



Local 1277

News

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President's report

A "big one" for organized labor!

Rusty Hicks, President of Los Angeles County Federation of Labor, Elected Chair of California Democratic Party

By Art Aguilar - President, Local 1277

Spearheaded by organized labor across our state, Brother Rusty Hicks, the strong and effective President of the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor (the "County Fed") was overwhelmingly elected Chair of the powerful and influential California Democratic Party.

Hicks' decisive victory by more than a 20% margin among the hundreds of delegates who cast ballots at the Party's state convention in San Francisco, on June 2, represents a clear, timely and welcome message about the importance of the union movement in California and the electoral "muscle" that the hundreds of thousands of union members and families have as a force for social, economic and political equality and progress. He will serve as Party Chair until the next statewide convention, in 2021.

Speaking to the delegations representing Democrats throughout California, Brother Hicks said he was "reporting for duty" and that he would work long and hard to unify the Party, which has recently been plagued by internal divisions, policy fights, and a lack of visionary leadership.

Even with its historic majorities in both houses of the legislature in Sacramento, and control of the governor's and other statewide offices, the California Democratic Party, the largest such political organization in any state, has not always been able to push its progressive agenda forward. This is because of previous uncertain leadership and a lack of focus on the issues that really affect *all* working people and their families: affordable housing, better public education, income equality, adequate healthcare, a cleaner environment, expanded and efficient public transportation, and *real* immigration-policy reform and tolerance.

From our point of view, the best thing about Brother Hicks' new position is the fact that organized labor—the working men and women he so ably represented as President of the County Fed—will have new and greater influence in policy matters. Our priorities will become *statewide Democratic Party* priorities.

Further, Brother Hicks is just the right person to lead the state Democratic Party into the *all-important* 2020 Presidential election. He is a very successful campaign and election-process veteran, and his skills and experience will be vital as California Democrats seek to hold onto their congressional gains from 2018 *and* reach out to register thousands of new voters—young and old, moderate and liberal—in order to keep our state a political force to be reckoned with.

Congratulations, Brother Hicks! You have a big job ahead of you, and you can count on the total support of unions and their members throughout California.

Our Operators and their Passengers

How Much?

By Jeff Shaffer - Financial Recording Secretary

That is the magic question asked every day by passengers boarding the transit buses we represent. Although many fare policies differ from agency to agency, the principles of *quote and go* provide the mass-transit agency with an adequate answer to that question. Most operators are required to quote the fare and then deal with the next passenger. It is not, *however, the operator's responsibility to enforce the collection of that fare.*

At most of our properties represented by ATU Local 1277, the policy on fare collection is that the duty of an operator is to quote the fare and move on. You *never* want to put yourself or others in a situation that could cause harm to anyone or anything. If approached with the magic question, how much is the fare?, the operator should do what is required: quote the fare. And move on.

Many times, our Union gets notified of a member being disciplined for being, what management defines as, rude. The member, in most cases, is just trying to do his or her job and collect the fare for the agency. I understand the feeling of making sure the rules apply across the board, but our members need to understand, the agency is responsible for enforcing the rules. Our job is to follow the rules, unless they are unsafe, immoral, illegal, or violate our CBA/MOU.

So, please, make sure you follow the rules, quote the fare and then move on to the next rider or stop. ***Please do not put yourself in a situation that can be escalated to the level of harm, for you or the other passengers, or even the agency's property, which might result in a customer complaint. It's just not worth it.***

A current “Scorecard”

Some Positives for Organized Labor, And Some Steps Back, Too

By John DiRito - Executive Board Member-at-Large

Good morning, afternoon, and evening, brothers and sisters. I hope this newsletter finds you well and active at your jobs and careers.

As we learn from sports—or if you’re not a fan, then from life itself—you can’t win ‘em all. People and organizations are often going to take a step or two forward and then maybe a step back. The goal, of course, is to rack up more *forward* steps than *backward* ones. That’s called progress, and that’s what we all want—as individuals, families and members of organized labor.

Recently, a number of news items caught my attention. They highlight the back-and-forth steps that the union movement faces as it continually seeks to better the lives and futures of both its members and the overall society which we live in. With these four following examples that I want to share with you, brothers and sisters, I think—on balance—organized labor scores a few more *forward* steps than backward ones.

The Steps Forward

In early May, *The New York Times* ran a long article about former Vice President Joe Biden’s entry into the race for the Democratic nomination for President in 2020. Based on his own background, loyalty to unions and working families, and his strong support of President Obama’s pro-working people agenda during the eight years they worked together, Mr. Biden appears to be a candidate that organized labor can enthusiastically support.

While my article in this month’s newspaper is *in no way* meant to be an early endorsement of Mr. Biden by either our Local 1277 or our International Union, it is worth noting some things:

- Mr. Biden has strong, long-standing, and positive relationships with the big unions (and their members) that have great influence in key 2020 battle ground states like Pennsylvania (his home state), Ohio, Michigan and Wisconsin. The Republicans won all these states in 2016, and that tipped the election to Trump. Mr. Biden likely would have won *three* of those four (maybe not Ohio).
- In the recent mid-term congressional elections (2018), *spearheaded by organized labor’s major campaign drives*, the Democrats greatly improved on their 2016 performance. In fact, in Pennsylvania, Michigan and Wisconsin, they swept to victory in *every state office!*
- Both International Union leaders from various professions, along with labor-studies academics have noted that blue-collar, union rank-and-file support for Trump in 2016 has significantly declined. Trump’s promised “economic boom” hasn’t reached down to many working families in these states, especially since numerous manufacturing plants—the economic lifeblood for tens of thousands of union families—have been forced to close! Between plants closures and the resulting economic chaos and hardship, and the ruinous trade war with China, union households are struggling more than ever to make ends meet.

I do not for a moment suggest that the economic woes of our unionized brothers, sisters and families in the Midwest is a “step forward”. Far from it! I am looking at the larger picture: Trump carried these key states by very slim margins. *If—and when!—enough union members and families realize that the current administration in Washington, D.C., is no friend at all to working people and their needs and goals, then a strong, outspoken lifetime friend of the union movement, someone like Mr. Biden or another good, pro-union candidate, has a very good chance to carry those states in 2020 and help change things for the better in Washington, D.C. Talk about the larger picture: it doesn’t get any larger than that!*

Here’s a second “step forward” and, believe me, this one is really a bolt from the blue! *Bridgewater, the world’s largest and richest hedge fund for the super-wealthy investors, has publicly come out in support of unions and their positive effects on working people!* You’re reading that right, brothers and sisters: The bluest of blue-chip money hoarders states that rising corporate profits (Bridgewater’s bread and butter!) are due to declining employee share in the economic “good times”.

The hedge fund notes that in industries where unionization has *decreased*, wages *fell* as well. While corporations have reaped bigger and bigger profits, *workers have not seen that bonanza in their wages!* Further, Bridgewater states that in the “most pro-corporate environment in history, the last two decades have seen corporate taxes and labor bargaining power fall.” The fund further says, “The decline in unionization among U.S. workers....and outsourcing of jobs are driving worker wages down.”

Bridgewater reports, “In companies that had union membership decline, wages fell at a greater level than sectors where union membership remained intact.” There it is, people: ***In the professions that have strong union representation, wages (and benefits) have risen; in those professions where union membership has declined, wages (and benefits) have fallen.*** Put another way, even seemingly small moves towards or away from unionization of a workforce is tightly linked to what an employer pays its people.

How about that: A ringing endorsement of the positive and needed influence of unions from the inner sanctum of Wall Street!

A Little Rain Must Fall

As noted before, it can't always be some steps forward and none back. There were a couple of recent sour economic stories to spoil things.

In early May, it was reported that ~~sixty—60!~~—*Fortune* **500 corporations paid no federal taxes on nearly \$80 billion in corporate income in 2018!** It's true; I couldn't make this up! Many of our most familiar corporate names—try Amazon, Delta Air Lines, Chevron, General Motors, Honeywell, just to name a few of the thieves—paid *nada* to the feds in 2018. *Some of these pirates actually got rebates from the feds!*

Any of you, brothers and sisters, fail to pay your income taxes? And get rebates on top of that? I didn't think so.

Income inequality—the gap between what workers earn and what the superrich and large corporations rake in—is no longer just *unequal*. It is *catastrophic*. It is wrong by any reasonable economic, social or political standard. And it will continue this way—and no doubt widen—if a labor-friendly administration *isn't* elected in 2020.



Finally—it was only a matter of time, I suppose, given the current administration in power and its anti-labor attitude—the U.S. Department of Labor ruled that workers in the so-called “gig economies” are to be *classified as contractors, not employees*.

What does that mean? *The already-rich tech/gig firms make even more money, while, at the same time, they do not have to pay their working men and women the federal minimum wage or overtime, or even pay a portion of their Social Security taxes!*

This Labor Department has overturned years of progressive Obama-Era pro-working people rules. For the Obama Labor Department, gig workers were employees, entitled to fair wages and benefits. Under this Department, they are now contractors, subject to the whims and greed of their employers. Classifying gig-economy workers as employees would raise corporate labor costs an estimated 20-30%. Apparently, that is not allowed in Trump-world, but the unfairness and hardship to working people is!

As I've said, it's all about steps forward and some back. But I believe the steps forward that I've outlined are longer than those going back.

FORTUNE 500



Pride, jobs and unions

Why Buy American?

By Errol Frazier - Vice President, Local 1277

I have asked myself that question many times, and of course I have heard and know the standard answers: "It saves jobs" and "It helps our economy". But I really wanted some rock-solid facts to back up my answer to this important and often-asked question. You, brothers and sisters, deserve nothing less, so I thought it over and took the time to do a little research, which I'd like to share with you.

During the past 10-15 years, some **5.5 million** manufacturing jobs have been lost in this country. *Five and a half million!* Just think about how many individuals and *families* have been negatively affected by that staggering statistic. And that's not the total disastrous picture: During that same gloomy period, more than **30 million** jobs, in total, have been lost.

Now, it is true that a recent economic uptick has helped lower the national unemployment rate to a 50-year low. But—and this is a big but—how many of those new jobs are either a) high-tech gig jobs that are non-union and so overpaying that they simply widen the already-ridiculous income-equality gap, or b) low paying, non-union, minimal (if any) benefits, dead-end *McJobs*?

What Was Then, What is Now

Up until the mid-to-late 1970's, America was a manufacturing powerhouse nation. We supplied much of the world with a lot of their essential goods. Our economy was thriving, jobs were plentiful and well paying—and *largely unionized*.

But beginning in the 1980s, however, and pretty much carrying on through the end of the 20th Century and the first couple of decades of this one, that trend has changed. *We are now a consumer nation—buying the goods produced in other countries.* There's the really depressing irony: More and more, American consumers are buying up the same essential products we used to make in abundance and send overseas! *And be very clear about this, brothers and sisters: A lot of these goods we import are made in countries that either have no labor laws to speak of (10-year-old kids making our Nikes, anyone?), or completely stand against every human and social value we cherish (how about all those "Made in China" items you have lying around?).*

To make things even more economically dangerous, we are *increasing* our favor for, and dependence on, foreign-made goods. Items that run from the most ordinary (maybe your dog's feeding bowl or your pocket lighter) to expensive specialty goods (like cars and electronic devices). ***"Over this same last 10-15 years, the United States has lost out on approximately \$2 trillion in cumulative trade deficits with China alone"***, stated economist Roger Simmermaker in an on-line article *"Building by Buying American"* in *The New York Times*. He goes on to say, ***"The \$2 trillion of forfeited production would have generated \$600 billion of national revenue and created millions of jobs in the U.S."***

Think about how many of those jobs (many of which would have been union) could have been created just by rebuilding our nation's crumbling infrastructure—roads, highways, bridges, ports, airports and the like! Think about how many American families could have been made more financially secure because of good-paying jobs and adequate benefits!

Mr. Simmermaker further notes, ***"More American manufacturing jobs not only reduce the unemployment rate, but also expands our tax base to pay for more benefits, like Medicare and Social Security. It is not only possible for manufacturing to lead the recovery of the U.S. with growth and hiring, it is a necessity. To help achieve a sustainable economic recovery, our country needs a consumer-led commitment to buying American-made products, which supports American manufacturing jobs and employment."***

The website *AmericansWorking.com* estimates that for every **one** manufacturing job, there are **five** other jobs that are created; for example, truck driver, accountant, research & development and clerical. The website also gives a few more examples of the effects of what buying American-made products can help to conserve or preserve—including benefits to the environment, human rights, fairer social and economic equality and democracy itself.

The Bottom Line

So, there it is, brothers and sisters. The bottom line, which I believe provides the answers and supporting facts to the question, *"Why buy American?"* I really hope that I have given every one of you enough reasons from here forward, to be a "patriotic consumer" when you open your wallets and purses. The trade imbalance we can help lower will boost our economy and create jobs. A stronger economy means better jobs, many of which may well be union, since more and more American working people are realizing the importance of banding together at the worksite. And—the prosperity, freedom, opportunity, and the country we save will be our own!

Here are the upcoming Local 1277 membership meetings for August. Please make every attempt to attend the meeting for your unit. It's your Union, and we need your participation at our meetings! Because of the Independence Day Holiday, all unit meetings for July are cancelled. All members will receive credit for the meetings.

Tuesday, Aug 6:	Los Angeles area members: L.A. Building Trades Council, 1626 Beverly Blvd., Los Angeles. Morning Session 10:00 a.m. Evening Session 5:00 p.m.
Wednesday, Aug 7:	Metrolink Unit members: Union Offices, 1744 North Main Street. Morning Session 11:00 a.m.
Wednesday, Aug 7:	Riverside area members: 1074 E. La Cadena Dr., Riverside Morning Session 10:00 a.m. Afternoon Session 3:00 p.m.
Thursday, Aug 8:	Palm Springs/SunLine members: Cathedral City Branch Library, 33520 Date Palm Drive, Cathedral City Morning Session 10:00 a.m. Afternoon Session 4:00 p.m.
Thursday, Aug 8:	Long Beach: Machinist Hall, 319 W. Broadway, Long Beach Morning Session 10:00 a.m. Afternoon Session 3:00 p.m.