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WEC/EWC-NEWS

During its meeting 2011 the WEC endorsed a resolution of the International Metalworkers' Federation -- Automotive Working Group

Resolution on Precarious Work

Forty two international trade union delegates from 13 countries met in Detroit, MI, USA, to address the major issues confronting auto workers throughout the world, including the pervasive problem of precarious work.

Employers throughout the world are increasingly shifting from the employment of regular workers with good wages and benefits to non-standard forms of employment, such as temporary and contract work. Employers claim that they need the flexibility that comes with the use of non-standard work arrangements, but workers and society as a whole pay a tremendous price for the precarious work created by such arrangements. Precarious work means work without security in the broadest sense. Precarious workers are often denied union representation, decent wages, job security, stable hours and benefits.

Precarious work comes in many forms – temporary, contract, casual, on-call, seasonal, independent contractors. It has a disproportionate impact on the most vulnerable workers -- younger workers, immigrants, and women. Without job security, decent wages and benefits, these precarious workers face a dim future in which they cannot adequately support themselves and their families and their communities.

In their effort to create flexibility, employers have vastly increased the amount of precarious work by relying on a whole industry of agencies and sub-contractors, created to insulate primary employers from the expectation of providing good wages and benefits. By using employment agencies and sub-contractors, many employers are allowed to make hypocritical claims of being good corporate citizens while failing to provide fair wages and benefits to a larger growing percentage of the workers who make their products.

Employers must accept responsibility for the impact of their employment practices on society as a whole and to recognize that all of society pays the price for the harms caused by precarious work. Employers must end the use of precarious work and respect the rights of all workers to freely join a union, decent wages, job security, stable hours and benefits.

We call on governments to pass and enforce laws that protect the rights of precarious workers. Our legal systems must prevent employers from using non-standard work arrangements to create precarious work that breeds inequality and unfairness in job security, wages and benefits amongst workers.

We, the members of Automotive Working Group of the IMF, are fully committed to ending precarious work through all available avenues, including by enforcing and strengthening our collective bargaining agreements to protect against the ills of precarious work, by organizing to re-build industry union density so that our collective power grows, and by holding our elected officials accountable for ensuring that all workers are provided fair pay, decent wages, and equal treatment.

Finally, in our own unions, we will encourage our members not to see precarious workers as the enemy, but rather, properly identify the cause of this problem and extend the helping hand of solidarity to precarious workers as they seek to improve their wages and working conditions through collective action.

Erich Klemm
WEC and EWC Chairman