

Looking at Years of Pro

Well, it's been five years since we last met at the 29th general convention in Washington, DC. The world has changed in many ways, as you just witnessed—some good, and some not so good:

Two wars—one in Iraq and another in Afghanistan.

Thousands of American and Canadian lives lost, and many more wounded in these senseless wars.

The oil companies have (had) record profits.

CEOs making millions.

Wall Street losing billions and deficits in the trillions.

The over-regulation of labor unions during that eight-year period. While labor officials are asked to report all expenses of over \$25, the Enrons, Worldcoms, and Madoffs are left unregulated.

Hurricane Katrina destroys a city, while FEMA and the administration flounder.

The theme of change (for our convention) was not taken from the president's campaign. We chose the theme because it best describes what we, as a union, have accomplished since our historic general convention in 1994, 15 years ago.

Back then, we had less than \$300,000 in our general fund. In fact, we had to borrow money at that convention from the Defense Fund, just to pay the everyday bills. There were reductions in forces in every region of the Brotherhood. Long-time International representatives were laid off.

That was then. The changes that had to be made then were tough ones.

We started to change from a local-union-driven international with over 500 local unions to one driven by a district-council structure. Along with this change in our union structure, we began to consolidate our resources and cease the duplication of services.

The change that I'm talking about did not come without resistance—we had plenty of that, but, looking at where we are today, I know without a doubt that the grief, headaches, and heartaches were all worth it.

The duplication of services has stopped, which means less wasted dues on a local level and per capita at an international level.

As many of you know, we sold our interest in the United Unions Building last year and received over \$22 million for our share of that facility. Today, that same property couldn't be sold for \$10 million. Great timing for this move.

We will soon be in a new facility that will save per-cap dollars for our members for many years to come.

If the saying "cash is king" is true, then we are truly all kings: We have established 23 months in financial reserves and today, our general fund is at an all-time high. We have more money than in any other time in our history, but you will hear about that later from our general secretary-treasurer in great detail.

There's another saying when it comes to money: "Save it for a rainy day," and, right now, it's pouring on our affiliates. And we intend to give it back to you and your district councils for organizing and the structures of



your district council.

The hard rain started a year ago, when the market crashed. Fortunately, we have a pension fund that was strong enough to weather that storm.

But more important than that was the cooperation of our business managers in recent months on our funding improvement plan for the pension fund. They have shown us that, without a doubt, the health of the pension fund is priority number one for them, and it's something that I have spent many hours working on.

You know, I have a personal feeling for our pensioners. When my father retired from the union after more than 48 years of service, he received a pension of \$66 a month in 1975. There's nothing I want more than our members to retire with dignity, and I pledge to you that we will keep your pension fund rock-solid.

Our annuity fund—or, as some say, the 401(k), which, for

gress and Achievement

many Americans, turned into 201(k)s—has gained more than 4 percent over the last five years, when others have lost up to 40 percent. And we still have all of our early retirement options.

We are fortunate to have the financial resources to throw our affiliates and members a lifeline. Every district council has more resources now than they ever did. Past that, we have more organizers and trainers than ever before.

The Young Lions know today's version of the International—one with resources that helps district councils, lends organizing assistance and political action assistance, along with (giving) grants for special projects. That's what that change has brought us.

There are resources and policies and programs in place that benefit the members.

Truthfully, when I think back to my days at my local and the little help I received from the International, I am in awe of the opportunities that are available to our members and leaders today. Opportunities like education without political ramifications.

Yes—back then, opportunities for leaders to attend ongoing educational classes in DC were based on how much support they got from their International representatives. Basically, you went if you knew the right people, not because of need or because it would be better for the union.

Today, we have spent more than \$5 million dollars on furthering the education of our members, and hundreds of degrees have been given to rank-and-file members and officers. What better way to invest in our future than that?

At the close of the last convention, we showed an artist's rendering of our new International Training Center. Just weeks before that, we purchased 12 acres of land in Hanover, Maryland, just a few miles from BWI Airport. It is a facility that has trained thousands of our members in over 170 different classes. But not just FTI: LMCI, Government Affairs, and even my office have held meetings and classes there to benefit our members.

Promises made and promises kept.

Just a few months ago, before we assembled in Las Vegas, our members broke ground on our new union headquarters and a residence hall. Again, our officers didn't break ground, but our members attending classes that day. We will have all our offices in one location and be able to house 38 of our members for scheduled classes by this time next year.

The opportunities we offer don't stop with just our members. We're making great strides for our employers as well, through our LMCI department. The LMCI department has made tremendous progress over the last five years. It offers classes such as Supervisor Training Programs I and II, the recently developed project management class, and even green building.

LMCI has grown to offer us numerous online services for our employers, such as Reed's Construction Data, Westlaw, and Paint Bid Tracker. It holds regional and international meetings that put our employers face-to-face with our union leaders to address the issues that face our industries.

But what has become the hit of the department is the Finishing Industries Forum, or FIF. Over 300 contractors have come, year after year, to hear

from experts from all of our industries at FIF and learn new tools to run a better business. FIF has become so popular that we have over 500 people already registered for this year.

The administrator of the LMCI, Bill McDevitt, and his staff have done a great job with this department. Our goal is to extend the success of our national program to the local level with our employers. Some of the district councils, such as District Council 14, have already done that. That's quite a change from what our union was not so long ago.

Since the last convention, our Agreements Department has developed a database that can help all of our district councils keep an updated list of all wages and benefits, not only for our locals but all the locals of the other trades, so we can help prepare our district councils and locals for contract negotiations.

We more than doubled our hours since the last conven-

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tion, which means more members working on more jobs. And, with the traveling contractors today, we should double that number over the next five years.

You know, I lived in that International of yesterday, and it was no fun. Our political activity was nonexistent. The total political action budget in 1995, when I was general secretary-treasurer, was \$125,000.

Today, the Black and Gold Army of IUPAT members is well-financed, both in contributions to candidates and to support our endorsed candidates, in the form of robocalls, signs, t-shirts, and a feet-on-the-street campaign that is the envy of the labor movement.

[Applause.]

We can match any other international with bodies and we have a plan for working politics that really works. Our endorsement is wanted by leaders and candidates across both countries. The White House, governors, senators, members of parliament, and congressmen all want our support as well. As Pataki, the former Republican governor of New York, said, "When the Painters endorse, they endorse."

Organizing assistance in those days did not happen. Over the last five years, we have given more organizing assistance in dollars than in our entire history. Our plan is to double that in the next five years.

As they used to say in that old cigarette commercial, "We've come a long way, baby." Yes, we have come a long way, but we still have a long road ahead of us—a road that got a little bit harder last September, when the stock market hit rock-bottom. But, with your cooperation, we will make it there together as ONE UNION, just like our logo says. We had a plan, and we worked the plan. I love it when a plan comes together. And, boy, did it come together!

I look at where we have come from and the change in the face of our union, with its diversity from a brotherhood to the IUPAT. We offer opportunities where there were none before. Training and support from the headquarters has been kicked up a few notches in the last few years. Let's take Job Corps, for example.

Job Corps, in the last five years, has come to our rescue. Where? In Cross, South Carolina, for one of our largest contractors—Avalotis Painting.

By putting trained Job Corps students in place, Avalotis and our Business Manager Bobby Kincaid and his guy Chuck Hill were able to not only win a huge job in South Carolina, but put 40 new members in our union as well.

You know, we're all proud of all of our Job Corps centers, but this was a special victory for the IUPAT. It truly was a win-

win-win—for the contractor, for the union, and for a great bunch of members who will be working with Avalotis Painting for many years to come.

You know, I'm truly proud of our changes. As I stand here today and see a membership that is extremely respected by union and political leaders in both (the USA and Canada), our profile as an international union is a reflection of your accomplishments on the local level, not mine. We are looked up to by many, many affiliates of the AFL-CIO and the national Building Trades Department—a Building Trades that has elected one of our own, Sean McGarvey, the first IUPAT member to hold that office in the history of the building trades.

[Applause.]

We are known as a union that delivers when called to action. Yes, we have a bright future—one that is far brighter today because of the changes we have made in our structure. We need to keep working at it. The job is not done; it has just started.

You know that I don't make any promises I can't keep; my word is my bond. In the end, that is all any of us really have. I promise you this, and you will see an example this week when we present a resolution for a disaster relief fund that will take care of our members in need: We will always take care of our own, from the cradle to the grave. Please remember the members come first.

When disaster hit in many states these last five years, we came together as ONE UNION, and our employers also came together, to assist our members and contractors in the worst natural disaster to ever hit the United States: Hurricane Katrina. Later this week, you will see how we come together to help our own—we will always, always take care of our own.

There's something else we did over these last five years, and that is the delegates to the 29th Convention passed a resolution that gave the General Executive Board the power to waive the payment of dues to us—your per-capita. In exercising that power after Katrina and many other disasters in Iowa, Indiana, Texas, and elsewhere, we kept millions of dollars in our members' pockets when they needed it the most. We did the same for our members when there was a prolonged strike in Massachusetts.

We have now established a disaster relief fund, and we have the money in place to take care of any future problems. You know, let's hope we don't need to use it.

Today, a lot of our members are hurting. Unemployment, upside-down mortgages, rising tuition—many things that, with this economy, are not their fault. But we can offer hope for our members. We can make the same promise that, together, we will work harder for our members than we ever have in

our lives. No matter if we're in the field, in the office, factories; our rank-and-file members, our officers—we will fight for our members—we owe it to them.

We can also offer hope for our communities. Our Painters and Allied Trades for Children's Hope (PATCH) Foundation is the envy of the rest of the building trades. Although some industrial unions in the labor movement have their own foundations, we are the only building trade union to have one. We have worked so hard in building this for children's hope. You will be seeing a video this week that will show the great work that we have been able to do, with your cooperation: We have contributed nearly \$1 million and raised almost \$2 million since the inception of PATCH.

A little more than a year ago, we established, at one of our GPAC meetings, the term "Young Lions," to mean the young leaders of the IUPAT under the age of 35. We took that term from District Council 82. You've heard me say many times that you can't make my job any better, but that's not exactly true. You can make my job better if you offer to help fulfill the dreams and opportunities of those Young Lions in our union. Some of those young men and women are here this week and well on their way to becoming leaders in our union. Many more are on job sites and in offices throughout North America, possibly unaware of the opportunities they have to become leaders or better themselves in this union. I was a Young Lion at the 1984 convention. Do your part and show them the way.

We have the power to effect change that makes us—our union—stronger.

At this convention, we will work to set the course for the next generation of IUPAT leaders for decades to come with the resolutions we need to pass this week. The work we do here this week will go far toward protecting our jurisdiction and setting general policies and programs for the future. I will work as hard as I can and put in as many hours as necessary to get the job done, but I need each and every person in our union to do the same. There are no free lunches—we get what we put into our work and our life and our union.

I think of the many lives that I have touched in this great job of mine, and I often think back to those days when I first started. It was me and a handful of friends. All it took was the guts to ask for help, and our members gave it. Let's leave this convention with that thought in mind: Let's ask another member to help. They will. It's their union, too. We're a union of inclusion, not exclusion.

In closing, I have had the distinct pleasure of being an elected officer of our union, both locally and nationally, since 1975. That's 34 years of service. That's my whole life. My family has more than 1,000 years of membership in Local Union 252. I have great pride in that tradition. I'm proud of



my grandfather, a housepainter out of Local 345 in Philadelphia who became a charter member of Local 252. I'm proud of my father. He worked his whole life and retired with that \$66-a-month pension. He was a man with character, a proud man, and had a strong love for his union. As a young man, I didn't realize the sacrifices he made for me, my family, and my brother Ralph, who I truly loved more than any man in the whole world. He was my mentor, and, every day when I get up, I think of my brother Ralph as I prepare to go to work. He meant so much to me. My wife Gerrie has sacrificed more than any other woman, and I truly owe her everything. She's the greatest woman in the world.

[Standing ovation.]

In the end, it's about family—yours, mine, and how we can work together as ONE UNION to make their lives better. I'm willing to give you everything I have in me now. Share the load and work with me and your local leadership, and know we are all proud lions today and we're going to bring about change. We are going to make changes, not for our personal gain, but for the good of the members—our rank-and-file men and women who are not as fortunate as us, who I am so fortunate to lead. I'm the luckiest man in the world for having them behind me.

Let's do it for the apprentices, the journey workers, the public employees, and the retirees who walked and led before us, and gave us this legacy to carry on.

Let's do it because we are the IUPAT—the best damn union in the labor movement!

[Standing ovation.]

That applause is for you. You deserve it.

In closing, God bless all of you. Let's make the changes this week together as ONE UNION.

Thank you very much.

[Standing ovation.]