

# Minutes of the Autoworker conference call of January 23, 2012

**Chair:** Wendy

**Notetaker:** Dianne

**Present:** Brett (1700), Dianne (235), Frank (909), Judy (600), Martha (869), Karen(602), Katherine (602), Keith (600), Peggy (1112), Ron (600), Scott (551), Wendy (22)

**Guests:** Bob from Steelworkers, Peter from Teamsters

**1. Evaluation of Auto Show Demonstration**—This year's theme of the Auto show was about auto "roaring back" and was definitely in contrast to the story we were telling, but we were able to talk with reporters at length. About 35 people participated in the action, active and retired autoworkers, people from Occupy Detroit and MECAWI. We felt fewer autoworkers came out this year because the contract had already been signed and so they felt less need to demonstration. Five additional autoworkers from Local 600 met up with us at the Anchor Bar, where we were able to talk over lunch. We passed the hat and raised over \$175. Points to consider: a) crafting the leaflet to motivate why autoworkers should come out need to be specific and tailored to each year and b) putting together an updated phone list to call, and calling earlier. The auto show comes right at the beginning of the year so it is difficult to build given the long vacation.

## **2. Discussion on developing a campaign around one member, one vote on electing top officers.**

**a.** Bob outlined how the Steelworkers elect top officers, which include international president, secretary-treasurer, 4-5 vice presidents and one vice president from Canada. To get on the ballot, one needs to be nominated by a certain number of locals, but each local can only nominate one person per office.

The formula is something like 5 nominations plus one for every 10,000 members:

For example, in a district of 50,000 members, you would need 10 locals to nominate someone, (5 + 5). If the international is 500,000, then you would need 55 locals, (50 + 5)

To get a candidate on the ballot for as a candidate for international president, has proven difficult to achieve and there has been no opposition for that office since 1984.

It has proved difficult even for candidates to run in opposition to the incumbent for district director. For example in 2005 there was no opposition to an incumbent district director in any district.

The local sets up the balloting. Elections occur every four years; national conventions occur every three years.

What's the biggest obstacle to running against an incumbent? First is that there is a network that supports the incumbent and makes sure the incumbent has significant resources that enables the incumbent to outspend any challenger. Finance reform that could level the playing field would be a high priority.

**b.** Peter outlined the Teamster process of electing top officers. This was only won as a result of the federal government's prosecution of the union for being corrupt. Teamsters for a Democratic Union intervened in the RICCO suit and demanded the right to vote on top officers, and won. There have been five elections since, including an insurgent leadership that won in 1991. There is still federal supervision over Teamster elections. Today there are 1.4 million Teamsters and they vote by mail ballot.

Officers include international president, secretary-treasurer, about 15 U.S. vice presidents and 3 from Canada along with 3 trustees.

**First step (optional):** Members sign a petition for candidate accreditation representing one percent of the entire membership (about 35,000) votes. For international officers, there is a proportion that must be gathered by region.

This occurs about 9 months to a year prior to the vote. By securing accreditation, the candidate gains access to a free page in the Teamster magazine, access to the membership list so he/she can campaign for delegates and access to work site lists.

**Second step:** A member in good standing for two years is eligible to run for delegate to the national convention in their local. There are about 2,000 delegates at the convention, which is held every five years. Obviously this is an important part of the campaign, as candidates ask delegates to support them.

**Third step:** At the convention a candidate for top office must be nominated and seconded and then win 5% of the delegates. At the last convention, the candidate TDUsers supported needed 85 votes and won 137.

**Fourth step:** Once on the ballot, candidates receive the same privileges that the candidate accreditation process provides. There is approximately six months between the convention and the balloting. Ballots go out to all members, with a return stamped envelope, at the end of September or the beginning of October and due back just before Christmas, with the results announced the beginning of December. There is federal oversight to the election process and they also handle any protest.

The incumbent has the financial advantage. In the recent election, the incumbent spent \$2 million while the TDU-supported candidate raised and spent \$250,000.

**Question:** How do candidates raise money? There can be no employer contributions and only members can give up to \$2,000 to any candidate or campaign. There is a maximum amount a candidate can contribute: \$10,000 for the international president/sect-treasurer positions; \$5,000 for candidates running for VP. Because there is federal oversight, financing must be reported and is reviewed.

But only one in five Teamsters casts a vote.

A committee will work on a developing a resolution that can be submitted to the Constitutional Convention, made up of the “best practices” for nominating and electing top officers: Nick, Scott, Wendy.

Thanks to Bob and Peter for laying out the procedures in their union!

**3. Italian public press will be in Detroit over the first weekend in February** and is interested in meeting with Chrysler workers. Contact Martha ([grevatt.m@gmail.com](mailto:grevatt.m@gmail.com)) if you are a Chrysler worker or retiree and are interested in talking with the press.

**4. London, Ontario**—(Martha) There was a demonstration of 15,000 trade unionists and people from Occupy London on Saturday, January 21st in support of the nearly 500 locked out Caterpillar workers at the Electro-Motive Diesel locomotive factory in London. UAW workers at the sister Caterpillar plant in Muncie, IN make \$14 an hour and the London workers are being told if they don't take massive concessions work will be transferred to Indiana or Mexico.

A contingent of UE workers from GE's locomotive plant in Pennsylvania came and brought greetings but otherwise U.S. workers were absent.

Meanwhile the company is making record profits.

**5. “Right-to-work” legislation in Indiana legislature**--(Scott) This week there will be demonstrations organized by the AFL-CIO in opposition to the right-wing's push to pass this law. If passed, it would be the first beachhead of this anti-union legislation in the industrial Midwest. (Scott will send out the information to the auto list serves.

**6. Next conference call:** Sunday, February 12 at 4PM. NOTE new time! Please mark on your calendar!

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