



2017 CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION



Day Day Day Day
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 CONVENTION COVERAGE



Valter Sanches, General Sec., IndustriALL

International Solidarity Front and Center on Day Two

Leaders of IndustriALL, a worldwide federation of unions, and Workers Uniting, an international union, made clear Tuesday that the USW is not alone in the fight for global economic justice.

“When one of our unions is attacked, then both of our unions will respond,” Tony Burke, assistant general secretary of Unite the Union in the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland. “We will fight back and we will not walk away.”

Unite the Union, the largest union in the UK, and the USW are founding partners in Workers Uniting, an alliance of three million active and retired workers that was founded in 2011.

“We are a global union for men and women,” Burke said. “We are a global union for young people, for retired people, for people of color, for those with disabilities and for LGBT workers.”

Under the banner of Workers Uniting, USW members in the U.S. and Canada work together with Unite members in steel and aluminum, chemicals, oil, energy, paper and

packaging, and glass.

“We have members in many of the same companies and we deal sometimes with the same CEOs,” said Burke, a Workers Uniting board member.

Burke welcomed glass workers who are soon to join the USW and the more than 11,000 members of the former Telecommunication Workers Union in Canada who have merged with the USW and are now Local 1944.

While in Las Vegas, Burke met with USW-represented health care workers and said his union is committed to making sure it builds a strong relationship with those USW members in the health care sector.

The fight for fair trade is a key issue on the agendas of both unions. Of immediate concern is stopping China from being accepted as a market economy by the United States and Europe. That elevated status would protect China from dumping and anti-subsidy trade cases.

Burke thanked the USW for its help in its campaign to save
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We Are All In This Together: Napoleon Gomez

Workers in the United States, Canada and Mexico are on the same side of the fight against unfair trade deals and corporate greed, Mexican union leader Napoleon Gomez told USW convention delegates Tuesday.

“They said free trade was going to make all workers in North American happy. That was a lie, brothers and sisters,” said Gomez, President and General Secretary of ‘Los Mineros’ – the National Mine, Metal, Steel, and Allied Workers Union of Mexico.

“The truth is that NAFTA was a disaster for workers in Mexico, just as it was for workers in the United States and Canada. We have to change the corrupt system, sisters and brothers. We have to change it together.”

For 11 years, Gomez has been forced to live in exile in Canada due to persecution and threats from powerful corporate and political forces in Mexico. With the USW’s support, he has continued to lead his union from Canada.

The USW and Los Mineros are leaders in building international union solidarity to defend workers’ interests against globalization and unfair trade, Gomez said.

“Employers and politicians try to divide us and pit us against each other. Our solidarity works because our unions share common principles, common values and a common history.”

Steelworkers and Los Miners members share a desire for good jobs and economic and social justice, he said.

“Today companies like Carrier and Rexnord are closing factories, putting Steelworkers out of work and moving to Mexico where labor is cheap. Why is it cheap? Because Mexican workers like being poor? Because we want to take jobs from Americans or Canadians? Of course not, brothers and sisters.

“Labor is cheap in Mexico because of our authoritarian government and companies with ‘protection unions’ that



Napoleon Gomez, President and General Secretary, Los Mineros

deprive workers of their rights and keep their voices down. Los Mineros are fighting that system,” he said.

“We want the same thing as you – decent jobs, health care, pensions, respect and dignity,” Gomez said.

“There are no walls that can divide us. We are all in this together. This is our power, the power of unity.”

Resolutions Focus on International S

Dozens of USW members rose from their seats on Tuesday morning to speak passionately in support of Resolution No. 5 – “Global Unity and Activism,” in which the USW vowed to build on its efforts to forge global alliances and solidarity.

Members spoke about how those alliances have lifted up USW members fighting for fair contracts over the past three years.

The USW has, in turn, supported workers across the globe through Workers Uniting, the alliance with Unite the Union in Great Britain and Ireland, through IndustriALL, the global coalition of industrial unions.

Colleen Burke of Local 1998 in Toronto, told the

delegates of her visit with struggling garment workers last year in Bangladesh. “We saw first-hand the good work that IndustriALL does,” Burke said.

Bob Giusti, of Local 1357 at ATI in Massachusetts, said international solidarity was a key to ending the company’s seven-month lockout last year.

USW members also overwhelmingly supported Resolution No. 12 – “Organizing for Strength” – prioritizing organizing new members and fighting for workers’ rights.

Dozens of new USW members took the stage to a standing ovation, as a scroll listed the scores of USW organizing victories since the last convention.

Bruce Smith, president of the Glass, Molders, Pottery,

Cleaver: Unity Can Defeat Economic Bullies

Congressman Emanuel Cleaver, D-Mo., a United Methodist minister and the first black mayor of Kansas City, told the delegates at the 2017 USW Convention that workers are being pushed around by rich bullies, but unity can defeat them.

“We must go out of here with new found unity. The only way we are going to make it is if we are all together as working people. We are in the majority. There are more of us than them,” he said.

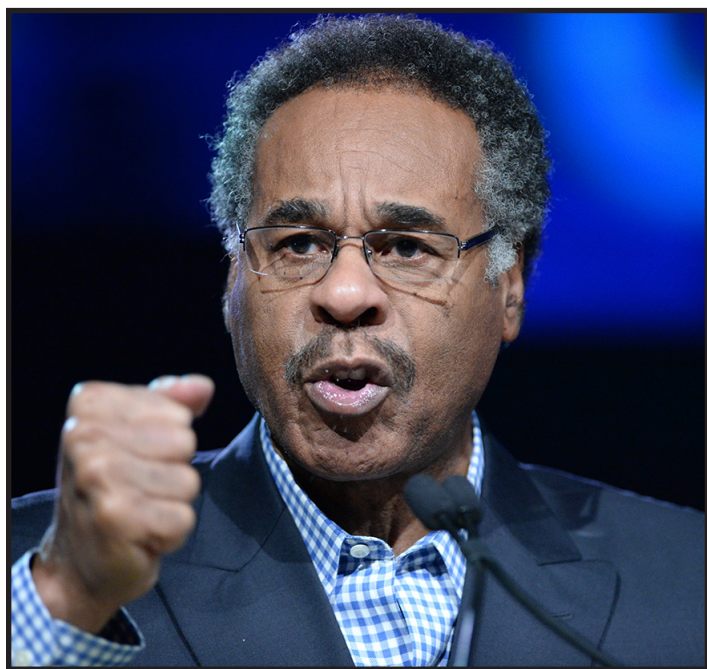
District 12 Director Emil Ramirez, who introduced Cleaver, said, “Throughout his career, he has always stood on the side of workers and their families.”

Cleaver apologized that the record book says only 98 percent of his votes were for working people. He said to laughs and applause, “My father would come up out of the grave with that belt he used to use if I stood with some billionaires over working people. I won’t do it as long as I am alive.”

He noted that his grandfather worked as a Pullman Porter on the railroad, a union job that enabled him to buy a house and a car. He recounted fighting so-called right-to-work legislation when it was proposed previously in Missouri and pledged to fight it when it is placed on the ballot again.

To win, he said working people must act in unity and never give up. He told a story about a young Andrew Jackson, the 7th U.S. President. He said Jackson wasn’t the best brawler, but he always got up after he was thrown down. Cleaver said workers must be like Jackson.

“We cannot be thrown permanently. We are the people who built this country. We will act in unity. We are the working people. We will not stay thrown.”



Emanuel Cleaver, U.S. Congressman (Missouri)

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Solidarity, Organizing, Environment

Plastics and Allied Workers International Union (GMP), which recently approved a merger with the USW, spoke of the importance of organizing.

“We know very well that everybody in this hall has a responsibility to grow the labor movement,” Smith said.

In the afternoon after a heated debate, the delegates approved a resolution titled, “Charting a Path for our Future: Economic and Environmental Sustainability.”

It says that the USW supports balanced approaches to climate change and opposes retrenchment on environmental laws.

It faced opposition from delegates who felt it did not go far enough and those who felt it went too far.

Justin Holloway of Local 1998 at the University of Toronto objected to what he described as the resolution’s fossilized language, saying “There are no jobs on a dead planet.”

Ryan O’Callaghan of Local 1, who works at Philadelphia Energy Solutions, a refinery the USW helped save when it was slated to close, said his co-workers will not support the resolution because its philosophy could cost them their jobs.

Speaking for the majority who supported the resolution, Carolyn Egan of Local 8300 in Toronto said, “No worker can be left behind. We are worker advocates. Just transition is critical to any just climate change program. It can’t be jobs versus the environment.”

Organizing is Key to the Future: Trumka

Activism and organizing among union members is the key to rewriting the rules to the economy and providing a better life for working people.

That was the message AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka delivered to the USW international convention on Tuesday, arguing that unions must fight harder than ever to uphold their basic principles of good jobs, safe workplaces, fair trade, quality health care and equality for all.

As he spoke with American workers during the 2016 U.S. election, Trumka said, voters were hungry for change that would shift power from greedy corporations and billionaires and return it to working people.

"Whoever they planned to vote for, every single person that I spoke to wanted the same thing," Trumka said. "They wanted a better life for themselves and their children."

To support that goal, Trumka issued what he called a "bold" proposal – that "everybody deserves a job, and everybody deserves the power to make that job a good job, whether you're black or white, gay or straight, immigrant or native-born, union or not-yet-union."

Keeping that promise means making it easier, not harder, for workers to join unions and bargain collectively, he said.

"When we stand together and we fight together," he said. "We win together."

Despite hard-right politicians gaining power in the United States and elsewhere, more people are mobilizing on issues such as income inequality, unionization, trade and higher wages.

"Collective action is on the rise," he said. "The momentum in this country is swinging our way."

Trumka said that the labor movement would cooperate with Donald Trump when it could find common ground, and oppose him when his plans violate union members' core values.

"We'll judge his White House on actions," Trumka said. "We're watching and we're keeping score."

One issue on which unions and Trump might cooperate, Trumka said, is on an infrastructure bill to repair crumbling roads, bridges and other public assets. Trump has promised a \$1 trillion investment, which Trumka called "a good scale."

On issues like trade, Trump has talked the talk, but unions like the USW must make sure he walks the walk.

"Nobody knows trade like the USW," Trumka said. "Remember, Donald Trump didn't kill the TPP. Working people killed the TPP."

The kind of activism USW members displayed in that fight must continue if unions are to grow stronger, he said.

"That's how we build an economy that works for everyone," Trumka said.



Richard Trumka, President, AFL-CIO

International Solidarity on Display

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the steel industry in the UK, which is under attack by unfairly priced foreign imports, as are Steelworkers in the United States and Canada.

Thousands of steel jobs in the UK are endangered by a worldwide glut of metal pushed on to the market by Chinese companies that continue to expand beyond market needs.

"Thousands and thousands of steelworker jobs are being destroyed and our members put out of work. And it's not just in steel," Burke said. "We are seeing the introduction of cheap Chinese tires dumped on our market and sold at a third of the price of premium brands."

Delegates also heard from Valter Sanches, the general secretary of the IndustriALL Global Union, a federation of labor unions worldwide that represents 50 million members.

A metal worker by trade, Sanches was previously secretary of international relations at the Brazilian metalworkers' national confederation, CNM/CUT.

Sanches was introduced to the delegates by International Vice President Carol Landry, who was recently elected as the only woman on the IndustriALL board of directors.

Along with the fight for fair trade, IndustriALL is fighting for a sustainable industrial policy in some of the poorest countries of the world, including Bangladesh.

About 5 million people in Bangladesh work in the textile industry, generally working up to 60 hours a week to earn up to \$60 a month, Sanches said.

After hundreds of textile workers were fired last December following a wildcat strike over raising the minimum wage, IndustriALL affiliates pressured employers and the Bangladesh government.

Eventually, the pressure worked. Workers got their jobs back and some 35 union leaders who had been jailed were released. The government also reopened union offices it had closed because of the strike.

"That's the way we can solve things," Sanches said. "We have to have each others' back."