

# CHICAGO TEAMSTERS JOINT COUNCIL 25



## NEWS»

### **STRIKING TEAMSTERS ASK SHOPPERS TO SKIP SK HAND TOOLS**

#### **Local 743 Members Rally in Chicago, Distribute Notices at Sears**

Striking workers at SK Hand Tools in Chicago and McCook took their plea to the people last week, asking consumers not to purchase tools manufactured by the company.

Outside Sears' State Street location in downtown Chicago, union members and supporters notified the public of Teamsters Local 743's ongoing strike with SK Hand Tools after the company unilaterally withdrew its employee health coverage without warning. Distributed leaflets encouraged consumers to refrain from buying Craftsman hand tools sold at Sears, which are produced by SK workers.

"The Teamsters' petition to consumers is in no way a strike against Sears," said Richard Berg, Local 743 President. "This is an appeal to people to make more informed decisions about the companies from which they purchase their tools."

Local 743 represents approximately 75 workers with SK Hand Tools, who have been on strike for nearly a month. In recent weeks, the National Labor Relations Board issued an unfair labor practice complaint against the company, alleging illegal bargaining over management's stoppage of health care coverage with no advanced warning.

In an effort to remind the public of SK Hand Tools' tactics, a number of other unions and workers' rights activists joined the Teamsters on State Street. Rev. CJ Hawking of ARISE Chicago distributed leaflets and reminded those on strike of their noble cause.

"With the current national debate focused on health care reform, the Teamsters' dedication to ensuring its workers have proper health coverage will not go unnoticed," Hawking said, whose organization partners workers with faith communities to fight inequality in the workplace. "The battle for the benefits you deserve may be long, but it is a moral endeavor on which you embark."

An impromptu rally one block west of State Street gave the union a chance to bring even more attention to the strike. As crowds looked on, workers were applauded for their perseverance over the last four weeks' many challenges.

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“It’s not easy to walk away from the job and stand up to injustice,” said Berg. “But each and every one of us knows the actions taken against our workers were unjust and we will stand together to right this wrong for as long as it takes.”

Contract negotiations between Local 743 and SK Hand Tools, which continued for nine months prior to the strike, have currently stalled. The French-owned company, which has made tools in Chicago for 88 years, has been under Teamster representation since 1968.

Teamsters Local 743 represents approximately 11,000 men and women in Chicago, working in the health care, warehouse, clerical and manufacturing industries.