



2017 USW Constitutional Convention RESOLUTION

Resolution No. 9

Collective Bargaining

WHEREAS, collective bargaining is our Union's most important task and we are committed with unwavering support of our members in their collective bargaining struggles across the wide range of locations where we work in North America, regardless of the economic environment; and

WHEREAS, Union members earn higher wages and enjoy better benefits on average than non-union workers; and

WHEREAS, the average wage increase for all workers in the United States was only 1.9% between September 2014 and September 2015, and an average increase of 2.3% again between September 2015 and March 2016, and the average wage increase in Canada was 1.6% between December 2015 and December 2016; and

WHEREAS, in the United States, according to a 2016 survey, workers paid back to their employers an average of 30% of the cost of their health insurance premiums for family coverage and 18% for employee only coverage; and

WHEREAS, only 8% of private sector employers offer their workers in the United States a defined benefit pension plan; and

WHEREAS, only one in five Canadian private sector workers are covered by workplace pension plans; and

WHEREAS, despite a continuing economic recovery and the return of some of the jobs lost during the Great Recession, median household income in the United States remains in decline since 2008; and

WHEREAS, although extreme increases in healthcare costs have moderated over the past few years, employers continue to attempt to shift costs to our members and decrease benefit levels. The passage of the Affordable Care Act, while positive for the United States, has introduced a new level of complexity for bargaining and allowed employers an additional avenue of attack. Uncertainty in healthcare continues to engage negotiating committees, as the newly elected government threatens repeal

of the Act. While in Canada, the public healthcare system remains under threat from right wing forces as well as from court challenges, while the current government refuses to implement a national pharmacare program which would provide much needed medicines to all Canadian residents; and

WHEREAS, the corporations we face at the bargaining table are ever increasing in both power and complexity, through acquisition and complicated transnational or private equity structures. The corporate protections we have negotiated in the United States, particularly successorship clauses, have allowed the sisters and brothers at Veyance, Cooper Tire, Tesoro, Sunoco, ConocoPhillips, Wausau Paper, Boise, Anchor Glass, St. Gobain Container and Dana Corporation (among others) protections to prevent buyers from coming in and gutting their contracts; and

WHEREAS, our labor agreements provide extraordinary protections for our members, especially in the moments our members need it most. We have defended the retirement security of our members, fought for access to affordable healthcare, provided for safer workplaces, and saved good jobs; and

WHEREAS, we recognize that our Union's successes are realized through the strength, solidarity and determination of local leaders and members working with skilled and knowledgeable staff, together utilizing the resources available only through a strong, diverse and financially viable International Union; and

WHEREAS, some employers have gone to great lengths to attempt to break our Union since we last met in convention and these assaults continue across both our nations. We continue to struggle for fair labor agreements in our mines, mills, factories, healthcare, public sector and service settings and when strikes and lockouts occur, they are often long and bitter struggles; and

WHEREAS, the attempts to strip away contract protections and collective bargaining rights have spread to the public sector, and governmental bodies at our federal, state, provincial and municipal levels are openly attacking unions at every opportunity; and

WHEREAS, our Union is facing potentially difficult rounds of bargaining with major employers in oil, steel, paper, mining and smelting, healthcare, higher education, the public sector and other key industries; and

WHEREAS, our members and our employers continue to struggle in a global economy and, more and more, are under tremendous pressure from countries violating our trade laws and currency manipulation in order to tilt the playing field in their favor.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that:

- (1) USW members will continue the fight to improve and maintain fair and equitable contracts with our employers in every sector.

- (2)** It is imperative that the USW negotiate and maintain adequate defined benefit retirement income plans for our members providing for lifetime retirement income security and to resist two-tier pension plans. Where we are unable to negotiate defined benefit retirement, we should demand adequate employer-funded defined contribution retirement plans or multi-employer pension plans that allow our members to retire with dignity, and otherwise provide for disability income and spousal benefits in the event of the member's death before or after retirement.
- (3)** The USW will continue to provide professional, technical and strategic assistance, Strike and Defense Fund support and legal back-up in support of our members' collective bargaining efforts.
- (4)** Through rank-and-file solidarity and support from local unions, USW members will support the picket lines and assist in the struggles of our fellow workers.