

PSC RESOLUTION AT THE JULY 2006 AFT CONVENTION*

Whereas, the premises offered by the United State government to justify the invasion and occupation of Iraq have been exposed as lies: there were no weapons of mass destruction found in Iraq; there is no connection between Al Qaeda and the Saddam Hussein regime; there was no imminent threat from Iraq to the safety of the US and no reasonable evidence to warrant such a claim; and

Whereas, the cost of the war in human life continues to be high: as of June 1, 2006, more than 2,475 US soldiers have died and 18,000 have been severely injured, the majority of casualties occurring *after* the end of "major combat" in May 2003; the number of civilian casualties, as is typical in modern wars, is many times greater than the number of military deaths—estimates of the Iraqi civilian death toll range from 38,000 to more than 100,000, with many more severely injured. Deaths and injuries continue to mount; and

Whereas, the financial cost of the war has led directly to cuts in social and human services: as of June 1, 2006, the war and occupation cost the United States approximately \$195 million *per day*, or more than \$8 million *per hour*, with the total cost approaching \$286 billion dollars. The \$286 billion spent by the US on the war as of December 2005 could have been spent on our schools and colleges and for similar investments in healthcare, housing, jobs, or for the rebuilding of the Gulf States communities devastated by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita;

Whereas, we recognize the hardships undergone by US military personnel, many of whom are members or family of members of unions, and a disproportionate number of whom are from poor and working-class families.

Whereas the burden of the war—its deaths, injuries, psychological trauma, and lack of support for veterans—falls disproportionately on working people, poor people and people of color, thousands of whom enlisted because they had no access to other viable options for their lives, including affordable education, healthcare and decent jobs; and

Whereas, the war and the occupation have undermined the economic and social rights of the Iraqi people, producing grinding poverty for many, and an unemployment rate that is estimated at 25% to 70% in June 2004 and has persisted at high levels throughout the occupation; and

Whereas, Iraqi workers are struggling to maintain their labor movement, historically one of the few forces in Iraqi society that is both secular and non-denominational, and

Whereas, the US has moved against labor rights in Iraq, enforcing a 1987 Saddam Hussein law outlawing labor organizing, collective bargaining and strikes in the public sector—over 70% of Iraqi jobs, and

Whereas, the U.S. is privatizing formerly nationalized industries, issuing a decree allowing 100% foreign ownership of all Iraq businesses except oil. The beneficiaries of the privatization are primarily US-based multinational corporations, many of them with ties to the Bush Administration; and

Whereas, human rights in Iraq, consistently violated in the Saddam Hussein regime, have now been violated again in the abuse and torture of Iraqi prisoners at the hands of US military and intelligence personnel and of private contractors; and

Whereas, the U.S. action in Iraq is the result of a conscious policy to gain control over Middle East oil and expand U.S. dominance through the building of permanent U.S. military installations in Iraq and elsewhere in the Middle East; and

Whereas, war has made the United States less, not more, secure:

Resolved, that the American Federation of Teachers —as an organization that stands for the rights of working people, the promise of education, and the pursuit of knowledge—go on record as opposing this war waged under false pretenses and inimical to the interests of working people, and,

Resolved, that the AFT join in solidarity with hundreds of labor organizations and call for the immediate withdrawal of all U.S. military forces, bases and operations from Iraq; and be it further

Resolved, that AFT call on the US government to meet the physical, psychological, economic, and educational needs of returning and current veterans, including providing full health benefits and restoring services cut by the Bush Administration; and

Resolved, that AFT call on Congress to work to reorder national political and economic priorities toward peace, economic and racial justice, labor rights, true security, and human needs.

*This was but one of several anti-war resolutions brought by locals to the July, 2006 convention of the AFT. What eventually passed was a resolution not nearly as comprehensive and strong as this. But it was nonetheless a historic resolution (with the PSC playing an important role) that stated that "The American Federation of Teachers oppose[s] the war in Iraq and call[s] upon our country's leaders to withdraw all troops, bases and military operations in a rapid and timely manner." The resolution committed the AFT to organizing "state and local affiliates to join the AFT in working with the AFL-CIO to end the war in Iraq and bring the troops home rapidly."