

Standing Committee Meeting Minutes

June 27, 2023 at 1:15 pm in Admin Boardroom

Present: Alexandra Carter, Scott Fairless, Darcy Lanes, Naminder Sharma, Wade Price, Ingrid Schile, Angelo Sia, Cam Leeson, John Hagley

1. Grievance 23-03; Unjust Discipline

Unifor: A shift instrument mechanic was sent home and we feel it's unjust discipline. Taking a look at notes, sounds like there were some things going on and he was getting pulled to multiple jobs and it sounds like short tempers, but may have just been some clarification required and it sounds like the people calling instrument mechanics aren't identifying themselves, and it may have an effect on how somebody answers. It's important that the person getting a radio call knows who is calling them. It sounds like it was something that could've been sorted out better with some cool down time before the supervisor went to talk to the instrument mechanic. The reason he was sent home was disrespecting?

CPP: It was disrespecting people on the radio and his supervisor after the fact. I understand he was getting pulled and the radio is a problem and he was frustrated, he went and did the job, but you can't pull up the radio and swear and yell, and then continue to do that to your supervisor when he comes to talk to you about it.

Unifor: Possibly this could've been a learning opportunity or maybe doing a letter instead of sending him home.

CPP: I think if he hadn't kept going that's where we would've gone, but he did keep going. You can't talk to people that way.

Unifor: All right, anything to add?

Unifor: Wouldn't you agree that if Bernardo had identified himself, the response would've been different?

CPP: I don't know. I have everyone's statements, they all line up.

Unifor: So you're saying his verbal communication on the radio was inappropriate?

CPP: Yes.

Unifor: Is that the first time somebody has used inappropriate language on the radio?

CPP: I don't know, I'm not on the radio.

Unifor: Is that the first time people have been disciplined for inappropriate language on the radio?

CPP: It's not the first time discipline has come from disrespectful language.

Unifor: Wouldn't you agree that respect can vary from person to person?

CPP: Let me ask you, how many people are on the radio at any given time? Twenty?

Unifor: I don't know, sure, maybe.

CPP: It's a public forum, that's a lot of people. It's like yelling at someone in a room of twenty people.

Unifor: If we'd been given an opportunity to deal with this differently, couldn't we have come to another resolution?

CPP: How else would you have dealt with it?

Unifor: I monitor the radios. I have in the past, heard some...

CPP: I'm sure it's been colourful...

Unifor: I don't know that it's known mill wide to not use colourful language on the radio and if doing so they would be disciplined for. So if that's the route we're taking, we want to make sure everyone knows that. And beyond that, what we refer to as mill language, and what's acceptable and not acceptable in certain areas. We all agree in this environment to not carry over mill language and are respectful and carry out conversations, but it hasn't been communicated to the members what is inappropriate language in the mill.

CPP: I think there's a couple things. One, this isn't the first time we've disciplined somebody for this. I don't think it's any secret that we have a standard that is changing as society changes. It's not like he was just swearing, it was directed at people in an angry way. If it would've just been that and if he'd been approached and said, "yeah I shouldn't have done that", but he did not, he kept going. So that's not...

Unifor: That's my second concern, wouldn't you agree that there's a time and place to talk to people? Isn't it better if we let some time pass?

CPP: Sure, but we also have to address things as they happen. If you want to stop something so it doesn't happen further.

Unifor: In our meeting prior to Brian going home, Bernardo indicated 3 times that he understood Brian was stressed. That's what leads me to... he acknowledged that he understood Brian was stressed but he didn't leave any time between those conversations. I understand it's important to communicate right away if they have issues, but it was more of... instead of waiting, he went straight to confrontation. I would think because he did what was asked of him, we could've left it a little bit and come back to it. Bernardo indicated 3 times in that meeting that he understood but we still went after him? We expect no discipline and his day back. That's our expectation.

CPP: That's not where we're at.

Unifor: We're going to have to find a way to get there. As far as we're concerned, this individual didn't refuse a job.

CPP: That's not what he was disciplined for.

Unifor: He wasn't told what he was doing was wrong.

CPP: Hold on, are you suggesting that the supervisor should have got on the radio and told him to stop doing that?

Unifor: What the supervisor could've done was let him know it wasn't appropriate.

CPP: That's exactly what he did.

Unifor: After it.

CPP: It was after.

Unifor: Being on the radio, we have to identify who we are.

CPP: I don't think that has any bearing on this, nor does him being stressed out. It was not appropriate behaviour in any circumstance.

Unifor: We're going to have to find a way to get to a mutually agreed upon resolve for this. Our members are upset. They didn't feel that there was language that was inappropriate. We expect no discipline and the day back.

CPP: We respectfully disagree.

Unifor: While we're talking about this, have discipline letters been sent to us?

CPP: I may have missed some this year; I'll look back at see what's left.

2. Truth and Reconciliation Day

Unifor: This is follow up from last time. Do you have any more information?

CPP: I don't have a clear idea of how that'll be handled but my understanding is that it would be paid according to ESA, Employment Standards, but not be a day off.

Unifor: But you agree it's a statutory holiday for the province?

CPP: Yes, we just need to figure out how it'll be addressed.

3. Women's Advocacy

Unifor: We sent Ingrid off to school and learned the importance of this position in the workplace. She learned of some suggestions when you have a women's advocate onsite; they're provided time to look for resources in the community and know what to do and how to help, and other support resources. She'll make it quite clear that it's not just women, and that there's lots of other things that can affect a person outside of work or even at work. Another thing we're looking for, and we'll push it at wage caucus, we'd like to see this as a bargained position that speaks to a women's advocate. There's access to resources when it's a bargained position. Part of recognizing that is some time to learn, do research, make phone calls and stuff like that. We can possibly get together and talk about it if you're open to it. Maybe there's some time where she can come in, it could be like safety days and training days for OHS so she could be learning on work time. It makes sense to me. There's certain savings to the company that this position could help with; less absences and higher productivity, mind on task, being on time, etc. There's a benefit to this position. So there's some other details we can go over. I'll let her speak to it more.

Unifor: There are some issues women in the mill are having. The purpose of this position is to just direct people when they're having issues, and it has been seen throughout Canada and I had the opportunity to go to Ontario and met lots of women who are being advocates. So it was a very nice experience. Some heavy topics, and I'm glad we don't have many having these issues but we should be prepared as the number of women in the workforce grows. We

often have to act as resource in equity issues. I have spoken with almost every woman in bargaining unit, and the thing affecting us right now is washrooms.

CPP: I agree.

Unifor: It's a health and hygiene issue sharing a washroom with men. I have encountered some problems locking the washroom. The washroom in warehouse is designated for truckers. And when we use the washroom, we encounter the truckers trying to open the washroom even when it's locked. Also, the hygiene of truckers isn't great. We wear coveralls and have to strip them down every time. Allow me to suggest, assign new PPE; 2-piece coveralls can be worn. To be in light of equality, make them available to everybody. Safety also is an issue for men in regard to washroom sharing, if a man walks in on a woman in the washroom, this can happen in the garage, then a man can be accused of harassment. It's awkward for both of us. I would like to know if there's any plans to change this. For example, in the bleach plant, there's a men's washroom and a supervisor and women's washroom. I would suggest a women's only washroom or perhaps having three washrooms. I know there's a closet that could provide space for it. Another issue too, for example in stores there are still men using the washroom. Perhaps put the lockers somewhere else. I spoke with some women there and they don't feel safe to change there when a man can come in. I haven't personally worked there but from what I spoke with this person, it was an issue. Again, coworkers are using the washroom. So not having enough washrooms for females, that is discrimination. Just building those washrooms exclusively for us says you care for us. I would like to say thank you for the new lockers, that shows me you intend to hire new women and that you care.

CPP: Thank you for that. I can share a couple things. We have created/refurbished a women's washroom in the steam plant. The conversation in the garage has come up and we've done some costing for that area as well. Because you also have chip screens people and if we intend to hire more women, that's where they mostly come in. We don't have a solution, but we've been talking about it. There have also been discussions around the warehouse and machine floor, and something we can do there. It's an issue we also have identified and are trying to address. We are open to discussion and suggestions. That's great, and it's great you've taken this on. We'd love to have you involved in those discussions.

Unifor: I have also had suggestions about stalls.

CPP: We've done a bunch of work in the main men's changeroom and there's more to do... for example there's the showers. How do we change that? So there's things out there.

Unifor: Do you have a timeline?

CPP: Unfortunately, no.

Unifor: I've had questions about timelines. The women's washroom in the steam plant is good but the only woman there quit...

Unifor: Is that washroom locked up?

CPP: We didn't let contractors use that washroom. It's locked.

CPP: I was involved in getting it built. I think it's important you brought it forward. Unfortunately, we have a lot going on so it's good to have it brought up again.

Unifor: Thank you for being open to the discussion.

Unifor: We can have discussion about whether we can look at a day booked for women's advocacy training, we were thinking something like the safety day where it's an 8-hour day before her regular dayshift. It is important that she is given a private email address so she's not using personal email and again, it shouldn't be her general West Fraser, so suggestion was womensadvocate@westfraser.com. As well, another space in the mill, maybe the safety office or could be another room. Maybe a room with a private number. We don't want somebody calling the safety office expecting to talk to her and getting somebody else.

CPP: We'll discuss that for sure. You talked about it being a bargained position? Would you be thinking letter of understanding? We'd have to talk to Jeanette and other people.

Unifor: We had to jump through some hoops to get her into the training without it being a bargained position. Not sure why, but there are other reasons we want it to be a bargained position. Right now, the government recognizes it, but you know what can happen when governments change, so that's why we want it bargained.

4. Maintenance Outage Review

Unifor: We wanted to hear from you on some successes and concerns and some things that need to be addressed. It's good to hear that money is going into the company.

CPP: We're a month away from numbers still. It's a matter of invoices still coming in. Typically, we spend in May and pay in June. I have opinions on the other stuff too. It's not just about the Benjamins.

CPP: To clarify, the argument we made with a month long shut was that even though we spent a lot of money, we spent incrementally less because less overall contractors, no bussing, things like that. We don't have all the numbers but we're also going against the benchmark of what we told the owners on how we were hoping to save money. Otherwise, I felt it went pretty well. Four weeks was a long time, but it was good feedback about not rushing jobs and being able to finish things up properly. Our safety record was very good for that amount of time.

Unifor: On both ends, contractors and employees.

CPP: Yes, a very positive benefit. Like I said, large reduction in contractor numbers which was beneficial for a number of reasons. There is revenue loss with an extended window, but there were a lot of benefits. People were still wound up before the shutdown and then we went into it and people calmed down. But then we have an opposite effect where we have to make sure people don't slow too much. We haven't had an opportunity to prove it was successful operationally yet.

Unifor: What about production helping maintenance? Sounds like sometimes it was effective, sometimes it wasn't.

CPP: From an operations point of view, I think it was successful. Four weeks is too long but two weeks is too short, so maybe three weeks would be better. Talking to people on the floor, during the first couple weeks everyone was focused but then people get tired everywhere. In my mind, trying to find the sweet spot is where we need to go. There were some other things I'd like to change. But as far as dryer cleaning and the stuff got done with our people was fantastic. Very happy.

CPP: Probably less people working than we initially expected, many took vacation when given the opportunity. But the other thing that monkey wrenched it was that it was a pretty hurried plan. First we thought September, then five weeks out we moved it back to May. So, trying to figure out who was available when... if we'd known the schedule sooner, we could have planned manning better. We had you guys coming down and helping but there was also dryer cleaning, so I thought it was good.

CPP: I saw some areas to improve. I think we'd double up so we can get lockouts done quicker.

CPP: Another thing that affected it was that everybody was tired by the end and getting people in was more difficult. We need to plan start up away from a weekend. But overall happy about it.

Unifor: The biggest thing from us was mindsets changing.

CPP: Yes, a lot of confusion.

5. Fibre Supply

Unifor: Any more money through FES?

CPP: Not yet. They're expecting to hear 2 weeks again, so the forestry people are answering more questions and as of last week we hadn't heard back. We asked for quite a lot so they're asking questions.

Unifor: Do you have a breakdown of where the supply comes from? Residuals, whole log, trades?

CPP: All over the place.

Unifor: Is there a percentage you budget on? Or wherever you get it from?

CPP: We don't budget on trades, all it does it change freight cost. One thing not in the budget is if somebody doesn't use all their chips and then we might get more. We don't know anything different than we knew before. I don't think anyone does, it's very volatile, but we're at the mercy of solid wood and lumber prices right now. That's what the sawmills are running after.

Unifor: You're at 70-80% residual?

CPP: Yeah, you can't do entirely residual.

Unifor: You talked about more aspen?

CPP: I haven't heard any talk about species, but I haven't heard talk about limiting species. What the mix is, we'll find out the month after we've already used it. We don't deny chips, but we don't want to put hardwood in there. That'll cost money and time. But as far as the other mix we're open to all comers.

Unifor: What about annual projection? Chips to the end of the year?

CPP: That's what it looks like, but you know how it is, we won't know until closer to any given time. It's frustrating.

Unifor: We're still uncertain of the fall?

CPP: We're uncertain of the fall. I won't say, "no problem", because we don't know but we're status quo right now. What we talk about right now is trying to make 1000 tons a day because we need to make money, power, and show we're viable as a business. Unfortunately, that hasn't happened this month.

Unifor: So the projection with 1000 tons a day, will that allow us chips throughout the year or will there be a recalibration of that when the chip pile depletes? Will we go slower?

CPP: Our budget is based on that. We aren't going to run 12 RPM to keep the mill running. We can't afford that.

Unifor: What about in the spring?

CPP: In the spring we were more limited by equipment. Our high-pressure feeder was done. The part in the winter was avoiding downtime in winter. Our projections are to run 1000 tons a day and we're always re-evaluating. We even have a few extra chips right now because we have a month of 13 RPM under our belt with the challenges we've had.

6. Manning Levels

Unifor: Where are we at with manning levels?

CPP: Mine [fibrelines] are getting better! One apprentice can move over when Kim Bare comes back. The John Watson thing delayed it a bit. We had an entry level person start yesterday and we have two more who are very close. We have people coming in on a steady basis. The training has been going well. We set another record for training, such a huge volume. Various people have stood up and they've taken that on with Raluca being gone. Luke has jumped in, and Alex, and safety...

Unifor: So, in the past we've had 4 production labourers per crew.

CPP: Yes, that won't happen this year simply because we can't hire people fast enough.

Unifor: For vacation coverage is there a contingency in place?

CPP: Yes, what my supervisors have been told, they're allowed to approve the people who were going to be gone and we'll cover one with overtime. Whatever we would have covered with 4 production labourers, we will do with 3 and overtime. The caveat is that we have to be able to cover the position. In some cases there will be a give and take. They might have to work with people to cover things. We can't run missing a body. In the past, we haven't paid overtime. But they've been told to do so now.

Unifor: So for 4 positions.

CPP: Whatever we would've covered regularly.

Unifor: We had expected more... that's typically why we have 4 in the summer months.

CPP: That was the best we could do in the circumstances. We based those earlier discussions on the information we had at the time.

Unifor: I'm not in production so I'm not as familiar. The prime-time process is that they get time in before May 1 and they get approvals before May 15...

CPP: So, far as I know, that has been done. And pleasantly, I haven't had people asking me if they can do special things, so I think everyone has it worked out. Even the people who sit and wait to see what everyone else takes and then take the rest of it... they were happy too.

Unifor: So what happened this weekend with the Digester?

CPP: Natan came in. We do need to talk about those types of situations but maybe on the next agenda. It's unfortunate how it went down. But people shouldn't be able to refuse... the supervisors can't compel that, so we need to understand what is going on.

Unifor: It would be tough to manage. There's always a possibility somebody can call in sick.

CPP: Hopefully this never happens again. This is maybe the 3rd time I've ever seen it happen but by contract there's certain things that need to happen, so we need to understand more.

CPP: Even in steam plant this is where we need your support as well. We have manning issues. We ask for overtime sheets, but I don't see people coming in.

Unifor: Is it the same thing in your department, covering with overtime?

CPP: Yes. But people should be coming in. if we don't have enough, I will be calling you.

Unifor: The stuff in your department put in before May 1, is that all dealt with?

CPP: Not yet.

Unifor: Do they have to check with supervisor?

CPP: The supervisor has it posted. Short term, we are covering with overtime and continuously we're hiring.

Unifor: Are you trying to work with the people to move vacations?

CPP: We told them we're flexible. That's why we try to have 36 in the department rather than approved 34.

Unifor: You're at 32 or 31?

CPP: I have 33 right now. But a few are off. One joined yesterday and we're hiring two more. So 34 now. But a few have injuries or are off. Any update about John?

Unifor: John who?

CPP: Wright. I know Steve Verge may come back in July so that'll help. But I'm not sure about John.

Unifor: I'm not sure.

7. Training

Unifor: Scheduling shifts prior to tests not being marked and handed back?

CPP: That shouldn't have happened. The individual was supposed to have done their test, but they didn't so they came in not knowing they'd be on their own. We don't ever do that. It's been made abundantly clear to everyone.

Unifor: So you have a program where you need 4 tours to do training before test, that's not being fast tracked?

CPP: Not as far as I know. But basically, a person can't go on a job if they haven't finished the training and written the test. They can't do a job by themselves. That happened with two different individuals over a 12-hour period. So the group has to do a better job of tracking the schedule and they'll check the week prior to make sure the training is complete.

Unifor: It was a concern because some members are scared to ask questions. The one said they weren't trained yet and were asked to get signed off early and "should I do that", and the other didn't ask any questions and just thought, "hm I'm on the schedule" and there was nobody there.

CPP: The other person did awesome on their test but didn't get all the tours, so they asked about that final tour of training but when I asked if they felt they needed it, they said no. Bottom line if they haven't written their test and aren't ok to go, then they shouldn't be scheduled on the job by themselves.

Unifor: We agree on that.

CPP: We nailed one today!

8. Retention/Hiring Practices

Unifor: Any updates on retention or hiring practices?

CPP: Nothing other than what we've already talked about. I'm continuing to hire, and I've been doing check ins with new employees as well like we had talked about last week. I also have started exit interviews with the hourly group too, although we've only had one hourly person quit so only one is completed.

Unifor: It's good to have those meetings in minutes. It shows you're trying to get a feel for new people in the mill and community and we can encourage them to get what they need, it's better communication all around. Some people were wondering about the closed door meetings.

CPP: I've had some really good feedback from new employees so far.

Unifor: We actually have a suggestion, we understand that it would be a West Fraser initiative, one thing we came across and I'll explain the best I can but it's a gas card. So to get your head around it, it would be like the wash card, everybody would get a gas card, it wouldn't be an allowance of money, but the more people that use it the less you pay.

CPP: So like a co-op situation. Do you know who is doing that?

Unifor: Kruger.

CPP: The gas station?

Unifor: Not sure.

CPP: West Fraser is Petro Can anyway.

Unifor: It's a side benefit that wouldn't cost anything. The employee is paying for the gas themselves but at a better rate.

CPP: We have similar deals with some of our vendors. We spend more and get more discounts. That's cool.

Unifor: A productive meeting... we actually agreed on 3 things! So what we're saying is that we understand there may not be an avenue for handing out cash, but maybe there are other benefits that wouldn't cost money.