

‘Peace is union business’

written by Lallan Schoenstein
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Support for Palestine and Cuba wins unanimous approval at the ILWU 39th convention



ILA Pres. Mike Vigneron (inset) and ITF Gen. Sec. Stephen Cotton (right) present million-dollar checks to ILWU Pres. William Adams at ILWU 39th convention.

Photos: Clarence Thomas

“Solidarity at the ILWU Convention was not an empty slogan,” reports retired dockworker Clarence Thomas.

Thomas participated in the 39th Convention of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) held in Vancouver, B.C., from June 17 to June 21 as a fraternal delegate representing the ILWU Pacific Coast Pensioners Association (PCPA).

Solidarity was substantial and real there. Unions shared their resources to help each other stay strong, and courageous union members stood up in support of their sisters and brothers in Palestine and Cuba.

Million-dollar checks were presented to ILWU President William Adams at the convention podium. Mike Vigneron, President of the Atlantic Coast District of the International Longshoremen’s Association (ILA), gave one check. Stephen Cotton, General Secretary of the International Transport Workers Union Federation (ITF), matched that donation.

Their historic actions were taken to help restore the ILWU’s assets, which had been depleted by the International Container Terminal Services (ICTS) litigation against the ILWU Longshore Division. A federal court awarded ICTS \$20.5 million of ILWU union funds over a dispute involving a job slowdown in Oregon.

International solidarity with Palestine and Cuba

Addressing the crisis of genocide in Gaza, Brother Cotton from the ITF spoke of his communications with Palestinian trade unionists. He explained that Palestinian taxi and truck drivers want U.S. workers to support their right to self-determination and the establishment of a Palestinian state.

Two Australian union leaders appealed for international labor action to stop the massacre and displacement of Palestinians. They received overwhelming applause.

Cris Cain, National Secretary of the 30,000-member Construction, Forestry and Maritime Employees Union (CFMEU), declared: "Peace is union business."

He talked about how the ILWU port shutdowns helped to end apartheid in South Africa and how, recently, dockworkers in Australia have engaged in parallel actions by refusing to work vessels carrying military supplies to enforce apartheid and carry out genocide against Palestine.

Paddy Crumlin, National Secretary of the Maritime Union of Australia, called for an immediate ceasefire and a diplomatic resolution.

https://www.struggle-la-lucha.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/AD_video2739470130a.mp4

In a video message celebrating Juneteenth, ILWU Honorary Member Angela Davis sent greetings and a plea for support of the Palestinians.

The resolution to remove Cuba from the List of State Sponsors of Terrorism (SSOT) was first introduced at the Constitution Committee Meeting, where it was passed without opposition. Committee members, including Thomas, spoke about the devastating impact of the 62-year-long embargo, an act of war that deepened the hardship imposed on the entire Cuban population.

That resolution, calling for an end to the boycott of Cuba, was introduced to the convention delegates. They voted unanimously to approve the convention resolution.

The resolution follows:

Send Pacemakers to Cuba and end the U.S. embargo

WHEREAS: ILWU policies and actions on foreign affairs have always been built on the

belief that international labor solidarity and world peace are the cornerstones of social and economic justice for all workers, including the membership of the ILWU; and

WHEREAS: The union's commitment to a peaceful world has been expressed in many ways,

each following a course of action or basic policy set by the membership through the International Convention;

and

WHEREAS: Washington has placed Cuba on its list of alleged terrorist nations (SSOT), which severely impacts Cuba's ability to secure loans and participate in world banking systems, thus disabling tourism, agriculture, and other productive markets;

and

WHEREAS: 243 punitive executive orders/sanctions were issued by President Trump and reinforced by President Biden, intensifying hardship for the working people;

and

WHEREAS: In 2023, a resolution to end the Cuban blockade [at the UN General Assembly] passed 182 to 2 (U.S. and Israel opposed);

and

WHEREAS: Except for empty campaign promises, the Biden administration has

done nothing to undo the hardships of the blockade forced on the Cuban people. These policies leave Cuba with a shortage of fuel, food, medicines, spare parts;

and

WHEREAS: Cuba has sent 3,700 health workers in 52 international medical brigades to 39 countries overwhelmed by the Covid pandemic. Cuba's international medical brigades have treated patients and saved lives for the past 18 years in 100 countries confronting natural disasters and serious epidemics, such as the Ebola crisis in West Africa;

and

WHEREAS: Cuba has developed five internationally recognized COVID-19 vaccines to meet its commitment to sharing its low-cost vaccines with poor nations and continues to develop new medicines for treating Alzheimer's, Diabetic foot ulcers, and lung cancer. Thus continuing its tradition as a world leader in medical research and development;

and

WHEREAS: Recently, more than 30 labor bodies have passed strong resolutions calling for ending the sanctions and removing Cuba from the SSOT, including multiple entities in California (including the LA Federation of Labor representing 800,000 workers) and Washington State: and

WHEREAS: The majority of Cuban Americans in Miami oppose the blockade and have demonstrated with car caravans and other actions for years calling for an end to the blockade and instead build bridges of love, Puentes de Amor;

and

WHEREAS: the ILWU has historically enjoyed an international relationship with the Cuban Workers Federation (CTC), and in 1947, participated in organizing the International Sugar Workers Committee;

THEREFORE BE IT

RESOLVED: that the 2024 ILWU Convention calls on the Biden administration to vote FOR the U.N. Resolution to end the U.S. unilateral extraterritorial blockade of Cuba and remove Cuba from the spurious U.S. list of state sponsors of terrorism (SSOT), reset Cuba regulations to January 1, 2017, initiate the discussion to fully normalize US-Cuba relations, and

BE IT FURTHER

RESOLVED: that the ILWU will commit to donate \$10,000 to Global Health Partners to purchase Pacemakers4Cuba* and

BE IT FINALLY

RESOLVED: that this Resolution will be distributed to Congressional delegations, the news media, and all labor organizations, urging them to do the same.

Submitted by Inlandboatmen's Union of the Pacific

** GHPartners.org/Pacemakers4Cuba Global Health Partners is a 50Jc3 charity with a commerce License to send medical supplies to Cuba*

