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SPEECH TO INTERNATIONAL BROTHERHOOD OF TEAMSTERS

28THINTERNATIONAL CONVENTION

LAS VEGAS, NEVADA, USA – TUESDAY 28 JUNE (local time)

Good morning Brothers and Sisters of the Teamsters:

I am honoured to bring you greetings from the International Brotherhood and Sisterhood of the Transport Workers of the ITF.

...some from Australia, Great Britain, India, Mexico, and South Africa in the hall today.

Our General secretary David Cockroft also sends his greetings.

We come here committed to forging an even stronger alliance and friendship in fighting with you across the globe to stop the war against workers.

We are here to organize alongside you for our working rights.

We are here because we are angry about what is being done to workers and because we want to do something about it.

We are here to get those rights back, our labour freedom back from the thieves and carpetbaggers robbing us with one hand and patting themselves on the back with the other.

We are here because of the lies said about our unions and our labor movement and because we want the truth to resonate across our workplaces and be heard in all of our communities and nations.

One of Australia's best exports was Harry Bridges, a member of my union who helped form the International Longshoreman into the ILWU in San Francisco in the mid 30s and who was a great friend of Jimmy Hoffa whom he admired as one of US labor's great leaders - a man of courage, loyalty and conviction.

Both these great and important leaders knew the truth: that honest labour must be properly acknowledged, respected and rewarded - regardless of how difficult that fight may be.

That truth lies in union recognition. It is given voice in union contracts. It is a truth that forms good government and fights oppression in all forms.

It is a truth of peace not war.

It is a truth of public service not private greed.

A truth of health not sickness.

A truth of education and opportunity not ignorance and unemployment.

A truth for the future and not the past.

It is the truth that freed Mansour Osanloo, the Iranian bus driver imprisoned, bashed and humiliated for many years in his own country for seeking wage justice for his members.

It's a union truth. An ITF truth. A Teamster truth.

Brothers and Sisters, we stand at a critical juncture for the global labor movement and for international transport workers in particular.

World trade dominates our national and international economies. It is a mighty engine like those powering the magnificent teamster local rigs outside this hall. It is the engine linking labour throughout the world.

Workers from the mines of many countries, to the manufacturing centres of many more.

From there to the distribution and retail outlets everywhere it links workers, their communities and their endeavors as never before.

From the farms, coal and iron ore mines of Australia, Brazil and South Africa, to the steel mills and factories of China, India and Japan, to the Wal-Marts, Macys and supermarkets of the world - transport workers do the heavy lifting.

It is good to see our brothers from the Chinese unions here, they face similar pressures and demands in the protection of workers' rights in the next largest economy to the US. To understand each other is to help each other.

This trade engine is fuelled by supply chains.

From road and rail to ports and ships back to road and rail over and over again through the cycles of manufacturing and distribution. It shelters in warehousing and is administered by logistics.

It is fuelled by urban transport and aviation.

It is an engine driven by transport workers the world over. Without us there is no engine.

We must organize every link of that supply chain so that we can reach out not only to each other in companies like UPS, DHL and FedEx but to other workers in other industries to help build their power and so they may in turn help us build ours.

We must do this with urgent courage and commitment at a time that this economic engine continues to direct great wealth into the hands of the few and not the many.

Already we have stood by and seen how that wealth has been squandered through the financial crisis by negligence, greed and outright criminal intent by those that seek to monopolize it.

It is often used by that monopoly against us who help create it.

Squandered by the banks.

Often in conspiracy with large multi national corporations...

...and watched over by governments owned and in thrall to their club membership of this world of elitism, graft and mutual backslapping.

Conversely, working women and men throughout the world were rewarded for their hard, grinding and often dangerous labour with the greatest destruction of wealth ever seen in the history of human development.

Across this country and across the world we have been forced into poverty, homelessness and unemployment in numbers never encountered before.

Whether it is in Wisconsin, Liverpool, Mumbai or Sydney, the war against workers continues to be motivated by the same elitism, arrogance, ignorance and negligence today in seeking to deny us of the rightful share from our labour.

In this great room, in the governing convention of the great International Brotherhood of Teamsters, and in rooms and workplaces throughout America and the world let us make this pledge to each other.

We will organize to get behind the wheel of this great trade engine of the world economy and this time drive it to our workplace, to our pension funds, mutuals, banks and credit unions.

We pledge to drive it to better opportunities in our schools and hospitals and our community support needs.

We pledge to drive a better life for our homes and families.

We pledge to each other to build something this time for the many and not just the few.

For the weak as well as the strong.

For the freedom of labour activists like Osanloo and not their imprisonment and murder.

Jim and Brothers and Sisters of the Teamsters - that's why I stood as President of the International Transport Federation...

...to put my shoulder to the wheel along with yours and everyone else's that has had enough of the war against workers and their unions and is committed to do something about it while we are still able.

Thank you brother Hoffa for your unswerving support of my candidacy and for the support of your great union, along with all of the other North American ITF affiliates.

Together, we can make a difference.

Together, brothers and sisters of the Teamsters, we are the difference for working people and their future.

I'd like to close by making a small presentation to you, Jim.

It is a famous and original print of my union of Australian dockworkers and seafarers, the Maritime Union of Australia, on a national picket line of one of the biggest stevedoring companies in the country.

A company who locked out their entire workforce and employed a new scab workforce in what our High Court finally determined was a criminal conspiracy against our union by them and the then Australian Government.

It is a modern episode of great labour courage against impossible odds that through community and international union support we prevailed and won our jobs back.

I hope it reflects the great courage of our movement - including in your union -when you look at it from time to time, brother.