



2017 USW Constitutional Convention RESOLUTION

Resolution No. 3

The Power of Unity

WHEREAS, Canada and the United States share a proud history of a strong middle class, economic security and living standards built on the productivity and solidarity of organized labor; and

WHEREAS, as USW members we are committed to the core principles that anyone who wants to work should have a job; that all workers and their families should live in dignity with health care and retirement security; that every worker -- regardless of race, gender, religion, ancestry, national origin, citizenship, age, disability, sexual orientation, or gender identity or expression -- should enjoy the freedom to form a union and bargain collectively; and that all workers should share equitably in a strong economy; and

WHEREAS, we will continually fight for workplaces that are safe and for wages sufficient to support families and communities; and

WHEREAS, our political system provides multi-national corporations and wealthy individuals even greater opportunities to buy elections and assert their priorities at the expense of working people; and

WHEREAS, in the United States the glut of money in our political system has facilitated attacks on both the economic rights of workers and our system of democracy, and so-called "right-to-work" legislation strips workers of their collective bargaining rights, making it harder for workers to form and join unions, while voter ID laws make it harder for citizens to vote, essentially excluding certain populations from the democratic process; and

WHEREAS, in both Canada and the United States, we have new leaders at the national level, we will work hard to achieve our priorities while never backing away from protecting our core values; and

WHEREAS, the philosophy of deregulation, de-unionization and race-to-the-bottom globalization known as neo-liberalism has shifted power, income and wealth from

workers to corporations, leaving us with severe economic imbalances and a widening gulf between the very rich and everyone else; and

WHEREAS, these destructive neo-liberal economic policies threaten to increase economic inequality in Canada as well as the United States, as the super-rich disguise their assault on the middle class as budget balancing, cost cutting and government shrinking, these are just excuses to avoid addressing the real problems with our economies: the rapidly shrinking middle class, soaring health care and education costs and the widening wealth gap; and

WHEREAS, the very rich and the big corporations do not pay their fair share of taxes -- many paying little or no taxes at all -- even if this means cutting essential funding for education, infrastructure, environmental regulation and economic development; and

WHEREAS, many politicians in the United States are now targeting valued entitlement programs like Medicare, Social Security and Medicaid as well as long-standing middle class tax breaks; and

WHEREAS, bad trade deals and the so-called free markets have left us vulnerable to foreign dumping and subsidization, putting American and Canadian jobs at risk, destabilizing our economies and further necessitating the diligent enforcement of trade laws and the development of new trade policies and trade remedy laws; and

WHEREAS, we will always fight for Buy American and Buy Canadian provisions to promote quality products that support fair labor standards and protect good-paying jobs, despite local authorities who continue to make excuses for using foreign products for major infrastructure projects and procurement needs; and

WHEREAS, we believe that while the market is an effective way of creating and delivering products, citizens have certain social and economic rights that we must fight to maintain, including pensions, health care and employment equity; and

WHEREAS, through our union-wide education efforts, we provide the resources to arm members with the information and skills needed to confront challenges in their workplaces and communities while becoming stronger leaders to fight for a better future; and

WHEREAS, we take our values and vision to the bargaining table to build safer workplaces with fair wages, benefits and workplace rules. The collective action we take across sectors builds bargaining power, while departments like Strategic Campaigns help local unions face elevated bargaining challenges by honing their negotiating and advocacy skills. These factors combine to help us make gains that benefit union and non-union workers alike; and

WHEREAS, through our organizing efforts, we continue to extend the benefits of collective bargaining to other workers, empowering them to negotiate for their futures and build economic security for themselves and their families; and

WHEREAS, legislative and political processes in Canada and the United States continually demand our attention and involvement -- from Ottawa to Washington -- our members' interests are advanced through the collective efforts of our leadership, staff, and members. We fight against bad trade deals and so-called "right-to-work" legislation, just as we fight for anti-scab legislation, card check certification, stronger safety provisions and a guarantee that the voices of working families are heard in all aspects of state and local government; and

WHEREAS, in the United States, our union demands that trade laws be enforced. We pursue innovative cases in many industrial sectors to defend our members' jobs when they are threatened by illegal and unfair trade, initiating and winning major gains that have saved jobs in sectors ranging from steel to tire to paper; and

WHEREAS, in Canada we oppose bad trade deals such the CETA and we demand that unions should be able to initiate unfair trade cases in Ottawa, because it is workers who ultimately suffer the consequences of unfair trade practices; and

WHEREAS, we utilize our education and activism networks, such as Rapid Response in the United States, to engage USW members in key legislative fights and to ensure that our members understand the policy implications of workplace issues; and

WHEREAS, programs like Women of Steel, SOAR and Next Generation build activism within our union and bring important voices to our legislative and political engagement; and

WHEREAS, we prioritize clear and effective communication between our members as the bedrock of our solidarity while striving to increase our union's media presence to combat dangerous misinformation and demagoguery; and

WHEREAS, we have expanded our influence by creating new organizations with key partners like the Blue-Green Alliance, Blue Green Canada and the Alliance for American Manufacturing. Our work in the policy arena is magnified through these relationships and has helped us become the leading voice in Washington and Ottawa for a clean energy economy and a revitalized manufacturing sector, helping secure our members' jobs now and in the future; and

WHEREAS, as union members, we work globally for livable wages, safe working conditions and decent benefits, from the sweatshops of Jordan to the mines of Mexico, as well as in workplaces across the United States, Canada and the Caribbean. We use our collective strength, bargaining ability and international relationships, and we acknowledge that a threat to one is a threat to all; and

WHEREAS, we believe that our communities largely define who we are, and healthy communities develop when we care for each other, treat people fairly, keep them safe and help them achieve; and

WHEREAS, we take on this challenge to preserve what the labor movement has fought for, what countless workers have died for and for what we believe our countries can become.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that:

- (1)** We will be a union that always fights for social and economic justice in order to build better lives for all. People who work hard should earn family supporting wages. Reducing economic inequality is not only right; it is at the core of sustaining our economies.
- (2)** We will push to establish full employment, rejecting the notion that stagnating wages are the new norm. We will be a union that works hard for legislation that facilitates organizing so that all workers have the opportunity to bargain collectively.
- (3)** Our union will work in Canada and the United States to ensure that investments are made in infrastructure, education and technology. We will work as a union for policies that will revitalize a strong manufacturing base.
- (4)** We will always advocate for better healthcare and retirement security for all citizens. Security and dignity in retirement and access to quality medical care are fundamental, universal rights, regardless of an individual's economic circumstances.
- (5)** As a union, we will continue to fight to ensure that all levels of government are properly financed and empowered to ensure quality public services and education; provide effective regulation of our workplaces, marketplaces and economies; and protect us from environmental degradation. Governments at all levels have important roles to play in providing essential services, defending the vulnerable, encouraging environmental sustainability, facilitating economic growth and ensuring a fair and just society. We must have a progressive tax structure in which corporations and the wealthy also pay their fair share.
- (6)** Our union will support regulations on the financial sector and insist on corporate accountability. As long as our economic policy puts the interests of corporations before the interests of working people, corporate short-term profiteering and financial speculation will jeopardize our economic future.

(7) Trade agreements must include enforceable protections for workers and the environment as well as prohibitions against child labor, sweat shops, illegal subsidies, currency manipulation and other forms of unfair and illegal trade. We will fight to protect domestic jobs and eliminate tax incentives and loopholes that encourage corporations to invest abroad. Together, as a union we will promote a global economy in which the rights of all workers and the environment are protected, trade is fair and balanced and trade agreements do not undermine the rights of sovereign governments or ignore the impact of globalization on workers and the environment.