

Unions differ on Korean trade pact

By JOSEPH SZCZESNY

For Journal Register Newspapers

The United Auto Workers support for a new trade deal with South Korea has led to a rift with the AFL-CIO, which has come out against the deal.

UAW President Bob King scuttled the UAW's traditional opposition to the trade deals after the Obama administration negotiated several changes in the agreement that are expected to benefit American auto companies such as Ford Motor Co. and Chrysler Group. The deal also was supported by Rep. Sander Levin, another longtime foe of one-sided trade deals.

The AFL-CIO, however, has announced it will continue to oppose the trade deal with South Korea. Rich Trumka, AFL-CIO president, said the proposed U.S.-Korea trade

deal does not live up to that model and does not contribute to a sustainable global future.

"We believe we must move towards a more democratic, sustainable and fair global economy with broadly shared prosperity for working people around the world. Reaching that goal will require deep-seated reforms in current trade policy, as well as in our own domestic labor laws and other policies," Trumka said.

"However, the labor movement's concerns about the Korea trade deal go beyond the autos," Trumka said. "It is clear that in both the United States and South Korea, workers continue to face repeated challenges to their exercise of fundamental human rights on the job — especially freedom of association and the right to organize and bargain collectively," he said.

Both Hyundai and Kia, South Korea's largest carmakers, operate assembly plants in the U.S. where workers face pressure not to consider joining any union, AFL-CIO and UAW officials have complained.

"We are also concerned that the trade agreement leaves open the possibility that goods produced in the North Korean free trade zone, the Kaesong Industrial Complex (KIC), could in the future gain access to the United States," Trumka said.

Over the past two decades, American unions, despite their differences, have presented a united front in their opposition to trade agreements. "The experiences of union members and working people with too many flawed trade deals like the North American Free Trade Agreement and China's accession to the World Trade

Organization do not justify optimism that this deal will generate the promised new jobs," Trumka said.

However, the split in union ranks has made it less likely unions can derail the trade pact with South Korea, promoted by the Obama administration.

King, in a decision that surprised and angered other U.S. union leaders, said the proposed trade will help American automakers and autoworkers in the U.S. Under the original South Korean trade deal negotiated in 2007, 90 percent of Korea's auto exports to the United States would have received immediate duty-free access on the day it took effect. "Under the current proposed agreement, duty elimination is now delayed until year five of the agreement, giving U.S. automakers the

time to reverse the damage caused by decades of South Korean protectionism," King said.

"Also with this agreement, cuts in the U.S. 25-percent truck tariff, (on imports) are substantially delayed until year eight of the agreement and then are phased in through year 10 of the agreement. Under the 2007 proposed agreement, truck tariffs were cut immediately from the day the PTA entered into force," King said.

The proposed text of the agreement also appears to reduce substantially the chances any South Korean manufacturers will decide to export any kind of trucks to the U.S. The language is something of a victory for the union, which has thousands of members building trucks for General Motors, Ford and Chrysler.

BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT

Insider website offers creative gift ideas

Lindsay Roberts launched an ultra-hip website that reviews, recommends and categorizes the most under-the-radar and creative gift ideas, called The Gift Insider.

Roberts of West Bloomfield Township scours boutiques, magazines and the web to help people find new, cool, unique, romantic, creative gift ideas.

"Most shoppers know that finding the perfect gift is never easy," said Roberts, a 24-year-old Birmingham Groves graduate.

Prior to launching The Gift Insider in 2008, she was utilizing her journalism degree from the University of Wisconsin at magazines like Good Housekeeping and Esquire. She left her magazine career to pursue her dream of being a full-time gift expert and The Gift Insider was born.

On Dec. 1, Roberts launched her newly revamped website, TheGiftInsider.com. This upgraded website lets users browse for gifts by price, person, occasion or personality, then links directly to the website where users can purchase these cool gift ideas. There is a Wish

"Most shoppers know that finding the perfect gift is never easy."

LINDSAY ROBERTS
The Gift Insider

List function to save favorite items, users can rate each gift, leave comments and share via social media. The Gift Insider does not sell items that she recommends, but serves as a resource.

"Since I was little, I enjoyed giving presents and seeing the happiness on someone's face when I had found the perfect thing for them. I am hoping I can do that on a grander scale by offering gift suggestions to a large audience through thegiftinsider.com," Roberts said.

Roberts recommends her favorite gift ideas across a variety of media platforms at thegiftinsider.com



Lindsay Roberts of The Gift Insider, with a few gift ideas.

BUSINESS BRIEFING

WATERFORD TWP. Made in Michigan Movement releases free holiday guide

The Made in Michigan Movement of Waterford Township has launched its second annual Michigan Holiday Guide.

The free guide, available to download at www.madeinmichiganmovement.com, offers a list of quality products made in Michigan by Michigan-based businesses.

"We believe we can be a driving force behind the shifting movement to buy local and hope this becomes a sustainable part of Michigan's culture," Made in Michigan Movement CEO Neil Yaremchuk said.

Each company in the guide either produces premium food products that are Michigan-made or goods that are high quality and affordable gift-giving ideas.

Featured companies include Dip Sensations, The Vegetarian Express, Upper Crust Candle Co., Pitt & Co., Bon-a-Rose, Hook to Cook, CompanySoap, Wrigley's Rewards, Seestial Soap, Will Cole Company, and Schaws.

For information, call 586-783-9487 or visit madeinmichiganmovement.com.

TROY

Automation Alley promotes three staff members

Automation Alley, Michigan's largest technology business association, has recruited and promoted three staff members.

Charles DeVries has been promoted to senior director, Business Development. DeVries' previous title was director, Government Affairs.

Alysia Green, formerly the Workforce Development supervisor, now holds the new position of manager, Talent Development. She is responsible for administering Automation Alley programming and managing all workforce development initiatives.

Additionally, Katie Mullin is now serving as the Alley's new manager, marketing and communications. Her previous title was marketing and communications coordinator.

BIRMINGHAM

Thornton & Grooms receives safety award

Thornton & Grooms of Birmingham and Farmington Hills received the Federated Insurance Safety First! Contractor of the Year Award on Oct. 30, during the Plumbing Heating-Cooling Contractors—National Association's convention, CONNECT 2010, held in Las Vegas.

CLINTON TWP.

Bon-Ton Stores collects \$6.5 million for charity

Bon-Ton Stores Inc., which includes the Parisian locations: Partridge Creek Mall in Clinton Township; The Village at Rochester Hills in Rochester Hills and Laurel Park Place in Livonia raised more than \$6.5 million for local non-profit organizations and agencies through its annual Community Day event on Nov. 13.

The stores sold \$5 discount savings booklets which included a \$10 coupon and multiple discounts that could be used that day.

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Send Macomb County e-mails to business.news@macombdaily.com or call Ken Kish at 586-783-0228 or Erica Stark at 586-783-0308.

For Oakland County, send e-mails to business.news@oakpress.com or call Kathy Blake at 248-745-4666.

Please include contact information for your business and left-to-right identification of people in photos.

Columbiaville farm grows soybeans for Japan

By ANGIE JACKSON

Capital News Service

Kathy Brockriede of Columbiaville and her husband own an organic farm where they grow soybeans, among other products. A portion of their crop has been exported to Japan for tofu over the years.

The Brockriedes, whose beans are sometimes combined with those of other local farmers for export, sell to a broker, who supplies it to Japan. "We found that it's a value-added niche," Brockriede said.

And to make a profit in a niche like that, organic farmers must grow for a specified market like the Brockriedes do, said Dan Rossman, Michigan State University Extension farm management director in Gratiot County.

"You want to produce what people want and are willing to pay a value-added price for," Rossman said, noting that Japanese buyers look to Michigan because they recognize the quality of its soybeans and prefer organic.

In 2008, Michigan's soybean crop was valued at around \$643 million according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). The USDA doesn't keep separate statistics for organic crops.

Kathy Maurer, the financial and creative director of the Michigan Soybean Promotion Committee in Frankenmuth, said her organization helps develop relationships with Japanese buyers.

"We're just starting to get our feet wet," she said about its involvement with international markets. "There have been different countries that we've invited buyers from to tour the facilities and farms."

"With the relationship in Asia, it's not just a business where they go after the cheapest bean. You have to form personal relationships," she said.

Jamie Zmitko-Somers, international marketing program manager for the state Department of Agriculture, said organic soybean production for international markets isn't booming yet, but it's developing steadily.

"It's not a super-large trend yet because of the economic slowdown worldwide, but it's certainly something that will remain important," she said.

Zmitko-Somers said international buyers choose organic products to ensure the identity and integrity of their products, noting that



The Associated Press

In 2009, the top five counties for soybean production were Sanilac, Lenawee, Saginaw, Monroe and Gratiot, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Michigan, especially the Thumb region, is well-known for soybeans.

In 2009, the top five counties for soybean production were Sanilac, Lenawee, Saginaw, Monroe and Gratiot, according to the USDA.

To ensure the quality that Japanese consumers desire, farmers can go through a detailed process to be certified under the Japan Agriculture Standards.

"It's a very rigorous certification to put a label on the bag," Brockriede said. "To meet Japan's organic standards, she and her husband filled out a 17-page application, had their facility inspected for around \$1,000 and took a four-hour class. They were also required to create and maintain an internal operating manual for their farm."

According to the Global Organic Alliance, the Brockriedes are among 17 Michigan farms certified by Japanese standards. Besides soybeans,

farmers grow other products such as wheat, corn and barley.

"It's all well-worth it to Brockriede, who said their farm received \$30 per bushel for soybeans last year, three-to-four times what they would have made selling the crop in the U.S."

"It's a good market if you're willing to jump through the hoops," she said. "As a farmer, it's about being able to receive an equitable price for our goods."

Zmitko-Somers said Japanese consumers are willing to pay more for their organic products because they are typically health-conscious. And Brockriede said nations like Japan serve as a model for valuing nutritious foods.

"People in other countries buy food to sustain their lives. Our food isn't dear to us like that. If we really had to pay what our food was worth here, we wouldn't buy Doritos," she said. "They're way ahead of us."