

Resolution 6

SHARED PROSPERITY

THE LABOR MOVEMENT is all of us who work, creating America every day, united, as one. Our movement is building a world where all those who work share in the wealth we create, where our rights are honored in the places where we work, and where our nation and our world prosper because we prosper together.

Our movement is open to all who work in America, to all who know two great truths—that when each of us leaves our homes and goes to work, we remain all day long a human being—not a commodity, not an input—but a human being, with rights and dignity, deserving of respect and a voice and a share of the great wealth we together have created. And that while we each are unique individuals, we are not alone—that we live, work and dream together—and when we come together, at work, at the polling place, in the public square, we are strong—stronger than the power of money, stronger than the power of hate, strong enough to build a future of shared prosperity for our country and our world.

We do the work of America—we heal the sick and fight the fires, build bridges, clean homes, write software and teach children. We mine iron and coal, forge steel, build trucks and drive buses. We design, build, fly, repair and clean airplanes. We keep the lights turned on and the Internet connected, the trains moving, the water flowing to your tap and the movies playing in your multiplex.

Our movement is as old as our nation, and as new as the immigrant hotel worker, the apprentice, the new teacher coming to work for the first time. Some of us collectively bargain with our employers to ensure we see the fruits of our labor. Powerful corporations use unfair laws to keep too many of us from the bargaining table. But we all make our voices heard—through organizing committees, associations, workers

centers, in our communities and at the polls. Our movement is greater than any particular organization. It is a movement of all who work and all who seek social and economic justice.

We are connected by the daily work we do in our communities and in a global economy that links us across borders and around the world with all others who work. Our vision of shared prosperity is global—it must apply as much for the worker sewing shirts in Bangladesh as for the worker who wears that shirt in Boston or Brussels.

What does shared prosperity mean?

Shared prosperity means:

- a secure job that pays a living wage in a safe workplace for all who seek one;
- a voice at work—through our unions and through collective bargaining with our employers;
- health care from the newborn wail to the last breath that also covers all the moments in between;
- aging with dignity, peace of mind and quality of life;
- jobs that applaud and support us being with our families—our children, our parents and our grandparents—when our families need us, while providing the living wage our families need; and
- ensuring our children are cared for in safe and nurturing environments that provide a foundation for lifelong learning and good health; that our children all have equal access to high-quality public education—and that all of us can pursue advanced education and learning we need to lead full and prosperous lives without sinking into lifelong debt.

Only through democracy will we achieve shared prosperity. We seek a country where:

- we all have a voice at work—no matter when or how we came here, whether we work in offices, or factories, or fields or homes, no matter whether our employer is a private company, a nonprofit organization or a government agency, no matter whether our employer calls us an independent contractor or an employee;
- we are all able to vote, without interference, without intimidation, without waiting all day or far into the night; and where
- one person, one vote, not \$1 million, one politician, is both the law and the reality of our nation's public life.

Democracy and solidarity—in the workplace and in public life—is the only cure for the power of concentrated wealth, the power of concentrated finance and global corporations. Democracy in the workplace and in public life means when we are more productive we live better. Democracy means we all contribute to and share in the good things in life—the schools, the parks, the roads and bridges—that make civilization possible. When we together make the investments our country needs, we build a more prosperous future than any of us ever could do alone. Without democracy at work, without collective bargaining, we work harder and create more, but instead of leading better lives, a handful of people hoard ever more wealth and power, becoming so powerful that in the end they threaten the very foundations of our country.

We seek above all good jobs and rising wages for all as we build America's future. Six years into the great economic crisis, America remains a land reeling from the impact of mass joblessness, of foreclosed homes, of stolen pensions. Corporate power has kept wages flat for longer than most Americans can remember. The top 10% have captured all of the income gains in America since the 1990s. Communities of color have suffered the most in this new radically unequal America. African American and Latino families' median net worth is now less than the value of a

decent used car. And yet in the executive suites and the Wall Street boardrooms, the good times keep on rolling. This is not what America is supposed to be—neither our economy nor our society can prosper as the power of economic elites pushes us further and further apart.

The labor movement is how we build a different and a better future—an end to mass unemployment, to CEOs and speculators getting rich while the people who do the work, who create the wealth they take, lead lives of increasing insecurity and diminishing possibility. The labor movement is about ending workplace discrimination, about a future when there is no pay gap between men and women. We are about stopping the practice of filling American workplaces with permanent “temporary” workers, about an end to employers telling workers they are now “independent contractors” without rights because their lawyers say they can get away with it. We are about an America where paths to the middle class are open, where we all can rise. Together, we will reverse the radical inequality that has marked our time in America, put an end to the “you're on your own” society and replace it with a country where we are all in this together.

We may work in a thousand workplaces, but we all live in communities—communities where we make our homes and raise our families. The labor movement is about building the power to create strong communities, where local public schools prepare our children for the future, where the parks are open and fun places to play, where those in need are fed and clothed and brought in from the cold—and where the people who provide these vital public services are treated as we would want to be treated. Together, we pledge to invest in our communities, to repair the damage done by years of politicians using the excuse of the economic crisis to dismantle our social and economic fabric. We pledge to offer the hand of partnership to employers and government to build a future of shared prosperity—of stellar educational institutions, 21st century infrastructure, and most of all an America where no one is kicked to the curb or left behind.

Yet none of these things will happen until we stop believing the myth that we are too poor to afford a civilized society. The reality is the opposite—some have become so rich that they rig the system so they can take what we produce and give little or nothing in return. The labor movement will not be fooled—we demand corporations and the wealthy pay their taxes, just as we honorably and proudly pay ours. We cannot have shared prosperity so long as we give publicly financed handouts to companies that lay off Americans to accelerate profits. We cannot have shared prosperity when we do our duty and pay taxes when we buy and sell our houses and cars, but speculators buy and sell trillions in financial assets every day without paying a penny in taxes.

And in return for what we ask of employers, we offer the hand of partnership. We offer to work together to make the investments that will make America more competitive, to help train the workforce employers need, and perhaps most of all, to be the customers employers require for their products and services.

A future of shared prosperity requires we think seriously about the future itself. In America, a generation of government by and for the rich has condemned millions of our young people to a future with too few jobs and too much debt. This is unacceptable. Politicians who trade in hate exclude young immigrants who know no other home from full participation in our national life. This is unacceptable. We have inherited the greatest legacy in the history of the world, in the form of our public schools and universities, our roads and bridges and ports, our water and power systems—and yet politicians beholden to the rich have let trillions of dollars in maintenance go undone, while the rest of the world invests in the technologies of the 21st century. This is unacceptable. The labor movement is building a different future—where there is work for our young people, a road map to citizenship for all who are here in America, and where together we make the investments America must make to compete and for all of us to prosper in the global economy of the 21st century.

For we do indeed live in a global economy, where our fate as workers in America is bound up with the fate

of workers across the world—in Brazilian steel mills, Bangladeshi garment factories and Egyptian cotton mills, on Chinese docks, in Mexican and Canadian mines and in German machine shops. We are part of a larger global labor movement advocating for an economic agenda that addresses the challenges of a changing global economy. We will strengthen global alliances with workers and their unions across the world. We know we share the same dreams, negotiate with the same employers, have the same hopes for democracy and see the same threats to our rights. And we know that together, across the world, we will defeat the threat of austerity driven by financial interests.

And we live on the only planet we have. We reject utterly the idea that we must choose between jobs and prosperity and caring for our only planet. All across America today, people are looking for work who have the skills we need to fight global warming—construction workers who could retrofit our buildings and our power plants, auto workers who could build new fleets of high-mileage vehicles, railroad workers who could build and staff high-speed trains, factory workers of all kinds who could make the capital goods of the future. Re-engineering must mean putting in place solutions so we can keep the good jobs we have while fighting climate change—carbon capture and sequestration technology, nuclear power and better, more efficient pipelines. We must fight climate change by putting America back to work re-engineering our economy.

Throughout the world, the values of shared prosperity are locked in conflict with the agenda of financial elites and global corporations. But in the end this conflict is self-defeating. A world of radical inequality is not in anyone's long-term interest. That is why we seek a global economy where worker rights and the environment are protected, an economy where global finance is regulated and put to work to increase shared prosperity. We want global trade rules that allow countries to protect workers and the environment, that do not trade food and product safety for market access. For too long, capital has written the rules of trade and has benefited at workers' expense. Global trade and investment agreements must benefit not just shareholders of

multinational corporations but workers and citizens in all the countries that sign the agreement. And there is no way to achieve these goals until the processes of negotiating international agreements are open and transparent.

In every generation, America's workers have had to fight and win again the fundamental right to be heard in our society. In cotton mills in Massachusetts in 1840, in Pennsylvania coal mines in 1900, in Michigan's auto plants in 1936, in the streets of Memphis in 1968, and the streets of Los Angeles in 1988, and today all over this country—in Walmart's stores and warehouses, in fashion shows and taxi dispatch yards, on street corners where day laborers gather, in the kitchens of McDonald's and Burger King—this fight is on.

But more is at stake than the fate of each group of us who stands up for our rights, our dignity, our very humanity. Each time working people stand together for a better future, the future of our country and

our world grows a little brighter—a future of shared prosperity, a future worthy of the great promise of America. The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. gave his life in the cause of the dignity of working people, and every day when workers across America follow in his path, we honor his memory and build the America and the world he dreamed.

Because when Nissan workers from Japan and Nissan workers from Mississippi sit together, when Steelworkers and Mine Workers demand their brothers and sisters in Mexico be freed and their union respected, when German and American Deutsche Telekom workers jointly demand that all that company's workers be treated fairly—then we are a little closer not just to shared prosperity in the global economy, but to a global economy that can sustain prosperity for all. And that has been the dream, and the real life goal, that makes out of millions of very different people who work, one labor movement.