Hurricanes Devastate U.S. Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico
Labor Movement Responds With Stepped-Up Relief Efforts

Three hurricanes, one Category 4 and a pair of Category 5s, in less than a month ravaged the communities of working people in the U.S. territories of the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico, as well two states in the continental United States.

The UIW, and the labor movement as a whole, has responded to needs of its membership and other citizens in these areas who were victims of the devastation by providing assorted supplies, raising money and establishing a disaster aid fund.

In cooperation with its parent organization, the SIU, as well as other AFL-CIO unions, the UIW so far has secured and provided generators, food, bottled water, flashlights, batteries, chainsaws, cleaning supplies including disinfectants and personal hygiene products, and much more to union members in the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico.

The foregoing items, many of which were donated by UIW/ SIU-contracted companies, were gathered and packed into shipping containers by UIW/ SIU members in California, Texas and Florida. Donations also came from members in other states. After working out shipping logistics with SIU-contracted Crowley, some items in late September were shipped to the USVI aboard the SIU-crewed SS Wright. Altogether, more than 30 U.S.-flag ships, many of them SIU-crewed, have carried cargo to Puerto Rico and the USVI. These vessels included ones operated by Crowley and SIU-contracted TOTE, among others.

“We are always there to assist our membership in any way possible, especially after such devastating storms like these,” said SIU Assistant Vice President Kris Hopkins, in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, who played a crucial role in collecting, loading and shipping the relief supplies.

“The show of support by our own brothers and sisters as well as organized labor in general to help the people of the Caribbean get back on their feet comes as no surprise to me,” he concluded. “Helping people out in tough times is what we all are supposed to do.”

“The containers have arrived, and we are waiting to hear from the Crowley representative to work out delivery specifics,” said UIW Vice President Caribbean Region Eugene Irish. “The recovery effort here is going slowly, but at least it is moving along,” he added.

The UIW-affiliated SIU has established a new fund to assist members and retirees living in areas affected by the recent hurricanes (this includes SIU affiliates). The fund’s name is Seafarers Disaster Aid Fund.

To make contributions, donors should go to the SIU home page (www.seafarers.org), and click on the link. Contributions may be made using PayPal accounts, MasterCard, Visa, American Express, Discover or any corresponding debit card. Please note that contributions cannot be accepted from contracted employers.

If donating by check, those making contributions should make them payable to Seafarers Disaster Aid Fund and mail to: Seafarers Disaster Aid Fund, c/o SIU Secretary-Treasurer, 5201 Auth Way, Camp Springs, MD 20746.

The fund will pay out a maximum of $500 per person. Information on how to apply will be posted on the website.

A U.S. Rep. Stacey Plaskett (D-USVI), a member of the House Committee on Agriculture and the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, on Sept. 14 announced the immediate availability of $2 million for the repair or reconstruction of federal-aid highways and roads on federal lands that have suffered serious damage as a result of Hurricane Irma.

“The catastrophic destruction caused by Hurricane Irma demands massive amounts of aid for our territory, if we are to address the overwhelming needs of the countless victims who face the daunting task of rebuilding their lives,” she said. “Today, I am pleased to announce the immediate availability of $2 million to the USVI Department of Public Works for the repair and reconstruction of federal-aid highways and roads on federal lands in the Virgin Islands that have suffered serious damage as a result of Hurricane Irma.”

The congresswoman also commended the timing of the grant, which came when the Virgin Islands faces many extreme challenges. The grant monies will not only facilitate infrastructure improvement efforts, but they will also provide much-needed jobs during the territory’s recovery, she said.
Our theme, as you know, is The Union Edge.

Those words are meant to reflect the fact that when it comes to protecting workers’ rights, we’ve got an advantage.

When it comes to securing good contracts and workplace safety, we’ve got the vehicle to do it.

When it’s time for grassroots mobilization and organizing, our status as a union gives us a leg up, and puts us in positions with opportunities to succeed.

The union edge is solidarity, and strength in numbers, and a proven track record of progress, and legal authority to negotiate contracts that protect our members…

We've got UIW shops in California, New York, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Wisconsin, Florida, Puerto Rico, and the Carolinas, in casinos, in warehouses, in hotels, in canneries, in delivery services and more. Well, we've already diversified, and we're going to be around for a long time.

One thing we shouldn't forget is that the general perception of unions is better than it used to be. It's been a year since this convention, we will spend time looking back at the activities of our last four years since the 2013 convention. But we will also be looking forward to the future.

"One of the very sad events since our last convention is the loss of our previous national director, a staunch trade unionist and good friend, John Spadaro. As you have already heard, John was highly thought of by UIW and SIU colleagues alike and his passing was a great loss to our union family. Rest in peace Brother John and thank you for your service to the UIW.

"I am honored to succeed John and I thank President Mike Sacco and the members of our Executive Board for the trust and encouragement they have shown to me in my new position."

"As with many of our union activists representing working people in the USVI, a baptism of fire! When you work for Mike Sacco, it is always expected that you hit the ground running!"

"Within a month of assuming the National Director position, I was out in Santa Bernardino, California with our UIW members at the Cott Bottling Plant and emboiled in some fairly contentious contract negotiations. We were successful in achieving a fair contract at Cott, but it was hard fought. While, in California, I also visited a beautiful old ship, the Queen Mary II where UIW members are employed in the service and hospitality arena. VP West Coast Region Herb Perez and I drove deep into the Palm Desert to visit with members who work for Sodexo Services at the U.S. Marine Base in Quantico, Virginia.

"I have continued to visit work sites throughout the country this year where contracts are pending. Let me tell you how gratifying it has been to visit the hard-working folks the UIW represents. To see first-hand the work of our UIW members at the Brillo Plant in London, Ohio…to witness the day-to-day labor of our brothers and sisters at the Kroger Distribution Plant in Columbus, Ohio…to visit the manufacturing plant at Sealess Mattress and meet with our members preparing for contract talks, it fortified for me why we do what we do as union members and why we pursue the Union Edge to bring dignity, decent wages, job security and fairness to every job site, every day."
Grassroots Action Reflects Labor Movement’s Enduring Power

The election of officers was one of many significant orders of business accomplished during the UIW’s Sept. 19-20 convention in Pinye Point, Maryland. Those elected to office, incumbent with two exceptions, were sworn in by UIW Chief Counsel Leslie Taylor. Taking their re-election shortly before the convention, from the center front row, David Heindel, secretary-treasurer; Chad Partridge, VP Midwest Region; Kate Hunt, UIW National Director; Michael Sacco, UIW President; Dean Corgey, VP Gulf Coast Region; (back row) Karrmert Mangram, VP Atlantic Region; Eugene Irish, VP Caribbean and Central American Region; Monte Burgett, VP Great Lakes Region and Herb Perez, VP West Coast Region.

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UIW Convention Finds Union on Right Course

UIW President Michael Sacco and other union officials to office, convention attendees also heard from guest speakers who voiced their views on the state of the labor movement, national politics and what the union and its membership can expect in the future.

After calling the convention to order, President Sacco focused his attention on the havoc levied upon the UIW membership by recent series of natural disasters. His remarks, in part, follow:

"As many of you know, Irma in particular hit us hard in the UIW, specifically in the U.S. Virgin Islands. We mostly made it out okay on St. Croix. But St. Thomas and St. John are a lot worse. We’ve already sent generators to the Virgin Island and Puerto Rico, along with other supplies and equipment. We’re working on setting up our other relief funds. We’re also working with the state AFL-CIO in Texas for Harvey relief, and we’re reaching out to our brothers and sisters in Florida too.

But this operation goes way beyond the UIW and the SIU. Recovery is going to take years, and it’s going to cost tens of billions of dollars.

“Nevertheless, brothers and sisters, we are going to win these situations before, and we’ve always bounced back. I know we need a lot more than a pep talk at a time like this. It’s going to take conscious, ongoing action to build on the gains that we have made. But that’s where our strength is. It reminded me of an old saying: ‘We’re already in a long, long time. Unbiased perception of unions is better today than it has been in a long, long time. Unbiased perception of unions is better today than it has been in a long, long time. Unbiased perception of unions is better today than it has been in a long, long time. Unbiased perception of unions is better today than it has been in a long, long time. Unbiased perception of unions is better today than it has been in a long, long time. Unbiased perception of unions is better today than it has been in a long, long time.’

"Now, don’t get me wrong,” he concluded.

In addition to Sacco, four guest speakers addressed the convention. These included Brian Schoeneman, SIU Legislative Director; Daniel Duncan, Executive Secretary-Treasurer of the Maritimes Trades Department; Steve Loeffler, Krager Company Senior Director of Labor Relations; and Valerie Cole, Union Plus Union Services Coordinator. Schoeneman and Cole spoke to delegates and guests during the opening day of the convention while Duncan and Loeffler gave presentations during day two

Brian Schoeneman

Schoeneman brought those in attendance up to date on the current political climate in Washington, D.C. and its implications for the national labor movement. His wide-ranging presentation touched on a myriad of pertinent issues, but focused primarily on the transformation in the way business is conducted since Trump took office and the aftereffects of the same.

"Times, they are a changing really puts what’s going on in Washington these day into perspective,” he said in his opening remarks.

"Normally when friends ask me what’s going on in Washington these days, I tell them about the layoffs and layoffs and layoffs. And then they go do it. And that may or may not be a good thing for us, but it’s different this time.

"That’s the first time we’ve seen this kind of bipartisanism in a long time and that’s a good thing, he said. "And I think if the president continues to do what he has been doing, which is going around tradi-

Continued on next page
Grassroots Involvement Ensures that UIW Remains on Proper Course

Duncan also reminded everyone that more than 30 governors will be up for election next year and, with an eye toward legislation at the state level, he said, “It’s not too early to think about what we can do at the state level.”

Duncan then focused his attention on something that once was said in a slightly different context. “It is a lot easier to make mistakes in a $10,000 race than it is in a national level race,” he said. “That’s why we have to be involved, whether it’s at the state level or the national level. But you can’t just do that once in a while.”

Duncan also talked about the importance of grassroots efforts at the local level. “We don’t have to look any further than the city of Virginia to see the power of grassroots efforts,” he said. “When we had the vote on the city council, we were able to pass a resolution that will make a difference in the lives of our brothers and sisters.”

Duncan also talked about the importance of unions in the political process. “We have the power to make a difference in the lives of our brothers and sisters,” he said. “We have the power to make a difference in the lives of our children.”

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UIW Convention Committees

Auditing Committee - (Seated from left) Adam Cordle, Chairman Tiffany Blake, Sue Plourde, (standing), David Heindel and Dawn Taliford. Also on the committee, but not pictured were Karim Robles and Kapiolani Bess.

Convention Arrangements & Public Relations Committee - (From left) John Wiegman, Juan Carlos Guerrero and Chairman Dean Corgey. Also on the committee, but not pictured was Bruce Heath.

Resolutions Committee - (From left) Ruby Ava Wilson, Chairman Herb Perez and Bonnie Johnson. Also on the committee, but not pictured was Kendrick Griffin.

Civil Rights Committee - (From left) Chairman Monte Burgett, Jeff Harris and Ivan Rodriguez. Also on the committee, but not pictured were Addison Powell and Lewis Nichols.

Credentials Committee - (Seated from left) Arturo Olguin, Chairman Terry Holter, Kate Hunt, (standing) Kermett Mangram, Tina Corbin, Sue Plourde and David Heindel. Also on the committee, but not pictured were Neta Christopher and Jose Lopez.

Constitution & Legal Committee - (Seated from left) Chairman Dennis Wiese, Gina Patino, Ray Adkisson, (standing) Leslie Tarantola and Kermett Mangram. Also on the committee, but pictured was Linda Leblanc.
Former UIW VP Caribbean Region Amos Peters, 76, passed away July 17 at his residence in St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands (USVI). Peters became vice president of the UIW in 1989 after joining up with the affiliate of the Seafarers International Union in 1973. He retired Nov. 30, 2001 following more than 25 years on the front lines and in the trenches of the labor movement in the USVI. Peters is pictured below addressing delegates and guests at a UIW convention during his early days as regional vice president. In the photo at right, he is pictured with his widow, Marion during his 2001 retirement gala in St. Thomas, USVI. An in-depth article on Peters’ passing will be published in the next edition of The United Worker.

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PATRICIA CAVENAS
Pensioner Patricia Cavenas, 69, passed away August 1. A native Shenandoah, Pennsylvania, Sister Cavenas signed on with the union in 1975. She spent her entire UIW career working at A&E Products. Sister Cavenas signed on with the union in 1978 while working at Armand Edward Metal Products as well as Chuck Gardin, Inc. She retired in 1984 and lived in Brooklyn, New York.

JOHN MARTIN
Pensioner John Martin, 96, passed away June 5. Born in New York City, Brother Martin served in the U.S. Armed Forces from 1944-1946. He signed on with the union in 1978 while working at American Casting. He started receiving his union pension in 1988 and was a resident of Oyster Bay, New York.

LEE RHODES
Pensioner Lee Rhodes, 73, died June 22. A native of Sunbury, Pennsylvania, Brother Rhodes came under the union umbrella in 1967 while working at Paulsen Wire Rope. He began receiving retirement stipends in 1982 and resided in his native city and state.

GEORGE STODDART

DOSSIE WILLIAMS
Pensioner Dossie Williams, 89, died May 18. Born in North Carolina, Brother Williams signed on with the union in 1966. He spent his entire UIW career working at Plymkraft, Inc., and went on pension in 1990. Brother Williams was a resident of Newport News, Virginia.

RICHARD WINTER

JOHN YOST

New Pensioners
Dhomie Barcelon
Del Monte Corp.
Long Beach, California

Veronica Browne
Pralex Corp.
Tampa, Florida

Socorro Contreras
Save The Queen, LLC
Long Beach, California

Burten Fiester
Crown Cork & Seal
Milton, Pennsylvania

Jamie Flores
American Casting
Brooklyn, New York

Jody Geist
A&E Products Group
Zion Grove, Pennsylvania

James Hedden
Victory Refrigeration
West Berlin, New Jersey

Harry Hampton
East Wind Industries
Dover, Delaware

Marie Hawkins
Plymkraft, Inc
Hampton, Virginia

Arthur Magrann
Victory Refrigeration
Barrington, New Jersey

Antonio Mendoza
Crown Cork & Seal
Houston, Texas

Michael Munyan
Franklin International
Lancaster, Ohio

Susana Padilla
Victory Refrigeration
Camden, New Jersey

Celia Pagina
Save The Queen, LLC
Long Beach, California

Devra Roberts
Franklin International
Ashville Ohio

Victoria Robertson
Seversen Group
Twentyone Palmis, California

Milford Robinson
Progressive Driver Services, Inc.
Valley Falls, New York

Santiago Rodriguez
Junnitas Foods
Long Beach, California

Angel Rosado
American Casting
Brons, New York

Donald Shellarger
Armalu Brands
Hudson, Florida

Loretta Tyler
Plymkraft, Inc
Hampton, Virginia

John Welsey
Contando Terminals, LLC
Norwood, Pennsylvania

Rubin Wood
Crown Cork & Seal
Montgomery, Texas
Labor Unions Need To Fight Against Income Inequality

One of several, messages organized labor is carrying to workers and voters nationwide is that Donald Trump isn’t keeping his promises.

In an October 27 press conference previewing the AFL-CIO convention in St. Louis, federation President Richard Trumka ran down a list of promises the Manhattan mogul-turned-GOP president uttered on the campaign trail last year, from more construction spending to blasting so-called free trade.

“We give them the facts,” said Trumka of Trump. “Here’s what’s promised. Here’s what’s done. And his promises left people in the lurch.”

Unions are already carrying that message to their members and families, Trumka said, and will continue to do so through the rest of this year and the 2018 election campaign.


Instead, what Trump brought factory workers was the “Christmas wish list,” from CEOs of major firms, who were briefly Trumka’s colleagues on a short-lived manufacturing advisory council for Trump, before they all quit over his response to the fatal neo-Nazi riot in Virginia.

The corporate wish list is being granted, in such things as delaying job safety and health rules curbing worker exposure to silica and beryllium, both cancer-causing substances. And their wish list is being granted, Trumka said, also by rolling back the Obama-era increase in eligibility for overtime pay.

“That sobering education gets people to concern about the issues,” says Trumka, citing evidence through public opinion polls showing Trump, just 10 months in office, has record unpopularity ratings, while 61 percent of those aware of conversations the federation had with union members “say that the issue is union-busting.”

But the message isn’t a top-down story. Instead, what Trump brought factory workers was the “Christmas wish list,” from CEOs of major firms, who were briefly Trumka’s colleagues on a short-lived manufacturing advisory council for Trump, before they all quit over his response to the fatal neo-Nazi riot in Virginia.

“We’ll push them on the tenth.”

The labor movement has been deeply involved in national and local election campaigns throughout its history. Trumka was asked whether this will be the case in 2018 when the entire House is up for reelection along with a third of the Senate. If Democrats tip either the House or the Senate they can block any legislation supported by President Trump, seen as the most anti-labor president in recent U.S. history.

“The only solution we have to labor’s automatic support for Democrats opposing Republicans. We are developing and Trump is putting forward a Workers Bill of Rights,” he declared, “and our support will only go to people who back that bill of rights. If a candidate, regardless of party, can’t do that we’ll say ‘That’s nice, good luck’ and move on.”

Trumka said this week many union members who are running for office on all levels are expressing aspirations at the convention. “We are going to push hard to increase the number of workers elected office,” he said after the press conference.

Also asked afterwards if the federation would reject people who backed perhaps nine out of ten of labor’s issues but not all of the points on the bill of rights, his answer, with a smile was “We’ll push them on the tenth.”

Trumka did not elaborate, but said labor’s 2018 election push would be “unprecedented in breadth, scope and unity. We will approach these elections more united than ever before,” concentrating on workers who backed Trump are realizing now that so called right to work threatens to “blasting so-called free trade.

“Collectivism is on the rise in the U.S., whether it’s political action or collective action, you’ll see a unity” that did not exist before, he added.

That unity will also be manifest in a political platform Trumka said labor will adopt at the convention and then present to political hopefuls. Those who support it will get workers’ support.

These that don’t, won’t.

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