

Transcript

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DC LERA presents

**“A Conversation with UNI Global Union General Secretary
Christy Hoffman: Remaking the World of Work for the
Service Sector”**

10:03:25 pivoted very quickly to doing everything online and virtually we did our annual conference back in June virtually which was quite amazing and and very effective and we'll be doing that again, this June instead of being in Detroit and will be virtual again

10:03:38 so we hope we you can join us for some of those sections as we go ahead.

10:03:49 But enough of the background.

10:03:51 Just, just thrilled to have Christie Hoffman. Today, to talk to us about the incredibly important work that she's doing and her organization is doing.

10:04:02 You and I global union represents, almost 20 million service sector workers. And before you tell us about you and I global union, Christy you know one of the things that I like to do is sort of set the context for people about how how you get to where

10:04:18 you are and in your noon I actually share a little bit of history together.

10:04:25 So, why don't you just talk about your amazing career and don't be, don't be modest because it is an amazing career.

10:04:35 Thanks, Steve and thanks for the invitation to join you today.

10:04:41 As you can hear from my accent I'm an American I'm from the United States I've lived in the in Europe now for most of the since 2004 with a brief return to the US around the time that Obama was elected.

10:04:56 And so I realized this is your on the you know the eve of a very historic day and it's very emotional time, you know, for me, as well as, as, as you I'm sure I was just saying to Steve that you know no matter where you are in the world right now if you're

10:05:12 American you're really watching a lot of CNN, but I'm in terms of my career and I started out working in a jet engine factory in 1977.

10:05:26 Actually 1978 and stayed there for quite some time, as say you know it was a unionized factory and Connecticut, I was chief shop steward. I really love my work.

10:05:39 There I was a member of the International Association of machinists and then eventually left the factory floor to become an organizer and working for the international office and title called the Grand Lodge trip, but sounds a little dated but that's,

10:05:55 that's, I spent about 10 years with the machine is and loves my work negotiating and handling grievances and I do believe that all of the, The work that I did during that period and set me up for what I do now because I'm again once again negotiating

10:06:13 with Floyd employers, pretty much on a daily or regular basis about all kinds of issues, certainly not the ones I faced back in the 80s, but it's the same.

10:06:25 It's the same point, sometimes too little has changed in that long period of time. After I left prednisone I went to, to become a lawyer.

10:06:36 And I was counsel.

10:06:39 And then my workers during the aftermath of the piston strike if I also worked at the was Assistant General Counsel at the Teamsters Union as representing, in particular the small package division with the UPS workers when they had their national strike

10:06:58 in 1997 and then my latest my latest legal work was with SEIU and James and Hoffman, in one of their law firms as well.

10:07:10 And I left in 2004 to join uni, and I must say, Steve, we don't say You and I, I love the way the subtitles have interpreted meaning you and I that's actually a nice way to look at it it's all of us together, but we call it uni uni global Union.

10:07:30 And I was, you know, I've run global campaigns from uni and worked in various and worked in one of our sectors property services cleaning and security and then later became the deputy general secretary and in 2018 the general secretary.

10:07:48 And so, Just to say a little bit about unique.

10:07:53 We were federation of unions from around the world, 150 countries across the service sectors, and I should explain a little bit.

10:08:05 Who that includes because we start out from we represent some of the lowest paid workers in the world. and by that nursing home workers and cleaners are among our lower paid workers.

10:08:18 Not to say lesser lower valued and post office workers it and tech workers, all the workers in retail food retail other retail e commerce

10:08:34 and property services, that's cleaners and security guards, and then we also have the media workers so the film producers that I add see the and the Writers Guild and so on and the media sector as well as the professional athletes so all of the professional

10:08:53 athletes in the USA football players Association baseball, basketball and so on belong to uni so we have big big range of sectors and all of our sectors have, you know, their own programs and strategies and so on but we, but we should work coherent in

10:09:11 terms of how we identify the problems that workers face and what the solutions are in the big picture.

10:09:20 And we have a really interesting.

10:09:23 We've had a very interesting year in 2020 and the sense that you know you have, you know, for the players and for the, you know, media workers like their big event has been really negotiating these back to work protocols which have been quite quite complex

10:09:39 for the film production and, you know, getting back onto the basketball court.

10:10:00 been a big part of our emphasis, so I'll stop there that's kind of my career and a mini, you know, 40 years and four minutes but yeah 40 years and four minutes and then we, we didn't know each other at the machine is but I served my apprenticeship at

10:10:11 at the machine is 74 to 78 in Chicago at a printing press company and, and then you and I worked together at the Teamsters in there in the early and mid 90s so it was, it was really a pleasure working with you back then but.

10:10:27 So, talk, talk a little bit more about what, what, what you need does and how its organized and how it's, it's, it's sort of governed 150 countries.

10:10:40 20 million workers that's a, that's an enormous

10:10:46 amount of potential cloud and just so how does it sort of how did these international secretaries work and what sort of the structure.

10:10:57 So we're set up, much like many, you know, international unions are we have both a regional and geographic structure overlaid with the matrix of the sectoral structure.

10:11:08 So, you know, for example, you know SEIU has divisions or so, the regions of the joint, the joint councils of the Teamsters at the same time you've got your divisions that really drive the industrial strategy.

10:11:20 So, we have four regions, you know, Asia, Africa, Latin America and Europe. Each one of them has their elected leadership, but we have our 10 sectors that are consistent across all the regions and they each have a global structure so our head offices

10:11:37 in Switzerland, the head of the, what we call our sector head the department lead the head of departments.

10:11:44 And they have their team stretched out across all the regions and we're pretty coherent, where the regions in the center work very closely together. I'm thankful to say, I'm, you know, we've got an agenda, which is about building union power across all

10:12:02 of our sectors.

10:12:04 We, you know have a big emphasis on working with multinationals and winning rights from multinationals to respect the freedom of association, the right to organize.

10:12:16 So that's a big emphasis that we share across all of our of our sectors, you know, obviously there's an exception with the world the athletes because they don't have multinationals but they do have really big leagues they have Commonwealth Games for example

10:12:32 where we've, we've been negotiating. So, our core work is really about building union strength in our industries.

10:12:39 And then we also have the program around policy change and know what we call changing the rules.

10:12:47 Mainly, our focuses on corporate accountability less than some of the the other, you know, the International Trade Union Confederation the sort of the the hub of all of the national centers like the AFL CIO and there are more working on the big big macro

10:13:04 economic issues.

10:13:06 But we are more focused on corporate accountability.

10:13:13 Then, you know, the G 20.

10:13:16 And, and then of course traditionally the role of international secretary is to bring people together from around the world to share strategies.

10:13:26 Common positions on issues. One of the issues were really deep into right now is the practicality and the policies around remote work for example, but we would have, you know, common issues in retail, You can imagine that I'm

10:13:45 even health and safety right now like what's our common position across all the retail industry about, you know, the fair treatment for workers and grocery retail.

10:13:55 So, sharing best practices, has always been a big part of an international Secretariat, but we've tried to move beyond that and get more into the organizing side of our industries because services have never been especially well organized not in the US,

10:14:13 of course, but not anywhere else either outside of Western Europe and so we have a lot of we have organizing centers we have organizing teams we do a lot of training we do a lot of capacity development and we do campaigns involving global companies.

10:14:29 Fantastic.

10:14:31 At our last session with DC lira we had representative of the NFL players Association, talk about the, the salary cap and how it works and a lot of these same issues so our listeners will be quite familiar with that and I I didn't realize that the pro

10:14:49 athletes were part of God so that's that's great.

10:14:52 Very cool.

10:14:55 So talk a little bit more about the, the global frameworks and how how you work with how do you try to leverage these big companies, you know, is you mentioned, you know, both you and I bargained with some of the biggest companies, whether it was ups

10:15:13 or balling or any of these big companies, how, how receptive are they to the role that you guys play and what are the leverage points to bring them bring them to the table to actually talk about improving working conditions for people.

10:15:32 Well, um, you know really depends what the issue is, we have found that employers have been very receptive to talk to us during this recent year because there's, they would like to have global policies on issues, and you can't have a global policy, if

10:15:51 you don't have a global counterpart, that certainly would be our position if you know you can't.

10:15:57 Many of the European companies, you know are openly committed to social dialogue, which is sort of, you know, the catch all that which would include collective bargaining and in general, as a general principle.

10:16:12 You know it's easier to get buy in.

10:16:15 On your policies from workers and unions if it's negotiated with the union so in many times companies are more than eager to talk to us about the common problems that we face we've been negotiating back to work agreements we've been negotiating remote

10:16:30 work agreements we've been negotiating health and safety product practices across retail I think we probably have 20 agreements with different sets of employers that we signed this year or, especially some agreements in Europe but but even, even you know

10:16:47 global. In the past, outside of us, the special circumstances have coded.

10:16:56 It's, it's the hardest thing and this should not be the case but the hardest thing is to persuade companies that they should allow organizing in those countries where unions are not already present at their work site.

10:17:09 And when I say allow meaning it's certainly illegal to prevent completely organizing but we know the union busting techniques that are in place in the US and it's all too common in the rest of the world.

10:17:21 So the hardest thing is to really break that resistance and all of our global agreements, provide for that.

10:17:30 But it's, it's been hard to enforce those agreements in countries where there's a really really stiff in resistance at the level of country level management and, and I would include the US in that bucket that that doesn't mean we don't try and we have

10:17:47 had some success but I don't want to say it's been universal.

10:17:51 And we have about 60 Global agreements in all of which focus on the right to organize as a core feature. The companies would be more than happy to negotiate over, you know, sexual harassment policies and all kinds of other issues, and where it gets hard

10:18:09 is when we start talking about work site access and neutrality and right you know enforcement measures, but we still make some success there, and our relationships with those companies proved to be really invaluable.

10:18:24 When we're going through problems of organizing which we often do. So, what's the leverage it really depends on how you know hard of a campaign we need to have and and you know whether

10:18:41 you know it's sometimes it's not as hard as others, we have a campaign right now that I would say we're trying to use maximum leverage against which is organizing call center workers, a company of about.

10:18:56 400,000 workers, almost all non union a French company, these, these, this is a growing industry it's not shrinking it's very much in demand during Koba the conditions were terrible during coven, and the leverage is, you know, we are talking to their

10:19:22 investors, of course we're talking to the we brought a case under the OECD guidelines we've gotten lots of media about the horrific conditions in the Philippines.

10:19:20 We've had them at the table, you know, long so I won't go into all the, you know, nitty gritty but but I would say that's where you look at who are the client you know we're talking to their clients we're talking to their investors we're talking to governments

10:19:34 and so eventually, you know I'm confident that that it would make sense for them to negotiate an agreement and have a more fair system for their workers that that could be an example we also have, you know, we have a big big program of work around Amazon.

10:19:51 I don't expect Amazon's coming to the table with us anytime soon but it's really important to put those issues in the spotlight policy issues of Amazon as well as the worker issues.

10:20:02 Yeah, really, really fascinating and how the globalization is really made these kind of issues, no longer just local issues that truly are global issues.

10:20:14 it could you just talk a little bit more about the the leverage point from the final from the finance side of the house. I'm particularly interested in, you know, so much of the Wall Street and financial community is now seeming to buy into this notion

10:20:32 of running their investments through, environmental, social and governance lens ESG BlackRock the the largest asset manager in the world, said that all of their investments will run through this screen, I don't really quite believe it but you know what

10:20:52 do you see as you see that that there's some momentum in that direction of of for workers in in the ESG on the financial side, and how were you sort of thinking about those issues.

10:21:06 I mean that's a big issue for us and we're just starting to get into it and more heavily this year because yeah they all the stakeholder capitalism, you know, this is the thing now, but when you go and dig into the weeds.

10:21:20 First of all, as has never been, you know, you know, elevated to high enough level to compete with gee i mean when you compare the three factors like I just say SS s.

10:21:33 Let's talk about human rights, not governance let's talk about human rights, and that cannot be well as long as your governance is right that that wipes out the neck the bad score you get on union stuff no no no that doesn't work that way.

10:21:46 So we're kind of moving beyond, you know, ESG now it's really got to be respect for human rights you see the new roles that are coming out from the big auditing firms that are trying to quantify.

10:21:59 You know, they want to have an equal scoring system across all the companies and stakeholder capitalism.

10:22:06 The problem is, is that the freedom of association is not really ranked very highly as a risk, you know, other risks, get always are paid, way more attention to especially child labor and forced labor which they shouldn't get attention but, you know,

10:22:22 we, you know, the the rights of workers tend to get diminished in the scoring.

10:22:30 And the other thing is that, in we're starting to do training with investors, You know, on what does it mean to respect freedom of association. I mean, you know, we're getting all these people who are like we're technically you know aligned with this

10:22:47 but we don't really know what to say when the employer says, this is just how we do it here, we're allowed to have captive audiences, we're allowed to do this.

10:22:55 So we're doing actual training of some of the more friendly, you know, Sri socially responsible investors and just more ongoing discussions with them.

10:23:05 We do a lot of campaign work with them so when we have a problem with a particular company will go to a whole range of investors, but in you know the level of scoring doesn't work the SG framework doesn't work to elevate worker issues beyond you know

10:23:23 to, you know, to a place that they need to be human rights needs to art do include the fundamental rights to organize and collective bargaining. They're not given the high enough.

10:23:36 Scoring they're not considered salient so well if you don't consider them salient you don't have to treat them as a risk under due diligence, human rights due diligence analysis.

10:23:46 So, this is where we're putting our emphasis, and I want to say the due diligence, I'm human rights due diligence framework, which is, you know, became the framework of the UN in 2011, and is now making its way through national legislation in Europe I

10:24:04 think that could make a big difference for the finance industry as well because it's about, you know, a framework of, you know, showing respect for human rights, it's not ESP, so I'm, I'm very sort of down on ESG because I think it never works for workers.

10:24:21 But, but, I mean, I don't object to the concept of stakeholder capitalism, but it's just that the devils in the details. Right, right.

10:24:31 The devil is lining is pockets with lots of cash.

10:24:35 Exactly. I mean that's it's just uh but i would say, you know, if I wasn't in a public place I might skate differently.

10:24:41 It's really, Really, and the B Corp, you know there's whole thing about benefit corporations right and that's their position on freedom of association is poor, they say it's controversial, you know, really controversial, it's not really controversial.

10:25:00 Right. But anyway, so So talk about two other sort of broad set of issues. And then we're going to we're getting lots of questions from the audience. So, so we want to leave plenty of time for them but sort of two broad sets of issues.

10:25:16 One is technology, How is automation affecting the service sector workers in from where you sit. What is sort of the challenges and opportunities for new technology in the workplace.

10:25:31 And then the second is really, you know, the response to coven in the pandemic. How has that impacted service sector workers and, and you've mentioned a lot about returning to work and all of those, those things but.

10:25:47 So, but let's start with the technology sort of in a both a high level or a micro level, how do you see automation.

10:25:57 Yet, artificial intelligence of these issues and social media, affecting a service sector workers.

10:26:05 Well, I mean, obviously, we have a lot of different you know sectors and it's different everywhere but to generalize a bit I mean, we have some sectors that are highly impacted and that would be the finance so the bank workers, we have that's one of our

10:26:20 large sectors which I didn't mention earlier.

10:26:23 Bank workers and ICT so information technology. And, you know, communications, but of course all of them are affected postal workers are affected.

10:26:33 You know dramatically cleaners to some extent security to some extent, everybody. There's an impact everywhere.

10:26:42 And I can't, you know, go so deep into the sector specifics for all of them but I mean our general approach is to say that, you know, and I coming from a factory.

10:26:57 You know, I worked in a factory when they introduce technology and my factory I was the first to say I want that machine where I have the button and I don't have to turn the wheel, so I'm like instinctively like Yeah.

10:27:10 Bring it on, you know it can have a lot of advantages.

10:27:13 But at the same time as a union protection nobody was going to lay me off I, you know, there was, I had all this safety around me and your general rap that we say around technology AI is a big one, surveillance.

10:27:30 They enable the surveillance which has been enabled by technology is a big issue in our sectors.

10:27:37 Clearly postal workers, the sorting centers have been impacted by sick technology for a very long time. Um, you know, in, you know i CTS, we see the impact of technology enabling the filtering of work which is something David while makes you know, it

10:27:53 has written so well about the technology makes it possible to outsource everything.

10:28:01 And so, you know, we're seeing it manifests itself in outsourcing surveillance for remote workers remote work is obviously you know exploding during coded but enabled by new technologies that are coming on stream much more quickly, the long and the short

10:28:18 of it is that, in all these situations the workers that have the right to bargain over these issues are able to navigate it for the better of themselves and also the company.

10:28:28 And I think that where you have workers who have no rights to protest or engage and how is the technology going to be implemented. How is it going to affect my daily life that's where it becomes really a big problem and I've just say for, you know, surveillance

10:28:44 for call center workers for example,

10:28:49 for them.

10:28:51 It's a, it's a terrible intrusion they have a camera on the full day long, in their home of, you know what's going on in their home while they're working and but Albanian court just ruled yesterday that it was illegal to do that but that's Albania I don't

10:29:07 know about the rest of the world just yet but I think the surveillance is a big thing AI in finance. Look, you see the finance workers in Europe negotiating over, potentially packages for some of the workers they won't have the number of bank branches

10:29:21 in the future that they have now people are moving to electronic banking at an alarming well very fast rate, but they're able to negotiate adjust transition and this is our ambition is adjust transition, whereas the bank workers in the US are just getting

10:29:38 there, they're just losing their jobs, and that's it and there's nothing. There's no capacity to negotiate so just transition is like the overall theme and then in the weeds in the details, depending on the technology surveillance.

10:29:52 No, you shouldn't be able to surveil any more than necessary.

10:29:56 You shouldn't take away somebody's dignity

10:30:02 and remote work because there's a whole, you know, we've got a laundry list of things that we should be negotiating with in connection with remote work.

10:30:09 But again, if you've got the capacity to negotiate. That's why we think, you know, keep banging away on collective bargaining and social dialogue, being so important for this moment.

10:30:19 Yep. Excellent. And what about coven just if you want to just talk for a minute or two about how this has changed the way you work the way uni is organized and performing its, its work, and sort of what are the what are some of the lessons that you are

10:30:39 learning about how workplaces around the world have reacted to the pandemic.

10:30:48 I mean, we work, I'm in my office now on a zoom call and I probably wouldn't be doing this, if I were, you know, in the my normal mode so it's been opportunities and also, obviously, it's got its drawbacks to say the least.

10:31:05 But however working is remotely mostly just like most other people in in Europe.

10:31:13 But we've actually been able to achieve a much greater visibility and then we would have normally. I mean, you know, I might normally be speaking, you know, twice a week at the most, but I'm flying to Singapore or bonus Cyrus or something like that to

10:31:29 meet with our affiliates, and now I'm you know every day twice a day you know it's a, you know, it's really like a speed up on steroids you know for me but, but, um, you know, I, on the other hand I'm not able to really meet with people face to face and

10:31:44 so I suffer all the drawbacks that everyone does from not having enough social contact but also not being able to meet our, you know, our members and our affiliates.

10:31:56 So, I think, you know, every you know offices are all you know struggling through this, most of our unions are not on remote work to be honest in Europe.

10:32:11 If you represent a central workers you are considered essential as a union rep, which I think is a great thing. But, you know, technically I represent essential workers and I could be in my office all the time as well and I am here about half the time

10:32:19 but, um, but um, but then it really depends on the industry we've had industries that shut down temporarily fast fashion for example the non essential work was basically shut down for a month in the spring.

10:32:45 We've had most of our workers are actually Of course, media and players are not going to work. You've got the Amazon warehouses Full speed ahead.

10:32:52 All the e commerce that's a big patch of work for us at the grocery store workers that the care workers and so on. So, we have the postal workers most of our most of our members are still working and have been working throughout.

10:32:58 Okay, so.

10:33:01 Yeah.

10:33:01 But, well I think that's covering a huge amount of ground and 35 minutes or so.

10:33:08 Kevin Cassidy Are you on on board I don't.

10:33:12 Not sure if I see you or not if you are.

10:33:27 I'm going to call on you to ask the first question and then I will, I will turn it over to one of our other folks who have lived in a question to Kevin and see, are you on board.

10:33:35 Don't see Kevin okay so let's, let's go to Steve Sylvia he's got a question about Amazon Steve.

10:33:41 Emily Can you unmute yourself and let him talk.

10:33:59 Emily he seems to be muted.

10:34:05 Can you unmute yourself. I think I unmuted myself and then Emily muted me But anyway, yeah. So, Christy. It's great to see you. I want to thank you for participating in this I'm curious what you've been doing in terms of helping different unions organize,

10:34:21 Amazon, you know one thing obviously it's coming up is the election in Alabama but also, you know, for years have been series of actions in Germany and and other places and how involved Have you been in working with the different unions and trying to

10:34:38 coordinate them in order to maximize their, their, their efforts, where you know we've been having an Amazon Alliance for seven years, bringing which brings together all the unions from around the world who are organizing Amazon and it used to be, you

10:34:55 know, Germany, Italy, France, it's now expanded to 22 countries and we, you know, if you follow us on any social media or even our website. We were very very active.

10:35:09 This past year, especially in working with all the union, all the unions were there are all the countries where there are unions so Germany, Italy, France, Spain, France.

10:35:25 To some, and then the UK and then some other countries as well, you know, throughout the pandemic, and it had a big action together on Black Friday.

10:35:31 Now as far as Alabama goes to her head president of RWDSU, who's a you know involved in, that's the union organizing the warehouse in Alabama. He's also the president of our unique alliance of Amazon and Stewart Apple bomb we've been quite engaged in

10:35:48 supporting Stuart through his resistance to the HQ in New York but also

10:35:56 we will be quite active in connection with this.

10:36:01 Alabama campaign, when it becomes more, you know, depending on what happens I mean obviously if it goes smoothly. There's no need for international solidarity, but we're definitely in close contact with RWDRW de su and I think I put out so we put out

10:36:25 statements but you know let's see how it unrolls you know it's a really big election, it's really exciting. And, you know, if you would have asked me five years ago like Could you just like that organize a warehouse of 6000 workers I would have said No

10:36:33 way but in this world we live in. Anything's possible so I'm.

10:36:38 I'm very hopeful, and it's great that these workers are coming together saying you know what we need a union and, yeah, I don't expect that Amazon will be friendly towards the idea they already have a website up there we're already campaigning, how heavily

10:36:55 they campaign. You know remains to be seen but we have to expect a pretty hard fight back.

10:37:00 Yep. Very good.

10:37:02 Lucy 40s I think had a question.

10:37:08 Lucy. And by the way, this is a new feature that we've added from lira the. We're actually will have a transcript of this meeting which will make make available so that's the low translations right away as that's that's a very cool feature Thank you so

10:37:25 Lucy.

10:37:27 Hi Hello Do you copy me. Yes, yes. Okay, well thank you, thank you, Christy for your, your presentation. It was fantastic and very very interesting, and the consular labor here in Washington DC that the Embassy of Spain in Washington.

10:37:43 And I was wondering if uni has promoted any kind of worldwide conversation on raising salaries to essential workers because risk. Risk of covet.

10:37:58 Thank you.

10:38:00 We do we have a campaign called essential rights for essential workers and one is to have a dignified wage. And so, in, and we put out a lot of promotional material on that but also we use that has been like the main messaging that we've had since, you

10:38:19 know, probably September is really pushing for that and supporting our affiliates that are fighting for wage increases in their, in their home countries so we've been especially active in supporting the wage increases in the UK where they've been trying

10:38:33 to lift up the grocery store workers to 1010 pounds an hour, the cleaners in Germany, the cleaners in the Netherlands, and definitely speaking out on behalf of the UFC Ws campaign to get hazard pay and attractive hazard pay.

10:38:50 So we've been pretty vocal on this issue and and because I'm a leader of a global union I get a lot of opportunity to speak on global platforms like the OECD or, you know, different you know international meetings and that's been my main message is that

10:39:05 the essential workers need to be treated with more dignity and they need a higher wage but also then you sick days they need social protection. They need the right to have a union.

10:39:18 That's great. So, Lisa power I think you're on.

10:39:23 There you go. Lisa if you could ask a question about the supply change that was a really good one. Okay. Sure.

10:39:29 Thanks Kristi. I was wondering what your thoughts are on the effectiveness of measures to improve transparency of supply chains. So for example products that might use slave labor or exploitive labor, or even in the DC area metro areas there are cleaning

10:39:45 services that promote the fact that they pay their cleaners a living wage and pay benefits in their employees.

10:39:57 I mean, I think that transparency is always a good thing. If you can't see the problem it's hard to act upon it so i'm in favor of that and in fact, in connection with the European legislation around due diligence.

10:40:13 We're asking for transparency for every company on whether to what extent their workers are represented by a union and bargaining like To what extent their workers are covered by collective bargaining agreement.

10:40:25 I do think that sometimes you have to be wary of the transparency that's just advertising and you know there's a lot of fake audits, there's a lot of fake.

10:40:37 You know certifications, whether it's. We're free from child labor and coffee or, you know, we pay a living wage. Well, I think I wary of that, I just think, if you have transparency, it has to be legitimate and it has to be, you know, third party like

10:40:53 legitimately not not just a social audit company that's giving you a blue ribbon, because a lot of that is, you know, a lot of that is just fake. I can't tell you how many kinds of companies I know that have told me, well we're rated the best company

10:41:10 to work in and Columbia, really, is that i mean you know how many are the best because I've heard that from 10 different companies and it's all just what they paid for.

10:41:20 So I would just be wary of the you know the source of the promotion.

10:41:28 Christy Could you just talk a little bit about. We were hoping that Kevin Cassidy would be on but it got tied up in a staff meeting.

10:41:35 So could you just talk about how you guys interact with the International Labour Organization Aiello, the UN.

10:41:44 Other multi, multi, multi lateral multinational organization but specifically with the Iowa.

10:41:53 I mean, obviously that we're based in Geneva, because the IO is here and traditionally that's the UN agency that that protects workers.

10:42:03 It's not so much the bread and butter of unis work.

10:42:08 Because, you know, we're so much involved in company work versus government work in the yellow is is you know tripartite organization.

10:42:18 And the worker representatives there tend to be the National Center unions from from the companies from the countries, however, however, we're deeply connected to pushing for new standards at the Aiello pushing for a supply chain standard pushing for

10:42:36 new standards on, you know, due diligence. So we might, and then we also have sectoral meetings, you know, social dialogue, a global social dialogue meetings at the yellow for our sectors, maybe you know once a year we'll have all the workers from the

10:42:53 finance unions around the world come together under the umbrella of the yellow to talk about joint issues of joint concern.

10:43:02 So we're definitely engaged, there and to the extent that you know the the new Declaration on the future of work was very important for us.

10:43:16 And we rely upon the yellow standards we rely upon the yellow conventions. I think that the yellow has become difficult to for the workers viewpoints in the past few years, because of a having Trump in the White House and the US is such an important player

10:43:34 in these multilateral institutions in a shift towards becoming more overtly anti collective bargaining across some of the, you know, and a few other countries so I'm looking forward to having it be a more reasonable place, but yes of course we're very

10:43:53 strongly tied to what happens at the Aiello.

10:44:10 That's great. Thank you. If I could just comment answer the question on Google, I saw a question, and I'll just be really quickly on that about what are we doing around Google because that's been incredibly exciting to see the Google workers of the US

10:44:15 come together in a union.

10:44:15 We represent that sector, we do we are they're part of us we're happy to say CWA the code. The unit is is part of uni and we just launched a Google Alliance just similar to what we've had in an Amazon, Google workers from other countries, who also belong

10:44:32 to a union.

10:44:33 It's a small group, we're really happy to have them together I think we just published something yesterday or today, announcing that and what are some of our big picture demands are but I think that's a really positive thing that taken together with the

10:44:48 Amazon election are two really positive things for unions in the US. Yeah. Fantastic.

10:44:54 We also had a question from key about trade agreements and what are your thoughts of union attitudes towards the EU, China trade agreement let's.

10:45:06 Can we call, can we call key up.

10:45:25 Hi. Can you hear me now. Yes, yes. Okay, great. Thank you for coming is really really healthy and very enrichment of your conversation. I'm just curious about a you know the recent the you sign on with the China, the breach rec room I just wondering,

10:45:31 The Free Trade Agreement I just wondering, though, you say have limited impact or what's the union's attitude whirling no sort of really no helping out with the more job creation or you think maybe it's a threat and how, how do we think about the future

10:45:46 or more. This kind of agreement. Thank you.

10:45:52 Um, I just don't have a, I don't want to express an opinion on that, I mean it's not an area that we're really deeply into, but in particular, it's not an area that are European region is really engaged and I mean in general.

10:46:10 Obviously, we think that trade agreements should be linked to commitments so human rights, and obviously we don't see that in China.

10:46:18 So, that's the bad side of it, whether it will involve more investment in Europe or not, you know, I'm not sure what the statistics are on that.

10:46:29 And we have not taken a position on that trade agreement nor have the European trade union, you know, Center as far as I know, and our Chinese unions part of your of, you know, because they're not really unions their statements agencies.

10:46:47 Right.

10:46:49 Yep.

10:46:51 Okay, I saw a question from my area about childcare this area and can we unmute area, which.

10:47:04 Hello. Am I unmuted.

10:47:08 Hi, um, yeah, I just wanted to ask whether you see an opportunity to put childcare employers supported childcare on the bargaining agenda.

10:47:21 You know it's been a big issue in the United States unions on that active, they're very active and asking for more public support so I'm just trying to cover that small aspect of making it part of the benefits that are bargained for.

10:47:40 You know, that's so specific to the country.

10:47:44 In most countries, the emphasis is on public support for benefits rather than negotiating benefits, and especially in Europe and I understand the unions in the US are also demanding public support for child care, as opposed to employ your support.

10:48:00 So, but I it's not an issue I have to say that's come up for us in any in with any of our unions outside of the US because in most cases, the question of childcare is, you know, a public, and with some private contribution usually but it's heavily publicly

10:48:24 subsidized. Thanks, Jeff. Jeff Wheeler did you want to ask a question or

10:48:33 have a message of hope, perhaps.

10:48:36 Hope is a good thing. Yeah.

10:48:39 So it's great to hear the conversation Christie I appreciate the comments and also I have the same doubts about global supply chains, about appropriately, dealing with labor rights.

10:48:50 Why was the president of the Union over the Department of Labor and now I'm over at USA ID. And so the question is, what, what do you recommend in terms of US policy for the administration of what we should be focusing on in terms of labor rights programming

10:49:06 and policy. And I'm wondering I'm poking around a bit too on kind of the connection with climate change, sustainable cities and other other matters. But I'm wondering what what would be your recommendations, the new administration of what we need to focus

10:49:22 on labor rights.

10:49:25 Well, look, you're asking the wrong person because there's plenty of US trade unionists who would have a long laundry list and I don't disagree with any of those laundry list but I know you know there's a whole question of what are the legislative changes

10:49:42 that need to be made and the, the right to organize and the change in fundamental labor legislation has got to be critical. But there's a lot of executive order things whether it's a huge number laundry list at the Department of Labor, and you know it's

10:49:58 not really for me to say what they should prioritize based you know I'm speaking really from a global purse, but I think there's all I'm doing as a starting point all the damage that Trump did in terms of reducing the ability to get overtime pay and of

10:50:14 course the gig workers and misclassification has to be taken on I think front and center and but the fundamentals of being able to organize that has to be that has to be fixed, but I hate, I hate to comment to specifically on the US political agenda because

10:50:33 it's not really my place to do that. Just to clarify, I wasn't talking about the US law but we actually find a lot of overseas programs, a lot of development programs around the world in the developing world.

10:50:45 And so that's what we're looking at kind of kind of what can we focus on around the world in terms of promoting labor rights and plugging that into some bigger issues.

10:50:55 I mean, look, the US knows how to do that if they have the will to do that I mean it's a question of enabling collective bargaining representation it's a question of living wages, and you know just conditioning, you know, Sir.

10:51:10 Sir, investment and other kinds of support on certain key standards.

10:51:16 We've done that in Bangladesh for example we negotiated the Bangladesh record and that was only about safety but it is doable, you can say it, you know, you've got to have say factories, you could add to that, you know, you've got to pay a living wage

10:51:30 in these factories, you've got to have freedom of association. I mean those are three starting points right there and I think that it's just a question of conditioning, and support on key elements.

10:51:43 But, freedom of association is really in many of those countries is is very very hard to find.

10:51:53 Okay, I think getting close to the last question John Russo has a question about universal basic income John Do you want to articulate that a little bit

10:52:07 there yet your high seas. Thanks for your discussion today.

10:52:13 I just did a long interview with PBS on the future of work.

10:52:18 And the question really, that is stressing is, will there be enough work around.

10:52:39 And given the growing level of security that have been going on the last 30 years with globalization neoliberalism and changes in technology.

10:52:35 And the natural thing that comes up is will a universal basic wage.

10:52:43 Help and or what will it mean for labor unions, given their traditional paradigm, on how they want to function.

10:52:54 Yes, good. Really good.

10:52:55 Good question john.

10:52:57 Excellent.

10:52:58 Sort of wraps rocks in the technology question and policy question so Christy this will be kind of your.

10:53:07 This is a high level question.

10:53:09 I mean, on the one hand, I think everybody should have a basic decent standard of living, and so that that's a floor, and whether that's a living living wage with social protection.

10:53:22 There should be that for everyone, but on the other hand, the linking up AI technology, I think it's just really a false choice, it's a way for the technology companies to get avoid paying their price, what they owe to society and they're just walking

10:53:36 away with billions and billions of dollars on this, you know, during this during coven, you know, Jeff Bezos alone could give every single one of his workers \$100,000 under an eight actually and be don't have the same wealthy had in February of last year,

10:53:53 so that's a nice up I, I think that when people talk about UBI it's like let's just give everybody you know the small amount of money that eliminates all their, you know, money they should be getting from the state for other reasons, and that should settle

10:54:06 it and I just don't i don't agree with that. I think there has to be different kind of redistribution of wealth and power and it shouldn't take the form of a you know a small little, you know, amount for everyone and the rest, eat the, you know, have

10:54:21 all the glory.

10:54:23 So I don't I'm not convinced

10:54:27 that though I do understand that.

10:54:30 It doesn't mean we should have no floor, we should have a floor, but I don't think you'd be I should be linked to technology. So I'm kind of like a part of the question is equally important.

10:54:44 Do you think it will change any way that unions or, or your organization will function as some of these issues come online I mean it's partly an institutional organizational question about paradigm shifts that I mean Rolando milk has written a lot about

10:55:01 this paradigm shift that's going on, and other people are talking about internet for labor issues.

10:55:08 Yeah, I don't do I think technology will change it or you bi will change the technology.

10:55:21 I

10:55:20 think that discussion you're talking about is more prominent in the US, precisely because unions have less power in the US. And so people are kind of like well how are we going to evolve to, you know, having no power from having little power, you know,

10:55:36 and you know, What's the paradigm shift there I don't think that unions elsewhere in the world, especially in Europe, where you have to say they've got more power are saying, well, we're not going to have any power because there aren't going to be any

10:55:48 jobs, they're not at that point yet, it's like, let's talk about a shorter workweek, let's talk about more holiday let's talk about redistributing wealth in a different way.

10:55:57 I don't think that represents a paradigm shift in the way unions work in the mega sense because it's still about how do we best represent the worker, how it workers so come together for collective power and represent, you know, the their best interests.

10:56:13 And I think that it makes unions more important in the new world of work not less. So, I don't see it as being like the farewell party for unions I think it's the opposite.

10:56:23 And that's what we hear from a lot of youth workers like the Google workers for example but others in tech were saying, This is not the glorious job I expected I want dignity my expectations have been raised to a certain point I want to be able to, you

10:56:38 know, work on projects that I care about I want, you know, I think that that I don't think that it's the sort of we're in the swan song of let's talk about a new paradigm I think that we really need to some unions really need to change and act differently

10:56:57 and have different, you know, system, you know, so many of us need to change that's not to say we don't all need to change in some ways, but I don't see it as a new paradigm, so maybe I'm kind of stuck in the mud but that's my no no that's a good, good

10:57:11 answer and I'm actually going to have our newest board member, do the last question that Petra Hansen from the Swedish Embassy was a question about OECD guidelines Petra Yuan.

10:57:25 Hi, thank you so much, Steve. Yeah, I'm with the Swedish Embassy and thank you Steve for this stream interesting presentation. So, you're in Geneva, but in Paris of the OECD office they've set up a unit for called the Global deal to try and provide like

10:57:44 a counterweight to the trade parody time and all the other topics that the OECD is covering and also having had an enhanced rather than the G 20 framework that the OECD has gained and past 510 years.

10:57:59 So just curious to hear your views on that but it also been was extremely interesting way of saying just now about trade unions having to adapt the way we all have to adapt to new reality so if you have any more time that that's really also super interesting.

10:58:11 Thanks again, expert on global deal I mean we uni belongs to global deal, I'm on the steering committee of the global deal. So you know we generally think it's a good idea to promote social dialogue and bargaining but I would say there's a little bit

10:58:26 of naivete about it because this the companies that are signed on to the global deal. Most of them do not have bargaining in outside of Western Europe, so I'm very concerned about that I'm pushing that like come on guys we're all in this together or guys

10:58:41 women, whatever, but like, it's not good to say we believe, we'd love social dialogue, but only if it's in Sweden, that doesn't work, or only if it's in, you know, Frank wherever it's required but as soon as you go to Malaysia it's a different story as

10:58:53 soon as you go to the US or Poland. So we need to like that needs to evolve in a good way, but I love the work that the global deal does to promote bargaining as a positive thing I think it's really great I I rely on their work a lot and.

10:59:10 And so I'd like to research papers I just think we need to push the employer members to do to actually walk the walk and not just talk the talk. So that's kind of my thing about the global deal.

10:59:21 I can't, the union's adapting yeah we're all adapting I mean that the Swedish unions are the best they've got everything like so online and so you know you can join the union online you could Swedish unions are union and in particular but others handles

10:59:37 The Swedish unions are uni own and in particular but others handles are really doing a great job of updating and modernizing and uni Odin is a growing union, a lot of our unions have been growing during covert they've proven themselves incredibly useful

10:59:52 to their members time when workers are, you know, desperate and really you know needing that support and I think the unions in Sweden, I'm saying because, you know, you're familiar with them but they've done a great job in their membership growth reflects

11:00:03 that.

11:00:05 So, you know some unions are slower than others but that's always, always going to be the case but I think we all need to, you know, lift our game we want to be a little more younger a little more female a little, you know, kind of the demographics, need

11:00:22 to shift a bit and some of our unions and, but that's happening. So, great.

11:00:30 Thanks so much. This has been a great conversation Christy, keep up the incredible work.

11:00:36 We really enjoy having you this is one of the advantages of this new zoom world Yes, you. You are not going to be able to a jet over here for an hour long presentation but this was really great sure our members appreciate that and we really encourage

11:00:57 Just to remind folks, February 24 will be sending out a notice we're going to have Anya from the German Embassy it Steve Sylvia with horse mode from eg Mattel.