



United Automobile, Aerospace & Agricultural Implement Workers

"Many faces, one Union!"

Local 2322

February 25, 2016

To the International Executive Board, UAW:

We, the Joint Council of UAW Local 2322, are profoundly disheartened by your decision to "nullify" a resolution in solidarity with Palestinian workers and students adopted by UAW Local 2865. As you know, our sister local represents over 13,000 student workers and graduate employees in the University of California system. Their resolution was adopted in December of 2014 by a vote of the membership, with 65% voting in the affirmative. It calls on the International union to "divest from companies involved in Israeli occupation and apartheid."

As the IEB itself acknowledged, the membership vote that resulted in Local 2865 adopting its resolution was properly conducted, with excellent member participation. In this sense, the process represents the type of active engagement and expression coming from rank and file members that we as a Joint Council hope to encourage in our own local. Nevertheless, you overruled Local 2865's members and overturned their resolution, claiming that it violates the UAW's constitution.

As we understand it, this decision rests on two grounds. The first one is that divestment by the UAW has the potential to injure unionized workers, including UAW members, and that this is somehow impermissible. But if this principle were consistently applied, it would become impossible for the union to engage in any type of boycott—even the one, now enshrined in memory as a high point of the struggle for racial justice, that helped topple apartheid in South Africa. Whether or not one agrees with the specific boycott embraced by Local 2865, labor solidarity cannot afford to dispense with the boycott as a tool. Any strike or picket line has the potential for negative economic consequences to some unionized worker, somewhere.

The IEB's second point was that the UAW Constitution's ethical code forbids discriminatory treatment, and that the resolution is "suggestive of discriminatory labeling and disparagement" of our union's Jewish and Israeli members. In fact, Local 2865's measure very specifically addresses policies of the State of Israel that are illegal under international law and have been widely condemned by international and even U.S. leaders; it is not directed towards individuals. Many Jewish members of Local 2865 campaigned to pass the measure and/or have spoken out in support of it.

In saying all of this, Local 2322 does not take a position on the measure itself. We have not debated Israel/Palestine broadly in our Local, whose members span a broad range of political viewpoints. We are, however, saying that we do not accept the IEB's claims that there is anything in the UAW Constitution that required nullification of Local 2865's resolution. This action looks to us like censorship, and is deeply disheartening. Insofar as it tends to confirm stereotypes of "Big Labor" as a top-down operation, it has the dangerous potential to discourage member involvement.

We urge you to reverse your decision, in the interests of upholding union democracy.

In solidarity,

UAW Local 2322 Joint Council