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Dobbs 'Proud to Be a Populist' Receives IBEW's *Voice of Working America* Award

Cleveland---Proclaiming pride in being called a "protectionist" and a "populist" by corporate America, TV anchor Lou Dobbs fired up delegates to the 37th convention of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, turning his speech into a town hall meeting on trade, jobs and the needs of working families.

Dobbs, the anchor and managing editor of CNN's "Lou Dobbs Tonight," was named the first recipient of IBEW's *Voice of Working America Award*, presented by the union for telling the true story, the real deal about what is happening to America's working families.

Dobbs ripped into a critique of the U.S. political, corporate and media elites. Our Constitution begins with the words, "We, the people, not we the elitists, we the corporatists, we the free-trade-at-any-price. Democracy is fundamentally about us, the people."

"We're losing sight of that," said Dobbs. "We are at a stage in our national life in which corporate America has come to dominate every major facet of our economy and our society. The minimum wage hasn't been raised in nine years in this country. The idea that this Congress could worry about an estate tax for the wealthiest two percent of this nation, could reform the bankruptcy law according to the exact details and instructions of the financial services industry should be repugnant to every American."

"Whether you're a Democrat or you're a Republican or you're an Independent, please let us agree on one thing: We must have countervailing influences to dominant political power in this nation in order for this great democracy to work," said Dobbs

"There is no excuse for those values in an American Congress, whether Republican or Democrat," Dobbs added. "Democrats voted along with

Republicans on the bankruptcy law of 2005. Democrats are voting along with Republicans on free trade agreements whether it's CAFTA or it's NAFTA or, as so many of my viewers love to talk about, SHAFTA.”

“I’m one of those fools who said we should go ahead with NAFTA in 1993. I did so with two very bad assumptions on my part. One is that President Salinas of Mexico and President Clinton of the United States were serious in the side agreements on environmental and labor protection,” said Dobbs. “I hate being wrong, but I do admit one of those rare, infrequent, almost impossible to recall occasions when I am.”

The United States has contributed nearly 80 percent of the total wealth created around the world over the course of the last 30 years, he added. Yet, during that same period, real earnings have been stagnant, and manufacturing wages have actually declined. “Now [we are called protectionists] for suggesting that it is unfair, that it is madness to destroy an industrial base...that was the world’s envy,” said Dobbs.

Expressing anger at President Bush’s contention that immigrants are taking jobs that Americans don’t want, Dobbs said, “This president can’t finish a sentence. Americans don’t want jobs that pay slave wages.”

When social issues start clouding the political thinking of Americans, Dobbs suggested, change the subject to talk about the \$5 trillion trade deficit, or the facts that 48 million people in the United States don’t have health care. “Talk about the fact that we can drop hundreds of billions of dollars into overseas adventures and nation building, but we can’t spend a billion dollars to secure our ports and borders.”

When a delegate asked Dobbs what he would think about providing tax breaks to companies that would bring manufacturing back to the United States, he said, “I guess I’d be all right with that.” But he also offered a different view. “How about this—a company that offshores American production, exports American jobs, and then exports back those goods and services to this country, how about we tax the bloody hell out of them?”

Saying that he was tired of people sitting and simply “discussing the socio-political economic situation,” Dobbs drew thundering applause when he shouted, “No. Raise some hell. Give a damn. And don’t be embarrassed to be a little passionate...If we’re honest with one another and demand the truth, you and I will have a great deal to be proud of and we’ll assure our children a bright future that otherwise would be denied them.”

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