

## Coordinated Bargaining Efforts in Other Industries

In addition to the long history of attempts at coalition building on the railroad (see article, Page 3), a number of coordinated bargaining efforts have taken place in recent years in other industries. Some of them have met with a degree of success and deserve our attention. We have a lot to learn from their struggles.

At General Electric, the Coordinated Bargaining Coalition consists of 13 unions and has existed for 40 years. Different unions dominate at the various GE plants around the country, but all are in the coalition. The United Electrical (UE) and the International Union of Electrical Workers (IUE) are the largest unions, and are joined in the effort by eleven others (see article Page 5). The locals meet together to prepare a common strategy, then send representatives to each others' bargaining sessions with the company. Each union maintains its own autonomy but agrees to cooperation. No union settles until all settle, and each union agrees to stick up for a common set of demands.

At Kennecott Copper, the Kennecott Coordinated Bargaining Committee consists of five union locals from a number of different internationals - Steelworkers (USWA), Machinists (IAM), Operating Engineers (OPEIU), Electricians (IBEW) and Office Professionals (OPEIU) -- which cooperate as an effective bargaining coalition to represent the entire workforce at the largest open pit mine in the world.

At Armstrong World Industries, Inc., The Steelworkers (USWA) and the Machinists (IAM) began joint bargaining in 2002 for contracts at all locations. Other Unions involved are UNITE HERE (The merged Textile Employees and Restaurant Employees Union) and the Teamsters (IBT). Steelworkers are also working together with the Autoworkers Union (UAW) at Gerdau Ameristeel Steel to improve conditions in the mills. In addition, the USWA coordinates bargaining with the UAW in the automotive parts industry.

At NYNEX telephone, a coalition of Electrical Workers (IBEW) and Communications Workers (CWA) fought back an aggressive company and staved off concessionary demands of the employer by forming an alliance in contract negotiations and the big strike in 1989. While unions were taking a beating all through

the 1980s, this historic alliance and fight back proved the exception. The key to victory was the sticking together of the two unions concerned. Through shared information, joint mobilization publications, cooperation in joint committees, coordination of contract enforcement, and work together on legislative and regulatory initiatives involving NYNEX, the unions maintained their coalition.

These are just a few examples of coordinated bargaining in industries outside of rail. And while the specifics of each industry and each struggle are unique, the basic truth remains the same - unions are more powerful when they act in concert with each other, when they engage in coordinated bargaining with the employer, and when they stand firmly in solidarity with one another.

