

Profits Before People: Richmond Ikea Lockout Enters Day 17

by Tia Everitt - Thursday, May 30, 2013

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Generating enough media spin to rival a jet engine at take off, the management and PR folks at Ikea Canada want you to believe that their poor little corporation is being held hostage by greedy, soulless union workers in [Richmond](#).

Woe.

Pity poor Ikea.

It's tough being a multi-national corporation with a reputation for [union busting](#), [still more union busting](#) and sundry [human rights violations](#). It is also expensive to flog the entire planet with particle board, Allen Keys and [horsemeat tainted foodstuffs](#). You can't expect them to provide "coworkers" with a safe, fair and equitable place to work. After all, you can't have your [faecal contaminated Tarta Chokladkrokant](#) and eat it too.

Bottom lines, people. Bottom. Lines.

Meanwhile, back in Lotusland, 300+ workers of the mega-Ikea store in Richmond are embroiled in a rapidly degenerating labor dispute. Members of the Teamsters Local #213 are locked out, and the store continues to skeleton crew it, while management utters threats in the news about further reducing the contract on the table if their slaves picketing staff doesn't roll over and take the pounding.

[\(Source: CKNW\)](#)

It looks like some assembly may be required as things get tense in a labour dispute between some 300 union workers and management at the Richmond Ikea.

Manager Janet McGowan says the store has been operating on limited hours as Teamsters take job

action.

But McGowan says they will now play hardball by gradually reducing the contract on the table if the union doesn't sign soon, "So, on June 3rd, our co-workers would have a phase one offer that they could, in fact, be accepting and then we would give co-workers an additional five days before implementation of phase two and then an additional five days before the implementation of the phase three."

Phase one would see a 500-dollar signing bonus go bye-bye, by phase three paid sick days would be cut in half.

If Ikea is so moral and fair, as their media relations people would have you think, why have the staff overwhelmingly rejected not one, not two, but THREE different offers by the company to date?

Simple.

Ikea is attempting to drag workers back into the dark ages. Not just because they're cheap, but because, according to their track record, they also enjoy it.

(Never mind that Richmond-area retail workers reside in one of the most expensive cities in the world. It's not like they have homes or families, right? Who needs to eat?)

Ikea is not about ensuring fair living wages. It's about profit. Not people.

Primary contract issues, per [Teamsters Local 213's Facebook page](#):

- re-introduction of multi-tiered wage systems
- removal of hour guarantees
- benefit reductions
- contract work out schemes
- many other concessions

I stand in solidarity with these men and women on the picket line.

Having been locked out by my employer for over a month in the summer of 2000, I understand what these people are going through.

Spending your nights and days on a picket line, in all kinds of weather, all times of day, and not knowing what comes next is scary.

Here is what happens:

The first few days are adrenaline-fueled and high-energy. There is solidarity. There is power in numbers. Everyone is prepared to stick it to the man.

As time slithers on, and the rhetoric from the employer grows increasingly hostile, infighting starts.

Division.

People start to blame each other. Blame the union. Question whether they made the right choice. Side with the employer. Discomfort and unknowns don't bring out the best in people.

When weeks near months, people become afraid. Union stipends/wage replacements are not enough in Vancouver. People start looking for other jobs.

The ones who hang in there start to feel guilt, and become compelled to accept whatever comes down the pipe from corporate, just to end the sustained duress.

The media portrays the workers as lazy, ignorant and willfully spiteful. Goodwill diminishes. There is a lack of public support.

The union organizers work hard to rally, but the morale just isn't there, and their job grows increasingly difficult.

They need support. Your support. Our support. These are families and community members, not a faceless corporate entity.

Ways in which we can help boost the cause of the locked out Ikea workers in Richmond/Teamsters Local 213:

- Boycott Richmond Ikea. Don't shop there. Don't give them your money.
- Boycott ALL Ikea locations. Don't go running down the road to Coquitlam. (*The breakfast is cheap for a reason.*)
- Don't cross their picket lines. Ever.
- Walk the picket line WITH them.
- Bring by some food and beverage, especially if it is really hot or really cold.
- If the weather becomes inclement, pop by with some shelter or weather related implements like umbrellas, ponchos or sunblock.
- Respond to online editorials, radio talk shows, newspaper articles that spin in favour of Ikea and demonize labor unions/workers.
- Use social media to counter the spin.
- [Write to them](#) and let them know you support the workers.

Keep fighting the good fight, folks. Remind them that people need to come BEFORE profit.