

One Direction for All in the Union

Service in the IUPAT kind of goes by in a blink, and along that way, in that blink, you meet a lot of great friends, a lot of good memories, people that I will never forget. People who aren't here today and people that are here today. Maybe more than my share, maybe more than I deserve; but I tell you, it's been a good ride and it's a great ride. And I'm not done riding yet. I'll make that clear right now.

Our business at hand: When we look at the high unemployment, the lack of jobs, the issues that we're faced with—pension issues, health and welfare issues—we can't shuffle them off or point fingers or say "They're responsible, those guys are responsible, those people are responsible. Poor us. We're getting bad breaks." We have to make our own breaks, and we can't do that if we're going in four or five or 10 different directions. So, my commitment is, September 1, we will be going in one direction.

It's my intent that, going forward, we will set up a structure that will involve having at least bimonthly conference calls with the region, within our region executive board, so we can check and talk and discuss and see what we're doing and what we're not doing, what we can do. Share ideas, if anyone needs assistance or help.

These aren't optional. These are going to be mandatory. We need to do it if we're going to move ahead. We are going to need to push ourselves. We're also going to try to meet on a semiannual basis, too—twice a year. We'll meet at each location of each district council, somewhere along the line, to see what's going on in those areas.

And it's truly about doing more networking and sharing and, you know, getting things done.



RAY SESMA
GENERAL VICE PRESIDENT
WESTERN REGION

I'm going to share something with you...I don't know if (a lot of) you really understand or appreciate what you have today. My first general convention was seven general conventions ago. It was in Chicago. I was just starting my fourth year of my term. My local, at the time, was in the top 10 in per-capita paying locals. It was a good-size local.

I went to that (convention) in Chicago. I only knew a few people that I worked with in the Bay Area and a couple young Hawaiian kids who are running around here today.

They're not so young, but neither am I ...And, when I got there, I wasn't given much information, except someone would come up to me and say, hey, when this resolution comes up, you vote "yes." When this one comes up, you vote "no." Not the resolution, not the why, not anything else on it. This is what you did.

I had an opportunity, at that first general convention, to meet my general president—my first general president. That (was) Bud Rafferty—a nice man, a great general president. That was like 30 seconds...

You think about that. Today, when you come to a general convention, I don't think you have to wait and try to get just a 30-second time with the general president. I don't think you come here not knowing each other or knowing a lot of people in this room. That's the way the International operated back in those days—it was a lot of secrets, a lot of guessing, not too much information. You told people what you wanted to tell them. There was not a lot of sharing, no networking, a lack of communication. And it was really a dark and sad time, in a way.

Were they wrong? No. They were all strong leaders. This is what they did. This is how it was then. They weren't communicating. They weren't building. They weren't talking. They weren't sharing. That takes a great toll. So, when we talk about change, change is very good.

I'll go through just a little list on it. Let's talk about a voice. Did we have a voice 30 years ago? Absolutely not. Do we have a voice today? Yes, a pretty good voice, too.

The BM/STs meet with the general president and the general executive board and staff, as well as the departments—that's the FTI, the Pension Fund, LMCI, Job Corps—on a regular basis

every three to four months. Think about what that means, too...The leaders interact, talk, find out, discuss. There are no secrets, as we said, on it. We get that opportunity so you have a voice.

That's the beauty of what we do today. We communicate and we share and we get people involved. And, once we start getting people involved, then we'll never lose.

We're here to share, and we're here to work with you on it. We're equal partners. I'm a vice president, (but) from the first day I ever took this position as a vice president, I was still that business manager. I was that shop steward. I was that president of my local. That's all I'll ever be. That's what I am with anybody in this room. I'm not anything special. I don't have all the answers. Talk to me, and I'll talk to you on it. That's how we need to do things. We're in this together, and that's how we going to get ahead.

Sometimes people think, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it. We're doing okay. We got our money. We've increased. We've doubled. We have done some good things on it."

The general fund of each district council would be drastically different if the monies that General President Williams provided and made available were not available under a different plan or a different GP.

In the Western Region, under the GP's plan, the district councils since 2004 have...in district council local union financial assistance, growth opportunity plan, organizing, et cetera, have received \$4,703,845—think about that.

[Applause.]

Going forward, (there will be) an additional \$1.5 million a year. In LMCI grants in the Western Region—and I know that the other vice presidents will have similar information for you on it, too—there's been \$815,000 spent in the region for just grants alone. This is not talking about STP training or any of the specialized training that LMCI does, but just in grants. Again, that's a lot of money.

FTI grants—new. Just started this year. Just recently went through the approval system on it. I'm not going to get into the FTI program, but I can tell you that, in the Western Region, they just approved almost half-a-million dollars for your training funds...Almost a half-a-million dollars. You know, that's a lot of money.

The one that's going to really blow you away: the Western Region in per-capita tax waived, the International's per-cap that has been waived since Jimmy has been the general president, over the last five years, amassed over \$30 million...And, of that \$30 million, we're roughly 30 percent. That's \$9 million-plus that was taken out of the region, basically, and really taken out of International's funds or reserves, to put back in and...to do better programs and to do more (for members).

So, we're not talking about a little bit of money here. We're talking about some pretty major programs and some sacrifices for everybody.

It comes down to trust and communication and following the plan. What is the plan? Let me review the plan briefly.

Update the bylaws. That's going to be done quick. We need to move ahead on it. It's a matter of not just saving jobs today but saving and creating jobs tomorrow. The "nickels," as we say.

Language. Top workplace performance. Going to be done. Has to be done.

Twelve-month reserves in the general fund. Should have been getting there on this over the last five years.

Improved labor management relations. Merged training funds. Where it hasn't been done, we're going to step in and get that done.

We're not forcing. We're not telling. What we're going to do is come in and look at the situation with you, and try to make it happen. That may (mean) getting FCA or other people involved in this, to do it the right way, but we're going to do it. I think it would benefit everybody in this room.

We're going to focus on training. A big focus on training...and the commit-

ment that the Eastern Region is making for industrial training.

Organizing more. We're going to spend a little bit more time on organizing. We're going to get on the same page. We're going to use all of our great departments within the region, and hopefully across the United States, as we get this moving.

You know, I have no pride of ownership in any one of our areas. All of our district councils that I have the pleasure of working with—they do a great job and they have their own systems of organizing. Could they all use some help? Yes. If you sit there and say that you're perfect and you do it the right way and you don't need any help, you're wrong, because there's always something bigger and better that's going to come up and it's going to benefit you. If it's going to benefit you, it will benefit the membership. So, you've got to be open.

I have to say, too: We have to look at increasing the market share in the regions and in our areas. We're losing. It's slowly, surely, ebbing away...We really have to think big. We have to look beyond what we have today and really work on what we need tomorrow.

I sincerely appreciate the work that each district council does. I truly believe that our interactions over the last several years have, to date, put us in the best possible position to go forward.

I don't consider myself the answer man, but, beginning in September, I ask that we as an organization follow the plan. Given a chance, the plan will work. You've seen it work. In most cases, where they're doing 80 percent of the plan, they're 80 percent better off than most others.

When I said I made a commitment that this is my last general convention—well, I'm not leaving until it's fixed. I'm not leaving until I feel that it's better for the person that comes behind me, and that it's better than it was when I got here. I think that's possible. I know we have the people. I know we have the personalities. I know we have the

Continued on page 65