

2019 IAM Transportation Conference Report



IAMAW Transportation Conference

The delegates to the IAMAW Transportation conference from LL 1725 want to express our appreciation for your selection and decision to send us to represent this local. Each and everyone of us in attendance were honored to serve this membership with integrity and solidarity. Your delegates are President, Craig Vanderhoof; Vice President, Joe Behan; Recording secretary, Helena Thornton; Secretary Treasurer, Gary Winchester; Grievance Committeeman 142, Ken Coley; Grievance Committeemen 141, Daryl Current, Mike Knoble, & John Wilkinson; Conductor/Sentinel, Maureen Kelly; and Mark Heim.

First I have to brag about our local for a moment as we have two award winning individuals recently honored. Helena Thornton was recognized and honored with the Community Service Award from the Women's Department while attending the Women's Conference. Paul Schultz was recognized and honored by our IP, Robert Martinez Jr, and GVP Sito Pantoja for the CIRT Critical Incident Response Team and his work along with fellow CIRT members Sandy Gardner, Bryan Hutchison, and Kathy Ferguson for their response to the Henry Pratt Factory represented by IAMAW Local 1202, Aurora, Illinois. I hope you all take pride for our members and their contribution to this union. Please take a moment and congratulate both of these members when you see them.

The first day of this conference we knew there was something

unique and special about this year. We began the day with extra security screening before we could enter the room. We discovered to our surprise, and delight the extra security was for the first two speakers on the docket that day. We had the pleasure of not one, but two, candidates running for President of the United States.

Our first guest speaker was the Senator of the great state of Minnesota, Amy Klobuchar. Senator Klobuchar who was the first woman ever elected to the Senate of Minnesota proudly told us all about her family of Union workers. Starting with her grandfather as an Iron ore worker as a teamster, her father as a union journalist, her mother as a teacher who even participated in the first Minneapolis teacher strike in 1951.

Her history speaks of her grit and determination to work for the people of this country. As President she states she will bring one clear message to the White House. *"When Union workers are strong, all workers are strong."* She recognized and applauded the IAMAW for their work for Flight Attendants, and flight crews rest periods in the FAA. *"You fought it and you won"*

She talked of how we need to change the current economic culture stating how the current tax plan rewarded companies for outsourcing work.

She spoke of antitrust and how we are in a new "gilded age" where there is a monopoly of power in transportation. The monopolies lead to less competition which lessens the power and wages of workers. Standards need to be changed because when companies get too big and narrow, workers lose. Senator Klobuchar recognized that *"Unions are the leverage that we have, unions can take on consolidation and can help workers for better wages."* She talked how antitrust laws need to be aggressively enforced.

Pharmaceutical companies think they own Washington. They literally have two lobbyists for every member of congress. *"They don't own me"*. Big Pharma actually pays off generic drug

companies to keep their products off the market, again causing higher costs to us. We need to take back control of healthcare. We should be building on the Affordable Care Act not taking away.

We need to protect and improve our retirement security. I have been listening to your union on these issues. *"I believe when promises are made, promises should be kept when it comes to our pensions."*

"We must stop the attacks on our Union." Senator Amy Klobuchar.

The second speaker, the Senator from the great state of Vermont, Senator Bernie Sanders. Senator Sanders who was the first major presidential candidate to have a unionized workforce. This is by far the best news I have heard of a presidential candidate. Bernie Sanders is the most pro-union candidate in the field.

Bernie started out talking of the history of the working people, of their courage and fight to organize and start the Trade Unions. He compared this to today and the struggles of the working people. Now it is our turn to continue this fight. The working people are being left behind and we are not going to stand by and let it continue. Bernie stated his administration will be a pro union administration. He will make no apologies about it. Stating he is proud he has walked the picket lines and has a one hundred percent pro-union voting record. *"The future of the middle class rests in growing the Trade Unions movement. We will make it easier for workers to join unions not harder."*

"It is not only immoral, but it is bad economics when the United States has the most unequal distribution of wealth and income of almost any major country on earth, and it is worse today than anytime since the 1920's." This is the most rigged economy in years. Over the past year the billionaires in

America have seen their wealth go up by over 33 million each and everyday while workers are getting a bonus (yes they actually get a bonus) of 24 CENTS a day.

Bernie talked about the amount of people with excessive anxiety and stress in this country due to living paycheck to paycheck to survive. This number is over half of the population in this country. Senator Sanders spoke on the burden and cost for unions to try and negotiate health care. He explained when healthcare is available to all people there will be one less snag in negotiations for the company to use. This is the wealthiest country in the world. It is not too much to have every worker earn a decent living wage, that every citizen have access to healthcare, that every child has an education.

"Our job together, this is not going to be easy, and it's why we call it a political revolution, is to change not only the values of this country, but the priorities, that exist in Washington DC."

He talked about a specific concern to the IAMAW which is the retirement crisis we are facing. Almost half of Americas fifty five or older have no retirement savings. (Remember now half or more of this country live paycheck to paycheck there is no room for saving). Twenty percent of seniors today live on social security alone which is approximately \$13,500 or less. *"And we ask our selves, why the American people are stressed out?"* Earned pension benefits of more than one and a half million workers and retirees are in multi employer pension plans could be cut up to sixty percent. *"When a worker is promised a pension, that promise must not be broken."*

"Corporate America and the billionaire class have been waging a forty year war against the Trade Union movement in America." When we have the most anti union people appointed to the National Labor relationship board it is an act of war on

labor. When billionaires, organizations and people like the Koch brothers spend millions to lobby for the so called "right to work" laws it is an act of war against unions. Allowing companies to threaten a shutdown if employees attempt to vote in a union, it is an act of war against workers. The union workers earn twenty two percent more than the average non union worker. The majority of union workers have a defined benefit pension plan. If the workers can be weakened and trade unions can be destroyed then there is no one left to stop their greed. If workers and unions are deterred or stopped from political involvement or voting there is no stopping their greed. *"The Trade Union movement is the last line of defense for working families in America."* *"What we have to do, and I look forward to doing it with you, and that is , we have to rebuild, strengthen, and expand the Trade union movement in America."* We need to help the millions of workers in this country to join a union.

Bernie spoke about American Airlines and their greed. He not only finds it unacceptable for AA to consider reducing our healthcare, outsourcing of jobs, eliminating the pension plan, he will fight such ruthless greedy behavior with us. *"It is not me it is us"* we must fight these actions together. He asks *"how is it that companies make billions in profits but don't pay their employees a fair share of that profit?"* He said publicly to the CEO of AA *"if you have enough money to buy back 15 billion dollars of your own stock you damn well have enough money to pay your workers a decent wage and benefits."*

We need to stop companies and any politicians or lobbyists from preventing any workers from joining a union. Our strength is truly in our numbers and in our solidarity. The proof is in history. The workers of the past banded together and fought for their right to unionize against all odds and much harm to them including death. Sadly the fight for what is right and decent has always been a battle. We win this fight when the people stand together for their cause. We win this battle when

we stand strong and firm expressing our outrage in solidarity and actions of protest. We must stand together, united in our fight for the right to organize, negotiate, and demand our fair share of the increased profits and benefits that are deserved and earned for our labor and toil. Put aside the distractions that are used to separate and divide us. Put aside the distractions that can't be afforded without our pay. Do not be fooled or misled that we haven't earned or deserve a larger pay once the larger profit is made. Remember every hand working a job contributes to the profit of a company.

I can go on and on with comments and talks of both of these candidates and their speeches. However there were many other speakers we had and all of them were people and organizations that work on behalf of unions and labor. All of the speakers had essential information and strong support to not only the IAMAW but the union movement.

All of the speakers and their speeches were made available via the Transportation website of the IAMAW. I implore each of you to go and listen to these recordings. It is necessary for all of us to take the time and put aside our anger, frustration, biases, and dislike and listen carefully to what is being done, what needs to be done, and most importantly how we need to stand together to get it DONE. We need to open our eyes, ears, and minds to see the enemy is not ourselves, it is not each other. It is the ones working against us, the ones trying to divide us, the ones trying to stop people from organizing and or voting, they are our enemies and they are the ones we must stop!

A highlight for me and I am sure many of the other American Airlines employees was having John Samuelson, International President of the Transport Workers Union (TWU) as a speaker. Brother John reaffirmed his commitment and alliance along with all of his members and their allegiance to the Association. He told us that as negotiations aren't going well it is the collective work of solidarity and actions that is going to

bring this contract home. American Airlines has to see from the rank and file that we find their offer unacceptable. *"I told Parker and Isom that we will never sell our own members down the river. They can take their plans to decimate our working conditions and benefits and also our work too. As you have heard it said before when they built that hangar in Brazil. They can take those plans and sell them somewhere else we're not buying what they're selling"*. John is a strong, solid, committed unionist. He will fight the fight with us but he needs us to fight. He and the rest of the negotiating team need us to stand strong and firm with actions showing the company we mean business and we support our negotiators. Brother John talked about his visits across the country to speak with his members. He wants them to know he is appalled at AA and their greedy behavior. *"It is mind boggling to me how members of this association both IAM and TWU are not incensed with anger, in absolute incensed with anger at what this company is trying to do"*. I don't know about you but I am incensed with anger. I am thoroughly disgusted with the lies, the greed, and the attempts to divide this membership. I see AA try to divide the old from the young, the healthy from members with medical issues and the IAM and TWU. Brothers and sisters let us take our place in the line of solidarity and fight this company. Let me see and hear you loud and clear to tell the negotiators they can COUNT YOU IN!

Starting this conference off with political speakers was a great way to spearhead the importance of electing politicians that stand with and fight for unions. We need to not only get out and vote and campaign for politicians but we need to join the political realm. We need to encourage qualified union members to run for office. We need to fill the seats of government at every level of government. From the school boards of small towns, to the governing of states, to the seats of congress at state and federal levels, all the way to the White House. Only when we elect from the workers and trade unions will we have politicians that understand our fight, and

willing to stand with us to create an America that works for labor. We need to demand that candidates speak out in favor of and supporting Unions. Politicians should be fighting for every American worker to have exactly what we have in our contracts. The union movement must be at the forefront, in the middle and at every point of conversation. If every employee was treated like a union negotiated contract employee there would be decent benefits, fairness, dignity, and equality for all who work.

It was a wonderful experience to be present for the President of the AFL-CIO Richard Trumka. He spoke passionately of the labor movement. He talked of the struggles and the never ending war with the forces that work against unions. He intently declared the irrepressible movement of Unions. His speech was riveting and crowd roaring worthy. He declared his full support and rally for the IAMAW and the Delta Airline's organizing campaign.

The two main topics that I had rolling around in my mind the entire conference and I heard both from every speaker in some form were organizing, and political activism. Organizing is so essential to the continue growth of unions and the center of where our power lies. The more organized workforce the louder our voice the more power our stance. Political activism being at the front of activities as each person we elect has either a positive or negative affect on our lives, our pay, our rights as Union members. As a representative of the union I will never tell anyone how to vote. But as a representative of this union I know it is my duty to search for candidates that will stand with and support the union. I search for candidates that know, understand, agree with and fight for unions, labor and the working people. It is my duty to pass the information I gain on to this membership. I along with the other local representatives want you to know we strive for labor, work, on the job safety, and union issues only. There is no religious, social, or other special interests to be discussed. If the

topic is not in reference to our jobs, our safety, our right to organize then it is not our issue.

The Transportation Conference had delegates and representatives from all parts of the Transportation Territory of the IAMAW. This included air and rail members from across the country, and Canada. We are a large territory as part of the IAMAW. The IAMAW is the largest union in the air and rail sector of America. This year was the largest conference with some 800 delegates attending. With hopes of the next transportation conference to include a newly organized and ratified Delta workforce. More and more people are realizing the single best way to improve their lives is by joining a Union and we need to help them do just that. These sentiments for our growth, the labor unions growth and how we help was stated by our GVP Sito Pantoja; our INTL President, Robert Martinez Jr; and AFL-CIO President, Richard Trumka.

So brothers and sisters the times are changing but the fight is still our fight. Have we suffered a lot of hard knocks? Yes. We have taken the punches and the blows but we still come back swinging. As the song by Chumbawamba goes (slightly changed lyrics) "we get knocked down, but we get up again. They are never gonna keep us down." Richard Trumka reiterated it in his speech. *"Were still standing. Our enemies want a fight. Delta wants a fight. Richard Anderson wants a fight. Here's what I say. BRING IT ON! Were ready for that fight. See we are the true American Patriots, we are fearless, we are strong, we are powerful, were dynamic, we are rising in solidarity, real solidarity, where your picket lines are my picket lines and mine is yours. We are going to win."*

Paul Schultz who was a delegate with the District 142 for EAP noticed the tough situation of almost every property of the transportation department was facing basically the same challenges and demands from their companies. He noticed the support and alliances we have with other unions, specifically

the Transportation Communications Union (TCU), and the International Transport Workers Federation (ITF).

In closing let me remind you there were many more wonderful speakers at this conference and they may be heard on the IAMAW Transportation website. I also believe District 141 has posted them to their facebook and or website page. Again I will ask you to take a few minutes of your time everyday to listen, learn, and appreciate all that this union has to offer, all that this union already has and is doing for its members. I am surprised that I still discover new and informative actions, topics, or available benefits offered by the IAMAW.

As always brothers and sisters it is an honor to serve you. An honor we take with our humblest and sincere gratitude.

In solidarity

Maureen Kelly

And all your Delegates