

# United Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers of America

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## First Decision Bargaining Meeting with GE

Yesterday's meeting with GE was a quick meeting. UE delivered its opening statement and blasted the company for its outrageous plan to close our plant (see full statement below). We also submitted a five-page information request so that the union has all the data and cost information needed to keep Ft. Edward open.

GE responded by indicating that it is prepared to have "serious and meaningful discussions" with UE and said that it would review the union's information request and begin compiling the data requested. Beyond its stated willingness to engage in "serious and meaningful discussions," GE made no commitments. Negotiations will continue next Thursday, October 3 when GE is expected to give a detailed presentation on its proposal to transfer all of our work to Clearwater, Florida.

The UE bargaining committee consisted of President Scott Gates, Business Agent Angel Sardinia, Vice-President Carol Dudley, Chief Steward Mark Rock, Recording Secretary Kim Little and executive board members Sonny Gooden, Bruce Ostrander, Roger Harrington, Chris Little, UE International Rep. Gene Elk, UE Northeast Region President Peter Knowlton, and UE Political Action Director Chris Townsend.

## National UE and UE Local 332 Statement to General Electric Decision Bargaining – September 26, 2013 Ft. Edward, NY

For more than seventy years, our union has represented the Ft. Edward and Hudson Falls facilities. During that time, GE made hundreds of millions of dollars in profits from the hard work, creativity, and dedication of our members. Just this year, Ft. Edward management gave us a party to celebrate a record-breaking quarter.

Last week, you stunned and shocked us when you announced the company's intention to close the plant next year. You claimed that we were "non-competitive" and that our volume was steadily declining. Prior to September 18, GE has never made such claims. Our leadership and members meet with local management on a routine basis and those self-serving excuses to close our plant had never been previously offered by the company.

GE's heartless proposal to close our plant will – if carried out – be a disaster for most of the 200 workers and their families. UE knows from the bitter experience of other GE plant closings that your plant closing will cause countless hardships, and even some genuine personal tragedies, among our members and their families. The opportunities and life prospects of many of our members' children will be altered, for the worse, if GE wrongly decides to carry out its preliminary plan to close our plant.

Moreover, GE has poisoned our communities by dumping PCBs and other toxins into the Ft. Edward site and the Hudson River. When the extent of this environmental disaster was fully uncovered in the 1970s, GE at first worked tirelessly to deny the impact of such toxin dumps and then GE Chairman Jack Welch fought a long legal battle with the EPA to evade the company's responsibility to clean-up the Hudson River. But the company and even Jeff Immelt today can no longer deny that GE, at this site, created one of the largest environmental disasters in U.S. history.

You poisoned our river and our towns and now you want to create an economic disaster by shuttering our plant and running out of our community. Ft. Edward GE employees earn more than \$12 million a year and that money is largely spent here in Warren and Washington counties supporting schools, churches, community services, restaurants and scores of local businesses. The impact of your current plan to shutter our plant cannot be fully calculated today and we are working with local officials to assess the damage your current plans would create. Within hours after you dropped your bombshell on this community we heard that the planned sale of a local property was cancelled. Sadly, if you get your way and close our plant, we fear that this will just be the tip of the iceberg.

UE rejects your plan to close our plant and destroy our jobs and our livelihood and will do everything in our power to convince you to rescind last week's plant closing announcement. Our plant has been profitable for many years and our skilled workforce cannot be easily replaced. After creating an environmental disaster, GE has a responsibility to our community keep 200 decent jobs while it continues to make a reasonable profit here in Ft. Edward for the foreseeable future. You owe at least that much to our members and their families, you owe it to the people of Fort Edward and Warren and Washington counties, you owe it to the people of New York.

According to the information you supplied to us, GE plans to move to Clearwater, Florida. How ironic it is that under your September 19 notice, GE gets "clear water" and you leave us with no jobs and a poisoned river and ecosystem. Our preliminary investigation indicates that Clearwater GE pays many workers \$12 an hour and hires from a temporary agency which pays those employees as little as \$8 per hour.

We have been carefully following GE's national attempt to dramatically reduce the standard of living for working people and its wrong-headed attempt to devalue manufacturing jobs across the U.S. In one non-union plant after another – and even in some union plants – GE has sliced wages by 50 to 60 percent of what it once paid the majority of its workers. GE used to proudly boast that it had the best paying jobs in the communities where it operates manufacturing plants. But now GE rejects that legacy. You now attempt to sanitize your wage cuts by calling them "competitive wages," but we know the truth, they are poverty wages. We reject your attacks on our standard of living – it's not good for us and it's not good for the U.S. economy.

Additionally, we have many questions about your plans to close our plant and replace us with lower-paid workers in Clearwater. Today, we are providing you with a detailed and formal request to supply answers to our questions. That request is preliminary and we reserve the right to request additional information as bargaining continues. Under the National Agreement and the National Labor Relations Act, GE has a responsibility to supply all of the information requested. Before we can meaningfully bargain with you, it is necessary that you provide us as much of the information that you can assemble in a timely manner. If necessary, as stated in the National Agreement, we can and should be ready to agree to extend the 60-day bargaining period. Our members and our community deserve no less. It is our expectation that you will engage in serious and meaningful negotiations and work in a cooperative spirit with us to keep the plant open, retain 200 decent jobs, and avert the economic and social disaster that your current plans will undoubtedly bring

## **REMINDER**

**Solidarity Saturday – 9am – Local 332 Union Hall**

**Come get petitions to circulate in community.  
Meet to discuss publicity, community relations, actions,  
and solidarity support**