

I.B.E.W. Local 336

# News

# Views

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VOLUME 11, NUMBER 1

Labor Omnia Vincit

MARCH, 1997

## President-Business Manager's Report

by Donald L. Moseley

My first Business Manager's report to you is difficult to write. I could write page after page describing all the problems we're facing in all the contracts this local administers. There are two primary problems with that approach. Number one, you already know what the problems are and number two by the time you read this report those problems are old news and we have a new group of problems to deal with. Besides, you really want to know just what will your Union and new President-Business Manager do about the mess all these various companies are making.

When I took this office I first recognized that I had in place the best field staff assembled in the fifteen plus years that I have worked for this local. I saw no need to make any changes in that regard and did not. The talent that is present in that collective group is going to be utilized to it's fullest extent. While the pace they experience today is fast and hectic, my plan is to make many if not most of those people as cross-functional as possible. To network with all entities of this local is an absolute must in my mind. The more this staff can know about all aspects of the local, the better this local and it's members can be served.

I want to broaden our work in the field of organizing. The best way we can protect and improve the working lives of our members is to vigorously organize and bring under the union banner those workers who compete with our wages, benefits and working conditions. We must strive to bring their levels up to that which we enjoy today. If we don't then employers will

continue to attempt to diminish our current standard of living down to the non-union level. At some point in the future I would like to see this local have a full time organizer on staff. The work involved in organizing is immense and complex. From odd, irregular hours to knowing all the legal boundaries that frame that topic, an organizer can make the difference between growth or slow certain diminishment of a local.

The financial stability of our local is of eminent concern. It is no great secret that employers are "taking us on" as never before. It seems that little is settled any more short of going to arbitration or court. Costs in operating the local continue to rise while income to the local has subsequently diminished. I have taken steps to reduce spending of the local and have worked with the Executive Board in doing so. The Executive Board is another fine example of a body of people looking out for the best interests of the membership. They have taken bold and daring steps in assuring the financial future of our local and I applaud them for doing so. They do a great job in tracking the spending of this local and looking after your interest at the same time.

I want the employers of our members to succeed and make money. If they make money then we have an opportunity to get more of it at the various bargaining tables. I will not allow them to make their profits at your expense. That seems to be the approach many of those employers are taking today. Our members do their jobs and produce spectacular earnings for their companies. But when the time comes to share some of the wealth, it seems greed takes over. Suddenly, their "family" of employees they tout all year long, becomes an ugly step-child when it's time to reward them for the work they've done.

This job you have given me is a big one. I recognize its importance and I do not take it lightly. I pledge that I will look after your best interests and represent you to my best ability. I cannot succeed without your support. You, each of you, are my strength. And without your strength, I can't even begin to battle all the giants at our door-step. Thank you for allowing me to lead your local. I hope to do a job worthy of your support.

## WHO DO I CALL?

To help you reach the right person when calling the Union office regarding non-contractual questions or problems, or to report a change of name or address, please note the following and keep it in your wallet:

For Ameritech (IL & IN), Johnson Control & Magic Kingdom Cards Jean Sullivan, Ext. 233 between 8:30-4:30 PM

For AT&T, Lucent Technologies & AG Communications Jean Pilot, Ext. 235 between 7:30-3:30 PM

For Ameritech Services (EBS/CBS) & all other companies Pat Morgenroth, Ext. 234 between 8:00-4:00 PM

Ameritech Benefits Linda Corcoran, Ext. 228

### FIELD STAFF

#### Business Reps:

Dale Carpenter Ext 244  
Rick Gessler Ext 231  
John Greenwald Ext 224  
Ron Kastner Ext 225

#### Chief Stewards:

Mike DeWitt Ext 227  
Jerry Gast Ext 401  
Dan Grueneich Ext 403  
Harold Hess Ext 404  
Tom Hopper Ext 405  
Jim McLauchlan Ext 406  
Michael Sacco Ext 236  
Randal Schkade Ext 408  
John Skurka Ext 243  
Bryan Slinkard Ext 409  
Steve Tengblad Ext 410  
Steve Unterfranz Ext 411

Region C - Units 1, 2 and 7  
Region A - Units 3 and 4  
Region B - Unit 5  
Region E - All Units

#### Area Stewards:

John Gavin Ext 402  
Jerry Rankins Ext 407

## Dues Increase Approved By Membership

During the February round of Unit Meetings, Local 336 members approved, by more than a two-to-one margin, a change in our Local Union By-Laws to raise initiation fees from \$15 to \$25 and local dues from .75% to a full 1%. This amounts to a monthly increase for members of between \$2.33 and \$10.41 depending on top wage rates at the local's 19 employers.

The action was necessary to ensure the continued financial strength of our union and help it grow in a time of upheaval in the telecommunications industry.

Dues rates have not changed since an increase in 1974, but are still at or below the rate of our sister telecom unions, and far below those of the building trades.

Financial Secretary Ira Dean Spencer has notified payroll deduction administrators to begin the new dues rates in April.

The following is a unit by unit recap of voting on this bylaw change:

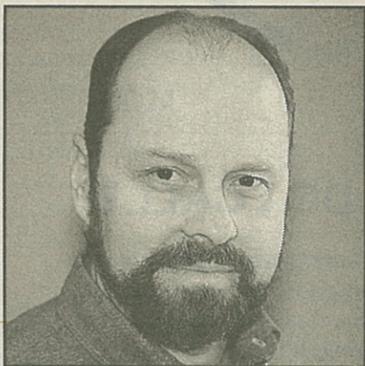
Unit#	Yes	No	Void
1	79	14	
2	92	21	
3	107	58	
4	102	16	
5	110	23	
6	34	99	9
7	67	38	
9	24	24	
<b>Totals:</b>	<b>615</b>	<b>293</b>	<b>9</b>



## Many Thanks To All!

by Ron Kastner, Vice President/Business Rep

Many of us—myself included—are often guilty of taking so much that we have for granted. With this in mind, I would be remiss if I failed to thank everyone for your overwhelming support in our union elections. Now, after 18 years of serving you, the loyal members of Local



336, as a union representative, I begin my tenure as vice president with great pride. Thanks also for your support of President Don Moseley, Financial Secretary Ira Dean Spencer and Treasurer Larry Moeller. Together, our team will continue to serve

our union to the best of our collective abilities.

I also must thank all of the delegates who worked together at the International Convention we attended in Philadelphia. It's always a pleasure to see so many sisters and brothers joined together to plan, discuss, and dream about the future of our union. It was especially rewarding to see the delegates from LU 336, many newly elected, share in the excitement generated on the convention floor. While attending this convention and planning for the next millennium of union stewardship, we elected the union leadership, passed many resolutions affecting our future, such as secret balloting, and debated many issues that were once thought impossible. I know that all of our group left Philadelphia energized and hopeful about our conviction to union principles.

Finally, as we continue our march to the millennium, I hope that all trade unionists around the world will continue to come together in solidarity to fight the corporate onslaught threatening all workers. I expect all of us in Local 336 to do our part and help make the dream a reality. Do your part. Hang tough!

### News & Views

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## The Scoop on SecurityLink Organizing

by Thomas Hopper

Local 336 is currently assisting Ameritech SecurityLink employees in an organizing drive to become IBEW members. This spirited group of workers is determined to gain recognition from Ameritech and to improve their working conditions through a Local 336 collective bargaining agreement. Every current member of our union can pitch in and help these workers gain safer working conditions, respect and dignity on the job, and a higher standard of living than they have today. By participating in this organizing drive, you will contribute to building a better union, a larger union, a stronger union, and you will play a vital role in making Local 336 a more powerful force as we collectively move into the next century.

Here's what you can do: If you see an Ameritech SecurityLink worker on the job, off the job, in your community or anywhere else - make contact with them! Introduce yourself as a current IBEW Local 336 member and see if they want to talk about the current organizing drive. Share any positive experiences you have had as a union member. Examples could include: that you have a more respected voice on the job; how you've accomplished more as a group than you would have as an individual; that you feel more secure in your job; or any other relevant information you believe may be helpful to these workers.

Organizing the unorganized is as difficult today as any other time in history. We can never match the huge amounts of money that large corporations pay in their efforts to defeat any organizing drive. We will win in the workplace, in our offices, on the streets and in our communities. This is where we work - this is our turf! Local 336 members outnumber Ameritech management by the thousands within our jurisdiction. We can win with one on one contact and through open, honest, and sincere communication with people.

Taken from "What are Unions?" an organizing brochure provided by the AFL-CIO, the following words convey to me what I believe are some of our basic beliefs as unionists. **"Unions are a voice. People with the same concerns often get together to talk and look for answers. That's exactly what a union is all about. It's people ... coming together, voicing their mutual concerns. By saying 'Union Yes,' they make life better on the job, for their families ... and for the whole community. Unions are families. Our families are shaping our own lives and our nation's life. The working people in unions want to be sure the family remains vital. With the changes in today's economy, that can be tough. But today's unions are searching for new ways to adjust to the challenges affecting all members of the family - with ideas like affordable child care, help for senior citizens and family and medical leave for emergencies. By working together to see these ideas become realities, union people are helping to overcome the changes facing the family. Unions are working people. Unions are solidarity."**

If you or any SecurityLink worker would like to learn more about this organizing campaign, please contact me at 630-960-4466 ext. 405, or through the Internet at the following e-mail address: [thopper@igc.apc.org](mailto:thopper@igc.apc.org).

## PayPhone For Sale?

by Ernie Kuhnke

In the last year there has been speculation that PayPhone Services is for sale. Ameritech would not comment on published reports that PayPhone was sold to Mars Candy.

This writer contacted the Human Resources Department of Mars Candy in Chicago and was informed that Mars was accepting applications from Ameritech employees that have experience in the PayPhone division.

IBEW Local 336 went to court and filed a petition for an injunction to stop the sale of PayPhone pending negotiations. The company still contended that PayPhone was not for sale. Do they think we are all goofy?

PayPhone is currently facing charges (filed by CUB) before the Illinois Commerce Commission for the highest rates in its five state service area. The churn rate is high, revenue is down, expenses are up and service to customers is, at best, dismal.

Yes, we can manipulate all kinds of numbers so that they demonstrate that things are wonderful. However, when all is said and done; the rate of return is not what the industry would like to see from such an experienced organization.

PayPhone is surviving not by its management team but by the AMERITECH name.

Maybe all the employees in PayPhone should consider buying PayPhone Services. The concept is not new. It has been done before with mismanaged companies.

Beginning January 1997 there are several huge changes that affect PayPhone. These changes will not only effect our customers but they will affect the future employment of each and every employee within PayPhone.

Management has very cagey about how it comments on any changes coming up. Some of these changes are driven by the government. Other changes are being driven by management itself.

Some final thoughts come to mind. First, when you get that yearly proxy card look at it closely, attend the meeting and ask questions about YOUR department. And finally, think about PayPhone employees coming together in unity and buying PayPhone.

*Editor's Note: Brother Kuhnke is a PayPhone employee.*

## Credit Union Growing With New Location

Bell West Credit Union, dedicated to serving the financial needs of the members of Local 336 IBEW, is happy to announce the opening of another office in Oak Lawn, Illinois, at 5619 W. 87th Street. Business hours for the North Riverside and Oak Lawn offices are Monday, Tuesday and Thursday 8:30 - 4:30; Wednesday 9:00 - 3:00; and Friday 8:30 - 5:30. The Oak Lawn office is also open on Saturday 8:00 - 1:00. Please call 708.447.4400 or 708.422.1313 for information about services available to union members. Bell West is a full-service community credit union open to all Local 336 members.

## Talk back to the News & Views!

Send your letters, stories, pictures and cartoons to our union newspaper at

1319 Butterfield Rd., Suite 504, Downers Grove, IL. 60515

Fax to 630.960.9607 or e-mail to [71112.555@compuserve.com](mailto:71112.555@compuserve.com)

Occasional outstanding submissions will be awarded a prize from the editor's cheap, trashy prize closet solely at his discretion!

# Corporations Are Real Welfare Cheats

In 1995, Dr. Janice Shields of the Center for Study of Responsive Law, released a report titled *Aid For Dependent Corporations*. It identifies 153 sources of federal business welfare from fiscal year 1995 totaling \$167.2 billion, or \$1,388 per individual taxpayer. The report details the precise nature of corporate subsidies, industry by industry. But a new study suggests that these figures vastly understate the enormity and social impacts of corporate welfare.

Ralph Estes is the author of a soon-to-be released book *Why Corporations Make Good People Do Bad Things*. In a recent article published in the academic journal *Advances in Public Interest Accounting*, Estes seeks to calculate the costs imposed by corporations on the larger society. While corporations carefully track internal costs, Estes argues that they purposely ignore the externalized costs of their production. In the fiercely contentious global business environment, being competitive often means being able to externalize more costs than a competitor. Thus, for example, a corporation logging public lands rather than its own, is able to externalize the costs of paying property taxes, of timber sale preparation, road building, fire fighting, insect infestation, and replanting. Estes calls the social costs imposed on the larger society "external diseconomies," which are, in effect, "coerced assessments" on consumers, employees, communities and the environment.

Some of the more obvious externalized costs are air and water pollution, depleted natural resources, endless streams of toxic waste, chemicals in the food supply, destruction of forests and fisheries, and dangerous or polluting products. Less obvious are the costs to the U.S. economy of exploitative or unfair wages based on discriminatory practices and maltreatment of foreign labor; or the cost to families and to employees who contract cancer in the workplace; or the cost of corporate crime including fraud, income tax evasion, and the ubiquitous military contract overcharges. Estes notes that corporate fraud involves staggering amounts. The 1991 Equity Funding fraud cost policyholders, shareholders, and insurance companies \$7.7 billion. That amount was described as more than the total losses from *all* street crimes in the United States for one year. The Savings and Loan scandal of the 1980s, by itself, cost taxpayers \$500 billion.

Estes consolidated prior and original research from government agencies, private research institutions, public news sources, and recognized experts. He then linked these disparate studies, extracted and totaled the numbers, and published the surprising results. Where no studies existed and information was unavailable-- such as the cost of agricultural workers poisoned by carcinogenic chemicals-- he offers no guess. Where estimates are necessary, they are on the conservative side. His intent is not to be precise so much as to provide an "indicator

of magnitude."

Using figures drawn from *Fortune* magazine, *U.S. News and World Report* and *Dollars and Sense*, for example, he estimates the annual cost to the nation of corporate crime at \$ 165 billion. To calculate the cost to the U.S. economy of wage inequities based on sexual and racial discrimination-- which, Estes reasons, constitute an involuntary subsidy--Estes uses data from the *Statistical Abstract of the United States* and the *Economic Report of the President*, and arrives at a figure of \$ 165 billion per year. He calculates that the social and medical costs of death from workplace-induced cancer is \$278 billion. These categories alone add up to \$608 billion in annual costs to society, and they are only three of 12 categories that Estes examines.

Estes concludes that the annual price of corporate welfare, when fully-costed, is a staggering \$2.6 trillion in 1994 dollars. By comparison, Shield's direct subsidy figure of \$167 Billion is only a trifling 6 percent of Estes' estimated externalized costs.

The numbers are so great as to be rendered meaningless. A trillion dollars is a thousand billion. To put this figure in perspective, \$2.6 trillion is nearly twice the federal budget, eight times what the U.S. spends on education, and more than ten times the annual deficit. While our government "reforms welfare" and punishes today's children for yesterday's budgetary excesses, one year of corporate subsidies would pay for one century of welfare for poor people.

Estes puts it this way: "As Washington and Wall Street reverberate with ominous estimates of the cost to business of government regulation, one can listen virtually in vain for consideration of the costs of *not* regulating...In the public debate, as decisions are made by taxpayers and their representatives that may affect corporations-- decisions on corporate tax provisions, industrial policy, corporate welfare, regulations and penalties for their violation, investment tax credits, zoning exemptions, and tax abatements-- no information has been available about the other side of the ledger: the aggregate costs to society of the corporate system."

Now there is.

### Editor's Notes:

Copies of Ralph Estes' article, *The Public Cost of Private Corporations*, can be obtained from *American University Media Relations* 202. 885.5950.

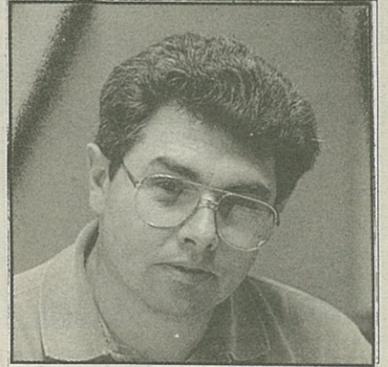
Estes' new book, *Why Corporations Make Good People Do Bad Things*, is available from *Berrett-Koehler* at 415. 288.0260.

*Aid to Dependent Corporations* can be obtained from *Essential Information*, PO Box 19405, Washington, DC 20036, or call 202.387.8034.

# Truth & Politics

by Larry Moeller, COPE Director

During the recent healthy debate over our proposed dues increase, it became apparent that there are some misconceptions on how our local funds our Committee on Political Education (COPE) activities. *Let me make this clear, NO dues money is used to support any political candidate or party.*



Local 336 COPE is entirely funded by voluntary contributions from officers, staff and members of our local. Additionally, we have 50/50 split-the-pot raffles at union meetings, and last year a special raffle was held with the help of our stewards who voluntarily sold chances.

In 1996, \$7,517.00 was collected and \$6,884.00 was sent to IBEW COPE Director Jack Moore. \$633.00 was deposited in our local's independent COPE account. The money sent to the International is returned to us on request. Our independent COPE account was used to cover some expenses incurred running the special raffle as well as small donations to worthy groups.

During the '96 campaign our local requested and received \$ 6,225.00 from our COPE account at the International. The money was donated on behalf of the members of IBEW LOCAL 336 to deserving candidates in the states of Illinois & Indiana. A deserving candidate is one who has a pro-worker voting record, or has passed a rigorous COPE screening to earn the endorsement "pro-working family." Our local's COPE fund has contributed to candidates running for governor, all the way down to members of a union running for a local village office.

We do this because a politician can wipe out our hard-won gains with the stroke of a pen. We do this because the enemies of workers and unions out spend us 7 to 1. We need access to the political process in order to have a voice on issues that affect our standard of living. Often we do this by donating money, so when we call on a State Representative or Senator they remember who helped them get there and respond to our needs.

COPE is important. So are our hard earned wages that we spend for dues. Our COPE fund has been expanded to give us the voice we need without using dues. I'm proud of that, I hope you are too.



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BANK SHOTS

# INQUIRY II (RAISING ARIZONA)

by John Greenwald, Business Representative



For those of you who read my last article (September) on LUCENT TECHNOLOGIES proposed exodus to Arizona, Georgia, Oklahoma, and New Jersey of sales and tech support jobs, will find I was right on target in how many people would be willing to relocate to these areas.

An initial survey was put to those affected employees, asking for their choice of relocating, retiring, or seeking other employment through the transfer system. In dealing with midwesterners only, I was not surprised by the following results of this survey:

#### Relocate to N.J.

Forget it. No interest in crossing the Appalachians to get there. Leave it for those easterners. Although, now that the Yankees won the world series, it may draw a few who now want to jump on their band wagon or Cub fans who wish to associate with the N. Y. Jets.

#### Relocate to Atlanta

This choice drew the most attention of all, but what Lucent considers the midwest is hard to tell if the choice was made from employees in Minneapolis or Cancun. Although, now that the Atlanta Bills—or is it the Buffalo Braves—blew the world series, some may be jumping off that band wagon. Say "Hiyall" to Scarlet

#### Relocate to Oklahoma City

After watching the movie *Twister* - say no more, very little interest.

#### Relocate to Tucson

I just recently visited this area and got hit by a drop of rain. Of the little interest shown for this area, those who choose this for relocation were largely for health reasons, or looking forward to retirement and joining friends or family. Baseball's spring training is a major event in Arizona which is the only way to tell the seasons are changing.

Most astute employees chose to retire or seek other employment knowing that their choice was not binding and displayed no sign of panic. It goes to show that the Company was not wise in making their decision to relocate Customer Care Centers. Or were they? I'm sure you can figure this out. A re-canvass is scheduled at the end of March.

On a more serious note, union members and front line managers in the Chicago area have formed a team to deal with a number of issues while this transition unfolds. Included among these issues are:

- Continue to serve the customer without being stressed out.
- Provide opportunities for members to enhance their job skills, preparing to test for other jobs.
- Use internal and external resources for continuing employment.
- Assist those wishing to relocate.
- Monitor work loads in areas, consolidating only if necessary without undue hardship to other employees.

Other future team recommendations will surely be made. Thanks to those volunteering their efforts. Good luck.

In other Lucent news, the union and company have reached an agreement short of arbitration on the Service Coordinator-Customer Software Administrator grievance in West Chicago. Please refer to the union bulletin board posting for the terms and conditions of this settlement or contact John Gavin.



Members of System Council T-3 survey the site of the new customer care center in Tucson, Arizona. (Photo by Bill Dryer)

## Divide and Conquer

by Thomas Hopper, Chief Steward

Divide and conquer: "Performance Management." Divide and conquer: "Pay for performance." Divide and conquer: "Reward the 'high performers' and discipline the 'low performers.'" Divide and conquer—Ameritech-style...

Ameritech has unilaterally implemented a "performance plan." This is not only a major change of working conditions, but a long-term plan by the company to break our solidarity! Needless to say, we are in dispute with them over this garbage.

For those who haven't seen this plan in action here's a quick overview: Using a dubious tracking system, management ranks individual workers by category from low to high, with different types of treatment prescribed based on the ranking of the individual.

"Low" performers are interrogated like criminal harassed, intimidated and even disciplined. "High" performers are rewarded with gifts including meals on company time, free clothing and \$100 American Express gift certificates. Taken to the bank, a quick endorsement and the teller hands you one hundred dollars! This is clearly a violation of the law that bars an employer with union contract from dealing directly with individual members on issues of wages. Is this a great company or what? Divide and conquer.

However, in a commendable show of solidarity, group of workers at the Orland Hills garage came up with an idea that deserves recognition. Here's the story: Ameritech picked the highest ranking crew in the district and rewarded all 22 technicians with \$100 American Express checks. Instead of turning down the money that should have been at the bargaining table for all, or forgetting their co-workers on the low end, this crew taught us all with a creative example of unity that should make us all proud to be Union!

Just before Christmas, all 22 techs cashed in those checks and donated the \$2200 to a charitable organization, Together We Cope, in Oak Forest, Illinois in the name of our union.

Interestingly, part of the mission statement of this organization includes the following statement; "To empower and treat all with dignity and respect. To activate, motivate and educate community members as to how they can become a solution to the problems facing our many neighbors in need." Something to think about, don't you think? Below is a letter Local 336 received after this thoughtful donation.

Dear Local 336,

Recently, I had the pleasure of meeting two gentlemen that are members of your local. They are part of the Orland Park phone repair crew and were looking to make a sizeable donation. They told me about the incentive checks from Ameritech, the awkward situation surrounding these checks and your recommendation. Both guys shopped around for a worthy charitable organization and found that Together We Cope met their standards.

It is my understanding that your local played a key role in this donation. I would like to convey both our gratitude and appreciation for your help in facilitating this donation. It comes at a time when we are making a great deal of costly and unavoidable adjustments to both our office and our resale shop. It has been decided that the greatest portion of the donation will go to our Christmas toy program for area shelters to help working poor people in our area.

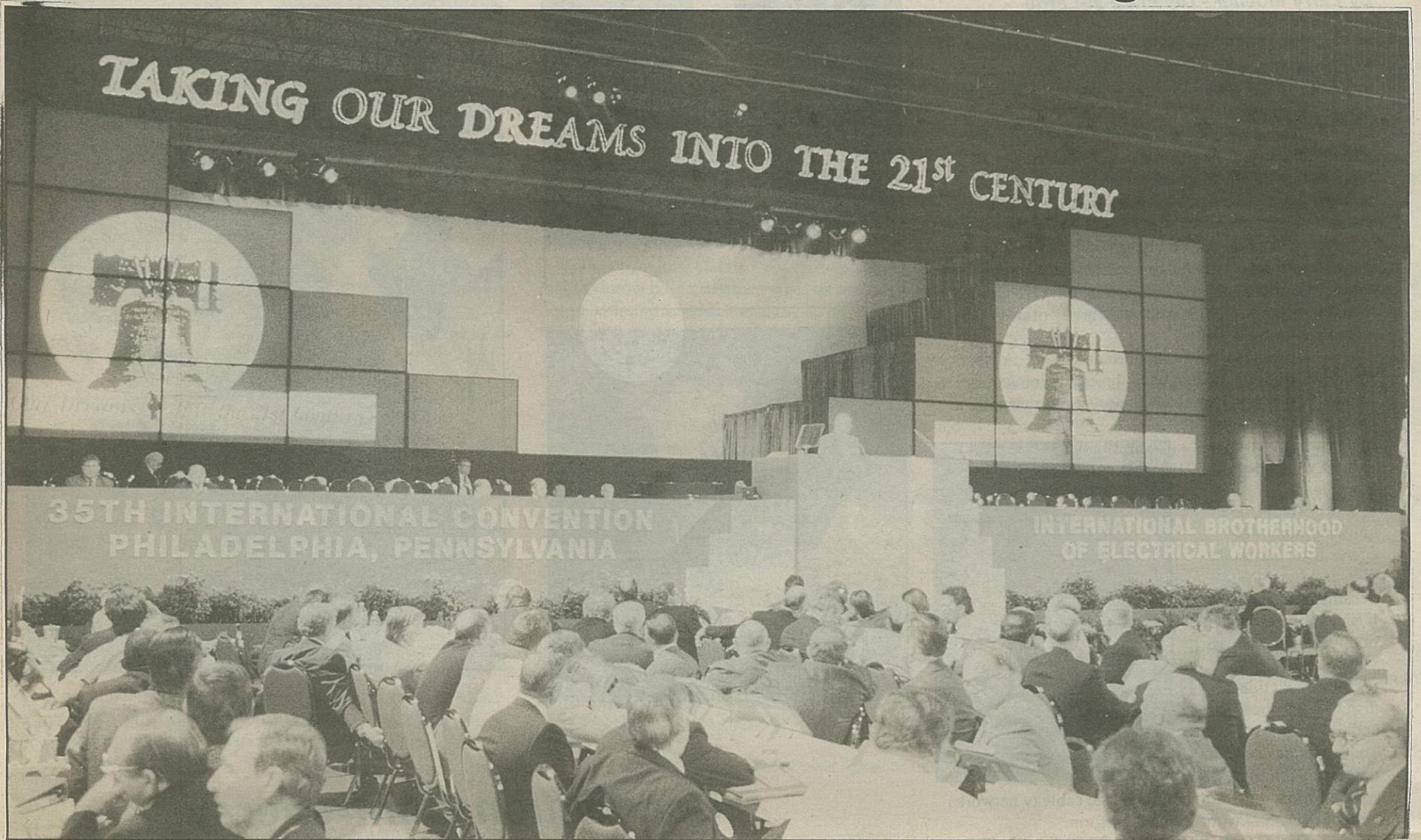
I would like to thank you again for your help in making this donation possible.

Sincerely,  
Debra DeMaar-Brent

The very money that Ameritech was using to break these workers solidarity was creatively used by IBEW members to build solidarity, while making children in the community smile a little wider at the time of year, those that are less fortunate most need help.

Great job and hats off to the brothers and sisters in the Orland Hills garage. You make us all "Proud to be Union!"

# International Convention Coverage



## *I.B.E.W. 35th Convention Kicks Off March Into The New Millenium*

In a democratic trade union, the participation of members in our own governance is crucial to a vital, inclusive organization.

But when the union has three-quarters of a million members working all over the continent, "hearing the voices" can be a tricky undertaking. One way to feel the pulse of the union and set its future direction, is to call a convention of delegates from all of our locals.

That's just what happened in

September when 2,800 delegates from almost 900 locals convened for one week in Philadelphia, the appropriately nicknamed "City of Brotherly & Sisterly Love," for our 105-year-old union's 35th convention.

The official business of this gathering is to elect international officers, act on resolutions affecting the union, and hear appeals from individual members and local unions.

What you won't see on the

agenda, but is at least as important, is the opportunity to network with other local unions and trade information on employers and the latest strategies and tactics used to maintain our security and strength into the next century.

Although this gathering happens only once every five years, its influence will be felt by all members of our union every day until we meet again. The following pages, hopefully, give a taste of this extraordinary event.



### **OUR TEAM IN PHILADELPHIA...**

International President J.J. Barry (bottom row, second from left) and International Secretary Jack Moore (bottom row, far right) join the Local 336 delegation lead by President-Business Manager Don Moseley (bottom row, second from right). Other members of our Local's elected delegation beginning from the top row left to right were Larry Morrison, Larry Moeller, Jerry Gast, Jack Mancilla, John Skurka, Rick Gessler, Ron Kastner, John Greenwald and Dale Carpenter.

# Convention Report

by Larry Moeller - Delegate-at-Large

The 35th convention of the IBEW convened in Philadelphia on September 16, 1996. Thanks to the members of Local 336 I was privileged to serve as your delegate-at-large.

Attending a gathering this huge can be an intimidating event. For example, 2,395 delegates, representing 867 locals were present. However, once I realized these Sisters and Brothers shared the same commitment to their locals as I did, it was a great warm experience being in such a big crowd.

Our International union deserves a compliment for organizing the day-to-day agenda, travel to and from the convention center, as well as a variety of user-friendly evening activities.

It was extremely important to have members of our delegation who had been through a convention before. Ron Kastner was able to secure our delegates a table in the front row by knowing who to talk to before the opening gavel.

The value of knowing other delegates from across the U.S. and Canada became obvious as the business of the convention went on. Many of you are aware of the recent jurisdictional disputes our local has had to contend with.

Some outside construction locals felt they were entitled to the initial build of the cable tv networks by the RBOCS— work we now perform.

Don Moseley was successful in resolving this problem before the convention, however Local 126 out of Philadelphia proposed a change to Article 27 of the constitution that, if approved, would have nullified all of Don's hard work. Thanks to our veteran delegates, John Skurka, John Greenwald, Ron Kastner, and Don Moseley who lobbied other utility locals, plus support we earned from 6th district V.P. Jerry O'Connor, we were able to defeat this motion.

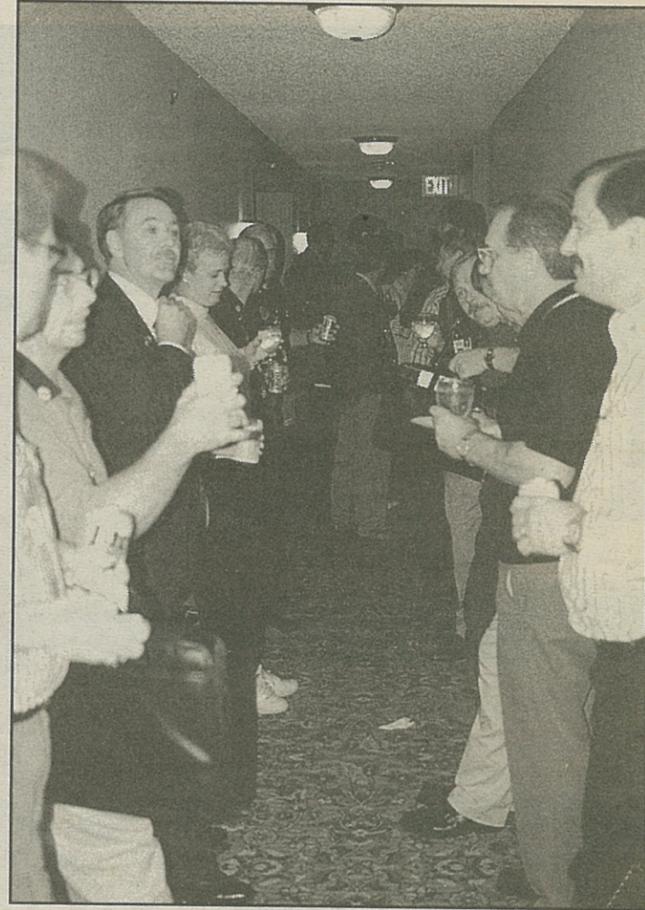
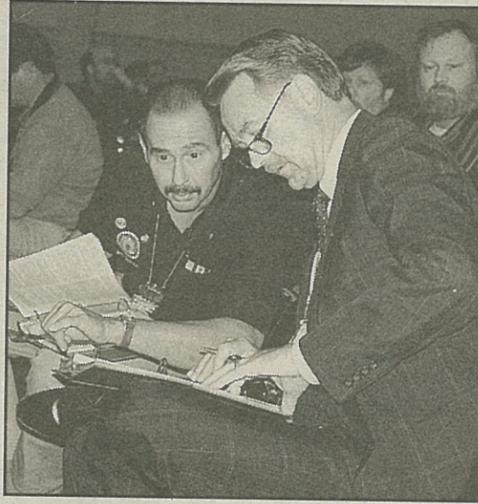
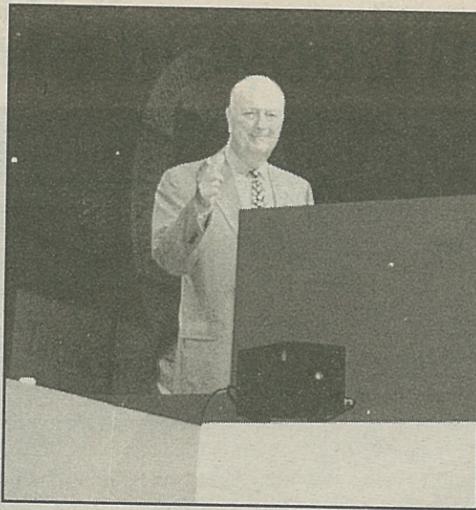
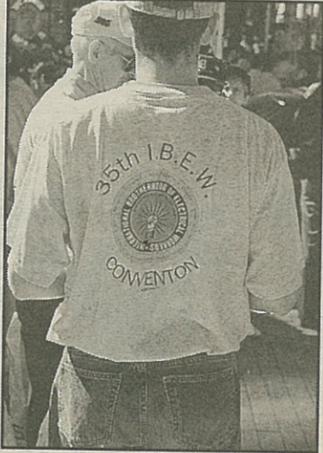
I will end my Convention report with a comment on the re-election of J.J. Barry as International President (IP). For the first time in many years there was opposition for the office of I.P.-- a healthy dose of democracy for our union.

Challenger Mike Lucas and his supporters were taken totally by surprise when Barry supporters moved the election of international officers up to the morning of Day 1, rather than the usual third or fourth day.

No amount of cat calls from the Lucas delegates or stamping of feet deterred the "Barry Express" from its mission. Not even the Brother who was to place Lucas' name as a nominee for I.P., announcing that he was withdrawing Lucas' name could stop the train. The steamroller tactics had a chilling effect on some of the members of our 336 delegation.

Don Moseley called a delegate's caucus and each of us was able to comment on the un-democratic events we had just witnessed. At this point our delegation was split on which candidate to support. It took the leadership of Don Moseley and Ron Kastner to remind us what was at stake. In short, our wish to defeat the motion by Local 126, and secure the right to share jurisdiction of the initial build of new telecommunication systems, could depend on our choice. What a way to run a railroad!

The election results were: J.J. Barry 572,821, Mike Lucas 115,920. Local 336 voted unanimously for the winners.



## Convention Controversy

by Jack Mancilla - Delegate Unit 7

As the 35th I.B.E.W. International Convention convened in Philadelphia, most delegates - even those who had been here before - were not prepared for what occurred within the first forty-five minutes of the opening session.

Our incumbent International President J.J. Barry was being challenged by Mike Lucas, a recently terminated international staffer of the I.B.E.W. under President Barry.

In addition to the challenge for the International President's office, forty-six local unions from throughout the United States and Canada had sponsored a resolution (Article III) to amend the I.B.E.W. Constitution to allow for a "secret ballot" vote for International offices. This hotly debated and emotionally charged issue was at the heart of Brother Lucas' bid to become International President.

The two most controversial issues involving the "secret ballot" were 1) should the members you represent have the right to know how you voted for these offices? 2) whether reprisals, real or imagined, from the International could lead to amalgamation or trusteeship being imposed upon your local for not voting the "correct" way (keep in mind that anyone can know how you and your local voted under our current system). Without passage of the "secret ballot" amendment and its implementation at this convention, Brother Lucas' challenge would be in jeopardy.

The normal order of business at the convention would call for Constitutional changes prior to the election of officers. We all anticipated this would occur as it has in the past, on Wednesday or Thursday. But soon after the opening remarks things changed quickly, with parliamentary changes being rammed through to allow for officer elections as a first order of business.

A supporter for Brother Lucas was recognized by the chair, International President Barry, and voiced his opposition and disgust with the "railroading" of the Democratic process that was about to occur. Unfortunately Brother Lucas had voiced concerns that the incumbent officers could use the podium to campaign from until the vote later in the week and that a delegate reception hosted by the International Officers on Tuesday evening could be construed to be campaigning at the expense of union members, an advantage not available to challengers for International office. These allegations and concerns were cited by President Barry reasons that we should in fact be voting now.

It wasn't until later that many of us realized what had happened, a very well rehearsed and thought out political ploy by a group of very experienced incumbent officers. As our delegation caucused prior to casting our ballots, the concerns about relation and the realization of the true powers that the International President wields became evident to us. The outcome was no surprise. President Barry was reelected by an overwhelming majority of delegates.

The experience of participating in this "Democratic" process was one of many thoughts and emotions we felt. Disappointment and disgust were the first emotions many of us felt. But when the reality of the situation sunk in we did what we were elected to do, represent our membership to the best of our ability. I certainly wish everyone could participate in the convention process. I am sure it would be an eye opening experience and certainly one I will never forget.

On behalf of the delegates, I would like to thank you all for the opportunity to serve you in the capacity of delegates to the I.B.E.W. 35th International Convention

# International Convention Delegate Report

by John Greenwald - Delegate Unit 4

Since our last *N&V* in September, I had the opportunity to attend my second International Convention.

My first priority upon arriving in Philadelphia was to breeze over many of the proposed changes to the IBEW constitution, *Resolutions* for the IBEW to take action upon, and grievances which have been brought to the floor by the membership of our international union. Let me start by explaining what exactly these 3 categories are.

**Law Committee:** This is where a proposal to amend the international constitution in the same manner in which our local union would propose a change in the contracts we work under, then voted upon by the membership employed by that company.

**Resolutions Committee:** In the same manner as the law committee, these proposals ask the delegation to vote for or against any action the international union should take in making policy, supporting labor causes, and future convention procedures, to name a few.

**Grievance Committee:** Any member or local union who has had a dispute within the international union, and feels they have been denied just cause, may appeal their case to the convention floor.

Delegates are asked to vote whether to concur or non-concur with committee recommendations.

What makes the convention entertaining is that on occasion, a "floor fight" can take place and stir some interesting debate. Here are a few issues where that happened:

### Electronic voting & Secret balloting

Electronic balloting, by swipe card was instituted in 1991 at the previous international convention in St. Louis, Mo. and used for the first time at this convention. When the chairman cannot determine the outcome of a vote from a show of hands from the floor he will ask the

delegation to vote via computer. This eliminates a roll call of all registered delegates in attendance and dismisses any impartiality from the chair. The interesting debate came when delegates proposed that any vote registered by a delegate shall not be revealed to anyone on how that delegate voted. The reasons were: (1) to keep it concurrent with the voting practices when you vote for our government officials and referendums; (2) to remain anonymous and free of any retribution from any officer in the union.

The opposition claimed that the membership has a right to know how a delegate votes on an issue, citing secret balloting as similar to allowing our Senators & Congressman the right to vote by secret ballot in the Halls of Congress (The opposition failed to point out that Congresspeople vote by secret ballot for the purpose of electing the leaders of the House). As voters and citizens, we have a right to know how our duly-elected representatives vote on issues that affect our livelihood.

This issue swayed back and forth across the convention floor 'til debate ceased and the delegation voted electronically. The Law Committee recommended non-concurrence. The vote failed 388 to 325. All future electronic votes will remain secret.

### Increase of Per-Capita

The law committee asked for concurrence on a proposal to increase the monthly per-capita assessment to each local union \$1.00 by January 1, 2001 or earlier when determined by the International Executive Council. This increase is passed on to the membership of the Local Union.

The vote passed, but without the support of our local delegation.

### Other Resolutions

Support to re-elect Clinton - **Passed**  
 Investigate an adoption of IBEW 401K plan - **Passed**  
 Early retirement for NEBF pension - **Passed**  
 Support of Nuclear Energy - **Passed**

Equal speaking time at convention microphones - **Failed**  
 Reciprocity of welfare benefits between L.U.'s - **Passed**  
 Oppose "Right-to-Work" legislation - **Passed**  
 Allow International Rep.'s to organize - **Failed**  
 Stop sexual harassment - **Passed**  
 Formation of Human Service Dept. in I.O. - **Passed**  
Other Law Committee Business  
 Increase Delegate expense allotments - **Passed**  
 Prohibit I.O. President from merging L.U.s - **Failed**  
 Increase of salaries for I.O. Officers, Executive Committee and I.O. Representatives - **Passed**  
 Special assessment to Utilities L.U. only - **Passed**  
 (The original proposal failed. The passed version was modified by the Law Committee)

### Other Grievances and Appeals

Member being unruly and out of order at Local Union meeting (fined and suspended)

**Appeal denied**

Two members working for employer who was in a labor dispute (assessed fines).

**Appeal denied**

Member collecting unemployment benefits while working in trade (fined).

**Appeal denied**

5 other cases were withdrawn or appellants were absent.



Should you have any questions regarding any details of this report or the convention in general, please contact me at the Union office on 630.960.4466 extension 224.

# Benefits Report

by Linda Corcoran

It's been rough scrutinizing all the mailings Ameritech sent to our homes. There were Summary Plan



Descriptions, Total Compensation Statements, Open Enrollment Packages, and communications regarding all the new vendor contacts like the Ameritech Disability Service Center, Ameritech Health Plan Service Center and the Ameritech

Retirement Plans Center.

Keeping up with the changes was hard enough. Add to that the numerous errors the materials contained and you have a nightmare. The unfortunate part is that Ameritech did not share any of the mailings in advance with us. Had they done so, many of the mistakes would have been caught before the information was sent out.

The **Open Enrollment** process was a disaster. Several zip codes received the wrong medical options. Two zip codes were sent choices of PPO when in fact they were mandatory Health Care Network. The affected **zip codes** were **60804**, formerly 60650 (Cicero) and **60707**, formerly 60635 (Elmwood Park). Members in those areas were sent corrected packages and given an extension date for Open Enrollment. Cedar Lake, zip code **46303**, received packages showing them as mandatory areas. Truth is, they are not mandatory and have the option of remaining a volunteer in the Network or going back to PPO. We addressed this with Ameritech and finally after three months the company corrected this mistake. There could be additional zip code errors that have not been discovered, so please check your Union bulletin board for a listing of the newly added and deleted zip codes.

We are aware that there is a huge problem with the **downloading of enrollment data** to the various vendors by the Ameritech Health Plan Service Center. Because of this, some members are being told they have no coverage with Blue Cross or with their HMO selection. On a case by case basis, these errors are being corrected.

**Confirmation letters** were to be sent to confirm any changes that were made. However, some were never received, some were received but were wrong, some were received but the changes were ignored and then some were received and were actually correct. So much for confirmation letters.

**Dependent college students between the age of 19 and 23** had to be certified this year for the first time. Even if you did this, you probably got a letter saying your dependent was being dropped. This caused a well deserved panic. Everyone was scrambling to re-enroll their dependents, causing havoc with the telephone enrollment system and the reps at the Ameritech Health Plan Service Center. Consequently, no one could get through. "Graciously," an extension was given to allow the dependent mess to be cleared up.

Calling the **Ameritech Health Plan Service Center** at any time is frustrating enough. Just when you think you've gotten through, the system disconnects you. Hold times were up to 20 minutes or more. The Company's response? Call after 5 p.m. That didn't work either. When we asked Ameritech to allow us to fax dependent information to them (who could then relay the information to the Health Plan Center) they refused. They felt it was in the individuals best interest to call and talk

to the rep. When we explained it was not in the best interest of their job (Thanks to the Performance Management Plan) to spend eight hours on hold or trying to be on hold, they relented and took the information.

Bit by bit we are discovering more and more errors. Our hopes are that Ameritech and vendors will be forgiving and allow the proper corrections to be made without any harm to us or our benefits. If you are having a problem as a result of Open Enrollment, call me at the Union office at 630.960.4466 extension 228.

There is still some confusion out there about the **Vision Care Plan**. There are two plans available. Both are administered through Cole who replaced the Vision Service Plan. Your choices during Open Enrollment were **Vision Care Plan, the bargained-for plan**, which allows you to use any vision care provider then **reimburses you** for exams, lenses, frames and contact lenses based on a fixed dollar amount.

You need to call Cole to see when you are eligible for services and for a claim form. There is no monthly premium to pay.

The second choice, **Vision One (the non-bargained plan)**, replaced the Alternative Vision Care Option (also non-bargained) that previously required a \$5.00 and \$10.00 co-pay. Vision One requires that you see a provider in the Cole Vision network of providers. The cost per month is \$1.58 for single coverage and \$3.64 for monthly coverage. The exam and eyeglass lenses are covered at 100%. Frames have a \$120.00 retail allowance and contacts have a \$125.00 allowance. Once you choose this option, you are locked in for two (2) years. You do not need to call Cole for a claim form but you do need to verify when you are eligible for services.

As mentioned, Cole should be contacted to verify when you are eligible for benefits. Your eligibility is determined from the last time you used your vision benefits. Vision Service Plan was to forward the history of all employees to Cole. Unfortunately, not all records were received, so there is no record of when you used your benefits last. In those cases, your eligibility is immediate.

Enrollment for this year is closed. Any questions about either plan can be directed to Cole at 800.432.2299.

Because of the error-ridden individual **Total Compensation Statements**, newly revised statements were mailed to our homes. We did pass along the errors we were aware of, so hopefully they were correct. For those whose earliest retirement age was under age 55 without 30 years of service, your first statement reflected a much higher pension amount because the computation did not include the discounted amount of 6% less for every year you retire under age 55. Not surprisingly, no one from the company told us this tidbit until members called questioning their new statements.

The new **Disability Service Center** is having a number of problems which adversely affect our members. Ameritech feels with additional staffing, these problems won't exist. I strongly disagree. Staffing is only one of many problems. A complete lack of direction, training, compassion, leadership, ownership and cohesiveness rounds out the list. As with any change, we anticipated a shaky transition, hoping that things would settle down to something resembling reasonable. So far it hasn't happened.

To ease the pain in this process, remember to call your disability in on the 6th business day, or in advance when you know that you will be absent for more than six business days. Also, make sure all necessary medical records that would support that you are incapable of work are faxed to the Disability Service Center.

I have established a workable contact, someone that actually returns my phone calls! If you need some assistance, give me a call.

Related to disability and other stressful time-off incidents, don't forget that the **Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)** has stringent application time frames.

Ameritech had been lenient, but as of late, the company has been denying leaves because of late applications. Although this doesn't affect wages in most cases, it could however, cost you down the road in discipline.

**FMLA time is excluded by law from being used against someone for "poor" attendance-- this includes denying job transfers.** Don't take a chance, if you feel you could have a qualifying condition notify your boss to start the application procedure.

If it's denied you can challenge it. This challenge is valid if you didn't know your rights under FMLA at the time of the absence. If you have a question, ask your chief steward or call the FMLA group at 1.800.232.0275.

For the **Northwest Indiana and ASI** folks whose pension bands were grandfathered during 1995 bargaining due to a title change, your **pension bands were finally corrected**. Tempers flared but persistence paid off. Another fine example of how Ameritech "cares." It took a full year after negotiations to get what we bargained—and work for—every day.

Also in the area of **pensions**, thanks to one of our members who closely watched his pension figures and discovered that the earning codes used to capture differentials for the **supplemental monthly benefits** accrued in the last three years preceding retirement, were not correct. The earning codes have now been corrected and the pension amounts adjusted appropriately.

Recently, a NW Indiana member's wife called because the explanation of benefits statement she received from Blue Cross for services provided at St. Anthony's Medical Center in Crown Point indicated that St. Anthony's was a Non-PPO hospital. Armed with a list of PPO hospitals provided by Ameritech, of which St. Anthony's was included, a call was made to Blue Cross. It turns out that the files at Blue Cross were wrong. They have been updated; however if you had any services rendered at St. Anthony's during the year, please recheck your explanation of benefits to make sure the charges are correct. Blue Cross will also be reviewing past claims and issuing correcting statements, if necessary.

Complaints are trickling in about **Caremark Prescription Service**, which administers the prescriptions for Health Care Network and PPO participants. It seems that the service is less than promised. Some have complained that prescriptions are being received later than the 10 to 14 day time interval. Some folks suddenly received letters notifying them—without explanation—that a drug is no longer covered. If you are having similar problems, let me know. If there is a system-wide problem, we would like to get it fixed for all.

The same can be said for **Value Behavioral Health**, which administers mental health and substance abuse treatment. We've received complaints that it is taking an unreasonable amount of time to pay on claims. We've also come across cases where claims are being denied even when the treatment was certified. Claims should be processed within 30 days of receipt, if not before. An occasional error in claim processing is to be expected. We just want to make sure it is not happening on a continual basis.

Lastly, as a reminder to our newest members. As a **regular term or full time employee**, you are **entitled to medical, dental and vision** at no cost to you the first day of the month in which you attain six months of service. This would include temporary employees who are reclassified to terms when they approach their sixth month. If you have not received any enrollment information and are approaching your six months, please contact me. These benefits were bargained for us-- use them!

## WHERE TO CALL FOR AMERITECH BENEFITS

**Ameritech Health Plans Service Center (Hewitt)**  
1.800.223.2929

*General Information about benefits*

Medical, Dental, Vision, Life Insurance, Flexible Spending Accounts, Prescription Drugs, Mental Health/Substance Abuse, Premium Payment Program, Adoption Assistance, Enrollment (New Hire or Change in Current Coverage), Forms, Transfer to another service center, Review your current year coverage

**Ameritech Disability Service Center (Sedgwick)**  
1.888.212.3300

Report a sickness disability or an accident disability (Workers' Comp), Long Term Disability, Status on a sickness disability or accident disability, Request assistance on processing a claim

**Ameritech Retirement Plans Center (Towers Perrin)**  
1.800.248.2411

Savings Plans, Pension Plans, Death Cases

**Ameritech Educational Assistance Service Center**  
1.800.562.2319

Application Package, Reimbursement form  
Questions about: Educational Assistance Program, Career and Personal Development Plan and Educational/Development Support Plan

**Ameritech Benefit Center**  
1.800.232.0275

Leaves of Absence, Payroll, Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA)

**Blue Cross/Blue Shield (Medical & Dental)**  
1.800.621.7336

**Vision Service Plan (Vision)**  
1.800.942.9091

**Cole (as of 1-1-97 handles Vision care)**  
1.800.432.2299

**Caremark (short or long term prescriptions)**  
1.800.556.2381

**Ultralink (HMO/DHMO)**  
1.800.858.4347

**National Bond & Trust (Savings Bonds)**  
1.800.426.9314

**Value Behavioral Health (Mental Health/Substance Abuse)**  
Pre-certification: 1.800.735.6585  
Claims: 1.800.433.3374

**Prudential Service Bureau**  
1.800.301.7558

Administration of FSA's, COBRA Administration, Life Insurance, Reimbursement for adoption assistance

**Life Works (family resource program)**  
1.800.635.0606

**Ameritech**  
1.800.587.0521

Telephone Concessions, Service Bridging

**CNA (Long Term Care Insurance)**  
1.800.742.2033

**Employee Assistance Program**  
1.800.572.6588

**O.C. Tanner (Service Awards)**  
1.800.828.8819



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An informational seminar from Advance Capital Management to help people plan for retirement.

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- What do I need to know about minimizing the expenses associated with investments or annuities?

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Thursday, April 10 - Rolling Meadows  
Wednesday, April 16 - Lisle

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## Financial Corner

by Bill Russell

**Q:** What can I do to assure I am building a sufficient retirement nest egg?

**A:** If you work for a corporation that has a company funded pension plan, the first part of your retirement saving is being done for you. Your employer will contribute to your account (pension) and it will build as you continue to work. A thirty year career at an employer with a good pension plan will provide you with a pension that has a lump sum value that is 3 to 5 times your final annual pay. This alone will provide you with about half of what you will need to be able to afford to retire.

**Q:** If the rest is up to me, what is the best way to accomplish it?

**A:** The best choice for your savings dollar is a company sponsored 401k plan. If your employer matches any of your contribution (a common match is 50 cents on every dollar up to your six percent of pay), the best investment you will ever make is the saving of the first six percent of pay into that plan. You get an immediate return of 50% (the match) and it and all subsequent gains are tax deferred. No other investment can even come close to that.

You should select aggressive, growth-oriented investment choices if you have more than ten years left to work. Saving six percent of your pay, plus the 50 percent company match for 25 years will grow your 401k plan balance well in excess of your pension lump sum amount. These two together will provide you a reasonable retirement after 25 to 30 years.

If you want to save even more, push your pretax 401k contribution to the maximum allowed by your plan. In many corporate plans this is 15 percent of pay. The full 15 percent you contribute will not be taxed for federal or state income tax purposes. Depending on your bracket, this will save you a fair amount of taxes now on the money you earn and put away for retirement. More importantly, none of the growth on your investments in the plan will be taxed until they are withdrawn. Investing 15 percent of your pay, plus a 50 percent company match on your first six percent, for only 25 years will produce all you will need to retire comfortably, even if you ignore your pension entirely.

**Q:** If I want to retire even earlier and can afford to save even more, what is the next best place?

**A:** If you have many years left before retirement, probably the next best place is investing in an IRA account. Pick an aggressive investment choice. Even though this does not provide a tax credit in the year of your investment (the IRS, generally, does not allow a tax credit if your employer has a retirement plan), it still provides an outstanding way to defer the taxes on the earnings. After 25 years the earnings will be three times the size of your cumulative contributions. If you start early and follow all of the items recommended here, you will be able to retire very comfortably after only 20 to 25 years of work. The bad news however, is that living on a net pay which subtracts a 15 percent contribution to your 401k plan, \$2,000 per year into your IRA, not to mention federal, state and Social Security taxes leaves very little of your gross pay to enjoy now. In the quest for savings and early retirement, remember that life can be short. Live a little now, too!

**Editor's Note:** William Russell, Certified Financial Planner, is a regional vice president for Advance Capital Management, a Chicago-area financial planning company, where he counsels individuals on investment and retirement issues. Bill will provide written answers to your questions and share those with common interest in this column, which is offered as a service to our members. Local 336 does not endorse the services of one financial planner over another but does encourage members to take full advantage of benefits bargained-for in our contracts. Bill can be contacted at 2443 Warrenville Road, Suite 600, Lisle, IL 60532. 1-800-327-3770 or by fax at 630-955-3706

## “What has the union done for me?”

Jim McLaughlin, Chief Steward, Unit 5

Well, it's been over a year on the Chief Steward job and it's been fun for me to meet everyone. Unfortunately, I'm bothered to report that the questions I have heard the most are; “What has the union done for me?” and “Why does the union allow this to happen?”

I went home one day and looked up the word union in the *Funk and Wagnall*

dictionary and here's what it said:

**Un-ion** (yoon'yen) **n.** (1) the act of uniting, or a state of being united., also that which is formed (2) a combining or joining of nations, states, parties, etc. for some mutual interest or purpose (3) the harmony, agreement or concord that results from such combining or joining (4) a labor union”

This brings me back to the bothersome two questions; “What has the union done for me?” and “Why does the union allow this to happen?”. Guess what—**you/we/us** are the union—**not me!** I represent “us” in everything I do. When I walk into a meeting, managers look at me as “the union.” They don't understand either. I represent our organization and together we are “the union,” as strong as our weakest link. With the situation at Ameritech, we darn well better work to strengthen that weak link if we want to prosper together.

We can't allow the current state of the company to get to us. The company has cut the work force down to a minimum, and before it's over will cut back even more. If we take a quick look around, we see disastrous mismanagement all over.

In the central office, there aren't enough people to cover the work needed to provide top-rated service. (A footnote to outside people; please remember that when you are in a central office, whose work is whose and when no one is around to help you, don't take the work away from the few people left inside). In construction we are also running at the minimum. We now spend more money detailing people around to “put out fires” than it costs to add people to the work force.

In the safety arena it gets scarier. The company buys \$1800.00 locators to protect cable in the ground, but when it comes to the poor sap working in a manhole, they take away \$1150.00 continuous gas monitors that ensure the quality of the air we work in. They've replaced them with antique “explosimeters” last used 15 or more years ago, invented before World War II, which do not monitor the air continuously— but cost about half as much. How much is real safety worth? This is a good example of where management's priorities lie. Makes sense to me!

And then we have the new and improved I&M department. What a joke! I meet people and they introduce themselves as a “1,” “2,” or “3,” based on the bonehead Performance Management fiasco.

There are no facilities anywhere, everyone knows it, but nothing is done about it. What's the easiest way to make our customers mad? Don't give them service and they'll go elsewhere. Yet today, a jack out of service is more important than a “Sav-a-delay” (a new customer without facilities waiting for service). Hmmm, am I missing something here? I think I'd rate their new system a 3.

The bottom line from the top is to make divi-

*continued, top center column*

## What has the union..., continued

dends and show a profit for the shareholders, no matter what the cost. The sad truth for these “leaders” who don't know the job, is that the only way they know to satisfy their shareholders is to cut people and create a short-term profit at the expense of our future. These “leaders” future is to cash in their stock options and run to the next company and make a mess there.

In the end, they can rank us, cut people, and create new businesses, but the fact is that we “the union” represent the company everyday to the public. When all is said and done, we, “the union,” will be able to hold our heads high and know we tried as hard as we could to serve our customers and make a profit, in spite of management.

Hopefully, when it's all over the younger work force will be able to remember when people retired happily after thirty years of service from a good company with a solid future.

Now, back to who a union really is, IT'S US, the best of the best! Hang together and make it happen.

**There are people who struggle for a day... and they're good;**

**There are others who struggle for a year... and they're better;**

**There are those who struggle for many years... and they're very good;**

**But there are those who struggle all their lives...**

**and they are indispensable.**

*-Bertolt Brecht*

## No-Cash Overtime Work, continued

preparing a strong pitch in women's magazines, pointing out how the law would give women extra time—if not the cash—to take care of their families.

President Clinton, who opposed the GOP legislation last year, “now says he might sign some form of comp-time legislation, provided it has safeguards sufficient to ward off potential employer abuses,” reports *The Wall Street Journal*.

To prevent passage of the comp-time bill is one of the top challenges the AFL-CIO faces in the tough legislative battles that loom ahead. With so much at stake, unions and their allies will be tested whether they can develop a grass roots movement to thwart this Big Business grab at workers' pay checks.

## No-Cash Overtime Work

by Harry Kelber

For 60 years, millions of workers have received time and a half overtime pay for work beyond 40 hours in a given week, as guaranteed by the Wages and Hours Act. It was exhausting to put in an extra four hours or more on top of a regular 8-hour shift, but people were glad to get it, because they needed the money, especially low-paid workers.

Eventually, workers came to consider overtime pay as part of their regular income, which they could use for payments on a new car or for a family vacation or, more likely, to pay the monthly bills. Whenever overtime was reduced or stopped, it felt like a pay cut.

Many companies did not mind paying the overtime to their regular work force because it spared them the expense and headaches of hiring and training additional people and paying them the standard benefits.

Of course, there were unscrupulous employers who used pressure tactics to deny their workers the overtime pay that was due them. Every year, the Labor Department, even with a shortage of inspectors, catches many hundreds of such chiselers and forces them to pay back the overtime pay they stole from their workers. And we're talking only about the employers who got caught cheating!

In some major industries, companies can require mandatory overtime from their employees whenever they so decide. Workers have been forced to labor weekends for long hours to meet company production schedules. That could mean not attending a child's birthday party or giving up a visit to an ailing parent in a hospital. For the humiliation and the extra toil, at least a worker could look forward to more money in the pay envelope.

But now, the Republican-controlled Congress is determined to take the cash benefits of overtime work away from us and give us compensatory time off instead. On the first day of the 105th Congress, Rep. Cass Ballenger of North Carolina made the compensatory time bill the first piece of legislation introduced into the House. In the Senate, Majority Leader Trent Lott said a similar bill will be among the GOP's “top 10” initiatives.

In lieu of overtime pay, workers would get 1-1/2 hours of comp time for each hour of overtime worked. If such a bill is enacted into law, it would mean the transfer of countless billions of dollars from workers' income into the pockets of employers. But that's not the only blow that the nation's workers would suffer.

Employers will have an excuse to take away our paid vacation time. We'll be asked to take our vacation out of our accumulated comp time, which can reach a maximum of 240 days. The same thing can happen to our paid sick leave and holidays.

Under a law that provides compensatory time off for overtime, we would not only lose substantial amounts of money but we would be disadvantaged in other ways. Employers could pressure us into taking our accumulated time off at their convenience, not ours. They could insist that we take time off in the slow season, not the weeks when we are planning the family vacation. And keep in mind that there are still far too many chiseling employers around who will look for ways to beat us even out of our compensatory time.

No wonder, the nation's major corporations are planning to launch a high-powered campaign for the comp time bill. They're counting on the lawmakers in Congress, both Republicans and Democrats, to pass the bill as part-payment for the huge contributions they gave them for their election campaigns.

The National Association of Manufacturers is

*continued, bottom center column*

# WHEN "ECONOMIC FREEDOM" BARS CHEWING GUM

by Norman Solomon

America's top business newspaper has put out a fascinating document called the "1997 Index of Economic Freedom." It's a thick book that illuminates the priorities of *Wall Street Journal* editors, who teamed up with the influential Heritage Foundation to rank the countries of the world.

So, which sovereign nation scored highest in economic liberty?

The answer: Singapore.

In Singapore, the indexers of "economic freedom" have seen the future, and it works: "an efficient, strike-free labor force...no minimum wage...no antitrust regulations."

But some significant facts go unmentioned. For instance, chewing gum has been illegal in Singapore since 1992. The government recently reaffirmed the ban and warned citizens that ordering gum from foreign mail catalogs could bring a year in jail and a fine of \$6,173.

The crackdown came after authorities blamed wads of gum for jamming subway doors. Evidently, the visionary leaders of Singapore have realized that people can't have economic freedom and chew gum at the same time. Nor do financial liberties on the Asian island extend to anyone who might want to buy or sell — or read — a copy of *Watchtower* magazine. The Jehovah's Witness religious group and its literature have been banned in Singapore for a quarter of a century.

Throughout last year, at least 40 Jehovah's Witnesses were behind bars in Singapore for refusing military service on religious grounds. Amnesty International calls them "prisoners of conscience." Dozens of other Jehovah's Witnesses spent weeks in jail for "peacefully exercising their right to freedom of expression."

The unfettered commerce that dazzled the "economic freedom" indexers does not include the exchange of ideas or information. As the Associated Press reported last spring, Singapore "has some of the world's strictest media controls."

And Singapore's methods of punishment remain harsh. Brutal caning is mandatory for vandalism and 30 other crimes. Death by hanging awaits those caught with 500 grams of marijuana. As you might guess, dictator Lee Kuan Yew has scorned "decadent" notions of civil liberties.

Ranked just behind Singapore — and also

classified as "free" in the Index of Economic Freedom — is Bahrain. The small Persian Gulf country wins profuse accolades: "a free-market economic system...no taxes on income or corporate profits...no capital gains tax...few barriers to foreign investment...a vibrant and competitive banking market with few government restrictions."

Overall, in Bahrain, "businesses are free to operate as they see fit." To investors, that's high praise indeed. But you wouldn't know from the report that Bahrain is a traditional monarchy. Long ruled by the al-Khalifa family, it's a nation that gives plutocracy a bad name.

A royal decree abolished Bahrain's parliament 22 years ago, and since then the government has suppressed dissent. During the mid-1990s, several thousand people were arrested for pro-democracy street protests. Amnesty International notes that Bahrain's recent political detainees have included "children as young as 10."

In Bahrain, the past year has brought "large-scale and indiscriminate arrests," says Human Rights Watch. "Serious, extensive and recurrent human rights abuses continued in the form of arbitrary detention, abusive treatment of prisoners and denial of due process rights." Torture has been common. But "there were no known instances of officials being held accountable."

Clearly, political tyranny can be quite compatible with the kind of economic order favored by folks at *The Wall Street Journal* and the Heritage Foundation. The touting of countries like Singapore and Bahrain is proof that one-dimensional fixations are foolish — and dangerous.

Despite persistent efforts by some media outlets and think tanks, it's not possible to credibly separate the flow of money from the exercise of power. Every day, much of the real world is buffeted by a political version of the golden rule: Those who have the gold make the rules.

All too often, terms like "economic freedom" get defined in ways that just so happen to favor the interests of the wealthy few. In the process, such definitions set aside democratic values.

Inadvertently, the 1997 Index of Economic Freedom renders a valuable public service. It shows that narrow concepts of "economic freedom" can be catastrophic for genuine human freedom.

# SUPPORT THE CASE FOODS WORKERS

Case Foods, a \$123 million a year chicken processor, operates a plant in Morganton, North Carolina. In July of 1995 the workers, mostly immigrants from Guatemala, voted to be represented by the Laborers' International Union of North America (LIUNA). The company has refused to recognize the Union or deal with worker complaints which include dangerous line speeds, leading to wrist and other repetitive motion injuries, high levels of carbon monoxide causing dizziness and eye injuries, and company requirements that force workers to purchase their own medicine for work-related injuries and their own safety equipment.

Living conditions are appalling. Many poultry workers are crammed into trailers; for example, 8-10 workers live together and pay \$1,000 a month for heatless trailers. These are only a few of the complaints of the exploitation perpetrated by Case Foods.

The National Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice, an organization comprised of national religious leaders from 18 denominations, sent a delegation to the Morganton plant. The report concluded that "Hardworking immigrants are being exploited by the Case Farms' management. They are treated poorly in the plant, where they live, and their rights to organize and be represented by a union are being thwarted."

You can help to end the exploitation of the Case Farms workers. Chicken processed by Case Foods are carried by local grocery retail chains, including Jewel, Fresh Fields, and Treasure Island. If you shop at these stores, ask the manager if they carry Case Food Chicken. If they do, tell them that you are aware of the conditions that Case Foods subjects its workers to, and urge the manager to let Case Foods know about your feelings towards the company.

For more information call Miltoria Bay, National Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice, 1607 W. Howard, Chicago, IL 60626, Phone 773.381.2832, Fax - 773.381.3345.

## WE'RE NUMBER . . .13?

Recent statistics released by the Department of Labor help explain why a growing number of American are anxious about their economic future.

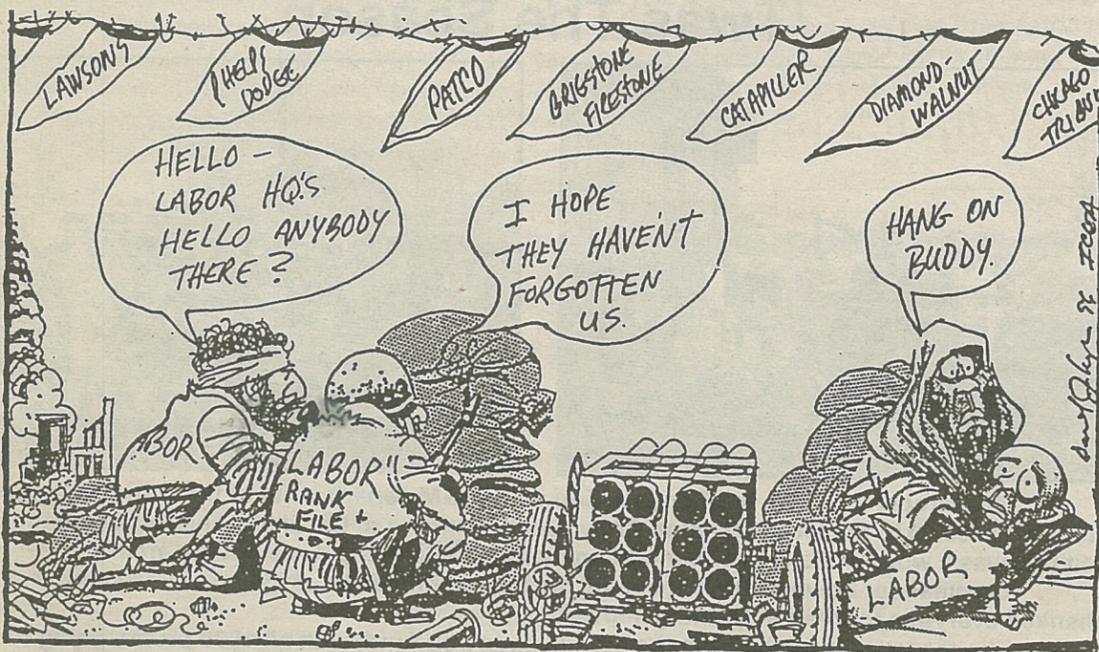
In 1985, American factory workers were the highest paid in the world. Today, they don't even rank in the top dozen.

While some of the decline can be attributed to the exchange rate, other factors also are at play: corporate downsizing, reduced benefits and the fact that U.S. corporations are more likely to relocate their facilities overseas than their Japanese or European rivals.

Mexican workers were among the few to experience a decline in real dollars. So much for NAFTA.

Hourly Compensation Costs in U.S. Dollars for Factory Workers:

	1985	1995
Germany	\$9.60	\$31.88
Switzerland	9.66	29.28
Belgium	8.97	26.88
Austria	7.58	25.38
Finland	8.16	24.78
Norway	10.37	24.38
Denmark	8.13	24.19
Netherlands	8.75	24.18
Japan	6.34	23.66
Sweden	9.66	21.36
Luxembourg	7.72	20.06
France	7.52	19.34
United States	13.01	17.20
Italy	7.63	16.48
Canada	10.94	16.03



ORGANIZING OR SOLIDARITY CANNOT BE ACHIEVED BY LEAVING YOUR WOUNDED BEHIND.

**Book Review**

# “DOWNSIZE THIS!”

By **Mike Matejka**

Downsize, rightsize, displace—how many code words can you find for fired? In this strange nation where the stock market soars and Wall Street dances when workers lose their jobs, do we cry or laugh?

We can laugh—with a bite—thanks to Michael Moore's new book, *“Downsize This!”* Moore, the creator of TV's provocative brief series, “TV Nation,” and the popular documentary “Roger and Me” takes on the destruction of the middle class with a vengeance.

It's acceptable to blame government for all of our problems but no one names the corporate raiders making millions while decent jobs disappear. Moore not only names the corporate chieftains, he includes “trading cards” documenting their abuses (not their golf swing) and proposes we replace certain Congressfolks with the lobbyists who really control them.

If NAFTA was such a great deal Moore wonders why we don't move U.S. government offices to Tijuana and save taxpayer money. He also proposes building private prisons in former factories and then putting ex-employees who end up as criminals on their old jobs—as convict labor. And if profit is the supreme goal, why don't we allow GM to sell crack?

Corporate leaders get the skewer but so does Newt Gingrich—“Mandate, What Mandate?” Moore slams Bill Clinton for not standing up for workers. The only political figure he goes soft for is Hillary Clinton in a chapter entitled, “My Forbidden Love for Hillary.”

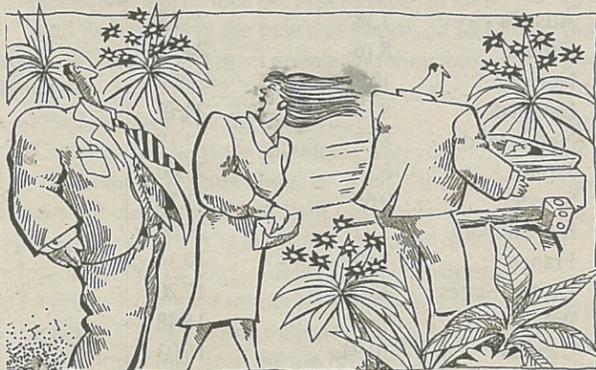
Union leaders are not left off easy either as Moore lambastes them as too soft on corporations and too quick to make concessions. While attacking labor leadership he also wonders if members' union inactivity is another reason union leaders are less militant.

The writing style is quick and breezy, almost like TV news clips. The humor is in-your-face, sharp and unsubtle. The closest literary precedent might be Abbie Hoffman's wild books in the 1960s.

If you like to laugh out loud when reading, grab this book. If you're offended by four letter words, skip it. But if you've been frustrated by the controlled dialogue of most TV talking heads and the fact that no one will challenge the corporate pirates ruining the country (and the world), read this book up. You can get discouraged and cry—or you can laugh at the outrageousness of it all. And thanks to Michael Moore, you'll be laughing—you might even join “Mike's Militia” by the book's end.

*Editor's Note: Mike Matejka is the President of the Illinois State Labor Press Association and editor of the Union News in Bloomington, Illinois.*

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*“He died from working excessive overtime...  
But it did pay for a great funeral.”*

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## 'Twas The Season



On October 23, 1996, the Construction and CP&M departments of the Dundee garage donated \$400.00 to the local Salvation Army. Both members of Local 336 and local managers felt this was a worthwhile charity benefitting many people in the Kane county area.

Commander Steve Church accepted the money on behalf of the local Corp and thanked everyone for their help and generosity.

The money was raised from the garage soda pop fund, with all 1996 profits going to this worthy charity.

Even with today's corporate turmoil, it still shows no matter how they rank us, we still are all good people. The Salvation Army helps the “3's” of the world, that not unlike our very own “3's” are working hard to survive.