

JOBS

When the MTD last met in convention, the national economy already was spiraling downward, but most delegates probably believed that by now, things would be greatly improved.

That's not to say we're always optimistic, but the can-do spirit of trade unionists past and present tends to attract people who see the glass as half-full.

Four years later, and five years into the recession, we remain both cautiously optimistic about putting more Americans back to work, and also realistic about what it will take to achieve this most important goal.

Our bottom line is that measures must be taken to make sure that every American who wants a job can get one. We agree with previously proposed plans, including the joint one from the AFL-CIO and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce that would boost U.S. manufacturing by building factories here, not overseas.

But even the clearest, most logical blueprints don't have a prayer unless Congress puts aside its partisan bickering, stalling, and sandbagging, and instead works towards tangible and effective solutions to this great crisis. The obstructionism that took place during the first Obama administration has only gotten worse because of anti-worker legislators and the corporations that have their, um, ears.

Fortunately, the vast majority of the American people see it the same way we do: Jobs and the economy are jointly the number one issue across the nation.

We can win this fight. We can turn things around.

A great first step will be to stop rewarding companies that send jobs overseas. And that starts by changing the focus of our national economic policy from one of maximizing the competitiveness and profitability of corporations that only maintain headquarters somewhere on U.S. territory to one of maximizing the competitiveness and prosperity of the human beings who live and work in America.

Note that we didn't say companies don't have the right to turn a profit. We know that America's working families can't succeed unless their employers are doing well. But U.S. businesses still can make money by keeping their production here. And despite rumors to the contrary, we do still have a national economy, not just a global one.

For the record, please note that we don't have any interest in protectionism, and MTD unions in particular undoubtedly appreciate the importance of having imports and exports to ship. But it's like the instructions you receive on an airplane, when they're explaining how to use the oxygen masks – you'd better get yourself squared away first, or you won't be able to help anyone else.

In encouraging domestic investment and laying a stronger and more stable foundation for long-term growth, it is essential that we also tackle the problems of wage stagnation and economic inequality. This will mean changing our labor laws so that all workers who want to form a union and bargain collectively have a fair opportunity to do so. What it also means is making full employment the top goal of our economic policy. We can do that by, in part, shrinking the trade deficit and eliminating incentives for offshoring.

Once again, we're not talking about doing economic harm to other countries. We instead want to make it easier for them to rely on domestic incomes as sources of growth. A key to that step is establishing suitable minimum standards for the global economy, stopping the race to the bottom, and in the process, creating new markets for American manufacturing.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Maritime Trades Department, AFL-CIO, its affiliates and Port Maritime Councils see jobs and the economy as the number-one issue today in America, and we remain committed to securing, promoting and protecting good jobs here at home, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the MTD, its affiliates and Port Maritime Councils wholeheartedly recognize that a resurgence of the labor movement is critical to restoring the middle class and getting the economy working for millions more people. Study after study has shown that unions

are good for workers and good for employers, due to increased productivity, lower turnover, higher morale and greater accountability. Government data shows that union members earn a better living, and that translates into more money that goes back into the economy, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the MTD, its affiliates and Port Maritime Councils remain 100 percent committed to ensuring that the American Dream will not and does not fall further and further out of reach.