

STRIKING GOLD FOR GOOD OF ALL

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Come together.



Invoking a song title from Beatles lore might feel like an awkward fit here, but we think it's appropriate today when Hecla and union officials meet.

For the past five months, miners, the company and the Silver Valley economy have all suffered because of a failure to forge a new contract. The fact that both sides are willing to talk again after meeting less than two weeks ago hints at progress.

The biggest stumbling block, as today's news story by Chanse Watson shows, is senior miners' insistence that their longstanding method of selecting work crews needs to continue, while Hecla's Lucky Friday officials are adamant that times have changed and the old ways will not get miners prepared for the demands of a modern workforce. The old way: Senior miners determine who does what, where, which essentially also determines how much miners are going to earn. The new way: Miners at all levels are rewarded for learning new skills. Those with the most tools in their tool belts, so to speak, stand to benefit the most.

It's easy to understand some miners' perspective that if it ain't broke, don't fix it. But as far as the Lucky Friday is concerned, it is "broke." Like virtually every other company, the Lucky Friday must modernize if it's going to compete. That means systems and technological advances that already have been embraced by competitors and created greater efficiencies and effectiveness must also be adopted if the Lucky Friday is going to be profitable and continue to produce for years, maybe decades, into the future. And as Hecla CEO Phil Baker has long insisted, all the modernization in the world is meaningless without a highly trained, versatile workforce.

In our view, the vast majority of the 250 or so miners affected by the strike will benefit now and well into the future by adding to their skill sets. That increased knowledge will lead to greater income for them and greater efficiency for the company, which ultimately leads to greater benefits for everyone. The win-win would apply to everybody willing to learn additional skills. The only ones who would lose are the very few who refuse all change.

Come together.

There's work to be done.