation of workers' organizing rights and the repeated failure of governments to rectify these injustices.

To reverse this decline demands that labour laws be strengthened to reassert the rights of workers to organize – free from intimidation, threats and firing. Achieving this goal will require laws that:

- Give all workers the right to certify a union as their bargaining agent as soon as a majority of them in a unit have signed cards authorizing representation.
- Provide first contract mediation and arbitration after 90 days of bargaining to prevent employers from stalling for months, and sometimes years, in attempts to break down member solidarity.

- Strengthen penalties for employers that attempt to thwart organizing or first contract negotiations.

Our union's historically strong organizing record of success is under threat. The laws in many jurisdictions are becoming increasingly hostile to the organizing activity of unions, thus

interfering with workers' statutory right to organize. For example, in many jurisdictions,

representation votes are now mandatory. In provinces where the law has changed to require mandatory votes (including Canada's industrial heartland of Ontario), our members have experienced an unprecedented number of aggressive anti-union campaigns in response to organizing efforts. We must continue to push governments in all of these jurisdictions to:

- Restore the card-check-based certification system that operated

Strengthen the rights of workers

for many years without amendment by governments of all political stripes.

- Amend labour laws to give Labour Relations Boards the statutory authority to grant effective, expeditious and meaningful remedies for unfair labour practices, especially those committed during organizing campaigns.

Preserving Retirement Security

In Canada, pensions are under attack. The failure to have a pan-Canadian pension guarantee fund has left defined benefit pension plan members vulnerable in the event of corporate bankruptcy. With less than 40 per cent of the workforce covered by a defined benefit pension plan, we cannot lose sight of the importance of maintaining and improving OAS and CPP and CPP benefits.

We often think that pension plan under-funding and the possibility of benefit reductions will affect very few. The reality is that registered pension plans – and to a greater extent defined benefit pension plans – play an important role in the retirement needs of Canadians. As of January 1, 2002 just over 5.5 million Canadians – or about 40 per cent of the total workforce – participated in registered pension plans. At the end of 2003 approximately 60 per cent of defined benefit plans were under funded with a combined actuarial liability of \$160 billion.

A pan-Canadian guarantee fund would ensure that the pension benefits for 4.5 million working Canadians and an unknown number of retired Canadians remains secure.

Fair trade not free trade

Several events in the coming years demand our activism to prevent global financiers and their allies from further undermining the rights of workers. We must strike at the heart of actions and institutions that perpetuate unfair trade by:

- Defeating the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA).

- Defeating the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA).
- Demanding that the World Trade Organization (WTO) be restructured.
- Demanding that China allow free trade unions, stop its exploitation of its own people and cease its manipulation of its currency.

We need to continue to defend against under-funding, deregulation and privatization attacks on our universal, public, not-for-profit system. We need to also fight for our health care system to include drug coverage, long-term care, home care and dental and eye care.

Our members mobilized to make sure our voices were heard in the review of Canada's health system carried out by the Roy Romanow Royal Commission. We support the Romanow recommendations and will continue to fight the federal and provincial governments until they are fully implemented.

Success in our efforts is more likely if activists understand that:

- The battles we engage are winnable.
- We can win them through our activism.

- All of our members must be engaged.

Empowering Political Activism

In Canada, our work on the legislative front is continually evolving and expanding.

In addition to the day-to-day activities of maintaining Steelworker issues in the forefront on Parliament Hill in Ottawa, such as steel, softwood lumber, security issues, bankruptcy law and others, the Steelworker influence is making its way to the Provincial Legislatures as we launch our campaigns on labour law reform and post-secondary education funding.

In addition to training a core group of political activists within the local unions, we need to utilize technology and other state-of-the-art resources to:

- Employ volunteers more efficiently in phone banking and home visits.
- Refine our membership database and build our capability to communicate more strategically with subsets of our membership.
- Engage and assist political activists through dedicated web sites and e-mail lists.

Targeting Federal Elections

Political races that will be targeted for active Steelworker involvement will include federal ridings where there is a concentration of Steelworker membership.

When politics are local, members are also more likely to become directly involved in the campaigns, as well as with local party politics and community organizations – a key step toward influencing the political parties.

While our own polls and surveys suggest our members do not appreciate being told how to vote, they want to be involved in political action. In fact, most of our members surveyed would not only like to be involved, they would also be willing to make a financial contribution and would consider joining our political partner, the New Democratic Party. We just have to ask.

Talk politics

Developing a program to build power through political activism includes:

- Updating materials on political education and the impact of political decisions on the lives of our members and families inside and outside of workplaces.
- Educating and supporting workplace, local and regional SCAN coordinators.
- Involving women's and human rights committees in SCAN and campaigns.
- Ongoing promotion of individual members in SCAN.
- Using SCAN to help communicate information and gather feedback from the membership on issue based and corporate campaigns.
- Developing "Steelworkers Vote" workshops and materials to build the confidence of members to "talk politics" in the workplace and increasing the participation of Steelworkers in election campaigns at all levels in both the United States and Canada.

- Bringing Steelworker members to the legislatures in both our countries through the link to Steelworker Lobbying programs.
- Working together with the Canadian Labour Congress to build activism at a municipal level and through Labour Councils to bring Steelworker voices into decisions that impact our members in their home communities.
- Developing a kit to help activists promote membership in the New Democratic Party in Canada.
- Identifying and supporting Steelworker candidates for election at every level of the political process.

Building Power through Membership Growth and Density

In 1998, our union undertook the most comprehensive and critical examination of our organizing structure and efforts in our history. The Organizing Task Force engaged our union's

members and staff in the United States and Canada at all levels to develop a comprehensive set of principles and an action plan to grow the union by deepening our union's commitment to organize the unorganized.

Organize the unorganized

The Task Force's principles and action plan elements are as valid today as they were in 1998:

- There must be strong commitment and efforts by our local union members at the grassroots level. We must continue to break down the institutional barriers preventing motivated members from becoming involved in organizing.
- We must strategically focus our organizing efforts where they are most likely to be successful – by employer, industry, geography and workforce demographics.

- There must be greater accountability at all levels of the union for effective use of organizing resources, including the International union and the Districts.
- We must carefully select and continuously train our organizing staff.
- Our communications with prospective members must become more sophisticated, both in substance and in methods.
- We should utilize our clout with employers to neutralize their opposition to organizing non-union facilities.
- We cannot consider an organizing drive completed until a first contract is ratified.
- We need to involve political leaders in our organizing struggles.
- We should experiment with innovative organizing techniques.
- We must ensure that every worker has the opportunity to have union representation in order to have a voice at work.

This organizing vision must be revitalized and integrated through the following measures:

- Our members, local unions, elected officers and staff must rededicate themselves to using their bargaining power and relationships in their communities to require employers to give employees at non-union facilities the opportunity to decide whether they want to be represented, without interference from their employer. This is among the best ways that our members and local unions can help build power in our union.
- Under current conditions (with the exception of Quebec), we cannot continue to rely on, and pour precious resources into, organizing through the broken procedures of federal and provincial labour laws.
- We must continue our efforts to develop a more diverse group of volunteer member organizers, and address institutional barriers that

continue to prevent talented members from having the opportunity to help grow our union.

- Women, who make up a larger part of our workforce than ever before, are more likely than men to join unions, and account for nearly half of the labour movement's total membership. We have taken the lead in responding to these trends with bargaining and public policy actions aimed at helping people to better balance the varied demands at home and at work. These actions must be expanded to assume a more central role in our organizing strategies.
- We should make fuller use of available technologies that can further build activism among our members and retirees, including the ability to match our union's members and retirees with non-union workers in the same neighbourhood during organizing drives.
- Our union needs new mechanisms for creating partnerships with our local unions to organize non-union facilities of a particular

employer, industry or community. Our "organizing partnership" program has had some success; however, we need to find new ways to provide incentives and cost-sharing arrangements for our local unions to take on organizing challenges. We will never have enough full-time organizing staff to organize at the levels we need to maintain and build the power of our union.

- Our union should use our significant influence, along with that of other trade unions globally, to support the expansion and strengthening of organizing "codes of conduct." These agreements are negotiated between multinational corporations and the International Metalworkers' Federation (IMF), the International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers' (ICEM) and other global union federations. Like neutrality agreements, "codes of conduct" are designed to ensure companies respect workers' organizing rights on a global basis.
- We need to celebrate our diversity and connection with our

communities. Building power requires the active support of members and their families. And, it requires reaching out and building alliances with cultural and community leaders.

- We must continue to pursue long-range strategic plans to organize in our core industries. At the same time, we must continue to build our organizing capacity in health care, security, public sector, education,

Reach out and build alliances

non-profit, transportation and other service sectors where collective agreements can be secured and our union's diversity can be

strengthened. We have a growing number of activist members in these sectors, who are able and willing to help organize their brothers and sisters in non-union workplaces, and we need to give them opportunities to gain organizing experience.

- There are many unaffiliated, independent unions, which are looking to join the strength of an international union. In many cases, these independent unions represent members in the same industries as our union, and they are struggling financially and organizationally. We need to work to develop a more systematic approach to giving these organizations a home in our union.
- We will continue to work for stronger protections of organizing rights at both the provincial and federal levels.
- Our union has been forged through numerous mergers over the course of our history. We will continue to pursue mergers in order to strengthen our member density in industries and to build greater power in both bargaining and politics.