

"This is the U.S. Congress," Ciomek said. "Yes you can."

The congressman assured Ciomek that yes, he would vote against Fast Track.

Lawmakers listen

Among the highlights of the conference was a Capitol Hill rally attended by several lawmakers, including U.S. Rep. Michael H. Michaud (D-Maine) who was honored with the USW's Wellstone Award for his commitment to causes important to working people.

Michaud told the Steelworkers to keep being involved in the nation's policy, particularly the anti-sweatshop bill (H.R. 1992) and the fight for fair trade. Michaud is the original sponsor of H.R. 1992 that would prohibit goods made in sweatshops and with child labor from being imported into the U.S. marketplace.

"Your calls and your letters do matter and I ask you to continue to do the great work," Michaud said. "The Steelworkers have shown tremendous leadership on this fight. You have incredible influence on the Hill."

U.S. Rep. Dennis Kucinich (D-Ohio) reminded visiting USW members that details matter, regardless of what political party is in power.

"It's going to be really important that all the Democrats who are running for president are challenged on trade," he said. "All these trade agreements have to be taken down and renegotiated. Put those labor rights in there. And anyone who says anything else, frankly they're not representing America's working people."

'Steelworkers don't give up'

Outside of Rep. Betty Sutton's office (D-Ohio), the USW Ohio contingent crossed paths with fellow members from North Carolina. They exchanged notes and spoke about the wealth of knowledge they had gained at this year's conference.

Someone asked the laid off Continental Tire workers how they found the strength to be so involved with the union during such tough times.

Lots of prayer, the group agreed.

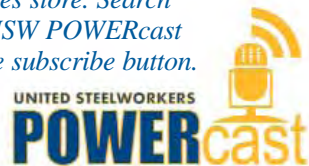
"And Rapid Response helps because it helps get the word out," said Foxx,

who is also active in Women of Steel. "The Steelworkers have been there for us. We don't give up. Steelworkers don't give up."

To see highlights of the 2007 Rapid Response conference, including USW interviews with guest speakers and photos of members, go to [www.usw.org](http://www.usw.org), click on the Rapid Response link and go to the conference highlights page.



You also can hear a report on Rapid Response on the USW's POWERcast, episode 14. To download a weekly podcast, go to [www.usw.org](http://www.usw.org) and click on the POWERcast logo, or you can receive free automatic downloads through Apple's iTunes store. Search iTunes for USW POWERcast and click the subscribe button.



# Political Crossroads

## Time for Change: Toxic Trade Deficit Hurts America and Workers

**W**illiam Greider, national affairs correspondent for *The Nation* magazine, was the keynote speaker at the opening of the Rapid Response conference. The veteran journalist is the author of several best-selling books, including "Secrets of the Temple," a critique of the U.S. Federal Reserve. Before his speech, Greider spoke with USW@Work:

**Q:** *Your body of work stands out for many reasons, perhaps most notably for challenging mainstream thinking in economics. Was that by design?*

**A:** "I started out as a reporter knowing nothing about anything. But I learned very quickly that business and finance were at the core of everything... What I found out was how lopsided the economy is, how very unfair it is to average people — how they're cut out of the decisions. Then I discovered labor. My work is to go against the conventional wisdom and I feel very comfortable with that."

**Q:** *Is it frustrating to have exposed some of the injustices you have over more than three decades but see little progress?*

**A:** "Yes, in some ways. But one of the things that labor unions do is educate people. They do that very well. It's part of their importance. Ordinary people aren't dumb. In most cases, they get to the truth. Trade is an example. For many years, the people down below knew what was happening. They may not have had the data in their hands, but they figured it out."

**Q:** *And what many working people said all along about "free trade" and globalization -- that it's costing good jobs, feeding a toxic trade deficit and so on — is being discussed by some corporate leaders, right?*

**A:** "I can see very clearly that the establishment, having preached that free trade is a win-win situation — nobody loses, etc., for decades — is now overwhelmed with evidence to the contrary. Workers, unions and

others have known this for years. Voices are now coming forward that say, 'You know what? We have to reform globalization in pretty serious ways, partly because the U.S. is losing.'"

**Q:** *Why is that an important development?*

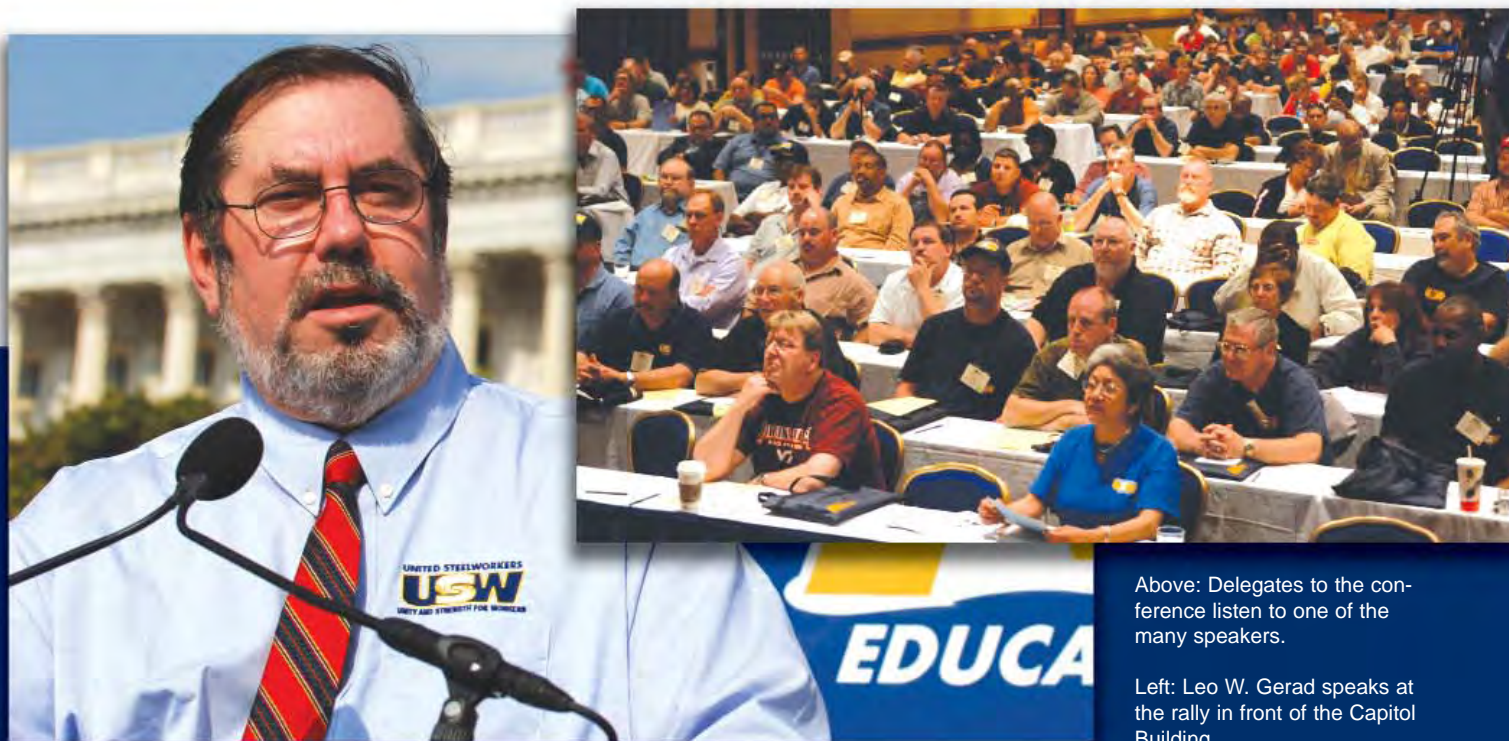
**A:** "That's an important addition to the debate because it's not coming from workers, myself or labor unions. It's coming from people who were on the other side, who were in management, who saw it happen and now recognize that their assumptions about how this was going to be good for everyone are simply wrong. That's a great help in arguing for political change."

**Q:** *You've talked about the country being at a political crossroads. Why is it important for USW members to be involved in having a voice in deciding the direction of our country?*

**A:** "If we don't change fast, we're going to go down as a first-rung economy, and if that happens, the whole global system goes down. I'm putting that starkly, but that's really what I believe. It's a historic opportunity to reform, change and prevent that from happening. But if we don't move rather seriously, the worst may happen."

To see a video interview with William Greider go to the Rapid Response page on [usw.org](http://usw.org) and click on conference videos.

“What we do from today until November of '08 will determine the kind of future we leave for our kids and grandkids.”



Above: Delegates to the conference listen to one of the many speakers.

Left: Leo W. Gerad speaks at the rally in front of the Capitol Building.

Photos by Page One

