

CHOICES

Conversations with the Candidates

Choices set our Democracy apart. Americans can choose to register to vote – or not, select a political party or remain independent; follow the campaigns closely or tune in later; switch off the debates or debate with

friends over the merits of various candidates; and, finally, choose to cast a ballot or stay home.

In November 2008, over 220 million Americans will make that final choice. Over 140 million will go vote.

And they will confront stark choices. Two major party candidates – and maybe an independent – will be on the ballot in all fifty states.

The winnowing process – the choices made by candidates, their campaigns and the voters themselves – has started already.

Historic Dual Endorsement

A score of candidates seek the presidency of the United States. Twelve Republicans and eight Democrats vie for their party's nomination. Most have

been raising money, visiting the early states of Iowa and New Hampshire and participating in candidate forums.

Given the early start – and the strong possibility that nominees will be chosen by early February 2008 – the IAM Executive Council decided to make an historic dual endorsement. For the first time in its 119-year history, the IAM would recommend to its membership one Republican and one Democratic candidate for the primaries and caucuses.

On May 23, 2007, ten candidates – five Democrats and five Republicans – were invited to participate in the IAM's *Conversations with the Candidates* scheduled for August at the National Staff Conference in Orlando, FL.

Moderated by Erin Moriarty of CBS News, these in-depth *Conversations* would focus on domestic issues: jobs, trade, health insurance, schools, manufacturing and energy. To be considered for the IAM endorsement, candidates had to participate.

Almost immediately, the



Bill Burke, Page One Photography

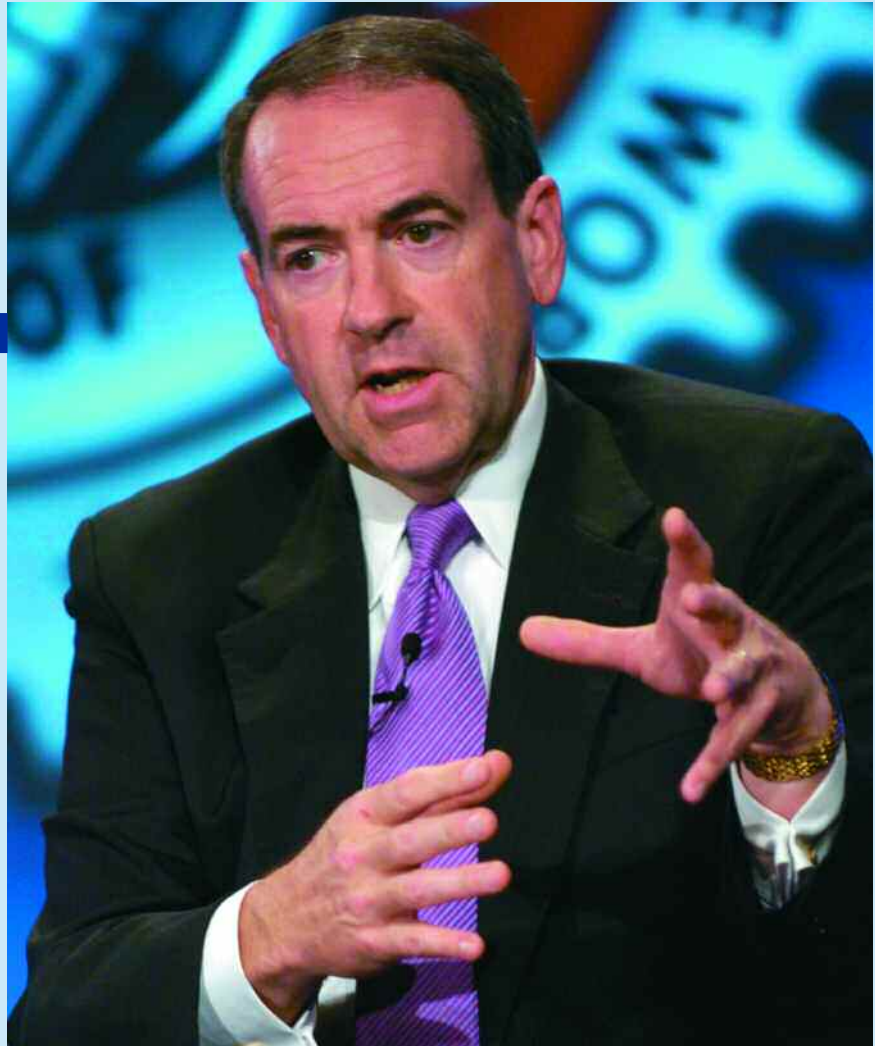
Senator Hillary Clinton earned the IAM's endorsement for president in the Democratic primary.

'08

candidates began to make choices. Among the Democrats, Congressman Dennis Kucinich, Senator Hillary Clinton and former Senator John Edwards accepted. Senator Barack Obama and Governor Bill Richardson declined citing scheduling conflicts.

Republican Congressman Duncan Hunter accepted the invitation but, at the last moment, chose to attend a forum in New Orleans. Former Governor Mitt Romney, former New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani and Senator John McCain sent their regrets. Former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee chose to alter his schedule and actively sought the IAM endorsement.

Since January 2007, presidential candidates had submitted to forums that demanded 30-second sound bites, made them wait ten minutes for a turn to speak, and saw them raising their hands like school children. Now they had an opportunity to explain their posi-



Bill Burke, Page One Photography

Former Governor Mike Huckabee earned the IAM's endorsement for president in the Republican primary race.

tions on the issues in detail.

Over 700 Machinists were anxious to learn about them and what they would *do* for working families.

Conversation with Hillary Clinton

Four individual *Conversations* were held – two on August 27th and two the following evening. Each lasted about 45 minutes.

Senator Hillary Clinton went first. She argued that “My job as president will be to make sure that every single American does have a

good job with a rising income, with health care guaranteed that is high quality and affordable, and with pension security no matter what happens.” She then promised “to protect Social Security, to get back to where unions can organize to work and fight for workers.”

When asked by the moderator how unions fit into her plans, Clinton responded that “our country worked best when we were creating a thriving middle class, when we were creating millions of new



AP/World Wide Photo

Because of outsourcing, Boeing's new 787 Dreamliner production will not create as many U.S. jobs as prior Boeing aircraft models. Key components are being produced offshore and shipped to Boeing for final assembly, costing not only U.S. jobs, but critical manufacturing skills.

jobs, when people did feel they could take care of their son or their daughter and have a better future for themselves. I want to get back to that shared prosperity. The middle class is the engine that makes America great. And the union movement has been the catalyst for that engine."

Support Middle Class

"I want to take health care off the table for negotiations," explained Clinton. "We need guaranteed, affordable, universal health care.

"In addition to health care, we need to incentivize manufacturers to keep manufacturing here in America. Right now, our tax code actually promotes the outsourcing of manufacturing jobs."

Moriarty then probed deeper on trade and tax policies. Clinton replied, "We'll close all the loopholes, for number one. Why on earth should we give a tax advantage to a company that wants to take a job overseas? If they want to take a job overseas, they have to pay for it and not get subsidized by the American taxpayer. We also need to figure out how we're going to have trade agreements that are actually enforceable when it comes to not just what is usually dealt with in a trade agreement, but labor and environmental standards.

"We need to invest in infrastructure again. We are falling way behind. We cannot have a strong economy if

we're not building up more roads and bridges, tunnels and subways and airports, and all the things that we need to maintain our economy.

"And we also need to do more for kids who don't go to college, like apprenticeship programs and more community college programs, more skills programs. We've got to have more apprenticeship programs. Where are you going to get the next generation of airline workers? Where are we going to get the next generation of people that are going to work on the assembly lines? Where are we going to get these people if we don't start training them now," Clinton asked.

"And we need to respect the dignity of that work, but

we've got to recruit young people into it and give them a sense that there's a future there," she added.

Asked if she thought we were in the middle of a trade war with China, Senator Clinton answered, "well, if we are, we're losing it."

The New York Senator explained that the Chinese "have to understand that my first obligation as president is to protect American jobs and to protect American health and safety. If they want to have access to our market, they have to play by new rules."

Senator Clinton used her closing statement to make a direct appeal for the IAM endorsement. "I would love to have your support. I'd love to have your partnership, not just during this campaign, but when the hard work really starts, when I get inaugu-

AP / World Wide Photo



Resources for skills training, such as this Cleveland-area high school course on CNC machine programming, are critical for keeping America's manufacturing base strong.

rated," Clinton said. "I want you there with me. Together, we'll change America and get our country back on the right track."

Leaving the stage to a standing ovation, Clinton shook hands, had her picture taken with IAM members and signed autographs until the room emptied. Later she

met with the IAM Executive Council and President Buffenbarger to again ask for the IAM's support.

Huckabee Enters the Lion's Den

Next up was former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee. As the only Republican candidate in Orlando, he knew he needed a direct but humorous approach.

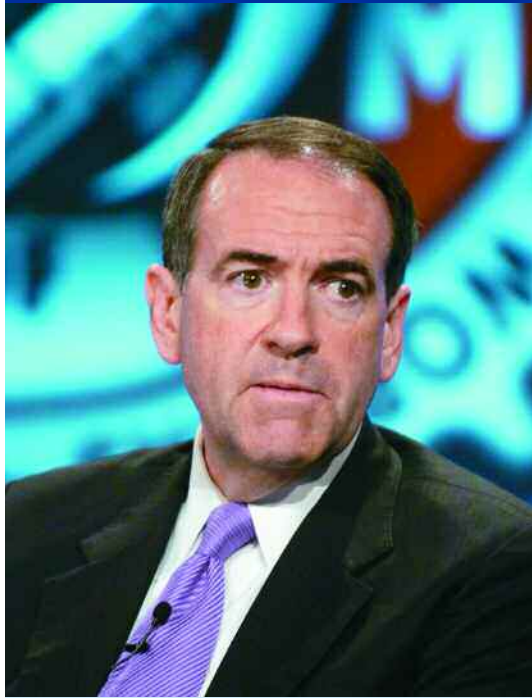
"I am here to ask for your support and endorsement," Governor Huckabee said, "which may seem a little unusual. I know that to a lot of people, quite frankly, a Republican coming to a union meeting seems about as out of place as Michael Vick at a meeting of PETA."

While Huckabee's line drew laughs from the audience, if not from the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals or the Atlanta

Bill Burke, Page One Photography



After her remarks drew a standing ovation at the National Staff Conference, Senator Clinton greeted an enthusiastic IAM crowd.



Bill Burke, Page One Photography

Former Governor Mike Huckabee pledged to be the president for all Americans.

Falcon's quarterback, he quickly explained his blue collar roots.

"My father was a fireman and worked as a mechanic on his days off fixing car generators, back when cars had generators," said Huckabee. "My dad never had a day of his life that he didn't have the work of the day still on his hands when he came home."

Better Future

Then Huckabee turned serious. He explained that he "was the first male child in my entire family lineage to even graduate from high school ... the 44th governor of Arkansas, who stayed in that job for 10 and a half years ... lived a life that most Americans lived, a life that hasn't always been easy. Here's what I worry about," continued Huckabee. "How

many of you are living better today than you ever dreamed you would be living when you were a kid? My guess is every hand in this room would go up. But if I ask, how many of you have confidence that your grandchildren will be living an even better life than you? My fear is that nobody's hand would go up.

"I'm here because I believe that, whether we're left, right, liberal, conservative, you need to be thinking about what takes this country up, not what's taking us down."

Then Huckabee took a shot at the CEOs who keep "asking for huge concessions on the part of the people who actually make up the day-to-day workforce.

"In many cases, they went after the baggage handlers, their ticket agents, the people at the gate and the pilots ... to take up the slack. The CEO gets a \$100 million

bonus and the stock goes down eight percent. Why on God's earth do we allow that kind of disparity? And the reality is that we can't."

After a long discussion of his FAIR tax plan, his views on health care and a spirited defense of Wal-Mart business practices, Huckabee turned to the issue of trade.

"American companies are going to try to find the best way they can to survive, to bring products to the marketplace," said Huckabee. "Where we failed as a country is by allowing the Chinese to buy up extraordinary amounts of our currency, and then use the manipulation of that currency to artificially lower their prices and to force things back into the country. We're allowing an incredible trade deficit that ... last year alone was over \$232 billion."

Asked by Moriarty how he would define his politics, Huckabee responded, "I am



AP/Wide World Photo

Huckabee spoke out against companies demanding concessions while giving CEOs large bonuses. Above, Wall Street specialists trade shares of health care giant UnitedHealth Group, whose CEO left after investigations into \$2.1 billion in stock options granted him by the company.



Using know-how gained from making components for U.S. plane manufacturers, China is producing its first commercial regional jetliner, the ARJ-21, that will flight test in 2008. China plans to produce large jets by 2020.

not a Wall Street Republican, and I'm not a K Street Washington lobbyist Republican. In fact, nobody's challenging Wall Street and K Street like me in the Republican party, nobody. I'm the only Republican that's coming to this meeting here tonight. And the reason is because I know in my heart I'm a Main Street Republican."

Protect Manufacturing

His anti-establishment role became obvious as Huckabee talked about America's ability "to fight for ourselves. And that means we have to manufacture our own weapons of defense. We can't be dependent upon some other government to provide for our weapons of defense."

Huckabee argued that America has to "stop allowing the Chinese to pillage us with devalued currency, cheap unregulated goods, and force the American manufacturer to play by a set of rules [that] you're not forcing everybody else to play by. Secondly, if you make this an issue, not just of the economy, but of national security, then we need to do whatever it takes to make sure that we are manufacturing our own weapons of defense. If we don't, we are at the mercy of whoever is manufacturing those weapons to be free."

The candidate from Hope, Arkansas ended his *Conversation* with a powerful, poignant statement explaining why he was there. "I came here because if I'm the

president, I'm going to be the president of every single American, even the ones that don't vote for me. I've got to be the president of every Democrat who really wanted somebody else to win. I've got to be the president of people who don't share my personal religious faith. I was that kind of governor. I didn't please everybody. I never will.

"And I *do* understand when I look into the eyes of somebody who tells me they've lost their job. I know what that feels like. And I know the terror in a person's face when they say it. And it will not be lost on me. I may not have all the answers, but I'm still going to be the president of all the people. And I would give my utmost and my best to make sure



The hollowing out of America's manufacturing base threatens our ability to produce the products for national defense, such as ammunition, tanks, aircraft and electronic components.

that I never forgot where I came from and I would never forget where you came from. That's the best I could promise you, but I promise you that."

Edwards' Closing Argument

The following evening, August 28th, former Senator John Edwards and Congressman Dennis Kucinich battled for the IAM endorsement. By prior agreement, Edwards went first. The former North Carolina Senator and Democratic vice presidential nominee was a man on a mission. Edwards met with the IAM Executive Council for five minutes and President Buffenbarger privately for a few minutes before going on stage. There he wasted no time making his pitch.

"I want to be the presi-

dent of the United States who ends the war in Iraq, but I also want to be the president of the United States who ends George Bush's war on working people in this country," he began. "I want to be the president that stands up and fights for American jobs ... And then finally, I want to be the president of the United States that strengthens and grows the union movement."

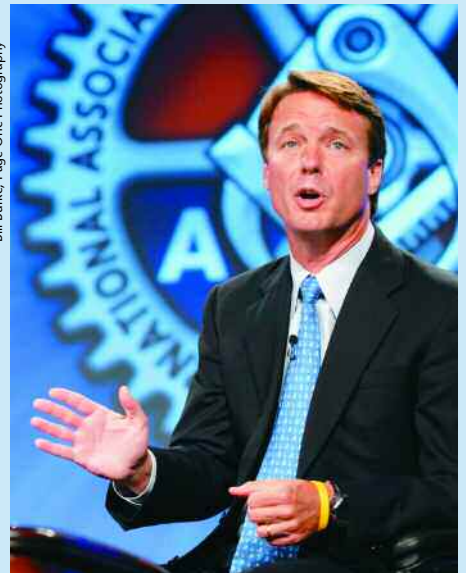
Clearly John Edwards knew what he wanted to be. What wasn't equally clear was what he would *do* as president. Repealing the federal right-to-work law was a case in point.

Asked by Erin Moriarty if he would sign a bill repealing section 14(b) of the Taft-Hartley Act, Senator Edwards tried to shift the question to "the rights of workers to be members of a union."

But Moriarty zeroed in on right-to-work and asked, "If Congress, in fact, enacted a law ... that said that [if] anyone who was in a union shop, they would have to join that union; they'd have to pay dues. Would that be something you would sign?"

In the transcript, Edwards is quoted as saying, "Yes. (stammers) Absolutely. I will do anything. Here's what I believe. I believe we will not continue to have a strong middle class in this country unless we strengthen and grow the organized labor movement. It's that simple."

Asked about his signature issue – poverty in America – Edwards responded, "I think the greatest anti-poverty movement in American history is the organized labor movement. And to the extent we can grow and strengthen the organized labor movement, we will have a direct impact on poverty in this country."



Bill Burke, Page One Photography

Former Senator John Edwards focused on health care and fighting poverty.

Health Care Initiative

Then it was on to health care. "My proposal [mandates] that every man and woman, everybody in America be covered. It covers up cracks in the health care system. It bans pre-existing conditions ... [gives] mental health parity, mental health is treated the same as physical health. Preventive care, chronic care, long-term care, all covered. Dental care and vision care are covered. You can choose between either a private plan or a government plan."

Edwards explained that his plan lets Americans "take your health care with you wherever you go. If you're laid off, if you change jobs, if you just moved from one part of the country to the other, your health care can go with you. And we actually have a system for monitoring the quality of care and the quality of choices that are available."

"And I don't believe you can have universal health care for free," said Edwards. My plan costs "90 to 120 billion a year, and I pay for it by getting rid of Bush's tax cuts for people who make over \$200,000 a year.

"I was against NAFTA and CAFTA, et. al. from the beginning." And when asked if he would get rid of those agreements, Edwards said, "I would



Workers at Cessna Aircraft defeated Cessna's attempt to impose "Definity," a substandard health plan. America's health care crisis makes medical benefits a tough issue in contract negotiations for both active workers and retirees.

first try to redo them with real labor standards, real environmental standards and real enforcement mechanisms. If that's not possible, yes, get rid of them."

Edwards drew applause when he said, "I came from nothing. I worked hard all my life. All my work has been on behalf of people who are in this room, fighting big corporations, big multinational corporations, and their armies of lawyers. I have no apologies whatsoever for what I've done with my life. I've worked hard. I've been there for my family, and my kids have had a better life than I had. And I do not back away from that for a second.

"I want your support,"

Senator Edwards concluded, "I've been with you in the crunch. And I want you to be with me in the crunch because I'm telling you that together we can strengthen and grow this movement. And most importantly, we can strengthen and grow America in the process."

Edwards left the stage to thunderous applause, and immediately plunged into a friendly crowd.

Kucinich Will Cancel NAFTA and WTO

As members returned to their seats, the final *Conversation with the Candidates* began. Introduced by President Buffenbarger as a man who works tirelessly to



Kucinich pledged to reform America's health care system that enriches corporations but leaves millions of Americans uninsured and unable to afford prescription drugs.

better the lives of working-class Americans, Ohio Congressman Dennis Kucinich told the audience why the Machinists Union flag flies in his congressional office.

The IAM flag “was put there after 1999 when I marched with the Machinists in Seattle. They were there and they were so strong. I walked right next to President Buffenbarger. And I told him in Seattle I want that Machinists flag right in my Washington office so people can see what Machinists stand for. They stand for what’s good for America.”

Kucinich then talked about his childhood. “Back in Cleveland, Ohio,” he explained, “my family fought every day for survival ... had concerns about where the next check’s coming from ... whether there was

going to be money to send the kids to school, whether there’s going to be food on the table, whether [they could] afford to pay the bills or not. I understand what people go through.”

Top Priorities

In a rapid-fire litany, Kucinich went through his priority to-do list. “First act in office, cancel NAFTA and the WTO and have trade conditioned only on workers’ rights, human rights and environmental quality principles. That’s the first act.

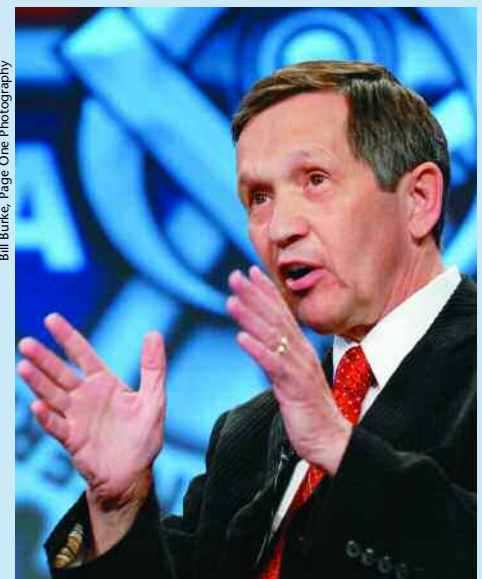
“Then I’ll send the Congress a bill for Medicare for all: a single-payer, universal, not-for-profit health care system. Today, the Census Bureau said 47 million Americans are without health insurance. But you know at the bargaining table, health insurance is the key issue. It’s been used to

squeeze unions for a couple of decades.

“Under a Kucinich Administration, health care is no longer a bargaining issue because everyone’s covered, a universal, single-payer, not-for-profit health care system. I’ve written the bill. It’s H.R. 676,” he said.

“It’s time to free workers from the worries they have of losing their job, not having portability with their health insurance,” said Kucinich.

Asked if SEIU president Andy Stern was correct in saying the train had left the station when it came to manufacturing jobs, Kucinich responded, “Well, Mr. Stern, we’re going to build trains in America. We’re going to build new rails in America. We’re going to have an American manufacturing policy that says that the maintenance of steel, automotive, aerospace



Bill Burke, Page One Photography

Congressman Dennis Kucinich vowed to repeal NAFTA and protect American manufacturing jobs.

and shipping is vital to our national economic security and our national defense.”

Kucinich closed by reminiscing about facing down the banks as Cleveland’s mayor. “In 1978, the bankers told me to sign the papers to sell our local utility company. I thought of my parents.

“They were sitting in a small apartment above 10712 St. Clair Avenue ... I stood in the hallway. They were counting pennies to pay utility bills ... And when I saw that as a child, it had an indelible impression on me.

“So I’m sitting there with this banker and thinking ‘there are people that it really matters to them what they pay for electricity, really matters if they can get electricity for \$70 a month instead of \$100 a month. And so I said NO to the sale,” said Kucinich.

The battle with Cleveland’s bankers cost Kucinich his next mayor’s race. It would be fifteen years before he returned to public office, first as a state senator and then as a Member of Congress.

His courageous stand marked him as a hero to the men and women at the IAM National Staff Conference.

Extensive Outreach

Throughout August, the IAM conducted an extensive membership outreach effort. In a random sample survey of all IAM members and retirees, an online poll avail-



AP / World Wide Photo

Workers assemble motorcycles in a factory in Shanghai, China. Without better trade laws, countries like China will continue to gain manufacturing skills and jobs.

able to all members on GOIAM.org and on computers set up for National Staff Conference participants, over 3,000 IAM members let their voices be heard.

Members narrowly supported the idea of a dual endorsement – endorsing one Democrat and one Republican candidate in the presidential primaries and caucuses. Independents and Republicans were overwhelmingly supportive.

On the question of candidate preferences, IAM members reflected the American public almost exactly. Among the Democrats polled, Senator Hillary Clinton won 38 percent; Senator Barack Obama held at 22 percent, Senator

John Edwards was at 13 percent and Congressman Dennis Kucinich drew three percent.

Among members who said they were registered Republicans – roughly one-third of the sample, the same pattern held. The leading GOP contenders drew equivalent levels of support as in national surveys. Governor Mike Huckabee, the only Republican to participate in the *Conversations*, drew support from seven percent, roughly double his national polling numbers.

In the survey, 72 percent of IAM members agreed that the union’s leadership should endorse the presidential candidates who best represented the interests of working people



More than 700 participants at the National Staff Conference had the opportunity to express their opinions online about the presidential primary candidates and issues in the 2008 elections.

and the concerns of Machinists union members.

Even among IAM leaders, the jury was still out. They were considering all the evidence, evaluating all the arguments, and assessing what was in the best long-term interests of its members.

Strategic Endorsement

On Thursday morning, August 30th, International President Tom Buffenbarger explained the value of an IAM endorsement to the National Staff Conference.

“Our endorsement carries with it something priceless — a blue collar union’s seal of approval,” he said. “And make no mistake about this. Blue collar families are the key demographic battleground in 2008.”

“We cannot unify our union,” explained

Buffenbarger, “nor unify our country unless we are prepared to face the hard facts,” he asserted. “A third of our members vote Republican; two-thirds vote Democratic. And we need to find common ground — inside our own house and in the larger body politic — if we are to address the crises this country and this continent are facing.” Finding that common ground goes hand-in-hand with “finding reliable partners who will ... work with us on the issues that matter most to our members,” said Buffenbarger.

Historically, the IAM endorsed the men who fought in the trenches alongside the Fighting Machinists. Those fights did not occur in the few months before an election, but in the years and decades that led up to those presidential elections. Nor

did those fights end when the polls closed.

“The men we endorsed kept fighting shoulder to shoulder with us in the years AFTER the polls closed,” said Buffenbarger. “Some like Ted Kennedy, Tom Harkin and Dick Gephardt are still our active partners today. Between them they have 48 years of partnering with us AFTER their campaigns for the presidency ended.”

So a strategic endorsement — one that aimed for a lasting, real partnership — was the objective.

The Case for Huckabee

“I was impressed with former Governor Mike Huckabee,” explained Buffenbarger. “He had the guts to tell us where he disagreed with us and the brains to figure out where we might work together.

“He didn’t tell us what we wanted to hear. He told us what he believed, even when not a single one of us would have agreed with him. That took guts. That took conviction — not a bad combination.”

When the vote was



Mike Huckabee

called, the conference agreed to endorse former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee.

Unanimous for Clinton

Turning to the endorsement for the Democratic nominee, Buffenbarger reiterated that the IAM was “looking for a strategic partner who will work with our union over the long haul, can amass over 70 million votes in the general election, can compete for 350 Electoral College votes, and can govern this nation in a time of multiple crises.”

Buffenbarger reminded those in Orlando that during the last Clinton Administration, “this union had a friend in the West Wing – and a friend in the East Wing. We fought with the Oval Office on NAFTA and PNTR. We worked with the East Wing on health care reform. We worked with the White House on the Family Medical Leave Act, a patients’ bill of rights and the creation of 18 million new JOBS.

“Over the last seven years, the former First Lady kept working for our brothers and sisters in New York. When the terrorists attacked, she waged war with our own bureaucracy to provide recovery monies, to address the respiratory ills of the union men and women who worked at Ground Zero – the World Trade Center cough we highlighted in our documentary *Everyday Heroes*.

“On CAFTA she was with us. On EFCA she was with us. She fought shoulder to shoulder with us on legislation

impacting the airline industry. And she co-founded the Senate Manufacturing Caucus.

“She is campaigning to make the Invisibles – the blue collar men and women, the union brothers and sisters – visible to the next president of the United States.

“Hillary Clinton is focusing on jobs, on OUR jobs, on OUR industries.

“I believe,” asserted Buffenbarger, “that Senator Clinton will make a spectacular president. She’s smart. She’s tough. She’s focused. She’s a fighter. And with our help – with the help of the Fighting Machinists – she’s going to be the Democratic nominee for president.”

Again, the conference voted. The IAM endorsement decision was unanimous. Not a dissenting voice was heard.



Hillary Clinton

Choices had been made. Senator Hillary Clinton and former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee were chosen as the IAM standard-bearers in the 2008 primaries and caucuses. It was an historic moment for a history-making union.

And now those choices belong to the IAM membership.



On the last day of the National Staff Conference, the IAM made an historic dual endorsement in the presidential primaries of Democratic candidate Senator Hillary Clinton and Republican candidate former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee.