



The Power of Unity Defines Us: Gerard

International President Leo W. Gerard opened the 2017 Constitutional Convention on Monday with a tribute to the USW's 75 years of fighting for workers and a call for renewed activism and unity among members.

"Our founders risked everything to win the rights that all of us enjoy today. They did it against unbelievable odds. They battled hired scabs and thugs. They stood down national guardsmen hell bent on breaking their strikes. They even stood their ground against cops that shot them dead on picket lines," Gerard said.

"And yet, in spite of all that, they prevailed. Their power was – and ours still is – the greatest power every known – the power of unity, the power of our activism, the power of standing strong, shoulder to shoulder – militant if necessary."

Delegates rose to their feet and applauded in tribute to

those who founded the USW and those who helped it grow beyond its industrial roots into the diverse union it is today in the United States, Canada and the Caribbean

Together going forward, Gerard said, the union faces great challenges in fighting to maintain jobs, middle class wages and benefits against corporate greed.

"And we've still got CEOs who sneer at our demand to put an end to hazards in the workplace," he said. "Instead they focus on their next yearly bonus and stock options."

Gerard praised USW oil workers who took on an unfair labor practice strike in the United States to improve safety on the job in a rich industry that has for decades been tone deaf to our demands for safer working condition.

He acknowledged locked-out USW members in steel who
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resisted deep concessions sought by Allegheny Ludlum, and those members who stood strong in long hard bargaining for contracts at U.S. Steel and ArcelorMittal.

In Canada, the USW resisted concessions sought by Rio Tinto in Alma, Quebec, and 25 years following a mining tragedy known as Westray is still fighting to hold managers accountable when a fatality occurs.

Canadian members fought to keep the steel industry alive while resisting Stelco's attempt in bankruptcy protection to stiff retirees out of pensions when it has \$300 million in the bank.

In both countries, the USW has been fully engaged for 40 years in a relentless fight against unfair trade by countries that cheat the system, destroying lives and exporting unemployment, Gerard said. In the United States that has included participating in 81 trade cases aimed at saving jobs and industries.

"No Bay Street or Wall Street financier, no trade representative, no politician – no Republican or Democrat, Conservative or Liberal has the right to steal our jobs in the name of so-called Free Trade," Gerard said.

In the United States, Gerard said Republican billionaire developer Donald Trump "took a page out of our playbook" during last year's presidential campaign and delivered speeches attacking unfair trade that sounded like ones USW leadership has been delivering for decades.

Yet there's a danger that what "looked and sounded like a victory may really turn out to be a Trojan horse," Gerard said, referring to the "most radical, right-wing Republican Congress we've seen our lifetimes – bent on wiping out every bit of social and economic progress we've made in the last 50 years."

Trump and Republican House Speaker Paul Ryan are already gearing up to weaken Medicare, Gerard said, noting that their "half-assed" plan to replace the Affordable Care Act would have dumped the runaway costs of health care on workers while giving the super rich \$465 billion in tax breaks.

Gerard also warned of extremists on the state level who want to wipe out public sector bargaining and outlaw union dues check offs.

"Before you know it, they'll be gutting OSHA, the Chemical Safety Board and other work place protections that we badly need," Gerard said.

In no time, Gerard said, right wing politicians will be clamoring for a national right to work law and a balanced budget they will use to wipe out what few progressive policies that might be left.

"And if you think Trump will stop all of this, you might want to think again," Gerard said. "We need to remember what we've learned the hard way over 75 years of bargaining ... Billionaires don't go to bat for working people. Only we can look out for ourselves, our families and our communities."

The USW, Gerard said, must above all else not let political divisions tear the union or its members apart. We must fight back with the power of unity and activism, more now than ever before.

Gerard urged union members to run for office at every level of government in both countries with help from the union.

"We need to have a union voice and union influence at every level," he said. "Run for the school board, city council, state rep, damn it, if you need to get started run for dog catcher. We will help you."



The World Craves the Power of Unity: DNC Chair

Democratic National Committee Chairman Tom Perez says his mission to advance the middle-class agenda is inspired by Steelworker values of unity and fighting for workers' rights.

"Those values are all about making sure we all succeed across this country," Perez told USW delegates in his rousing convention address Monday.

"You inspire me. The world craves what that sign means – The Power of Unity," he said, referencing the convention theme.

"When we marshal the power of unity, we build a better nation, a fairer nation, a more just nation."

Perez, former President Barack Obama's Labor secretary, was elected DNC chairman in February. Next week, he and Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders will launch a multistate tour to unify Democrats and rally grassroots support, including union members.

"I understand that we are in a divided nation. We have to earn your trust and the best way to earn your trust is to lead with your values," he said.

"We know that when unions succeed, America succeeds. When unions succeed, the middle class succeeds."

Reinforcing a message of USW International President Leo Gerard's convention keynote address, Perez urged Steelworkers across the country to seek political office and fight for a government that represents all Americans, not just the 1 per cent.

"People are waking up and saying it is not acceptable that we have so much inequality," he said. "Too many decisions are being made without members of the labor movement in the room."

Republicans are exacerbating inequality by trying to take away health care coverage from millions of people, impose an age tax, make it harder to save for retirement and make it harder for homebuyers to afford a mortgage, he said.

Perez said the Trump administration's \$1 trillion infrastructure plan would enrich private corporations while rejecting project labor agreements that would force all contractors to pay union-level wages.

"We need you to be in the game," he told USW members. "We need you to get into the arena and run for office – as Democrats – from the school board to the Senate."



Democratic National Committee Chairman Thomas Perez

Resolution Round-Up: Day One

On the first day of the 2017 USW Convention, delegates debated five of 28 policy resolutions and 20 local union resolutions.

Before beginning, USW Secretary-Treasurer Stan Johnson reminded delegates that their primary responsibility was to debate and pass resolutions that will articulate the union's policies and guide its action.

The delegates unanimously passed Resolution 3 – "The Power of Unity" – which echoed the theme of the convention. The resolution commits USW members to stand together in the fight for social and economic justice.

Stacy Spexet of Local 9460 in Duluth, Minn., said "We have been able to keep our members going through tough times because of our unity."

Another resolution that passed challenges the USW to reinvigorate its political activism to fight for workers' rights and to support union members who run for public office.

Delegate P.C. Choo, of Local 1998 in Toronto, shared a personal story of his first run for political office in 1994,

several years after he emigrated from Malaysia to Canada.

"The reason why I managed to win is because I dared to speak truth to power," Chu said. "If I can do it, so can you."

Also passed was Resolution 19, titled Affordable Healthcare – a Basic Human Right. With it, delegates resolved that the USW will work to ensure that healthcare is considered a human right.

Numerous members spoke in support of this resolution, including Carlos Castillo of Local 915 in District 12. Castillo, who was elected president of his local in the spring of 2016, learned in the fall that he had cancer. He paid a \$5,000 deductible when treatment began in November and another \$5,000 when treatment continued into January of 2017.

That is a lot, he acknowledged, but he said he is grateful when he considers the situation of people who do not have any insurance.

Debates on the resolutions will continue throughout the convention.

Senator Pledges to Fight for Good Union Jobs

U.S. Sen. Catherine Cortez Masto, D-Nev., thanked USW members for helping elect her to a first term in the Senate and pledged to the 2017 USW Convention delegates that she will work to secure good American jobs and union rights.

"I will be fighting in the U.S. Senate for the USW and for all working men and women in this country," she said in the opening session of the convention on Monday in Las Vegas, her hometown.

When USW District 12 Director Robert LaVenture introduced her, he noted that USW members had knocked on doors to elect the former two-term state attorney general to the senate. And she acknowledged that aid, saying of her position, "That is because of all of you who came out to support me."

She told the delegates that she is the daughter of a union member who always told her and her sister that without his union, he could not have afforded their births at the hospital.

She said she is working in Washington, D.C. for pro-union policies and to promote renovation and construction of the nation's infrastructure.

Crumbling infrastructure is bad for the economy, she said, and repairing it creates good, union jobs and promotes economic development.

"I am looking forward to collaborating with the USW and working with all of you," she said.



U.S. Senator Catherine Cortez Masto

Barber Closes Day One with Call for 'Moral Battle'



Rev. Dr. William Barber II

The Rev. Dr. William Barber II closed the first day of the USW international convention on Monday, bringing the delegation to its feet with a passionate call to activism.

Barber, a protestant pastor and president of the North Carolina NAACP, called on USW members to join forces with other groups and to fight for all working families on moral grounds.

"We must have a revival of values," Barber said. "These issues are not about Democrat vs. Republican. This is about right vs. wrong. These are moral issues, not political issues."

Barber is the founder of North Carolina's Moral Mondays movement, launched in 2013 in response to right-wing attacks on civil rights, voting rights and other causes that Barber views as moral imperatives.

The "moral decay" that led to the birth of that movement is also responsible for the environment that led to the election of President Donald Trump in the United States, Barber said.

Barber called for the labor movement to take a cue from the USW's 2017 convention theme: The Power of Unity.

"We must have a strong, steadfast unity" among labor, religious, civil rights, environmental and other organizations in order to beat back the "national immorality" of hard-right politicians, Barber said.

Barber called for a connection between USW leaders and those of other like-minded groups to build a national "moral resistance" to the right-wing politics of hate and fear.

"If they're all together, we can come together," he said. "No more separating our movements. We need steadfast togetherness."