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Op-Eds

Cascade Aerospace

This week I was able to visit with workers from Cascade Aerospace. When the company is in operation, it is one of the area's largest employers, with more than 600 highly-trained employees whose number one job is to keep airplanes in the air. According to the company, "the employees are key to our success."

Today these workers are walking the picket line. This is their first strike and two critical issues make this dispute very important far beyond the plant gate. That's because Unifor 114 members are fighting for the future survival of the plant, and for the next generation of workers who will come to work there.

The company is demanding that new employees make less. If the union agreed to this, new employees would have lower benefits, substandard pensions and less holidays. The principle that all employees deserve the same pay and benefits for the same work is a foundation of the labour movement. Selling out the next generation before they even arrive on the job is the opposite of that. It is unfair and simply wrong.

The employees are also seeking a commitment from the company that they will continue to operate in Abbotsford and not transfer work to its other operations. For that reason alone, everyone should be standing shoulder to shoulder with these men and women. A victory on this front would be a victory for the future well-being of the entire community.

The company needs to sit down with representatives of "their most important resource” and conclude a new collective agreement. The people I talked to yesterday are ready to negotiate, they are just waiting for the company. Hopefully, they do not have to wait too long. In the meantime, stop by the picket line and show your support. They are fighting for you too.

JIM SINCLAIR

President, B.C. Federation of Labour