



October 5, 2014

IATSE Local 205
PO Box 142
Austin, Texas 78767

President Magee and the Brothers and Sisters of IATSE Local 205:

It is with great honor that I report to the local about the activities taking place at the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees Young Worker's Conference 2014. The three day conference illustrated again and again why IATSE matters, and what all of us can and should be doing to strengthen ourselves, our union, and our industry. Sessions included:

- An Address by Elizabeth Shuler, Secretary-Treasurer of the Oregon AFL-CIO
- History of the IATSE
- Messaging for Unions taught by Associate professor Bob Bussel of the University of Oregon and Elana Guiney of the Oregon AFL-CIO
- COMET Training
- An Address by Tom Chamberlain, President of the Oregon AFL-CIO
- Activism and Accountability

Every session included information which forced each member to deeply analyze their own relationship with IATSE, and I could spend an hour or more talking about each session and the importance to each of us. Our guest speakers highlighted numerous ways in which the labor movement has power, multiple ways in which each of us may be a greater contribution to our union and society. However, I would like to focus on the two which provided the most profound influence on me.

Messaging for Unions

Messaging for Unions centered on the language that we should all be using to communicate the message of IATSE. The simple fact is management has perfected how they spin the labor movement in a negative light. Look at any newspaper in this country and you will see that evidence in just the headlines. Sadly, the labor movement has lagged behind in countering this attack.

It is ALL of our responsibilities to work to shift the public opinion of the unionized work force to counteract the attacks. The simple fact, many of the words that are utilized by union proponents do not always have meaning to the general public. Society is a different place. There are less unionized workers in both the private and public sectors. This was illustrated time and again at the conference as an extensive discussion about language led to the realization that $\frac{3}{4}$ of the people attending the YWC were first generation union members.

Luckily however, IATSE is one of the few unions which is growing in membership, thanks largely in part to the motion picture industry. It is essential in keeping this growth alive in all areas of entertainment. The stage department has seen a steady decline in the past years. It is up to each of us to advocate for membership and work to find new companies to organize, new trades to organize, and be the face of the movement (more on that shortly).

Utilizing vocabulary like security, safety, professionalism, craftsmanship, quality, productivity, efficiency, stability, respect, and solidarity, just to name a few, we can reshape the face of the labor movement. These words work to

give visual framing to the public. We each have a mental picture of what each of the aforementioned words trigger mental images of effective, professional, essential workers. We all know that we are those people, but we must work to communicate that to our fellow members, our non-union counterparts in the industry that we are working to organize, and the general public who have grown unaware of the important protections guaranteed as a direct result of organized labor.

The November elections are in about a month. I encourage each of you to work for the greater good of our movement: canvass for pro-union candidates, communicate with others about the power of unions utilizing the language outlined above, be active in rallies, but most of all VOTE. We hold the power to change the public perception of Unions.

COMET Training

COMET Training centers on the organizing of our non-union counterparts in the entertainment industry. The power of the labor movement lies with each of us. Period. The entertainment industry employees and estimated 270,000 workers, of which 120,000 are members of IATSE. That means we have 150,000 persons to reach (a ratio of 1:1.25). If each brother/sister in the IA brought in 1 new member, we would have control of the industry. When placing in this frame, increasing our membership across the country appears to be an obtainable goal. It is the responsibility of EVERY member of IATSE to push for organization in EVERY non-union workplace.

Some key points:

- We must be diligent to reach all non-union members and advocate for the organization of all employees at all levels. This means working to organize companies like Crew One and Rhino Staging. Diligent work should always be given to non-organized employees who may simply not be aware of the protections and benefits available to them.
- We must be diligent to achieve the majority of our market share. This is one of our greatest tools in the negotiation room.
- Think about times in your own lives and work. Examine specific moments when you may increase the visibility of IATSE.

I highly encourage all members of Local 205 with the opportunity to complete COMET Training do so. It is one of the greatest tools to push for the growth and sustainability of our Union.

COMET Training led directly to each of us examining activism in our own lives. All attendees of the conference were asked to set personal goals for their involvement in the union. I have my specific set, and I will be in contact with the Executive Board to begin to begin work on mine. With the help of Sister Cowan in facilitating this exercise, I would like to offer the same challenge to each member of Local 205. Please take 3-5 minutes and set a goal for yourself in each of the following:

- A way that you may increase the activism of Local 205.
- A way that you may increase the activism of the International (Involvement in CLC, PAC, etc.).
- A way you may increase the visibility of IATSE to the Community through service.

I challenge each of you to select one of the three aforementioned goals and work to complete it over the next year. The labor movement starts from the workers. The power is in all of us to reenergize the labor movement. The power of the workers together gives us the power in the room. The power is in each of these goals.

I sincerely thank the Brothers and Sisters of Local 205 and the Executive Board for selecting me to attend the Young Workers Conference. I look forward to strengthen my relationship with IATSE and continuing to affirm my choice in joining. I am happy to chat with any member of Local 250 who would like a more in depth discussion of all the sessions, and I strongly encourage fellow members who meet the qualifications of the YWC to attend in the future.

Fraternally,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Darren E. Levin". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'D' and 'L'.

Darren E. Levin
Member IATSE Local 205
Young Workers Conference 2014 Attendee