

**Fred Redmond**  
Vice President (Human Affairs)

January 27, 2009

Mr. Dan Adomitis, President  
Firestone Natural Rubber Company  
250 West 96<sup>th</sup> Street  
Indianapolis, IN 46260

Dear Mr. Adomitis:

The United Steelworkers is closely following labor developments in Liberia and we shared in the joy when Firestone management and FAWUL, the union representing workers at your Liberian rubber plantation, were able to achieve a landmark Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) on August 6, 2008. We know that Firestone management and the union worked long and hard to find common ground. The USW extends our congratulations to all parties for reaching an agreement that helps Firestone maintain a profitable and productive business while ensuring that the rights of workers are recognized and respected.

A delegation of USW members and I spent two weeks in Liberia in December and had the opportunity to meet with dozens of union members, shop stewards and leaders. We also attempted to meet with Firestone management, but were denied the opportunity. In the course of many meetings, the USW learned that there are several significant areas where Firestone is not adhering to the terms of the CBA. The following areas of non-compliance were brought to our attention.

**1) Article 23 C - Working Duties-Task Employees**

This section of the CBA concerns the quota of trees assigned to the tappers. The CBA represents a major improvement over past agreements, reducing the work task by 20%. This was a necessary step as there have been numerous reports in recent years that many tappers were compelled to put their families to work, including the use of child labor, in order to meet the unrealistic daily quota.

The new CBA strictly bans the use of child labor, but many tappers are still forced to hire sub-contractors to help them complete their tasks because Firestone has not carried out the necessary reduction in the quota as mandated by the new CBA.

We've been informed that the adjustment in task work has been carried out in a handful of divisions, but a majority of tappers are still suffering under the old quota system.

This is a dehumanizing violation of the CBA and unacceptable. Firestone must immediately implement the terms of the CBA that set a more realistic goal for tappers to meet.

**DEFS 00016441**

**United Steel, Paper and Forestry, Rubber, Manufacturing, Energy, Allied Industrial and Service Workers International Union**

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## 2) Article 16 – Education

Under the terms of this article Firestone is committed to "improve transportation for the school system." Workers at the plantation report that there have no improvements in many parts of the plantation. Without transportation, young children are forced to walk long distances or else are completely unable to access the schools. Unable to receive even a basic education, these children are denied the opportunity to achieve their potential.

It's imperative that a multinational corporation with the vast resources at Firestone's command takes immediate steps to provide school buses to ensure that children throughout the plantation have full access to the educational system.

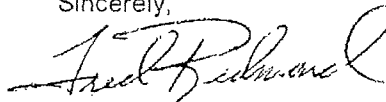
## 3) Article 29 - Union Membership

The new CBA expands the ranks of workers covered by the agreement. The union reports, however, that management has failed to transmit dues payments from some 1,500 workers since the agreement went into effect.

The union is responsible for representing its members and dues payments are crucial for the union's ability to administer the contract and carry out its duties towards the membership. By failing to provide the required deduction and transmittal of dues, management seriously weakens and compromises the union's ability to function.

The USW supports all efforts to maintain the Firestone rubber plantation as a productive and vital component of the Liberian economy. We know from decades of experience that a respectful relationship between management and labor is the key to success. Ensuring that the CBA is fully implemented and respected is the vital first step in this process. We urge Firestone management to address the areas of concern noted above and to quickly move towards full compliance with the CBA.

Sincerely,



Fred Redmond  
International Vice President (Human Affairs)

FR/ML/nsp

- c: Mark Emkes, CEO, Bridgestone Americas, Inc.  
Honorable Samuel Kofi Woods, II, Minister of Labor, Liberia  
Firestone Natural Rubber Plantation, Liberia  
Firestone Agricultural Workers Union of Liberia  
Leo W. Gerard, USW Int'l President  
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