

# THE SPOTLIGHT

5724 Seward, Lincoln, NE 68507 • (402) 434-2970 • [www.nebraska.com/~uswa286](http://www.nebraska.com/~uswa286)

## MARCH 2002

Congratulations  
to the following  
winners in  
the Nebraska  
AFL-CIO  
Calendar Raffle.

Local 286  
winners for  
March are:

Harry Holden

Mo Anker

David Bayne

## Steelworkers Hopeful About Steel Tariff, Fight for Retirees Continues

Although President George W. Bush's decision to impose high tariffs on many steel imports is not as comprehensive as Steelworkers would have liked, it still "raises our hopes that America's steel industry can be saved," USWA President Leo Gerard said.

The president's decision is "like a flashlight at the end of a very long dark tunnel," Gerard said. "It is important to heal the steel companies, but it is just as important to heal the workers."

USWA members and the steel industry now will begin a push to get Congress to pass legislation necessary to protect the health care benefits of 600,000 steelworker retirees whose benefits remain at risk. The current steel crisis, which began late in 1997, has forced 32 American steel companies into bankruptcy, 17 of which have shut down completely. A portion of steelworker retirees' pensions resulting from shut-downs are guaranteed by the federal Pension Benefit Guaranty Corp., but the health care benefits of retirees and their surviving spouses are wiped out completely when a company liquidates.

"This is a human calamity and a human tragedy," said Gerard, "and it occurred in the most productive steel industry in the world. That's just wrong."

The White House announced March 5 that Bush would impose tariffs of up to 30 percent for three years on most imported steel. The U.S. International Trade Commission had recommended tariffs as high as 40 percent to prevent illegal dumping. USWA members have been asking for the maximum protection recommended by the ITC.

Highlighting a problem with the World Trade Organization, steel-producing countries impacted by the tariffs are expected to sue at the WTO to have the tariffs declared unfair.

"The grassroots activism of literally tens of thousands of citizens from steel communities throughout the nation's industrial heartland," Gerard said, "made it crystal clear that the day is done when American workers will stand for being victimized by violations of our trade laws. We congratulate President Bush for hearing that urgent message and on taking another crucial step toward leveling the playing field in steel trade."

## April 2002

S	M	T	W	T	Fr	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20

**NEXT REGULAR  
MEMBERSHIP MEETING**

**April 14th @ 2:00 pm  
Union Hall • 5724 Seward**

Ucinda Slms, Editor  
Hugh Bowen, President



## FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

**Hugh Bowen**

As I reported at the March monthly membership meeting, we have learned that we are to get back some Ford business in belts. We will be making belts for the Ford Explorers. It is our understanding that this change is due to a problem that Ford is having with Gates. It is always good to see business come into our plant and we hope to see more of this in the future. It is so important that we all realize that these things happen because of our product, our abilities and the good quality work that we do. This is why it is important to continue to do good work, even in the worst of times.

The International is preparing to assist us in our attempt to keep the hose department in Lincoln. I understand that the preparation work being done by the International is going very

well and that they have been getting cooperation from the company in obtaining the information that they need. If all goes as planned, it will probably be the first week in April when the International representatives will be here to meet with our bargaining committee to begin preparing for meetings with the company.

Please remember that these negotiations are different than normal negotiations in that we will be presenting a plan that the company will need to look at. Normally, negotiations with the company begin with their presentation of what they want and our response to that. It is so important that everyone be prepared for some difficult times and some difficult decisions.

The sub fund is as unpredictable as ever. Just like you, all we can do is watch and wait. The information is available by calling extension 8822 in the plant and is updated every Tuesday.



# PRE-RETIREMENT SEMINARS

**To be eligible for retirement, employees must**

- be Age 65 with 5 years seniority,
- be Age 55 with at least 10 years seniority  
(there will be a reduction of 4.8% per year of age under 62) or
- have 30 years seniority, any age.

**Seminars are scheduled for: Monday, March 25, 2002**

12:00 Noon and 7:00 P.M.

**AND**

**Tuesday, March 26, 2002**

7:00 P.M.

The seminars last approximately two hours. The agenda include explanation of pension options and retiree benefits. We will also have a representative from Social Security and a financial consultant from Edward Jones.

If you wish to attend, please call me at 434-2974. I need to have your name, social security number and a projected date of retirement. I will also need to know which meeting you plan to attend. Spouses are welcome.

I will be scheduling more meetings in the future.

**Sally Edwards, Pension and Insurance Representative**

## IN THE EDITOR'S OPINION

**Ucinda Sims**

I recently spent several weeks working for District 11 with Stand Up For Steel. This allowed me to spend time with Steelworkers on the Iron Range of Minnesota, right in the middle of the steel crisis and the health care crisis of our retirees. Right up to the very moment when the President signed his name to the Steel Tariff decision, we always felt there was hope that the President would do the right thing and give some relief to our dying steel industry.

Now we know we were wrong. With exceptions for a few products that will see tariffs at the 30% level, and even more at a much lower level, the President made a decision that will quite possibly seal the fate of the Iron Range and the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. By putting levels on slab steel that are equal to the level of illegal imports that have already devastated both regions, and making those quota levels the legal limit before tariffs kick in, the challenge will be to prevent acceleration of the crisis in those areas.

Already, there are thousands of retirees dealing with the loss of their health care coverage as of March 31. All of them are searching for new coverage. Pre-existing conditions and the high costs are two of the factors adding to their sum of panic and fear.

We all need to realize that this is not just a steel industry problem. If corporate America realizes that it is just that easy to dump its responsibilities to its workers and its retirees, than it will become the norm and not the exception. Everyone will be doing it and we will all be affected. That is why it was

so important that there were representatives from our Local and from Local 307 in Topeka at the rally in Washington DC on February 28th.

To those of you that took the bus ride from here to Washington, it is important that you know how significant your participation was. Just so you know that you were noticed, you can go to [workingfamilies.com](http://workingfamilies.com) and click on the steel rally story. There you will find the report of the rally from the AFL-CIO. One of the people they interviewed and used a quote from is identified as a member of Local 286 from here in Lincoln. There are some great pictures from the rally at our own web sight. Be sure to check it out.

One constant in the thought process of any union is that "an injury to one is an injury to all". At no time in history is that as true as it is today. It does not matter if the problem is the moral obligations of a company that is financially bankrupt or the financial problems of a company that is morally bankrupt. It does not matter if it is the LTV Steel Mining Company or the Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company or Enron. The problems are always going to be the survival and well being of the working people. These are the problems that are of major concern to our union. And they will continue to be the focus of everything that we do.

Even when there are setbacks, even when the results are undesirable or not nearly enough, the United Steelworkers of America and the AFL-CIO and the brothers and sisters of every union nationwide and in our own community will continue to work to protect the rights and the needs of working people everywhere. Even ours.

**On a very cold day in March**, the following people volunteered their time to collect food donations at the gates of the fairgrounds for the Rocky Manginelli Swap Meet. Thanks go to Gary Floyd, Rick Hill, Mark Roux, Phil Snook, John Buhr, Milt Schmidt, Mark Kumpula, Mike Statler, Sue Statler Evelyn Pritchett and Dave Wattjes.

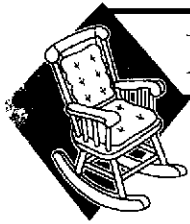
I would also like to thank the volunteers who help at the Lied Center with the Abe Lincoln Celebration.

On March 30, 2002, the University Place Community Organization (UPCO) will hold its annual Easter Egg Hunt. They are looking for volunteers to help from 9:00 a.m. until noon. If you can help with this activity, please call Sharon Doll at 464-3068.

Thanks again to everyone.

Milt Schmidt

Chairman, Community Services Committee



## Retiree's Corner

# Retirees Meeting, April 8th, 2002

**Potluck Dinner 5:30 pm**

Bring a covered dish and your  
own table service.  
Regular Meeting at 6:30 pm.

The March meeting started with a potluck dinner at 5:30 pm. Regular meeting started at 6:30 pm. Election of officers was held.

Results:	President:	Jerry Teichmeier
	Vice President:	Bill Ellsworth
	Secretary:	Marge Lahodny
	Treasurer:	Jim Landstrom
	Trustees:	Beverly Litt Martin Maul Marvin Tenopin
	Executive Board:	Roy Valentine Hubert Chapin Lean Lahodny

Mayor Don Wesely was guest speaker. Door Prizes were won by Alice Leibel and Marge Lahodny. Tickets for the May Dinner are \$2.50 per person. See Marv Tenopir or Barb at the Union Office. It will be held at Havelock Methodist Church.

Bus Trip May 15 & 16th. Royal River Casino. \$39.00 per person. \$20.00 back and 2 meals included. Call Marge Lahodny at 466-0737.

## Senate Passes Economic Stimulus Legislation Without Health Care Assistance

Following a 417-3 vote in the House of Representatives, senators voted March 8 by 85 to 9 to support a \$43 billion economic stimulus package. The bill includes an additional 13 weeks of unemployment benefits for workers facing expiration of their benefits and billions in corporate tax breaks. Some unemployment beneficiaries would not qualify for a full 13-week extension depending on their state eligibility rules.

The bill does nothing to help laid-off workers dealing with the crushing costs of health care. Many unemployed workers have lost their health insurance or face unaffordable monthly premiums. In addition, it leaves out hundreds of thousands of workers who do not qualify for unemployment benefits in many states despite paying into the unemployment system.

The stimulus bill comes late-almost six months after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks-because House Republican leaders had insisted on larger corporate tax breaks as the ransom for extending unemployment benefits for workers.

Under current law, workers qualifying for unemployment benefits are permitted to receive funds for up to 26 weeks. By the March 11 six-month anniversary of Sept. 11, more than 1.6 million workers will have exhausted their unemployment insurance benefits.

The bill will become law with President George W. Bush's signature in the next 10 days.