

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

Delegates, Officers and Guests ... welcome to the TWU 2008 Convention. We live in a world of constant change. The communications industry we work in changes every day. The wider labour movement is changing as well. Union density is declining in Canada. Reality is the demographics of the work force and our membership is changing, we are getting younger, unfortunately not me.

It is clear that new approaches, including union tactics and strategies are required to deal with new employer tactics. We see methods employed by TELUS in 2005 being used by other employers in contract negotiations. Picket lines do not have the impact on employers that they once did.

In these times of change we have our own challenges to deal with. Strengthening our financial situation, reaching out and servicing our members from Terrace to Rimouski as a national union, and ensuring that we understand what the members want and expect from their union. With all of that to think about we are aware that the TELUS bargaining unit faces an open period this year.

The question for us all this week, sisters and brothers, is can we adapt to those changes and challenges?

Can we continue the proud history of the TWU?

Can we reach out and be relevant to all of the members?

Can we meet our objectives?

Can we inspire others to be involved and help build this Union?

I think the answer to all of those questions is **YES, WE CAN!**

The TWU has made significant progress this year as you will see in the Executive Council and Committee reports. We have repaid the last of the seven million dollars that we borrowed from other unions in 2005. We are now in the process of rebuilding our reserves. We can pay our way. Once again we are actively participating in the wider labour movement with committees and sending

significant delegations to BCFED, AFT, OFL, FTQ conventions this past year. We have been more active in mobilizing members in social actions like the \$10 Now Minimum wage. And yes we can do more.

Dealing with new employer tactics involves political solutions. We have stepped up lobbying and political and social involvement this year and yes we can do more.

We have also made progress in discussions with other unions about developing new tactics for the new times we find ourselves in. Brother Jim Sinclair and the ranking officers of the unions within the BCFED are particularly supportive on this effort.

Looking forward, I am confident we can meet our objectives. It will not be easy. It will require hard work, dedication, and solidarity. We must have the loyalty of all elected officers to achieve our goals.

In view of the approaching open period, I recently asked all of the members of Executive Council to reaffirm their oaths of office in writing. I was the first to sign. All Officers signed the reaffirmations enthusiastically.

There is room for a wide variety of views and opinions within our union. Differences of opinion are welcome and in fact encouraged. But the members expect that elected officers will abide by their oaths of office.

The Executive Council has undertaken a membership outreach program to better communicate, build organizational capacity and turn rand employees into members from coast to coast. We can and will achieve tangible results across the board.

This convention is our opportunity to debate and decide many of the questions that are foremost in our minds. The future course of the TWU will be determined. I urge you to debate all of the issues thoroughly and respectfully.

Our featured guest speaker, Linda Duxbury, will tell us how she understands changing demographics. Her presentation may help our understanding of what the members want and expect from their union. Those expectations are changing.

Tuesday morning we will receive the report of the Merger Committee followed by a guest speaker on the topic. The Merger question has been on everyone's mind for the last year and I expect the debate will happen tomorrow.

We have invited many leaders of national unions to join us as observers here this week. Many, if not all of them, would certainly welcome a merger with the TWU. We have made it clear that we expect that they will not be campaigning for support of their union but will respect the independence of the TWU's decisions making process.

The Constitution Committee report includes recommendations of significant change. I ask you to give those recommendations careful thought.

The real question that touches everything I have mentioned so far is:

Can we meet our objectives?

The objectives of the TWU are in the constitution. I will paraphrase them because I think they can bring focus to this convention.

- To organize workers
- To improve wages and working conditions
- Advance the social, economic and general welfare of working people (by promoting legislation)
- And the defence of human rights

I know sisters and brothers that with the loyalty and commitment of all the members in this room the answer to that question is that the TWU can change, we can grow, and we will meet member's expectations and needs into the future.

YES WE CAN!

OUI ... NOUS POUVONS!