

April 2017

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Once again, as we do every year on April 28th, we will recognize the toll that work takes on our lives, our families, our physical and mental health.

But this year is made all the more poignant by the fact that 2017 marks 25 years since an entirely preventable explosion at the Westray Mine in Nova Scotia killed 26 men.

The United Steelworkers were – and still are -- involved with Westray since before that fateful morning on May 9<sup>th</sup>, 1992. Westray miners were in the process of signing USW union cards in 1992. Their main reason for joining the union was concerns about their safety in a mine that was operated in an unsafe manner from the moment it opened, a mere nine months before a neglected build-up of methane gas erupted in a fireball that tore through the underground tunnels, trapping and killing everyone in its path.

Twenty-five years later we are still fighting for justice for those workers and their families. Our StopTheKilling, EnforceTheLaw Campaign seeks better enforcement of the law we fought to win in 2004 – a law intended to hold corporations criminally accountable for workplace death and serious injury – a law that would have meant convictions against the corporate players whose deliberate negligence created the disaster. The Westray miners' blood is still on their hands.

This year's Day of Mourning in District 6 also recognizes the battle being waged for compensation by the victims and families of a deadly practice in mines of the mid-Twentieth Century, when workers' lungs were deliberately exposed to aluminum powder in the misguided idea that the practice would somehow protect them. If they are even still alive, most of these workers are incapacitated by breathing and neurological problems as a result of being used as guinea pigs until the practice was finally stopped in 1979.

The fight to protect workers' health and safety is one of the most important jobs that our union does, whether through work done in the District Office, or by District Staff Representatives in the field, and of course by health and safety activists on the shop floor – the front line for recognizing when lives and health are being unnecessarily compromised.

We urge you to participate in Day of Mourning in your community. The Day of Mourning remains the most solemn day in the Steelworkers' calendar, and is a day to bond with our Sisters and Brothers in the Labour Movement, united behind a common cause – to mourn for the dead, and fight tooth and nail for the living.

In Solidarity,



Marty Warren  
Director District 6