

CAW Stand in Solidarity with Anti-Mining Movement in India

Montreal, April 12, 2005 - Workers at two of Alcan's major smelting operations in Canada have pledged their support for the grassroots resistance to the company's proposed mining project in the Kashipur region of the eastern Indian state of Orissa.

Workers represented by the Canadian Auto Workers (CAW) through Local 2301 in Kitimat, British-Columbia, and the affiliated Syndicat National des Employés de l'Aluminium in Arvida, Quebec, passed resolutions proclaiming their solidarity with the predominantly indigenous and low caste population to be affected by the mining project.

The resolutions unconditionally endorse both the sustainable agro-centric democratic development objectives set by the peoples of Kashipur and the activities of Montreal based solidarity group Alcan't in India, which aims to pressure Alcan for its involvement in the Kashipur project.

The resolution passed by CAW Local 2301 has gone so far as to declare that workers at the smelting facility will "refuse to smelt any alumina shipped to BC from Alcan's eventual operations in Orissa."

For more than twelve years, the peoples of Kashipur have been fighting against the implementation of a billion dollar bauxite extraction and alumina refining project on their constitutionally protected land. Canadian aluminium giant Alcan owns 45% of the joint venture - Utkal Alumina International Limited - which is promoting this project.

A recent outburst of police repression, including false arrests, intimidation, and beatings against the anti-mining movement in Kashipur leaves many fearing a repetition of past violence, which resulted in the killing of three protesters by the police on December 16, 2000. As such, there is a definite sentiment that violence, instead of broad local support by the people of Kashipur, is being used to implement the Alcan-backed project.

As Alcan prepares for its 2005 Annual General Meeting, there is growing local opposition to its proposed Indian activities. The local solidarity campaign, Alcan't in India, is preparing for a public event on April 26 as well as a demonstration on April 28, at Alcan's AGM in Montreal.

Alcan't in India asks Alcan to "recognise the Kashipur peoples' title to the land and constitutional guarantee for self-determination, respect the democratic resolutions and public demonstrations of the people from the affected villages against UAIL and its activities on their land, and follow the example of previous lead investors in the project, such as Norsk Hydro of Norway, and fully divest from the joint venture, UAIL".

The CAW resolutions passed by Alcan workers represent the latest step in the growing movement of civil-society groups in Canada and abroad that are pledging their solidarity with the democratic struggle of the people in Kashipur.

Complete text of resolution at www.saanet.org/alcant/Communique/caw_resolution.pdf

For more information, visit www.saanet.org/alcant

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