

RESOLUTION 17

Protecting Workers' Safety and Health

Submitted by Buffalo Central Labor Council

THE BUFFALO, N.Y., CENTRAL LABOR COUNCIL calls on the leadership of the AFL-CIO and its affiliates to pledge their commitment to the protection of safety and health of workers as a continued priority and responsibility of the federation as it undertakes the task of organizational restructuring.

Our council and affiliated union locals have greatly benefited from the work of the AFL-CIO federation's safety and health initiatives, including but not limited to lobbying for workplace standards; empowering our members through national education conferences; mobilizing our members against assaults on the Occupational Safety and Health Administration and on its training grant programs; and providing resources for our local educational efforts and for Workers Memorial Day.

Historically and currently, safety and health concerns have been a major reason workers have been willing to organize and join unions. Even when employers have intimidated or overwhelmed organizers on wage, benefit, job security and retirement issues, workers still respond enthusiastically to effective organizing strategies based on workplace safety and health issues.

America's workers are particularly concerned about safety and health issues that grow out of basic conflicts between workers and employers. These conflicts include abusive workload pressure, speed ups, excessive overtime, short staffing, dangerous exploitation of immigrants, cruel mistreatment of injured workers, etc. Most workers can appreciate a well-crafted message about the basic injustice of their jobs and the effects on their safety and health. These issues demand attention and are ripe for mobilizing and organizing workers.

The federation must be a strong voice in standing up to the power of the corporate political lobbying machine. It is critical the federation take the lead in mobilizing the labor movement's fight for expanded safety and health legislation and protections and against corporate assaults on hard-won safety and health laws and standards.

This mobilization requires organizing massive grassroots campaigns and coordination from the AFL-CIO and national unions. It involves organizing the victims of safety and health problems on the local and national level and it takes political action in Washington, D.C., and in the states. Those of us working in the central labor councils and state federations are not in a position and do not have the resources needed to do this work.

The expansion of the federation's efforts to move forward on safety and health issues and to stop assaults on existing laws and standards requires strategic leadership and the capacity to plan and implement these initiatives. To do anything less would be a serious disservice both to workers' safety and health and to our hopes for a stronger labor movement.

THEREFORE, the Buffalo, N.Y., Central Labor Council RESOLVES, that the AFL-CIO federation and its affiliated unions maintain a strong commitment to protecting workers' safety and health and to fully incorporate these issues into expanded mobilization, political and organizing programs. Further, the federation will take a leadership and coordinating role, working with affiliates to build grassroots safety and health campaigns as part of these mobilizing, political and organizing programs.