

Canada's Carpenters' Union unanimously passes a historical resolution in defence of Israel

*Union calls for an end to boycotts against Israeli society,
charting a bold new course in worker internationalism*

September 8, 2008, Victoria, BC – Canada's Carpenters' Union, meeting at the 7th Biennial Canada Council of Carpenters Convention in Victoria, has voted in favour of a new resolution that will have a profound effect on organized labour around the world. With a membership of more than 60,000, the Council unanimously adopted a resolution denouncing the characterization by a limited number of other Canadian unions of Israel as an apartheid state. The resolution calls for greater understanding of the plight of Israeli citizens, who face continual waves of attacks and threats from the vast majority of their neighbours.

"Unlike many neighbouring countries, Israel has an active trade union movement that participates freely in Israeli society," explained Ucal Powell, President of the Carpenters' District Council of Ontario. "Supporting a boycott or sanctions against Israel risks reinforcing terrorist groups and does little to encourage the wellbeing of workers in the region."

The resolution, believed to be the first from a union in defence of Israel, was developed in consultation with various groups, including Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center, a respected Canadian-based NGO that takes its name from the famed Holocaust survivor and international justice pioneer Simon Wiesenthal.

"The road to lasting peace can only be paved on a foundation of tolerance and security, which is impossible to achieve given the current terrorist activities of Hamas and Hezbollah," said Avi Benlolo, president of Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center. "Resolutions such as this one are needed to counter the animosity toward Israel which is inherent in recent union activity – a situation which encourages further threats and violence from terrorist groups in the region. Our organization and its more than 25,000 members wholeheartedly support the Carpenters' resolution and believe it will resonate with Canadians and other labour advocates."

The leadership of the Carpenters' Union and local community leaders in attendance at the convention are hopeful this new perspective will encourage other unions to issue similar resolutions.

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