

A Stirring Call

In my comments today, I'm going to talk about leadership, how change makes us stronger, and how we have to move forward in this scary time that we're in.

Now, change makes us stronger and, of course, that's the theme of our 30th General Convention. It's significant, especially when it comes to charting our path through the next five years. Change makes us stronger by encouraging us to become better leaders. And, in these days, leadership is essential to growing our market share (and) our contractor base, and remaining relevant to the industries in which we work. In the time that I have here, I would like to briefly discuss the importance of change to remain relevant as that essential leader, to make us stronger on the international, national, and local level.

But first, my thanks to my partners in this union's leadership: Jimmy Williams—boy, oh, boy. General Secretary-Treasurer George Galis—it's always been my honor to work with you, both day in and day out, for the continued success and growth of our proud organization. And to this General Executive Board: Bill Candelori, Robert Kucheran, Ray Price, and my pal, Ray Sesma, for all the work that you do now and into the future. And to my family, of course—the love of my life, my friend and my strength—my wife, Kenya ... [Applause.]

Now, as your executive general vice president, my duties, in part, include assisting the general president in carrying out his or her executive and administrative functions, as set forth in Sections 43 through 49 of the General Constitution. Those duties and assignments include, at this time, primarily running his office, directing his staff, serving as a point person and strengthening community partnerships, serving as labor co-chair of the Finishing Trades Institute, and working on specific assignments related to growing our influence in our various trades and industries.

Now, in running this office for the last seven years, I really learned that this can become an all-consuming job—ensuring the flow of all the work, coordinating between the associated funds on meetings, and assigning and following up on general vice presidents, field staff, and executive staff to cover duties as directed, along with personnel matters. Now, Jimmy mentioned it earlier—in 2006, he hired Tim Stricker as his executive assistant. You all know Tim. And he has successfully assumed some of the duties that I had previously handled.

Further, after an operational review of our human resources function, in February of 2008, we hired Sandra Barrett as the IUPAT's human resource manager. That change has made us stronger. You might ask, "How can only two hires make such a difference?" With these additional personnel on board, my office was afforded the expanded capacity to carry out added duties as assigned by the general president that directly benefit our members. Now, that happens due to the fact that these two people are both extremely capable and have the best interest of the members and employees of the IUPAT at heart. They are a benefit to all of us and give your leadership the tools

to make a greater difference.

This is a prime example of how leadership development and change have made us stronger. I serve as a director on the board of the Partnership for Working Families, an organization that works to ensure that low- and middle-income workers and communities share in the benefit of economic growth—the development of our new economy. It also emphasizes the creation of high-quality jobs, affordable housing, environmental health, and career pipelines for shared prosperity. In this partnership, we have developed another link to the growth of our union. Some of you already work with Partnerships for Working Family affiliates: John Jorgensen in the Good Jobs, Livable Neighborhoods Coalition out of Milwaukee. Grant Mitchell, the Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy. The East Bay Alliance for a Sustainable Economy, with Doug Christopher in DC 16. Rocky DeStefano in



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to Leadership

Pittsburgh United. Mike Ball, Puget Sound SAGE. Dan Boody, Syracuse Alliance for New Economy. Jeff Sullivan in Community Labor United, and Working Partnerships USA, again out of San Jose and DC 16.

Some of you participated in the partnership's Construction Career Opportunities Project national conference, which was held immediately after our Building Trades Legislative Conference this past May. Organizing our delegation of the attendees was not done by me, but assigned to the Job Corps National Project Coordinator, Andrew Larson, who took the task (and) made this event happen, ensuring that the IUPAT was represented and enhancing our position with this organization as a serious community partner. Again, leadership development and change have made us stronger.

At our 29th General Convention, we presented you with the vision of an international training center. We had just purchased the land and, in five short years, completely renovated the property to house not only the Finishing Trades Institute, but our Labor-Management Cooperation Initiative and our Job Corps Program. Furthermore, in those same five years, the Finishing Trades Institute hired Dan Penski in 2007 and enhanced the staff with an executive assistant director, Sarah Coyne [Applause]; engaged the services of a director of curriculum and instruction, Tom Pfundstein; hired two recruitment and retention managers, Kevin LaRue and Greg Renne; and hired project manager Charles Rigmaiden; hired three apprenticeship training representatives, Robert Porto, Kelly Humann, and Brian Gingras, to work with lead apprenticeship training representative John Burcaw.

All of these changes that started in late 2006 have enhanced the Finishing Trades Institute's ability to deliver the services that are mandated by the board of trustees' strategic plan that Director Penski is, of course, tasked with implementing. All the while, under the direction of Tom, the Finishing Trades Institute has made bold strokes

in developing new curricula, such as the Industrial Applicator and Skylight Programs. They developed our existing curriculum, as well as instituted advanced instructor methods courses for the well-received coordinators' workshop.

Now, I would like to take a moment here to recognize some guests that we have at this general convention: the district council training directors from both our United States and Canadian district councils. Would you all please stand for a moment—all the training directors that are guests here? [Applause.]

Their presence here today is proof of your leadership's commitment to making training job number-one in our union. Without these trainers sitting in the audience, there is no union difference in the field. You know organizing will bring them in, but it's training that keeps them on the job. [Applause.]

And thank you for your service to your union and for attending this convention. We'll hear a little bit more about our district council training directors a little bit later.

Our accomplishments in the Finishing Trades Institute are,

in no small part, due to a board of trustees who understands and believes that the best way to remain relevant to industry users, contractors, and employers is to provide the best-trained, (most) safety-conscious and (most) dependable workforce to the industry. Again, leadership development and change have made us stronger.

Two more points on the Finishing Trades Institute. The recently instituted FTI grant program has just awarded over \$1.8 million to 22 of our district council training programs. [Applause.] The importance of this, of course, is that we're able, as the general president stated in his comments, to ensure that continued enhanced training is delivered when it's needed most, and we want to do more. Secondly, in accordance with Sections 190 and 232 of our General Constitution, the IUPAT, under the leadership of GST George Galis, uses the services of the

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FTI Curriculum Development Department to design the IUPAT leadership series. This, of course, provides the necessary training that leads to a certification in union leadership upon completion of the coursework developed in conjunction with the IUPAT and the FTI and taking specific union skills courses at the National Labor College.

I have been speaking the last few minutes about leadership development attached to change. Now, General President Williams has stated that this is a different general convention. Leadership must be practiced—a leader must be willing to provide you with the right answer, not just the answer you want to hear. A leader must have the will to encourage, cajole, tell, and convince the team why it's important to follow a strategy or a tactic that will benefit the affiliate and the International Union in maintaining and growing job opportunities, signatory employers, and relevance in the industries that we work in.

That is why General Vice Presidents Sesma, Price, Kucheran, and Candelori will address this delegation in their own fashions, other than in an emcee capacity, to present their visions and plans for their region. Their jobs require multiple nights on the road away from family and home, but it's a duty that they take because the continued relevance of the organization demands it.

The general president is demonstrating that leadership for this great union is shared, and is tasking our vice presidents with the responsibility to lead their regions, but we can't do it alone. And that is why we meet here every five years—elected leaders answering the call of our membership to chart a better course for our union, one that is about best representing them on the job and off the job. These times demand that we give them back everything we have.

Now, what is all this talk about change, developing leadership, and sharing leadership about? Let's take a look at the world that we're living in right now. We are facing a scary reality. Earlier this month, *New York Times* op-ed writer Bob Hebert wrote, the country has lost 6.7 million jobs since this recession began in December 2007. When joblessness reaches this kind of extremes, it just doesn't damage an individual family. It corrodes entire communities, fosters a sense of hopelessness, and leads to disorder.

To understand the severity of the times that we're living in right now, I want to measure three categories of joblessness. First, workers officially counted as jobless—those who are on the rolls of the unemployed. Two, those who are working part-time because they can't find full-

time employment—many of the folks here who are working and serving us while we're here for our General Convention. Those folks are working, not full-time; they're working part-time—one week on/two weeks off, three days a week, four days a week; like that. Then the third group, those who are not actively looking for work, but would take work if there was work available—in my opinion, the statisticians sarcastically call (them the) "labor market reserve."

These three categories of joblessness total over 30 million workers. That's nearly 19 percent of the overall workforce. It's a scary reality, indeed.

What can the IUPAT do? What can you do as executive officers, general executive board members, business manager/secretary-treasurers, elected representatives, staff, delegates, and automatic delegates? You are here, because you are demonstrated leaders of this organization, every one of you. You must lead.

In this scary reality of economic insecurity, our members and signatory employers, as well as prospective members and employers, are looking for something. They've seen the devastation of an economy that has crumbled under the weight of good jobs with good benefits disappearing as quickly as General Motors shut down plants, as DHL Shipping closes its American business, as job site after job site shuts down due to a lack of construction financing, which leads to unemployment, home foreclosure, and devastated communities all across North America.

Yes, our members are looking for something—something to have confidence in, something that provides a key to future prosperity—and that is leadership from you. The opportunity that has been presented to us as executive officers, general executive board members, executive board members, business manager/secretary-treasurers, elected representatives, staff, delegates, and automatic delegates can't be taken lightly.

Just behind the marriage to my wife, Kenya, and the birth of our children, becoming a member of this union and completing my apprenticeship are some of the most meaningful events that have happened in my life. That's why I carry pictures of my wife and children, that's why I carry my union card and my apprenticeship completion certificate. [Applause.] Why?

Why? Because it represents opportunity—opportunity to give back to this union, to this industry that has given so much to me and so much to all of us. Opportunity to become a skilled journeyman, a trade instructor, an estimator, a shop owner, a business representative, an orga-

nizer, a business manager/secretary-treasurer, an international rep, a general executive board member, and an executive officer of this great organization.

But it comes with an obligation to be a part of a team, to lead the team when called upon, and to be a part of the team when necessary. Every person in this room has the ability to answer the call, but do you have the will?

Just this past month, I had the great honor to attend the inaugural meeting of Floor Coverers Local Union 1512, a full affiliate of District Council 15, right here in Las Vegas, Nevada. [Applause.] Those 90-plus members who attended that meeting to review bylaws, nominate officers, and sign that charter were there because they're con-

cerned. They're concerned about work opportunities, medical coverage, pension benefits, but they were there to be a part of the solution to what ails this economy. There to be a full affiliate of the district council, and there to get information and leadership on navigating through these insecure times. Where else can they participate in their future well-being? They know that their union card provides them an opportunity to have a say.

Let these members know that this is their union. Let these members know that leadership is there, training is there, organizing is there, assistance is there.

You must lead. You must lead. You *must* lead. [Applause.]

