

Emotions run high as Mt. Holly smelter begins shutdown process

SMELTER, from B1

contract workers. Brown said a lot of employees didn't think the plant would close, but the reality is starting to set in. "Now it really boils down to the end of the year, and they know the end of the year is final."

Century has said it will shut down the Mount Holly plant by Dec. 31 if a new electric contract isn't signed with Moncks Corner-based utility Santee Cooper. The two sides have been at a stalemate over the terms of such an agreement.

Santee Cooper spokeswoman Mollie Gore declined to comment Monday on Century's pending closure. The state-owned utility has said it is willing to continue negotiating but can't agree to a deal that would raise rates for its other customers.

On Monday, Century began shutting down one of its two pot lines, the power-hungry furnaces where high-quality aluminum is made. There are 90 pots to each line and workers must extract as much metal as possible from each of them before disconnecting the electricity. The more aluminum that's left in a pot, the harder it would be to restart the system at some future date. Shutting down the pot line will take several days. The second pot line is scheduled to shut down starting Dec. 26.

Mike Bless, Century's president and CEO, has said it would cost too much money — between \$20 million and \$40 million — to restart the plant if both lines are shut down. Mount Holly operates around the clock, but it previously shut down during Hurricane Hugo in September 1989.

A.J. Nelson, the plant's safety manager, said some workers hold out hope that a deal can be struck to keep that second pot line running through next year while negotiations for a new agreement continue. Berkeley County's legislative delegation met Monday with



BRAD NETTLES/STAFF

Century Aluminum employee Larry Brown says the Mount Holly plant's uncertain future is taking its toll on morale.

Lonnie Carter, Santee Cooper's president and CEO, to discuss possible solutions.

"It was a good discussion and Santee Cooper confirmed our willingness to extend essentially the same terms of Century's current contract for Mount Holly for three years, with an option for Century to cancel the contract after six months," the utility said in a statement issued Monday evening.

The six-month period would let the state Legislature explore ways to keep Mount Holly operating, perhaps through state budget expenditures or special legislation, during the upcoming General Assembly session, which starts in January.

Century has said it will not accept an extension of the current deal and spokeswoman Samantha Dubay said the smelter will begin laying off workers next week. About half of the plant's 600 workers will be affected by the initial pot line shutdown.

"It would hurt a whole lot of people," said Robert Jefferson, a Mount Holly supervisor. "You've got a whole lot of

people who are upset because they don't know when they are going to get laid off. There's a lot of uncertainty. But there's always faith."

"I feel like Santee Cooper is just throwing us away," she said. "It's heartbreaking."

Under the current electric contract, Mount Holly gets 75 percent of its power from an out-of-state provider on the open market and 25 percent from Santee Cooper. Century Aluminum wants to buy all of its power on the open market.

Santee Cooper's board of directors said again last week that the Century proposal is a nonstarter because it would raise rates for its other industrial customers. That's because the 25 percent of power Mount Holly buys from the utility pays all of the costs associated with bringing power to the plant.

Century has offered to pay Santee Cooper to transmit power if it's allowed to buy it on the open market, but Carter, the utility's CEO, has said the offer wouldn't cover the utility's costs.

The open market savings would be substantial for Century — about half of what Santee Cooper currently charges. The lower rate is due to the out-of-state provider using cheap natural gas — instead of coal, which Santee Cooper primarily uses — to produce electricity.

They already have one line down, and three hundred people will be lay-off soon right now, don't no what going to happen. But in the mean time, before it happen, I need your help.

To: The Honorable Nikki B. Haley, Page 1
I am an Employee at Century Through
M.A.U.

I have a Wife and 4-childrens, 3-is living
1-Die, - 10 Grand childrens, 9-Living and
1-Die - and to great Grand Childrens.

This Job is Very importance to Support
My Family, and to help our childrens and
Grand childrens.

I am believing God for The plant to stay open:
because I need my Job, Just like every-
one else, Who is going Through, because we
don't no, When we could be Sent home
With no Job.

The money I make now pay my Bills,
God for bid, I lose my Job, and might not
get the same amount of money I used
to make. (and get less money) Oth my God,
we could lose the church Building, my
home: Those are my to main concern.

I retire from my Job in 2010, I been with
Alca, Mt. Holly for 30-years,
and went Back Through, M.A.U. Co. in the same

Year,

I am asking you to please, help us

Robert, Diane Jefferson, With a one time
Gift, to Save our church. I don't want
to lose our church Building - please help
us. We are a small group of people.
It's been three years, since God Bless
us with this Building. We are renting
right now, I pay all - of the Rent my
self as God Blesses me Each month, Light-Bill
insurance.

God spoke to me concerning a
Building a new Building for the church.
and I am looking for that, to come to pass also
in the name of Jesus! But can't build no new church
and will you please help us. no time soon,

and please Pray for us. Family's. to please

We need: \$200,000 for the Building we are
in right now, I think I could get it for less
so we can fix it-up nice, then what it is.

Page: 3

Thank; you for What ever you Can.
do. to help us.

Please Let me no IF you Can help are
not,

you don't have to put no money in my
hand, you Can pay it your Self.

and I am praying to God That you'll Will
help me IF you Can, as God leads. you'll.

Thank you!

May God Continue to keep you'll and
Bless you all the more. you and your
Ministry's

Thank you.

Page 4
Total Amount Needed is about.
\$360,000 for the Building and home, please
help me. If you want me to pay you Back I Will.
Please help us so we can do the work of
the Lord, so I will not have to be concerned
about the Church Building, and my home being
taken away, because we don't have the money
to pay it, if my job decide to lay me off.
Which I hope not. I won't have to worry
about, our home, church,
we are Brothers and Sister in - the Lord, and like
when we need one another, I am praying that we
will be there to help one another, thank you'll so
Very much.

God Bless you'll. even the more!
Elder: Robert L. Jefferson.
Evangelist: Diane S. Jefferson.
Trinity Living Word Ministry - Church.
our mailing Address: is - home,
082 Uper Rd.
Nineville S.C. 29468

Thank you'll