

RESOLUTION 5

COMMISSION ON THE FUTURE OF WORK AND UNIONS

The rich and powerful have rigged our economy against working families. Sophisticated and carefully executed attacks, from union-busting campaigns to pulling back laws that protect workers and their wages, to amped-up “right to work” laws, to using the courts as a corporate political pawn, have left union density in the private sector at 6.4% and threatened public-sector workers with significant loss in bargaining power.

The increasing inequality of wealth and power is shaping change in the workplace. The rich and the powerful are driving large-scale changes in the nature of work, including digitization, automation, deindustrialization, deprofessionalization, autonomous operations, globalization, offshoring and the impact of trade agreements—all of which threaten to leave working families with even less clout and economic security. Technology, and the profound changes it is driving, has the potential for creating better lives, but only if working people are able to shape the change that is coming. The failure of progressive forces, including the labor movement, to nimbly confront these seismic changes must be addressed. For these reasons, a strong labor movement is more important than ever.

Working families need more power, and unions are a primary vehicle to confront the economic insecurity most Americans face. Unions promote and defend the freedom of working people to make a decent living, to receive quality job and skills training, to support our families, to have work-life balance, to access important public services like good schools and quality health care, and to retire with dignity. Further, the changing nature of work and increased economic and political concentration at the top make the mission and values of the labor movement more important than ever.

To be successful, unions must grow. Our values are timeless, and we know that throughout history collective bargaining has been and will be the key to power for

working families. We must confront the realities that threaten our future, and we must evolve to overcome them.

We are at a time when work is increasingly precarious and the idea of having a stable job throughout one’s career is diminishing rapidly. Advances in technology are reducing jobs in some sectors and requiring new skills and knowledge in others. The prevalence of part-time, temp, on-call and subcontracted work arrangements; the emergence of low-road employment strategies in growth industries; and the continued growth of low-wage sectors have upended workplace security. Therefore, we must rethink ways of building bargaining power and providing economic security for millions of Americans, and we must make sure that we as a movement are effectively organized and structured to get it done.

Technology is not just changing the way we work, but also what we work on. New products, like electric vehicles, will mean new supply chains and sources of production. As old products are replaced with new, we must replace old jobs with new jobs. That also means we must ensure the new products are made in the United States and that the jobs are good jobs.

To recommend how we achieve these objectives, the AFL-CIO will form the Commission on the Future of Work and Unions. The AFL-CIO examined the future of work and unions through its Committee on the Evolution of Work in 1983 and made structural and policy changes as a result.

The AFL-CIO president shall designate a chairperson of the Commission on the Future of Work and Unions, as well as sectoral vice chairs and three members each from the transportation sector, service and retail sector, public sector, federal sector, building and construction trades, and the manufacturing sector.

The AFL-CIO will rely on the staff of the AFL-CIO, affiliated unions, and other organizations and experts to assist in this work. The AFL-CIO will assign staff, provide resources, collect findings and draft reports. The commission will work throughout 2018, providing

interim reports to the AFL-CIO Executive Council. The deliberations and recommendations of the commission shall be brought to the AFL-CIO Executive Council's February 2019 meeting and to the General Board in a special session before June 2019.