



Share some 21st Century Insights
with Joe Mulhall

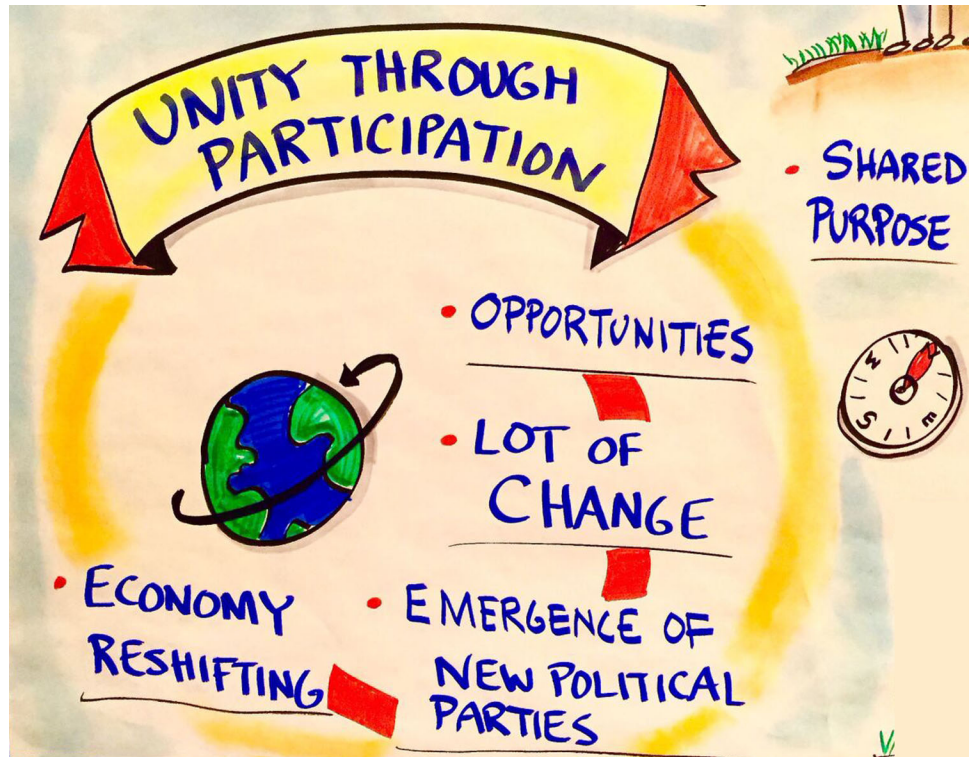
Bringing the 21st Century Workplace to Life

The popularity of Unions as an Institution has fallen dramatically in the past 30 years. Workers as well as employers have rejected the concept of working together through a Union. This is proven out by the decline in union density across North America. The reasons for this rejection have been well documented in the history since the 1950's.

Workers reject Unions because they do not see themselves reflected in the operation of these Institutions. There is a common cry of "what does the Union do for me" or "they take our money but they do nothing for us". Employers reject Unions because they interfere in "management's right to manage" and in their view Unions negatively affect the bottom line of the business.

On the one side the workers do not see the value of participating in the union and on the other side, the employer is discouraging that participation. The result is that profits are rising and the gap between the rich and the poor is widening. Workers are being left out of the benefits of the economy both at work and in the marketplace.

It is from this start point that we begin to build the 21st Century workplace. As workers, we have come to understand that life at work does not need to be defined as an "us and them" relationship. The concept of the 21st Century Worker has been created to provide a new



paradigm from which we can move forward. In the 19th and 20th Centuries workers had to struggle to get recognition for the right to bargain with employers over the distribution of wealth. In Canada we have won that struggle. We have the right to bargain collectively solidly enshrined in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and endorsed by the highest court in our land.

In the 21st Century the struggle will be to have our Right to participate in the workplace recognized. Rights that are granted by Laws, even Supreme Court of Canada Laws, are only words and concepts unless given life through action. It has been broadly recognized at the Policy level, both political and academic, that work-

see page 2...

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ers' involvement in the workplace will provide a sense of Worth, of Freedom and of Participation that directly contribute to harmony and greater economic success in the workplace. Industrial Democracy improves safety, increases productivity and enhances the quality of life at work.

It is not surprising that there is resistance to these ideas from the mainstream of business. For all of the reasons described in the research undertaken by the University of California (G. William Domhoff, 2012 and 2013) business owners have not yet recognized that workers, as citizens, have the right to enjoy the same privileges at work as they do when participating in a democratic government. Resistance of this type is not new. History shows that for decades employers vehemently opposed the "right to bargain collectively" about wages and benefits. History also shows that workers successfully overcame that resistance by working together both in the workplace and in the broader community.

CUSW has been built for the opportunity of building a new approach to the workplace. The Constitution of CUSW provides for member participation both in the internal operation of the union and in the workplace. We have aligned our structure with a clear understanding that we as members have a role in the workplace. We are well positioned to realize the value of Industrial democracy. As members we have set a standard of values and beliefs that directly impact on our actions ev-

ery day both at work and in the community. We have included our stakeholders as a part of the fabric of our union. The employers are not the enemy. They are one of our partners.

CUSW members did not build our structure in isolation from the Law or the intent of the Labour Legislation. The Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Supreme Court of Canada decision on the rights of unions to participate in the workplace provides

the framework that opens the door to our members taking a leadership role in making this opportunity a reality. We are very well positioned to move forward to implement the rest of the rights provided by Canadian Labour laws.

We cannot leave this discussion without a comment on the current state of our membership. The struggle for recognition of worker rights has pitted employer against worker

for almost 100 years. It is not easy to simply turn that page. The challenge for CUSW as a group will be in building an environment in which we the workers will realize that contributing to the success of the company, is contributing to our own success.

As a group of members coming together to create a better future for our members and their families we have set a clear vision for the future of work. The path is clear. Through education, skills and an understanding of the world around us we can make the transition to the 21st century workplace.

– Joe Mulhall

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