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UAW President Bob King said today that the union will continue to embrace change, true partnerships with employers where it represents workers and strive for improved quality.

King, speaking at Automotive News World Congress -- an automotive seminar taking place in Detroit -- said that the union has changed, and that today, working with the UAW is a smart business decision.

“The UAW has learned from the past and we have embraced radical change,” King said. “We have completely discarded the us verses them mentality”

King’s had a different message for foreign-owned automakers with non-unionized plants in the U.S.

“We want to restart our relationship with these companies,” King said.

King, 64, has emphasized his desire to ramp up organizing efforts since he was elected president last June. Earlier this month King announced plans to begin a campaign to organize non-unionized U.S. auto plants owned by Asian and German automakers and to use a portion of the UAW’s \$800 million strike fund to finance the strategy.

As part of that effort, King has proposed a set of eleven organizing principles that he would like companies to sign during an organizing campaign. Those principles, according to King, would ensure fair elections free from interference, intimidation, pressure and misleading information from companies and the union during an election campaign.

“If an employee makes a choice not to join the UAW, we will respect that decision,” King said today.

King’s renewed organizing goal comes as the union prepares to renegotiate its four-year labor contracts with the Detroit Three automakers, which expires in September.

The UAW has lost thousands of members in recent years as the domestic automakers have lost market share and as unions have lost favor with the American public. The UAW had less than 400,000 members at the end of 2009, after reaching a peak of 1.5 million in 1979.

King also has said that the labor rates of American autoworkers in foreign-owned plants are a critical issue for the UAW as it enters contract talks with American auto companies.

This year, for the first time, the UAW faces a binding arbitration clause adopted in contract talks in 2009 that bars the union from going on strike on any wage and benefit issues that would make domestic automakers uncompetitive with Asian automakers in the U.S.