

Coalition of Labor Union Women
15th Biennial Convention
Los Angeles, California
October 14-17, 2009

RESOLUTION NO. 14

Trade - It's More Than Jobs

Women and families around the world suffer as one half of the world's population earns less than two dollars per day. Increasingly, women and children are forced to work under dangerous, sweatshop conditions to support their families. Until workers in developing countries have the right to organize and collectively bargain, corporations will continue to exploit them

The US trade deficit with China has gone from 233 billion in 2006 to 700 billion in 2008 – about \$8000 for a family of four. Both blue collar and white collar workers are losing their jobs due to trade.

The cost cannot be calculated just by jobs lost alone. On some days, 25% of the particulate matter in Los Angeles originates in China. The California economy alone loses about 28 billion annually due to premature deaths and illnesses linked to ozone and particulates.

In 2007, over 80% of the product recalls by the Consumer Product commission involved Chinese products. The cost to women and families in other countries is even higher. In August 2009, a factory in Beijing was closed after 600 children were sickened by lead leaking from a factory. Frequent factory accidents and chemical leaks are common in countries with lax environmental standards and safety rules.

Even with safety issues and high unemployment in many communities, projects continue to use subsidized foreign made products. Work on the San Francisco Oakland Bay bridge was recently halted when cracked welds in the Chinese made girders were discovered.

China has flooded the tire market with subsidized imports. The U.S. consumer tire industry lost 4,400 jobs from 2004-2008. In that time period, tire imports from China have increased by 215 percent by volume and 295 percent by value.

The enormous trade imbalance has been caused by misguided U.S. trade policies, lack of enforcement of current trade policies, lack of a manufacturing policy and the fact that many countries cheat. They engage in dumping goods at prices that are less than the cost to produce them, have lax enforcement of environmental regulations, have inadequate protection of worker rights and safety; and engage in massive subsidies. Many countries do not enforce patent and intellectual rights laws resulting in knockoff goods that are frequently unsafe. Piracy of trademarked goods damages the reputations of US manufacturers and often presents safety issues for working women and their families.

The current race to the bottom results in lowered living standards for working women and their families all over the world. Many global corporations want to lower wages and benefits, safety standards and environmental regulations to those in other countries while raising CEO pay. The Economic Policy Institute estimates that that annual earnings of all workers without a college degree in the U.S. are \$1400 dollars lower because of competition with other countries. The cost for trade displaced workers is much higher.

Submitted By: Janet Hill - USW
Committee Recommendation: Concur
Convention Action: Concur As Amended
Committee Assignment:

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And the damage is not restricted to blue collar workers. 127,710 professional, scientific and technical services workers lost their jobs as well due to unfair trade. There were 66,986 managers of companies and enterprises. They even included 13,141 arts, entertainment and recreation workers.

The trade problem is not limited to China. NAFTA and CAFTA both represent failed trade policies that have damaged the standard of living for workers and rights of workers around the world.

Modern day slavery has enslaved 27 million people worldwide. The large majority in Africa and Asia producing products that sold in the United States are taking union jobs away from union members.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

CLUW will fight against unfair trade policies and agreements around the world by educating chapters and members on trade issues;

CLUW will work with allies to advocate for “fair trade” standards that include protection for human rights, labor rights and environmental values;

CLUW will advocate that trade laws raise living standards and human rights records among trading partners and reduce the incentives to move production to countries with the lowest standard;

CLUW will help raise awareness that fair trade benefits society when worker’s interests are given the same consideration as corporate profits;

CLUW will promote the idea that workers rights are human rights;

CLUW will urge our Representatives to continue to fight to maintain and strengthen U.S. trade laws;

CLUW will seek legislative relief for new ways to force China and other countries to adhere to fair standards with regards to trade and the environment;

CLUW will push the U. S. government to develop a manufacturing policy that will mandate companies to use U.S. made goods and to move production of goods back to the U.S.

CLUW will raise the awareness of Human Trafficking and the enslavement of workers to produce products sold in the United States.

CLUW will work for passage of HR 3012, the Trade Reform, Accountability, Development and Employment Act.