

A National Perspective

Loud and Clear: ‘We Don’t Want No TPP!’

APWU delegates held a spirited rally protesting the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) on the second day of the union’s National Convention.

With Secretary-Treasurer Liz Powell serving as emcee, and the APWU Labor Chorus singing loud and proud, speakers outlined the damaging effect the trade deal between the US and 11 other countries would have.

Opponents of the TPP believe Congress may consider the deal in the lame-duck session – after the November elections but before newly elected senators and representatives take office.

“What’s at stake is your jobs, all of the jobs of the people you love and all the jobs in middle-class America,” said Rep. Alan Grayson (D-FL). “It’s a road that leads to nothing but cheap labor.”

Broadcaster Ed Schultz energized the crowd with a fiery pep talk. “If you think that 200,000 workers in your union can’t make a difference, you are wrong! You can make a difference, we have the power!” he said.

Schultz advised delegates to call their local elected officials and ask them to vote against TPP legislation. He also called on Hillary Clinton, the Democratic Party nominee for president, to “get on the phone” with senators and urge them to oppose it, whenever it comes up for a vote.



“This will gut American jobs, depress wages and destroy the middle class,” he said. “It’s a corporate deal that is going to help the people of Wall Street and it ain’t gonna do anything for Main Street”

“You cannot lose. We have the power, 200,000 people can make it happen: We can do it!”

APWU President Mark Dimondstein concurred. “Brothers and sisters, take it home, call the White House. What do you think?” he said to the fired up crowd. “The White House has gone on the record last week saying they will work with the Republican House and Senate, and what’s going to stop them? It’s you and me and all the people like us!”

Resolutions, Day One and Two:

Delegates Get Down to Business

Delegates to the APWU’s 23rd Biennial National Convention got to work on the convention’s first two days, debating and voting on resolutions, with a focus on proposals for future contract negotiations.

The convention adopted resolutions dealing with safety and health, excessing, duty assignments, clothing allowances, the seniority rights of Part-Time

Flexibles, and improving the status of Postal Support Employees. They also approved resolutions addressing issues specific to each of the crafts.

Delegates engaged in a lively debate over the Joint Arbitration Selection System (JASS). The nationwide program was intended to establish a method for the union and management to jointly

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A Real-Life Hero

Dr. Mona Hanna-Attish is the pediatrician who exposed the Flint water crisis, proving that lead was poisoning the children of the impoverished city. For her efforts, she was vilified by the powers that be and labeled “an unfortunate researcher who was causing near hysteria.”

But the good doctor was not deterred. She advocated for the children and families of her city until the story finally pierced the consciousness of the nation.

Speaking at the APWU convention, she brought many to tears. “Flint did not always mean disaster,” she said. It was home to General Motors, the United Auto Workers union, and the great sit-down strike of the 1930s. Because of good union jobs, Flint had the highest

per capita wages in the country, with great schools and hospitals.

It was the decline of the auto industry and Flint’s unions that lead to decades of disinvestment, and ultimately to the austerity measures that poisoned the water, she pointed out.

“The most important medication I can prescribe for Flint is to lift our families out of poverty,” Hanna-Attish said. “Being in a union family can buffer children from any adversity.”

The APWU presented her with a \$10,000 contribution for the Flint Child and Health Development Fund. Delegates were so inspired by her remarks that they passed buckets for contributions and raised more than \$12,600! The Mott Foundation, based in Flint,



matched the APWU’s contributions, bringing the total to \$50,000. Delegates voted unanimously to induct Dr. Hanna-Attish as an Honorary Member of the APWU.

A North Star

In an impassioned speech to APWU delegates, Cornell Brooks, president of the NAACP, declared that the two organizations are allies. “NAACP stands



with you,” he said. “We stand with you at the ballot box. We stand with you at the labor line. We stand with you in the post office, state legislatures, and Congress. You are our ally, our friend.

“Our dreams, aspirations and ambitions are mocked by the privileged 1%,” he said. But, he added, “The right to vote shines like a North Star... We will stand up to fight and die for the right to vote... We need every union, civil rights organization and family to stand up and turn your people out to vote,” he said. “We will turn out en masse, in the millions ... We will not give in: We will succeed!”



Billion-Dollar Cookie?

APWU members voted to endorse a boycott of Nabisco products made in Mexico on Aug. 23.

Stay tuned for more info.

Nina Turner: Work Worth Doing

Nina Turner, an outspoken surrogate for Sen. Bernie Sanders during his campaign for president, thrilled delegates to the APWU's National Convention in a wide-ranging speech on Aug. 22.

Borrowing a phrase from President Teddy Roosevelt, the former Ohio State Senator told union members postal work is “work worth doing.”

“The work you do re-affirms each day that the Postal Service is the fabric of the United States of America,” she said. Walking off the convention stage into the audience of delegates, Turner clearly enjoyed sharing her passion with APWU members.

“You are the ultimate public servants. You see people in all phases of their lives. When people walk into your door ... they come and get that Money Order or buy their stamps or pick up package deliveries – you see them all through their struggle.”

The fight for postal banking is also “work worth doing,” she said. “Banking should be part of the mission of the Postal Service, so poor folks don’t have to go to a payday lender or check-casher,” Turner added.

Fighting for justice, the convention’s theme, is also “work worth doing,” she declared. “Your fight for justice is not



just in the Postal Service, but your fight for justice is what you do each and every day...

“Fight for justice and understand that the struggle is forever and it never ends.”

Ellison Praises Spirit of Activism

Noting there are people “lurking around, trying to privatize our post office,” Rep. Keith Ellison (D-MN) told delegates to the APWU National Convention, “We are not going to let them do it!”

“Privatization is not about cutting costs or being efficient. Privatization is so some people can give this public trust to their cronies,” he said.

The USPS deal with Staples is a perfect example of the attack on public services, he said. “I want sworn, experienced, trained postal workers handling the mail, not Staples.”

Ellison vowed that he and his allies in Congress will continue to fight against mail processing plant consolidations and for postal banking. “There are plenty enough post offices all over America, and if we do postal banking, then the rural parts of the nation and those in the inner city could get access to banking services,” he said.

The post office has played a historic role in hiring African-Americans and other minorities, women and veterans, Ellison pointed out, giving them “a fair shot at the economy.”

Ellison congratulated the APWU’s fighting spirit. “Being activists in the street and in our organizations is the key to our success,” he said.

Strikingly Similar

Postal workers across the Atlantic

“face strikingly similar” concerns, said Dave Ward, general secretary of the union representing postal workers in the United Kingdom. Great Britain’s Royal Mail was privatized three years ago.

“I don’t buy any of this rubbish that if you privatize something, you get a better deal,” Ward said. He praised the APWU for building A Grand Alliance to Save Our Public Postal Service.

“We have to handle the balance of forces that are operating in the world of work. “We don’t have to wait for politicians to do it. We can do it through the strength of our organizations,” he said.



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Resolutions

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schedule arbitration cases and select arbitrators.

Although representatives from some regions of the country praised the program, others – especially those in the Eastern and Northeast Region – said it's been a disaster, resulting in reduced arbitration hearing dates, an inability to schedule priority cases and management manipulating the selection of arbitrators.

Eastern Region Coordinator Mike Gallagher urged delegates to adopt the resolution. "If it's working for you, good. Keep it," he said. "It's not working for us... Removals used to take six months now it takes two years. Employees are losing their health insurance. They are losing their homes... We need to stand up. We need to stand for justice.



Delegates approved a resolution to allow regions to opt out of the program.

The assembly also voted to adopt a constitutional resolution pertaining to the APWU Officers' Retirement Plan (ORP). Following the 2014 National Convention, a special committee was established to review the plan and make recommendations to strengthen it. Com-

mittee members and members of the National Executive Council (NEC) and the Constitution Committee came together in an act of solidarity and developed a compromise.

Delegates overwhelmingly approved a resolution which will maintain the current plan while limiting its future burden on the union's membership by establishing an appropriate contribution level.

President Mark Dimondstein praised the work of the committee: Jonathan Smith, New York Metro Area Local; Annette August-Taylor, Northern Virginia Area Local; Connie Sadler-Nelson, Tucson Area Local; Craig Fisher, Tri-County Ohio Area Local, and Jared Wonde, Dallas Area Local, as well as members of the NEC and the Constitution Committee. "I very much appreciate the hard work and dedication carrying out the vote on the retirement plan. I applaud all the parties...let's move forward together."

Spirit of Activism

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"We will return the Postal Service to solid footing," AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka declared. "You know, nobody is talking about cutting Saturday delivery anymore, and that's a win. Now 7-day delivery is a buzz, and that's progress. You did that and you did that with your activism."

Trumka marveled at how far we've come. In 2012, the Republican Party platform called for the privatization of the Postal Service and the Democratic Party platform was silent on postal issues. This year, the GOP platform is mum and the Democratic platform opposes postal privatization and favors postal banking.

"See brothers and sisters, you did that," he said. "You are part of a national

movement of working people who are putting good jobs, raising wages and strong unions front and center. We are winning the debate and now it's time to win the election!"

Trumka urged union members to support candidates who support working class values, such as safe roads, affordable health care, quality public services, and equal justice in our workplace, streets and courts, no matter who you are, where you came from, or who you love.

"Your mobilization and ground-work will make the difference. You're there every time America calls: You're trusted, you're reliable and you get the job done," Trumka said. "When postal workers hit the streets, nothing can stop us!"

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Credentials Committee

As presented by Co-Chairperson Sharon Collona of the Twin Cities PDC Local, the preliminary report for the APWU Credentials Committee for Tuesday, Aug. 23, is as follows:

The 23rd Biennial Convention's 2,099 delegates represent 336 locals, 50 states, Guam, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. Also in attendance were 76 national officers and five Retiree National Convention Delegates.