

Coalition of Labor Union Women
15th Biennial Convention
Los Angeles, California
October 14-17, 2009

RESOLUTION NO. 6

The Triangle Fire – A Century Later

March 25, 2011 is the Centennial anniversary of the infamous Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire.

The shirtwaist was usually a ready-made white blouse popular at the time. Max Blanck and Isaac Harris, the ‘Shirtwaist Kings’ owned the Triangle Shirtwaist Co. It occupied the top three floors (8 – 10) of the Asch Building at 23–29 Washington Sq. East on Greene St. in New York City. The building today is part of Cornell University.

On Saturday March 25, 1911 a fire broke out on the 8th floor fueled by flammable materials and dust, the fire spread quickly. Most of the 500 workers in the building that day were immigrant women, many in their teens. Some escaped before the elevator failed and the stairs became engulfed in flames. More than 60 jumped from windows rather than die in the fire and smoke. At least 24 died when the poorly maintained fire escape collapsed.

In the end 146 people, mostly young women, died as a result of the fire.

The owners were indicted for manslaughter but acquitted on reasonable doubt. Civil suits, 23 in total, on behalf of the families were settled almost two years later, for \$75.00 per victim.

Public horror and outcry resulted in the establishing of worker safety and work condition reforms as well as stronger unions in the garment industry.

A young Frances Perkins witnessed the fire; it so affected her that she devoted her life to improving the lives of working people. She was later quoted as saying “the New Deal was born that day”.

In March 2009 the Triangle Fire Remembrance Coalition was launched. (www.rememberthetrianglefire.org) The Coalition is creating a city – wide commemoration coordinating educational, commemorative and memorial activities to create a living memorial. A memorial that remembers not only the victims of the infamous fire but also the social conscience and action their suffering inspired.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

CLUW national organization join the Triangle Fire Remembrance Coalition and take an active part in commemorating what was a defining moment in Women’s and Labor History, to honor our sisters who paid with their lives that ours might be better;

CLUW chapters take part in commemorating this historic anniversary either by participating with the Remembrance Coalition or in their own areas by creating a memorial honoring those we lost and those who continue to work for justice for all working people.

Submitted By: CLUW Archives and History Committee
Committee Recommendation: Concur
Convention Action: Concur As Amended
Committee Assignment:

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CLUW will urge the Triangle Remembrance Coalition request linkage to the New York American Labor Studies Committee site and that CLUW offer to link their website to increase dissemination of the information about the Triangle Shirt Factory Fire.

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Convention Action: Concur As Amended
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