

*Voices in Unity* ★★  
**STRENGTH** *in Solidarity*

July 28 - August 3, 2010 • Las Vegas, NV

# CONVENTION REPORTER

## *Uniting to Win Legislative & Political Change*

The 38<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Convention of the Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers International Union was called to order on Wednesday, July 28, 2010 by Local 31 (Long Beach, Calif.) Financial Secretary Doyle Townson. Serving as the Convention's temporary chairman, Townson extended a warm welcome to delegates on behalf of the members of the BCTGM's Western Conference, of which he serves as president.

The Convention opened with a special music video tribute to BCTGM members and the jobs they do. Singer Janine Valentine performed the U.S. and Canadian national anthems and BCTGM International Representative James Rivers delivered an inspirational invocation.

Townson then turned the Chairmanship of the Convention over to BCTGM International President Frank Hurt with the presentation of a commemorative gavel.

### **Hurt Delivers Keynote Address**

In an inspiring opening speech that received a standing ovation, President Hurt reflected on the significance of the 2010 Constitutional Convention and the union's continued success.

"When we held our Convention in this very room four years ago, the future for working people and the labor movement was ominous. We were confronting the sixth year of a relentless assault by arrogant anti-worker bureaucrats, who used their power to harass, and weaken unions – and to maximize the influence and profits of corporations, and to shift the wealth of this country even further from the middle class, to the privileged class.

"This year, we come together in an environment that stands in stark contrast to those dark days. Today – in spite of opposition from the minority party, our national political leaders are utilizing the power of government to advance the common good, and improve the quality of life for all of our citizens," he told delegates.

Hurt reflected on the significance of the Convention's

theme: Voices in Unity, Strength in Solidarity. "This theme was selected because the fundamental and historic changes that have taken place in this country – and the successes our Union has accomplished over the past four years, were achieved only through the Unity in our voices, and the strength of our Solidarity.

Noting the success of the 2008 Elections, Hurt said, "Millions of Voices in Unity, and that powerful Strength in Solidarity, changed America forever, and sent a bright beacon of hope around the world. A President who forthrightly says, 'You cannot have a strong middle class, without a strong labor movement.'"

Hurt then noted that at the time of the last Convention, "the wizards of Wall Street, and the barons of banking, were already waist deep in reckless, and corrupt activities, that would soon destroy millions of jobs, cripple thousands of communities, ruin countless lives and leave our economy on the verge of collapse."

He continued by saying that "for eight years, they rode the special interest gravy train, gorging themselves like hogs at the financial trough, while working men and women lost their jobs, lost their homes and struggled just to get by from day to day, on less and less."

Referring to the continued opposition to worker-friendly measures in Congress, Hurt said, "The Party of HELL NO and their benefactors in the corporate world, are desperate to get back on that gravy train. Brothers and Sisters, a policy of HELL NO is not a substitute for governing. It doesn't put people back to work. It doesn't help families keep their homes, or put food on the table, or clothes on the kids' backs. It doesn't improve the quality of public education for our young people, or make college more affordable for working families. It doesn't do anything to make life better for good, hardworking, citizens, who just want a fair shot at a decent life for themselves and their families," proclaimed Hurt.

"True patriots, are devoted to the well-being of their fellow citizens and their country. We are here to tell these

phony patriots, and the Party of HELL NO, and those Democrats who have turned their backs on the people who elected them, that change is here to stay. We worked too hard to get here.

“The labor movement has only just begun to lead a great economic and social turn around. Our fight continues – we cannot falter – we cannot quit,” said Hurt.

He reminded delegates that labor laws in both the United States and Canada must be reformed to give workers an honest chance to join a union and enjoy the benefits of collective bargaining.

“We will not be satisfied, until the Employee Free Choice Act takes its rightful place, as a cornerstone, of a more just and fair society. And while some of our Brothers and Sisters in Canada enjoy decent labor laws, many of our members work in provinces which have labor laws that are as bad as what we have in this country. That has to change!” Hurt said.

Recalling some of the BCTGM’s struggle against greedy companies in the last four years, Hurt proclaimed, “We will not be satisfied so long as the insidious new breed of employer – hedge funds and private equity firms – can walk in and take over companies like Stella D’oro and Wendy’s and then destroy what has been built for decades...ruining countless lives and families, and then walk away unscathed, with millions of dollars in their pockets.”

Hurt continued, “We will not be satisfied, until corporations no longer get tax benefits for closing our factories, and moving production around the globe in search of the cheapest, most vulnerable, most subservient labor they can find. We will not be satisfied until trade laws start protecting our jobs, not the bloated profits of these unpatriotic companies that couldn’t care less about North America’s workers.”

Hurt reminded delegates that since the last Convention in 2006, local unions, together with the assistance of the International Union, have successfully negotiated a multitude of high-quality contracts with some of the largest, wealthiest, and most influential corporations in the U.S. and Canada.

“We accomplished this in the most challenging economic climate that we, in this room, have ever experienced,” he said.

Noting the importance of global solidarity, Hurt recalled two of the union’s most successful organizing victories in the last four years at Dannon Yogurt in Minster, Ohio and West Jordan, Utah. Success in these campaigns, Hurt noted, “was possible because we enlisted workers and labor organizations from around the world to join together in a powerful show of global solidarity, that the company never imagined was possible, and was powerless to stop.”

Hurt reflected on the power of the BCTGM’s unity and solidarity saying, “employers who do not bargain in good faith, or conduct business with us in an unlawful,

or unacceptable manner, have come to find out that the BCTGM has a very long reach. They have found out, that our will to defend our members and organize the unorganized, is unshakable.”

Bringing delegates to their feet, Hurt concluded his rousing speech saying, “Brothers and sisters, the BCTGM endures and prospers because we know who we are and what we believe in. Because we negotiate contracts that we are proud of. Because we successfully organize in the toughest places, during the toughest times. Because we are effective in the political process and in the halls of Congress.

“Brothers and Sisters, together with our voices in unity, together with the strength of our unbreakable solidarity, together, we will make the most of this new day for our members, for our Union, and for our two great countries.”

## **AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka**

AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka began his address to the Convention by thanking President Hurt for his years of friendship and leadership. Trumka also commended the BCTGM for the work the union does at the bargaining table, in communities across North America and in the political process.

Focusing in on the day’s theme, Uniting to Win Legislative and Political Change, Trumka detailed labor’s efforts and battles in the political arena.

“Two years ago, working Americans had the courage to elect a president whose very victory gave new life to our nation’s pledge to be ‘one nation, with liberty and justice for all.’ And over the last 18 months, President Obama has continued to make history.”

Trumka noted that such history includes fulfilling the six decade long struggle for health care coverage for all Americans; the most sweeping reforms of Wall Street since the Great Depression; extended unemployment compensation; and the enactment of a vital economic recovery plan.

“Not since Franklin D. Roosevelt told a trembling nation that we had nothing to fear has a President taken office in such terrible times. Herbert Hoover left President Roosevelt the Great Depression. And George Bush left President Obama – and all Americans—the worst economy since those terrifying days,” Trumka said.

Trillions of dollars in tax breaks for the wealthy, letting Wall Street and Big Banks run wild, turning the federal budget surplus into a record federal budget deficit, were among the list of Bush failures Trumka listed.

“The Obama Administration, our friends in Congress and within our labor movement are working overtime to overturn three decades of bad decisions—from Democrats as well as Republicans— that let our manufacturing base rust away; that let corporate America bust many of our

unions; that let Wall Street write its own rules and that left working Americans with a generation of wage stagnation,” said Trumka.

He added that more than five million manufacturing jobs had been lost in the last decade and instead of investing in making things, Wall Street speculated on simply making money. From corporate takeovers that wiped out workers’ jobs, to subprime mortgages that bankrupted homeowners and tanked our economy.

“Some of you know a little something about baking pies. So if you think of the American economy as a gigantic pie, then the pieces of the pie that Americans are receiving are becoming smaller and more unequal than ever.

“The gap between the rich and the rest of us has grown greater than at any time since 1929 – which was when the Great Depression began. With the worst inequality in 80 years; with unemployment around 10 percent; and with Washington paralyzed by Republican filibusters and catering to corporate America,” said Trumka.

“It is no wonder that so many Americans—including so many union members – are so angry at our nation’s leaders. We need to focus that anger at those who deserve it. We need to tell our friends, our family, our neighbors and coworkers: we know you’re angry, we know you’re disappointed and we know we haven’t achieved everything we worked for. Let’s be forceful with President Obama and his cleanup crew.

“Will America go back to the Bush years – with rising unemployment, shrinking wages, disappearing health care and dwindling retirement savings? Or will we move forward to a future where we generate jobs that pay middle class wages and produce world-class products and services. A future where we export quality products – not good jobs,” said Trumka.

He advised the delegates to make no mistake about the November elections: “If you’re a union member, a working woman, or a member of a minority that has been overlooked, underpaid and locked out...then our adversaries don’t want to win your vote. They just want you to stay home and sit this election out,” he said.

“It is up to us to mobilize the working Americans who have the most to lose from going backwards and the most to gain from moving forwards. We have just three months and we’ve got to get informed, involved and we’ve got to get real.”

Trumka reminded delegates of the progress of the Obama Administration and urged them to help keep it going by keeping worker allies in Congress. “For us, it’s a choice between the present and the past; between the wrecking crew and the cleanup crew,” he said.

“If you want an America where hard work is rewarded, then work for it—vote for it. If you want an America where we make things, then work for it—vote for it. If you want an America with a strong and growing middle class, then work for it and vote for it. If you want an

America where we understand that good public schools and college opportunities are our moral responsibility to our children and grandchildren, and that Social Security and Medicare are our solemn responsibility to our parents and grandparents; then work for it and vote for it.

“And if you believe the American dream is for everyone willing to work for it, not just for a privileged few but for all of us, then work for it and vote for it. Sisters and brothers, we got America moving forward in the election two years ago. Let’s do it again in 2010. Work together. Vote together. Stand together. Because when we do, no one can stand in our way!” concluded Trumka.

## **President Obama Sends Greetings**

President of the United States Barack Obama sent a special letter to BCTGM International President Frank Hurt and delegates to the Convention.

“The BCTGM’s commitment to improving the lives of working people and willingness to take on tough fights on behalf of a larger cause are well served by your leadership. Even though our country faces great challenges, you and your members meet at a time of hope and opportunity. We share a common goal of strengthening our Nation on behalf of working Americans, and the belief that ordinary people working together can do extraordinary things.

“I commend you and the members of the BCTGM for the work you do every day, and I wish you the best of luck moving forward,” concluded President Obama.

## **Hurt Presents Officer’s Report**

In the afternoon session, President Hurt presented the Officer’s Report to the convention delegates. Hurt began his remarks by acknowledging the challenges that confronted the labor movement over the last four years.

“The financial crisis, rising unemployment, flawed trade deals, and a growing wealth gap, has presented new and continuing challenges for the North American labor movement.”

He was quick to point out how the BCTGM has responded to this situation. “What has helped us weather some of these challenges is the strength of our leadership, our affiliations and the determination of our membership.”

He added that the AFL-CIO had been of great service to the Union through this period. “The AFL-CIO has been especially helpful to our union in lobbying for country-of-origin labeling legislation, and has helped us with several corporate conflicts including those with Wendy’s/Arby’s Group, and the New England Confectionery Company.”

Speaking about the increasingly global nature of the food industry, President Hurt remarked about the importance of global solidarity. He specifically mentioned an example of this solidarity with the Union’s affiliation with the



International Union of Food Workers (IUF). “The IUF was instrumental in our organizing wins at Groupe Danone’s Dannon subsidiaries in Ohio and Utah.”

Hurt pointed out that the 2008 election of President Obama brought about positive changes in some of the key departments that directly affect the BCTGM. “New leadership at the Department of Labor and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration has meant that new safety regulations and standards have been introduced for the first time in a decade. Our Union has been actively involved in helping to form some of those standards pertaining to diacetyl, combustible dust and injury and illness record-keeping.”

Hurt acknowledged that foes of such progress were fighting back. “Despite this progress, we are well aware that corporate interests are fighting back. Led by the American Bakers Association and the Chamber of Commerce, corporate interests have been pressuring members of Congress to water down food safety legislation, banking regulations and workplace safety standards. They have been pressuring Congress to postpone any movement on the Employee Free Choice Act. And they have been pressuring the White House to sign more free trade pacts. And they succeeded in making a single-payer system in the health care debate, a non-starter.”

To continue to put pressure on politicians in the U.S. and Canada, and hold off the anti-union forces, Hurt noted that organizing had to be a top priority. “Therefore it is imperative that our local unions take on this challenge and organize new members. This must be a priority!”

He then spoke about the need to communicate the Union’s message to the public. “We must do what we can as labor activists to see that our members know the truth. The truth about the corporate influence in politics. The truth about how workers are treated during organizing campaigns. The truth about the pain workers suffer through while on the job. And the truth about the absolute necessity of a strong labor movement to make our countries prosper.”

## Other Convention Happenings

Danny Thompson, Executive Secretary-Treasurer of the Nevada AFL-CIO, addressed the convention and reminded delegates of the importance of supporting worker-friendly political candidates. “Stand up for what you believe. Stand up for politicians who will stand up for you,” said Thompson.

Delegates also viewed special video Greetings from U.S. Representative John Lewis (D-Ga.) and U.S. Representative Debbie Halvorson (D-Ill.).

## Committee on Committees Reports

Prior to the Convention, under Article III, Section 9, President Hurt, subject to the approval of the International General Executive Board, appointed a standing committee on Credentials, Auditing, Rules and Order of Business and Committee on Committees.

Members of the Committee on Committee are Chairman Donald Woods, President of Local 1 in Chicago, Illinois. The secretary is Dennis Howard, Financial Secretary of Local 280 in Evansville, Indiana. And the third member is Deborah Lacey-Zuelsdorf, Financial Secretary of Local 315 in San Diego, California.

In accordance with the provisions of Article III, Section 6, the committee examined the credentials of 369 delegates representing 128 Local Unions, with a total of 3,337 votes.

### Constitution Committee

The following resolution was reported to the delegates by members of the Constitution Committee:

Resolution Number 29— *Article III, Section 10, Convention, concerning convention vote by hand:*

**NON-CONCURRENCE**

### Resolutions Committee

The following resolutions were reported to the delegates by members of the Resolutions Committee:

Resolution Number 9—*Strong and Effective State and Local Organizations:* **ADOPTED**

Resolution Number 18—*Defending the Standard of Living of BCTGM Members:* **ADOPTED**

### Political Action Committee

The following resolutions were reported to the delegates by members of the Political Action Committee:

Resolution Number 1—*America Needs Jobs: A Call to Action:* **ADOPTED**

Resolution Number 5—*Transparency in Food Labeling:* **ADOPTED**

Resolution Number 6—*BCTGM-PAC and Political Action: Engine for Political Change:* **ADOPTED**

Resolution Number 17—*Protecting BCTGM Tobacco Industry Jobs:* **ADOPTED**

## Convention Photos Online!

All photography of the 38th Constitutional Convention will be available to view and purchase online through Hank deLespinasse Studios, the official photographer of the 2010 Convention. The Convention photo site is:  
**[www.bctgm2010conv.com](http://www.bctgm2010conv.com)**