

UTU Softwood Lobbying Initiative Report

A delegation of BC UTU members, supported by senior Canadian officers, have returned from a week in Washington, D.C. lobbying for an end to the Canada / US Softwood lumber dispute. The group included Bob Sharpe (UTU Canadian Alternate Vice President), Tim Secord (Canadian Legislative Director), Don Tennant (Alternate Canadian Legislative Director), Brian Gleason (BC Legislative Director), and local members Sylvia Leblanc and Bill Whitton From Local 1923 and Brad Burrows and Dave Moorhouse from Local 1778.

In Ottawa, the delegation met with Robert Cairns and Glen McPherson of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, as well as Judy Randall, NDP Legislative Assistant. From these meetings, the UTU selected several common issues that could be raised and supported.

From Ottawa, the delegation traveled to Washington, D.C. where they met UTU International President Byron Boyd and National legislative Director James “ Brokenrail” Brunkenhoefer. Also introduced were US State Legislative Directors Don Dunlevy (Pennsylvania), Jack Ramsay (South Carolina) and John Smullen (Minnesota). The delegation met with industry lobbyists and Trade Counselors at the Canadian embassy for further discussion of the case the UTU would present. With the support of our International brothers, appointments were made with several members of the Government. The local members from BC were able to register their views with Congressmen, Senators, and their staffers. The delegation asked legislators to co-sponsors Bills before the House and Senate that supported fair trade, as well as discuss new issues with the legislators already signed on. The legislators were asked to help pressure US Dept of Commerce to review duties on Canadian softwood. We also provided draft letters they could send to the US President, Secretary of Commerce and trade representatives that supported resuming negotiations.

All the delegation met with Bud Clatanoff (US Trade Representative), presenting a solid case for a review leading to settlement that was well received. Members also met with the trade rep for Senator Grassly (Iowa) who will probably head the Committee on Finance, which oversees Trade.

Local members and US Legislators alike were impressed by the UTU’s ability to provide grass-roots access to the US political system. The delegation plans to follow up on our visits with letters and email to US legislators, and with further news releases to the membership.

Personal Timeline

Thursday Nov 7th, 2002

Flew Prince George, Vancouver, Ottawa. Toured UTU Ottawa office. Walked by Parliament buildings on way to dinner with Tim Secord and Heather Anderson (UTU Human Rights Coordinator) from Manitoba.

Friday Nov 8th, 2002

Meet at UTU office to map out issues to be discussed. Met with Robert Cairns and Glen McPherson of Foreign Affairs and International Trade for briefing on Federal position. Met with Judy Randall (Legislative Assistant to NDP Leader Alexa McDonough) for additional political overview. Developed main topics for delegation in Washington. Photo-op at Parliament Buildings.

Saturday Nov 9th

Flew Ottawa to Washington, DC. Dinner and orientation discussions.

Sunday Nov 10th, 2002

Day Off. Toured Smithsonian Museums for 8 hours. Needs two weeks minimum. Visiting Korean and Vietnam Memorials was emotional on day before Remembrance (Veteran's) Day.

Monday Nov 11th

At UTU Washington office, introduced to Brokenrail and State legislators. Brief visit from Byron Boyd to offer support. Discussed meeting points, started draft letters, and other handouts. Met with CP Rail lobbyist John Brimsack who offered his position on common issues.

Tuesday Nov 12th, 2002

At UTU office, Byron Boyd met with us to go over issues and offer support. Met other UTU execs and staff. At Canadian Embassy, met with Paul Bailey and Allan Minz (Counselors - Trade Policy) for the embassy. Dinner and roundtable discussion of days progress.

Wednesday Nov 13th, 2002

Start at UTU office to review strategy and talking points. Bob Sharpe, Dave Moorhouse, Sylvia Lebalnc and I along with John Smullen (Minn) met with Robin Goracke (Leg Asst) for Congressman Colin Peterson (Minn). We also met with Congressman Ramstadt (Minn) for short talk and photo-op. Brokenrail provided short conversations for delegation with many Congressmen walking by while the House was going in for a vote. Met with Susan Burr (Legislative Assistant for Congressman Jim Demint (South Carolina) . She talked for fair trade and that “ it was good to see you here in person pushing your concerns.” Back to UTU office to review visits and plan Thursday’s agenda with help from the State Legislative Reps. Dinner and round table reports on progress made.

Thursday Nov 14th, 2002

At UTU office, arrangements made for tour of Senate building. Bob, Sylvia, Dave and I were given an excellent tour by Senate staffers. Historical and architectural, it included a behind the scenes look at the process. The whole delegation, along with CN Rail lobbyist Karen Phillips attended the meeting with Bud Clatanuff (US Trade Representative). Again heard desire to negotiate long term settlement and appreciation for personal involvement from grass roots. Brokenrail, Bob, Brian and I met with Richard Criss (Legislative Rep for Senator Grassly). Although Mr Criss felt stumpage was a subsidy, he did not feel that it played a significant role in the final price. He appreciated new ideas about issues. Dinner and final round table reports on progress and results of initiative. During dinner, Nancy Pelosi (new Democratic House Leader) and Steny Hoyer (Democratic House Whip) stopped by to meet us. After dinner, Byron Boyd stopped in to review events, and discuss many other topics.

Friday Nov 15th, 2002

Flew DC, Toronto, Vancouver, Prince George and then drove home.

Note: Other Members of the Delegation met with other Members of the House and Senate to present issues.

Softwood Points

- Speaking Points
- Cost to US Consumer
 - 6 % Reduction in Shipments
 - Approx.6 Million US Jobs involved on the consumer end
 - Imposed duties have not had desired effect.

We asked legislators for sponsorship of free trade bills when they are re-introduced in the next sessions of the House and Senate. Side issues raised included foreign softwood coming onshore on the East coast, and the potential loss for American companies in Canada with a smaller consumer base. The issue of duties on remanufactured lumber and Western cedar was raised and recognized by US officials. Both Ottawa and Washington, D.C. officials seem committed to a negotiated long term resolution to these issues.

UTU Points

Support for this initiative by President Byron Boyd was expressed more than once.
Political power of American and Canadian Legislative Offices was shown..
Credibility of UTU allows industry participation on common issues
US national support shown by help from State Legislative Directors
Involvement of Local members in process on international level produces results.

Personal Points

Education in union affairs and government process invaluable
Participation in process made comfortable by State leg Reps and office support staff
All delegation members worked well to achieve goals with out exceeding reach.
New respect for Washington, D.C. as destination to see history and architecture..
Canadian Embassy impressive with much art. Staff interested and helpful with issue