



FRONTLINE

Volume 6, Number 2 • April 2003

President/Business Managers Report

“Good Faith” Negotiation

By Ron Kastner



Let me start off by officially thanking all of our armed forces in Iraq. Our prayers and support will be with them. Regardless of any individual

opinions about the war, I feel that supporting our troops is paramount.

Last month Local 21 delegates attended the IBEW State Conference in Springfield. The timing of this conference couldn't have been better because it occurred right in the middle of the voting process on the Broadband Parity issue. At this time there is an amendment being worked on assuring that the intent of Senate Bill 1518 is for broadband only. Some opponents to the bill felt that it addressed voice and UNE-P issues. We'll update you as soon as there is any news.

While we were lobbying, a lesson to be learned came in loud and clear. Quite often our legislators replied, "I haven't heard from anyone in my district on this issue." Is it an excuse? Maybe, but many issues these days are so important we can't take any chances. So please call your state and federal legislators when there's an issue that the Union feels is important enough to ask you to call the politicians. A simple phone call or email can make a big difference.

Contracts are expiring for our members at Citizens, Altura (formerly Fujitsu), City of Chicago, the Judicial and non-Judicial contracts of Vermillion County, Avaya and AT&T this year. I have appointed bargaining committees that will

bring the best possible contract to our members. However, those bargaining committees are only as good as the Solidarity is in those work places. Employers will be watching to see if the membership is behind the Union. So please, work hard to show Union solidarity by supporting your bargaining committee.

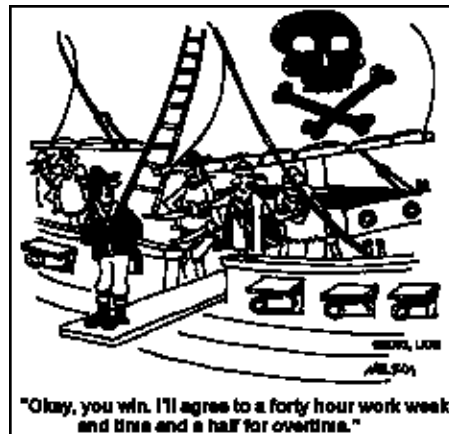
Speaking of Solidarity, the Local 21 members employed at Comcast, formerly ATT/Broadband, have been showing Solidarity on a daily basis. The company has been trying to break this solidarity almost every day, and you—the members at Comcast won't let it happen. I applaud you all for that. Based on the fact that other IBEW Local Unions had successfully negotiated contracts in other parts of the country, we felt Comcast would deal in good faith. At this point it hasn't happened. I assure the members at Comcast that we will continue to use every resource possible to bring a contract to each and every one of the areas.

At SBC, bargaining for the engineering assistants continues. The Union is attempting to incorporate these members into the Core agreement. In other news at SBC, the company intends to consolidate

and close different centers throughout 2003. As always, I will be appointing the Business Representatives who service those particular centers to bargain the effects of these company initiatives. Many of these centers are in downstate areas, causing more severe impositions on our members. Others are in areas of Chicago where public transportation is a necessity. Some center closings involve moving IBEW Local 21 work out of state. In these cases we have already started grievance proceedings.

In closing, by the time you read this we will have completed all the Local 21 Union Stewards' training. I'd like to thank everyone on my staff who helped make this a success and extra special thanks to all the Stewards who attended. I know the training will allow you to represent our members with the knowledge needed to do the best job possible.

In Solidarity



Gessler's Report	.....pg 2
Sacco's Report	.....pg 3
Reservists	.....pg 4
Benefit Report	.....pg 6
Safety Rodeo	.....pg 10
Schmidt's Report	.....pg 12
Labor History	.....pg 14
Worker Power	.....pg 16
Retirees	.....pg 18
Meetings	.....pg 19

INSIDE

FRONTLINE

IBEW LOCAL 21

Official Bi-Monthly Publication

International Brotherhood
Of Electrical Workers
Local 21, AFL-CIO/CLC

IBEW Local 21

1307 W. Butterfield Road
Suite 422
Downers Grove,
Illinois 60515-5606

Phone 630 960-4466

Fax 630 960-9607

Organizing hotline
630 415-3103



Website

www.ibew21.org

News wire hotlines

630 415-2711

866 423-9582

OFFICERS

Ronald E. Kastner, *President-Business
Manager/ Financial Secretary*

Rick Gessler, *Vice-President-Assistant
Business Manager*

Jacque Fields, *Treasurer*

Linda Corcoran-Cox, *Recording Secretary*

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBERS

Kevin Curran
Bill Lawrence
Jim Noble
Larry Schuler

Alison Watson
Rosetta Shinn
Bob McElrath

MANAGING EDITOR

Michael Sacco email: mjsacco@mindspring.com

Phone 630 960-4466 X224

Fax 630 960-9607

EDITORS

Larry Moeller e mail: ljm336@ameritech.net

Nancy North e mail: nnorth@attbi.com

Comments and articles are welcome and should be sent to the editors. Local 21 reserves the right to edit letters and articles, and to use items as space allows.

Member: Illinois State Labor Press Association, Midwest Labor Press Association, and International Labor Communications Association, AFL-CIO/CLC

The 3 C's

Consolidations, Contracting, Crossovers

By Rick Gessler, Vice President/Assistant Business Manager



SBC has geared up on the center consolidations that they announced recently. It appears that the plan is to consolidate many of our centers into one or two locations. We asked the company for many things that would lessen the negative effects on our members, including offering a general SIPP, but they would only offer SIPP to limited groups and locations. We continue to work on these consolidations and we have a sense that this task will continue throughout the rest of this year. We have some cases where the work is being "consolidated" out of state. In response, we've filed a grievance at the third step and expect to have that grievance heard soon. We dispute that the company has the right to move the work out of our jurisdiction.

Contracting out after layoff continues to be a problem. Representatives from SBC and the Union met again on March 14th concerning contracting out issues. We reviewed the directional boring being done by contractors. In the past meetings, the Union was told that, "we" are using our directional boring machines to the maximum so that they don't lie idle. Well, guess what we found out?... All of the directional boring machines have been sitting idle since the first of the year. Yet, the company's response is, "We feel we are doing the right thing." It is very discouraging when a company puts contractors ahead of their own employees. SBC has finally agreed to select an arbitrator to hear this case.

We were informed by SBC that their employment staffing people, who are actually employed by an outside contractor, failed to read job applications. Therefore, the company has been doing an **audit on employees** hired over the past few years. This means that the company hired people who ordinarily wouldn't qualify to be hired by SBC. Most are driver's license issues. The company now has terminated many of these members. We have informed the company that we will be taking these cases to arbitration

and are discussing an accelerated process to expedite getting these cases heard by an arbitrator. Currently we have **206 grievances pending arbitration with SBC.**

Recently, we reached agreement with the company just prior to an arbitration hearing on the "**parity agreement.**" This is worked shared between SBC and Com Ed. We have not been receiving our share of the work and the company has agreed to bring four technicians back to work off the recall/layoff list.

Cross over of exhibits during layoff also continues to be a problem. We filed a grievance on this issue and the company has denied the grievance. We have now sent a letter to the company to move the grievance to arbitration.

The company moved the **cable locate and the buried drop work** to the infrastructure maintenance organization (IMO), which caused the transfer of over 400 technicians to that group from I&R. We continue to address some of the problems that were created by that preferencing.

SBC informed us they will only be **hiring Term employees** in marketing in the near future. They also predicted this will be the case for other parts of the company. This strategy enables them to avoid applying Article 30 (layoff) of the contract. We put the company on notice that this is not the intention of the term employee language and Local 21 will file a grievance if the company proceeds. Local 21 won a grievance on this very issue not long ago.

The company also informed the Union that managers will be **calling employees who have called in sick** to see "how they are feeling." This is nothing new as the company used to do this in the past. However, we have told them that they must pay the person if they are calling them at home. If you are called at home on a sick day and are not being paid, notify your union steward.

For those of you who haven't attended a Union meeting recently, now is a good time to come out and see what's going on. There are seven meetings per month so I'm sure one could fit your calendar. I look forward to seeing you there. As summer comes upon us enjoy it and be safe whether at work or at home!

Spring is Here! And Other Odds and Ends...

By Michael Sacco, Business Representative



Spring is finally here! God, I love this time of year. New life, sunshine, cool breezes, the legislature in session down in "Springpatch." How 'bout that

new Governor? Me and a lot of youse (bad Chicago accent) backed this guy from my old neighborhood. Frankly, I'm impressed. A \$5 billion budget shortfall (a parting gift from Republican "leaders" George, Pate and Lee) and the man has a plan that doesn't put workers, kids and the elderly on the street. It also doesn't raise taxes on working folks at the same time that it increases school funding. How does a politician pull this off? Easy, close loopholes to corporations and other fat cats, while refinancing debt at competitive rates. What an idea! It's amazing what happens when you don't have to pay back your corporate and banking buddies...

Another mark of spring, although you'll probably read this after it happens, is Workers' Memorial Day on April 28. This day is set aside to remember the 12,000 workers killed outright and the 50,000 workers who die from occupational illness or injury each year in the United States. We shouldn't think about this only once a year though. We all need to think about this every day on the job! Please, work safe and don't take chances...

Know Your Steward



Jon Jackson Of SBC Datacom Large Install Dept.

Larry Moeller walked into my office last week and gave me a 1959 copy of *The Scoop*, the old newspaper of Local 336, one of our predecessor unions. I took a few minutes to read an article in the paper about what proposals the union was bringing to their upcoming negotiations. What an eye-opener! Just one year before I was born, the telephone workers who helped to build our Union, were seeking health insurance! Not an increase or improvement, but the basic benefit itself! How far we've come...

Here's a couple of good spots on the web: <http://nosweatapparel.com> and www.kentlaw.edu/ilhs/. The first listing is for No Sweat, a U.S. union made line of clothes made without sweatshop labor. The shop is in LA and their site gives lots of good info on apparel. They also have a cool line of clothes for sale...The second listing is for the website of the Illinois Labor History Society, a non-profit group that our union and this reporter, proudly belong to. The website, voluntarily hosted by the Kent College of Law in Chicago is filled with great information, stories and references about our working class history...

The first amendment is the single most important feature of the Bill of Rights. So why do people get so upset about peace protests? Isn't that what makes our country special, that we can have an opinion and voice it? That we protect

unpopular positions, like Jehovah's Witnesses refusing to salute the flag during World War II, and we don't shoot people for having 'em.... I'll drop this subject with a quote from the 1943 Supreme Court decision that protected the Jehovah Witnesses. "Freedom to differ is not limited to things that do not matter much. That would be a mere shadow of freedom. The test of its substance is the right to differ as to things that touch the heart..."

Why do our bosses think we're stupid? Why do they insult our intelligence daily? Two pieces of wisdom for management that I know they'll ignore: "You catch more flies with honey than you do with vinegar" and "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."

Some advice for my sisters and brothers, do what they trained you to do and no more. Don't be scared of your boss, you're probably smarter than him or her. Don't ignore the brother or sister next to you-he or she is your best friend, whether you realize it yet or not. Work safe, go home in one piece tonight and always remember to work to live, not the other way around. Smell the flowers and have a great summer!

Business Representative Mike De Witt and some stewards from Altura Communications (formerly Fujitsu) met and discussed contract negotiations.



L to R David Alonso, Joel Hornsbostel, Business Rep. Mike DeWitt, James Niemi, seated Kerby Geisel, Dale Green

Union Member Reservists Called Up for Iraq War

Our thoughts and prayers are with the IBEW Local 21 brothers and sisters who are also reservists, and have been called up for military service. Currently, we know the names of thirteen members, but that may change at any time: **Bryan Aguilar, Edgar Alba, John Alexander, Brunetta Brassel, Kenneth Brockhouse, Stefan Buschnyj, Brian Kollias, Christopher Lechocki, Kelvin Mahone, Clark Nabriet, Pierre Scott, Nia Westbrook, and James Young.**

Chris Lechocki is a steward at Lakewood and he gave *Frontline* some information about co-worker John Alexander and himself. Chris is a Specialist in the Army Reserve in the 941st TC Det which is Transportation Management Coordinator. John Alexander is a Staff Sgt in the Army Reserve, his Unit is the 940th TC Det which is also Transportation Management Coordinator. Chris has been in the service for 10 years. They are both based out of Ft Sheridan, Illinois, just outside of Great Lakes Navy Base.

20,000 Union Member Reservists are engaged in the War against Iraq.

John has been activated and on duty for about three months now. Chris was just alerted/mobilized the last week in March. He was brought home for now but should be heading out again for good in about 2 to 3 weeks. John's email address is john.alexander@us.army.mil Chris' email address is christopher.f.lechocki@us.army.mil

The current time frame that the army is advising once a soldier is activated and moved out is a one to two year stint in active duty time.

Both men have other back grounds in the military but at this time they both deal with transportation—arranging shipments, inspecting, routing, canvas routes, etc. John is currently the Commander of the 940th and Chris is currently a Squad Leader in the 941st. Chris' wife Joan is also an IBEW member at SBC.

Our sisters and brothers are not alone. At least 20,000 of the U.S. military men and women engaged in the war

against Iraq are Union member reservists, the AFL-CIO says.

As the war approached the end of its first week, with American troops pushing toward Baghdad, AFL-CIO President John J. Sweeney repeated the labor federation's belief that "the best way to disarm Saddam Hussein would be with a broad international coalition sanctioned by the United Nations."

But, Sweeney said, "We are unequivocal in support of our country and America's men and women on the front lines as well as their families here at home."

Among the reservists who hold Union cards are some 4,000 police officers and hundreds of air traffic controllers and pilots. The Fire Fighters estimate that 26,000 of its members are in the military reserves, but the Union had no estimate of how many have been called up. More than 4,000 members of the maritime Unions are loading and transporting equipment, supplies and material to support the troops in the Persian Gulf.

IBEW Electrical Workers from Ohio and Pennsylvania installed the U.S. forces' central command building in Qatar and saw duty in about a dozen other nations in the area where U.S. forces are stationed. They make up 70 percent of the power and production shop of the Air Force's 200th Red Horse Squadron.

"Our training with the IBEW has given us the knowledge to overcome any problems found here," said Orville Platte, electrical shop superintendent and a member of IBEW Local 129 in Lorain, Ohio.

The executive boards of several Unions, including AFSCME, APWU, UFWA, UE and UNITE, had approved strongly-worded resolutions before the war started, challenging the Bush Administration's reasoning and justification for a conflict that would put the lives of so many people at risk.

Following is the core of a statement Issued by the AFL-CIO Executive Council, Feb. 27, 2003, about three weeks

before the Bush Administration launched the attack against Iraq:

"The threat of terrorism with a global reach is real. We have experienced the terrible destruction it can wreak. To respond to that threat, America will need the support of our allies and the major nations of the world. Our country and our families will be more secure if America is the respected leader of a broad coalition against terrorism, rather than isolated as a lone enforcer.

"Those who fight for the United States are, as they always have been, the men and women of America's working families. The AFL-CIO is proud to represent thousands now serving in our armed forces. The AFL-CIO reiterates its support for all working men and women in our armed forces and honors their courage."

For more information of use to Union reservists, visit the AFL-CIO's website: www.aflcio.org/reserverights. If you would like to share any information about our sisters and brothers in the military, please contact the *Frontline* editors at north@attbi.com and ljm336@ameritech.net

The Union Plus Mortgage

The Union Plus mortgage program includes an extra benefit—assistance for members who are unemployed. Participants may apply for an interest free loan to cover up to six months of their mortgage payments in a lay-off situation. There are guidelines, so please call Jody Stephen at 800 475-7933.

Steward Training Classes Build a Stronger Union

By Alison Watson, Steward & Executive Board Member



President Kastner addressed the stewards

held March 21st in Schaumburg.

One of our guest instructors was Gil Cornfield, attorney at law. Gil explained the Duty of Fair Representation, Weingarten Rights and the Legal Rights of a Steward. The Local was also honored to have Professor Emeritus Bill Adelman, of the University of Illinois, teach a wonderful ses-

Our Stewards have the highest commitment to help the members. Our union leadership wants them to have the best skills possible to do their job. Formal training classes are organized to deliver high-quality training. New Stewards attended two-day sessions—the first set of classes was held March 5th & 6th at the Marriott in Schaumburg; the second set of classes were held on March 18th & 19th at the Holiday Inn in Matteson. A one day advanced class for experienced Stewards was



The committee sets up.



sion on Labor History. Kevin Curran and Jerry Gast covered contract items. Mike Kunas and I reviewed the Grievance procedure. Larry Moeller and Rosetta Shinn discussed the importance of political activity, and the role of the Committee On Political Education—COPE. Bev Goncher explained Steward's Responsibilities. Jim Noble stressed the value of establishing Phone Trees and other shop floor communications tools. Jacquie Fields and KC Coates covered Local 21 Organization and Jurisdiction. Mike Sacco discussed shop floor solidarity, new member orientation and internal organizing. . Tom Hopper and David Webster talked about External Organizing and distributed sheets to sign up volunteer activists. Linda Corcoran clarified FMLA, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Workmen's Compensation. Jim Kassing and Steve Tengblad stressed the importance of Safety.

There are two more sets of classes still scheduled—a two day class April 29th & 30th and an advanced class April 23rd. Once all the classes have been completed the majority of Local 21's Stewards will have been trained. The Local hopes everyone who attended the training walked away with useful information and more tools to make their jobs easier.



Gil Cornfield ponders a question from Mike Dewitt.

Training has been a goal of our Local Union for some time now and we are pleased to be able to get this started in March and have it completed by the end of April.



Photos by Nancy North and Michael Sacco

It Does More Than Rain in April

By Linda Corcoran-Cox, Benefits Coordinator & Recording Secretary



With the roll-out of new attendance guidelines at SBC, FMLA is more important than ever. It's nice to report something positive on this sub-

ject. We met with SBC in early March to discuss several problems and differences of opinions. We were told that the hold times for calls into the center are down to about one minute, which is a great improvement over the previous 2, 3 and 4 hours. Because of the high volume of calls regarding status of cases, by April employees will be able to check the status of their own FMLA requests on line. Email addresses, both for the intranet and internet, will be provided.

As a reminder, the FMLA forms have changed. The first page of the medical certification form, complete with bar code, is the **only page** that identifies who you are. It must be included with any medical information faxed by your physician or included when you mail the completed forms or the medical pages will be set aside and placed in the "unfound file." We suggested that the forms be changed to include the name of the individual on each page to prevent this problem, but we haven't received a response yet. As a partial solution, we asked that they take the forms in the "unfound file" and call the physician to see if the employee can be identified. Reluctantly, they agreed to consider it.

Another way to avoid the infamous "no medical was received" denial is to pick up the completed form from the physicians office and mail it in, either by regular mail or certified mail. This does two things. First, you'll be able to review the accuracy and completeness of what the physician has shown on the form before you leave the office (also keep a copy) and secondly, you will have the relief of knowing you mailed it rather than hearing they faxed it but it wasn't received at the FMLA group. Another suggestion is to ask the physician's office to print a fax transmission report of the date, time and number they faxed the forms to as proof that it was faxed and attach it to the medical certifica-

tion form.

We will continue to work through FMLA problems and give helpful hints whenever we can.

Workers Compensation is paid directly by the vendor via a separate check as of the conversion to E-link. Workers Comp represents 66 and 2/3 percent of your weekly wage rate and is not taxable. To make the wages whole, SBC employees also receive 1/3 of their pay for up to a maximum of 52 weeks, depending on the member's seniority date. The additional 1/3 is paid through E-link as a separate check from the Sickness and Accident Disability Plan, which is bargained-for.

Because you don't receive all of the wages in one check, the amount of deductions can't exceed 1/3 of the normal pay each week. If you only receive Workers Comp, there is no pay from which a deduction can be taken. More than likely, this will affect Savings Plan loans and contributions to the Savings Plan. Additionally, it might affect any supplemental life or dependent life contributions made by you as well as any monthly contributions for medical (for an HMO) and vision.

If this should happen, your benefits (medical, vision and supplemental life and dependent life insurance) will continue even though you have not made the necessary contributions. At the present time there is no way to make the contributions except through payroll deductions. If there isn't enough money, the deductions can't be taken. It's important that you set aside the money to make up for the missing contributions, because when you return to work, all missing contributions will be taken from your wages—automatically—until all the contributions have been paid. We are working with the company to devise a way that will enable members to make monthly contributions so that your wages are intact when you return.

Savings Plan loans will be handled differently. If you have a loan through the Savings Plan you will need to contact them for a monthly coupon book and continue to make the payments directly to them. If you don't contact them, you will be notified that you need to continue making payments to your loan. Failure to do so will put you in default and the total loan becomes due immediately. However, any loss in contributions to the Savings Plan, will not be allowed to be made up.

SBC has changed their **Tuition Aid** policy, again, effective March 1. We haven't fully evaluated the impact of the changes but have formulated several questions for the company. The highlights of the changes include discontinuing the pre-approved Degree Plan/Education Blueprint. Courses that result in a certification or certificate of completion are no longer eligible, however individual Business Units may elect to allow their employees to pursue such courses at the expense of the Business Unit. Approved programs can be taken at any institution that meets the U.S. Department of Education's requirement for an eligible program. This means the school is assigned a code on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA.) There were no changes made to the annual or lifetime caps.

There were no changes made to the negotiated **Career and Personal Development Plan**. Although the SBC 1027 form has a page requiring General Manager approval, it is not required for CPDP so you can ignore that section.

Do you have a News Story?

We need your contributions. We accept them on disk in Word format at the Union office (paper copy backup is a good idea) or simply paper copy. Or you could email an attachment in Word to both addresses as insurance.

Nancy North
nnorth@attbi.com
Larry Moeller e mail:
ljm336@ameritech.net

Politics Can Create Parity

By Larry Moeller & Rosetta Shinn, Committee on Political Education



March was a busy month on the political front. The Local 21 COPE department alerted our members of the potential danger inherent in proposed

changes to the federal government rules regulating defined pensions. In the plainest English, they wanted to change the rules at the end of the game and take our money. We hope all Local 21 members weighed in on the matter with our government.

The Administration's plan to change the current rules protecting traditional defined pension plans has been temporarily withdrawn due to overwhelming opposition. The Administration favored allowing corporations to convert traditional defined pensions to Cash Balance Accounts (CBA's) but thousands of U.S. citizens

voiced their opposition with a resounding "NO!" to defeat this bad idea. Thanks to all the Local 21 members who got involved.

Vigilance is a must when it comes to this issue. There are more proposed changes to the Pension Laws in the works that include the CBA issue. We will continue to monitor them.

Here in Illinois, Louella Byrnes, Ellie Augustyn, Cheryl Crooks, Rosetta Shinn, Mike O'Connell, Bill Henne, Mike McCormick, and Larry Moeller joined

SB1518 means good paying jobs in the future of our industry.

President Kastner and attended the IBEW State Conference on March 25th, 26th and 27th. The conference is political in nature with IBEW Locals across the State of Illinois in attendance. This conference was especially busy because our Local lobbied Illinois State Senators in support of SB 1518—the Broadband Parity Bill. This bill would remove the current regulations on DSL service, and provide a level playing

field for all high-speed providers. Passage would encourage the construction, maintenance, and updating of high-speed networks—in short it means good paying jobs in what we believe is the future of our industry.

In addition to speaking with Illinois Senators, a delegation lead by President Kastner met with Senate President Emil Jones and Speaker of the House Mike Madigan. We clearly stated our case to these two powerful leaders that their support could be the difference between success or defeat. Members can do their part,

a bulletin board posting went out detailing ways to voice your opinion to your State Senator, or go to our website



www.ibew21.org. Use your power—while we still have it.

HIPPA Impacts Benefits

By Linda Corcoran-Cox, Benefits Coordinator & Recording Secretary

There were changes to the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) of 1996

Effective April 14, 2003, most group health plans as well as dental, vision, prescription drugs and flexible spending accounts will be required to meet federal guidelines designed to safeguard protected health information (PHI) and provide employees with notices of their privacy rights and access to their records.

HIPPA was voted into existence in 1996 and contains many different pieces of legislation which have been implemented and which will be implemented in the future, such as the Privacy Act.

The new guidelines restrict the way the Plan can communicate with you or others about your past, present or future physical or mental health, the health care you currently are receiving or have received in the past, and all past, present or future payments for your health care. This also includes informa-

tion related to a condition that enables you to receive a leave under Family Medical Leave Act and benefits under a disability plan.

The Plans and their business associates will use and disclose your protected health information, without your prior authorization, to carry out treatment, payment and health care operations. Additionally, there are disclosures that are required or authorized by law that do not require your authorization such as public health issues, abuse, neglect and domestic violence to name a few examples.

The most impacting guideline is the requirement of written authorization when you wish your spouse or Union or other type of representative to receive your protected health information. If you want another person or entity to have access to your PHI, you must submit a written authorization signed and dated by you. Some companies are providing a form to fill out; others, like

SBC, have specific information that must be included in the written authorization. Unless the plan sponsor chooses to designate all of the health benefit plans collectively as an Organized Health Care Arrangement, each plan stands on its own with meeting its HIPAA obligation. For many companies, that means the written authorization must be sent to every Plan administrator. Without written authorization, no information will be provided to anyone but yourself. Think about it. It is very important that you provide written authorization NOW.

The new guidelines include many other restrictions. You should have received notification by your employer. Take the time to READ IT and do what's necessary. Don't forget that information will not be released to any Union representative without your written authorization.

The Inside Story—LOCAL 21's Structure

By Jacquie Fields, Treasurer



The Union is not something that comes out of mothballs every three years to negotiate a contract. YOU are the Union, but every Local has a structure to

enable it to handle the many issues the members confront every day. This is the first of a series focusing on the structure of our Local. We will focus on each appointed or elected position that makes up Local 21. Our structure is similar to most IBEW locals. We follow the guidelines stated in the IBEW constitution and have established by-laws, which have been reviewed and approved by the IBEW International.

Local 21's structure begins with our officers, who should have knowledge in: negotiations, mediation, arbitration, grievances, economics, labor laws. And they should understand the need for political activity. As a group, officers occupy positions of trust. They safeguard the funds and property of the local Union. Make sure the money and property is used solely for the benefit of the organization. They keep detailed and accurate record of all expenditures, including supporting papers. Our local union officers keep a list of standing bills to be compiled and kept current, additions and deletions to the list as needed and approved by the local Union.

Who is the first line of defense for the membership of a Union? The steward is the first point of contact for a member. This is a position appointed by the Business Manager, who usually receives recommendations from a Business Representative, Chief Steward, or Area Steward. The basic job description is the steward is the person who files the grievance on behalf of the member when their rights, according to the contract, have been violated. The steward represents the grievant in a meeting with the manager involved, and tries to settle the grievance for the member. But this only scratches the surface, as the steward has many roles to play. They counsel and advise. Before a grievance is filed, they are often called to mediate, and not only between a member and a manager, but also many times between members.

Other tasks include keeping the members informed via bulletin board postings, unit meeting attendance, and of course one on one contact. All of these things are done in addition to their own individual jobs for the company where they work. Usually Stewards represent the members at their individual work location, but have been known to represent members in nearby areas. Stewards report directly to Chief Stewards or Area Stewards. When your grievance must escalate to the next step, it is usually given to the Chief Steward or Area Steward. As a steward myself, I know what stewards go through, and I can't express how grateful we are to every member who decides to become one.

Next topic: Chief Stewards and Area Stewards.

The Work at Home group is growing from two workers to ten or twelve by the end of the year. The Union has been very involved in these additions by making sure the contract language is followed. The contract also has provisions for our Steward to visit the Work at Home members at their residence, which we have done and we will continue this practice in building solidarity.

With the busy season approaching, Local 21 welcomes our summer "call-back" members. They will be busy learning the new phone system and getting comfortable with the new computer systems.

I would like to thank our Steward, Shelly Miller, and the members for making my transition into this group a positive one, and I look forward to our future together.

Neutral Evaluation Trial Continues at SBC

By Kevin Curran,
Business Representative



The Union was successful in negotiating an extension of the Neutral Evaluation Trial at SBC for an additional six months. This trial helps clear the backlog of

arbitration cases we have at SBC since it allows an arbitrator to hear dismissal and suspension cases and rule on them the same day. The standard arbitration processes includes several weeks after the hearing for both sides to file briefs, then several weeks for the arbitrator to make his decision.

The Neutral Evaluation hearings are informal and no attorneys are allowed to be present. Instead, the Business Representative from the Union presents our side of the case and a manager from Labor Relations presents the company's side. The arbitrator then makes an immediate ruling.

Two cases were heard at Neutral Evaluation on March 26, 2003. The Union lost the case of a member who had been dismissed for allegedly falsifying overtime sheets, but we prevailed in the case of a member who was dismissed for attendance. On the attendance dismissal, the arbitrator ruled that just cause did not exist to dismiss the grievant and ordered that the grievant be immediately reinstated with the full six months back pay, full seniority, etc. In addition, the arbitrator overturned all previous steps of discipline taken by the company against the grievant and ruled that the employee's attendance record would be set back to zero.

Four additional cases were heard at Neutral Evaluation on April 14, 2003, we prevailed on two and the company won two. We will be meeting shortly with SBC to schedule additional cases.

News from J.U.L.I.E.

By Melanie Probst,
Business Representative

President Ron Kastner appointed me to represent our members at the J.U.L.I.E (Joint Utility Locating Info for Excavators) center in Joliet. Since January 2003 I've visited the office frequently to meet with the approximately seventy hardworking members and discuss changes and improvements in their work environments.

In discussions with J.U.L.I.E. management, they seem committed to safety, agreeing to monthly Safety Committee Meetings. Also, a recent ergonomic study convinced J.U.L.I.E. to furnish new computer keyboards and computer monitor screens. I'm told that chairs are next on the list to be replaced.

Complete information about all Union Privilege services is available online at www.unionprivilege.org.

Rainbow PUSH Joins the Fight for Justice at Comcast

By Jerry Rankins, Business Representative



Comcast workers from all over the Chicago market met together with the Reverend Jesse Jackson in late March. They were encouraged by the international leader for civil and economic justice when he stated that, "I will not stand for the Union Busting tactics at Comcast." He listened with great patience from the workers about their struggle for justice during nearly four years.

Rev. Jackson has offered to mediate between the parties. I'm humbled by the fact that he would take the time to meet with workers, staff, and volunteers.

For nearly four decades Rev. Jackson has been fighting for economic and social justice for working families. During the '60s, it was Rev. Jesse Jackson who witnessed the last breaths of the greatest civil rights leader that ever lived—Dr. Martin Luther King. Dr. King was assassinated during the Memphis Tennessee Sanitation workers fight for Union recognition and civil/economic justice. Rev. Jackson is a former Democratic Presidential candidate who was twice able to negotiate the release of U.S. POW's under two different presidents in the '80s and '90s.

In order for organized labor to exist, labor must form coalitions with organizations like Rainbow-PUSH, churches, and

other community-social groups. While unemployment continues to skyrocket, house foreclosures for working families are at an all-time high. Unfortunately, layoffs will continue for working families. Just recently, Comcast quietly laid-off another 17 workers in Elmhurst bringing the total to over 400 in Chicagoland, this year, and they have been here less than six months.

Workers must become more involved in the fight for justice in the work place. It's not too soon to start pushing for change in the White House. Currently, it's the White House that's attempting to change how overtime is paid, how pension plans are calculated, and how the National Labor Relations Act "right to organize" is enforced. It's the White House attempting to bring change to your house!

Chicago 911 Contract Expires June 30, 2003



IBEW Members outside PUSH headquarters

The contract surveys for bargaining have been returned, and the City of Chicago has been notified to begin negotiations. Monthly meetings have begun, and we are moving closer to completing appointments of the bargaining committee team.

WEINGARTEN RIGHTS guarantee Union Representation. Know your rights, because at any investigatory meeting with management that could lead to disciplinary action, you have the right to **UNION REPRESENTATION**. You must request it. Please, do not leave the meeting, but don't participate until you have a Union representative present. Every informed member should carry a Weingarten card at all times!

In Solidarity

Photos by Al Smuda

What's in That Box?

The giant carton was delivered to the Customer Care call center at Grace and Western on Chicago's north side. Inspired by the shortages of pens and paper, rumors flew that it was an 'odd lot' box of office supplies bid for on SBC-Bay. Steward Michelle Lee investigated, and was surprised to discover that the carton contained eight Weber barbecue grills. Each gas grill was valued at \$6,000. This deepened the mystery because you can't take notes with a barbecue grill.

Then, Business Representative Kevin Curran discovered the grills were purchased by Consumer with the intention of distributing them to a select group of Service Reps as a reward in a sales contest—one grill per office. However, SBC included severe and draconian restrictions, intended to eliminate a vast majority of the Service Reps from being eligible to participate in the contest. They also forgot that they are required to negotiate sales incentive programs with the Union before they bought the grills. As a result of the discussions, The Union refused to agree to the sales contest because it was designed unfairly.

At least Weber grills are union-made by the National Production Workers, NPW, right here in Illinois.



Steward Michelle Lee investigates.

Photo By Deb Maples

Safety Road-eo

It took over a year of competition to find the best I&R driver in the state of Illinois. In an effort to increase awareness of driving safety, Local 21 and SBC agreed to sponsor an I&R Safety Road-eo. The garage level competitions began in January 2002. Garage winners competed to determine the district champion. The four district winners met for the final round of competition at the Lyons garage on April 2, 2003: Danny Caicedo of Chicago, William Moseley of outstate, Tim Niemic of north suburban, and Joe Vilcek of south suburban. After the five events, Bill Mosely of the Maryville garage was declared the state-wide winner.



The five events in the Road-eo are:

1. Drive the vehicle's front right tire through a row of 6 tennis balls (3 on one side, 3 on the other, each 6 inches apart.) without hitting any of them, 10 points deducted for each ball hit.

2. Pull in parking, which requires the driver to position and stop the vehicle as close as possible to a barricade without making contact with the front barricade or the two side barricades.

3. Back in parking, which has the same objective as the pull in parking, except the measurement is taken from the rear bumper instead of the front.

4. Parallel parking, which requires the driver to position and stop the vehicle as close as possible to the curb, without hitting any barricades in front or behind.

5. The final event is stopping the vehicle at a stop line without letting the front bumper go over the line.

At the time the contest was announced, the State prize was a \$500 gift certificate.

Not everyone can be the state safety winner, but we can all work safe every day. Remember, the company will still suspend you for having motor vehicle accidents.



From L to R: Jerome Munie, Steward Maryville garage, Bill Moseley, Road-eo winner, and Rick Gessler, Vice-President Local 21.

Photos By Mike McCormick and Bob Kacprowicz

Local 21 Marches in St Patrick Day Parade!



Photos By Nancy North

Yes, There is News in Marketing

By Kurt Schmidt, Business Representative



It's been a very busy first quarter at SBC. The bargaining for the **Engineering Assistants** started and the company continues to take a hard stand,

insisting on negotiating a separate contract. The bargaining committee position is to meld the Engineering Assistants into the current Collective Bargaining Agreement (known affectionately as the core contract.) The Union made all of its proposals to the company, including wages, and we are waiting for the company to respond. Additional bargaining sessions are set up for April and May. We will keep all members posted on the status of the bargaining through mailings and the hot line. Brothers and Sisters, keep your solidarity because it is through your determination and strength that your bargaining team will succeed at the table. You are the Union. Power comes only through numbers united.

In the **Business Communication Services (BCS) in Oak Brook**, the Company finally decided to move the work this group had been doing for mid-markets since last year to the Pewaukee Wisconsin office. This had been delayed twice in the past. On April 21, 2003 the order issuance work which was performed by the Service group (also known as the Support side) will be moved up to Pewaukee. However, the Oak Brook office is over head count by twenty-seven employees. The Union, working with the company, was able to bring back other work on a temporary basis from Pewaukee. This hopefully will alleviate the need for a surplus at BCS.

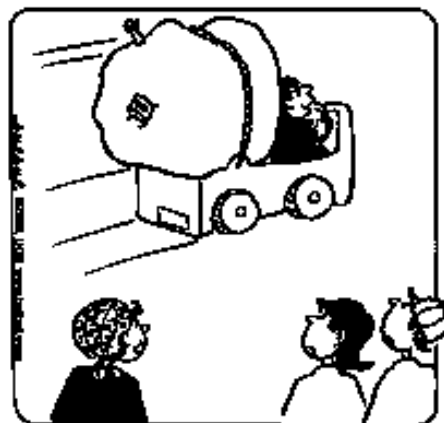
The employees affected are transferred over to Cathy Coughlin, VP Mid Markets, until their number can be reduced through attrition, promotions to management or movement to other craft openings. The Union was able to work out transfer rights for this Pewaukee intra-company call group, so if any openings occur either in the CLT (Customer Loyalty Teams) or servicing groups, these members would be selected by seniority for the openings without going through Job Link. Also, if a surplus takes place, and the goal of both the Union and the company is it will not, this Pewaukee group would return to the total employee seniority base of the Customer Advocate and Service Order Writer A job titles in Oak Brook prior to that action.

In **Consumer**, the company wanted to include a new element in the incentive plan. It wanted to prevent any employee who was on a step of attendance from receiving their hard-earned incentive money for that month. The Union said "NO!" to this company position. Attendance has no place in an incentive plan. I personally have been involved in incentive plans for twenty-four years and attendance was never an element used to prevent payment for earned sales.

Attendance is an administrative policy that the company puts in place. It should handle attendance on its own merits, and not take money from those who have earned it. Consequently, for the month of April there is no incentive plan in Consumer. The Union has already taken this issue to upper management at Consumer. Our President Ron Kastner requested a meeting with the President of Consumer, Paul Roth which was held on April 8th. In that meeting the positions of both parties were put on the table with a solid commitment to respond to the Union shortly. We will keep you posted on the outcome of those discussions. It is the Union's goal to have a fair and equitable incentive plan for May and the rest of the year.

Finally, I want to remind all members **DO NOT** go into a meeting with Asset Management Protection (Security) or your manager without Union representation. We are there to help and protect your rights, but first impose your rights under Weingarten guarantees, ask for Union representation. Security IS NOT your friend.

May all members take time off with their families this summer and have a safe and enjoyable season.



"There goes the pension funds... another CEO cashing out his stock before company bankruptcy."

Network Consolidations Disrupt Workers' Lives

By Sally Rudins, Area Steward

Several years ago I was directly affected by a major consolidation of centers in Network Services. The Switching Control Centers in Ameritech were consolidated into what we now know as the STC, CTG and FDC. The big question at the time was why? All of us in the centers knew we were great—our bosses told us, other departments told us, our customers told us. We made the numbers, and worked to give everyone the best service in the industry. We also have families, and the changes in work locations were important to all of us. The answer from Ameritech was that the consolidations would save the company money according to the bean counters.

Now fast forward to 2003. Once again, the company has announced a major consolidation of centers in Network. One of the first directly involves me—the Special Service Dispatch Center in Wheaton is on the bean counters' list. The dispatch work they do is slated to move to Detroit, MI and the nineteen Maintenance Administrators at Wheaton are being moved to the Customer Service Bureau at Lakewood in Hoffman Estates in May. Once again, the question is why? These brothers and sisters are the best, and have proven it time and time again.

As reported on the Local 21 Newswire, there are more center consolidations scheduled to happen this year in Network. While the details are not available at this time, the bean counters' list includes Installation and Repair Operations Centers, Loop Assignment Centers, AFRC-RMA Centers, Engineering and Construction Centers, HiCap Provisioning Centers, and Special Service Centers.

Once again, the company is saying that as a result of the consolidations, they will see greater cost savings, process standardization, and improved customer service. Noticeably absent is any reference to the impact of consolidation on our members' lives.

So my question is this—when we read about how family-friendly SBC is, just whose families are they being friendly to?

What Really Caused the Pennsylvania Mine Disaster

by Nancy North, Area Steward



April is National Safety month. Remember the news story that riveted America last summer—the rescue of the nine Pennsylvania coal miners?

Everyone felt it was miraculous that they were all rescued alive from the flooded mine. But could it have been prevented?

Most investigations focused on the failure of the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection to provide up-to-date-maps, but Black Wolf Coal had multiple warnings about the inadequacy of its 1957 map, drafted seven years before operations ended at the adjoining Saxman mine, the source of the Quecreek flood.

Owner-operator David Rebeck, claimed conditions were normal, but UMWA organizer Rick Molnar asked, “Then why were all the rescued men wearing rain gear, and why had the mine’s pumps been running full bore?”

In a Union mine, state and federal inspectors are accompanied by a worker-elected mine-safety rep who can insist on asking workers about conditions like “supersaturation”, where water is coming down the roof. Union miners might have insisted that test drilling precede mining any border area as potentially dangerous as the approaching Saxman mine.

Advance drilling is a much more reliable method for establishing borders than mapping. It provides physical evidence onsite in real time. Union miners at Saxman had been trained not to mine up-slope because of flooding problems in the area. Quecreek miners were mining up-slope directly toward a large mine that available hydrological studies had shown was full of millions of gallons of water. The company had a drill machine, but it was not onsite.

If Quecreek workers had been members of the United Mine Workers of America, they might have been more candid about company responsibility immediately after the rescue. If the Union had been recognized, the miners could have refused to continue advancing as conditions worsened—without fear for their

jobs. Previous attempts to organize had broken down in the face of company intimidation.

Beyond these nine men are the tens of thousands of workers who daily go down into the earth and face similar risks. The corporate owners and the government should insure they are not put in harm’s way, but miners need the UMWA to help safeguard them. We are Union, we can work safe.

Correction

In February’s Frontline, the story about laid off technician Wes Pruchinicki evoked a response. It is illegal to withhold visitation rights when there is no money for child support. We are publishing some websites that may be helpful.

www.dadsrights.com

www.cookcountyclerkofcourt.org

www.illinoislegalaid.org

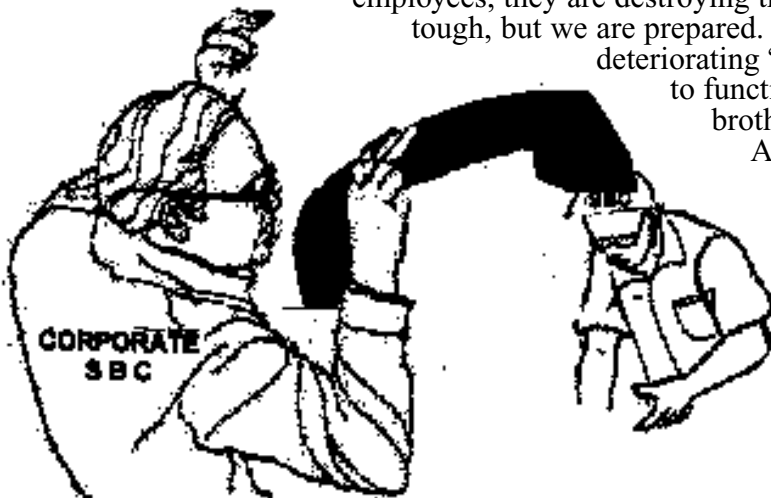
www.thebestlegalservices.com

www.allsolutionsnetwork.com/child_support.htm

Ma Bell Sheds Tears for Laid Off Workers

By Josie Richmond

Don’t cry, Ma. I know you care, but you’ve been “retired” since ’84, and there is nothing you can do. I know it is difficult to stand by and watch SBC hit us over the head. Thanks for caring, Ma. It hasn’t been quite the same since you left. But don’t worry. We’ve been taking care of ourselves for a long, long time. We’ve got our hard hats on! We’ve got grit! When SBC strikes their own employees, they are destroying their own “backbone!” Times are tough, but we are prepared. We have the knowledge that a deteriorating “backbone” makes it impossible to function properly. We have all our brothers and sisters unified in strength. And we have confidence that with the Union leading us, we will prevail.



A. Philip Randolph & the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters

By Nancy North, Area Steward

During World War I, he was called “the most dangerous Negro in America” but in 1989 *The Wall Street Journal* named A. Philip Randolph one of the most important people in the last one hundred years.

Asa Philip Randolph was born in Crescent City Florida on April 15, 1889, the second son of a minister. Soon the family moved to Jacksonville, where he grew up. After graduating high school, he and his older brother James worked at odd jobs. Eventually James became a Pullman porter. In June 1911, A. Philip requested parental permission to work in New York City, because he hoped to make a career as an actor. The mass migration of African Americans from the South into northern cities had just begun.

Randolph settled in the Harlem section of Manhattan, where he became a part of the most important black cultural and political community in the country. He listened to the great intellectuals of the time, and became a socialist. In the spring of 1914 he met Lucille Green, a widow and beauty shop operator. They married after a short courtship. She provided the financial support for her husband and his friend Chandler Owen as they searched for ways to solve the problems of the world.

In 1917 Randolph and Owen founded the *Messenger* magazine, an independent journal of radical economic and political thought among African Americans.

In 1925 a group of three Pullman porters invited Randolph to speak at the Pullman Porter Athletic Club. The Pullman Company hired only blacks to be porters on their sleeping cars. The porters were dissatisfied with the official “company” union—the Employees Representation Plan (ERP.) The speech convinced Ashley L. Totten, Roy Lancaster, and William H. Des Verney that the solution to the porters’ problems was an independent trade union. They established the nucleus of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (BSCP) in New York City, far from Pullman headquarters in Chicago.

There was a terrible fear of reprisals. They needed a dynamic leader who was

A. Philip Randolph

immune from Pullman vengeance—A. Philip Randolph became the general organizer. The *Messenger* became the union’s official organ.

Unlike most fledgling unions, the BSCP did not depend entirely on entrance fees and membership dues. They received a grant from the Garland Fund, and made appeals to the general public. Recruiting men to work publicly for the Union was difficult because most porters believed the company would fire them for it.

The BSCP was surprised by the editorial opposition to the Union in many black newspapers, but the papers also ran expensive ads paid for by Pullman.

Responding to Union pressures, Pullman held a wage conference with the ERP, increasing wages and changing some oppressive work rules. A major approach



of the Brotherhood against the ERP was an appeal to the porters in the name of manhood and self-respect.

Congress passed the Watson-Parker Act in 1926, upholding collective bargaining and the right of workers to choose their own organization; it established a Mediation Board. Randolph prepared a case, because he believed they could go before the Board with the membership lists, and the union would be certified as the official representative of the porters and maids.

At first the Board hinted they might require an election between the ERP and the BSCP, an expense the union couldn’t afford. But in June they ruled that the

union’s records were sufficient evidence, Pullman should recognize the Brotherhood, and submit to mediation. The company refused. Then the Board pressed for arbitration, but the company refused, claiming there was no dispute. The BSCP reached an impasse because the Mediation Board had no power to enforce its ruling.

The Brotherhood geared up for a strike in June 1928, then called it off at the last minute. Randolph and the BSCP focused on three goals: recognition from Pullman as the bargaining agent, establishment in the councils of organized labor, and respect among influential black individuals and organizations.

In 1929 the AFL Council decided to charter individual BSCP locals as “federal” organizations directly affiliated with the AFL, dodging the question of international jurisdiction. Randolph called a national convention of the BSCP.

During the New Deal, Randolph forged political connections. By supporting one of Senator Clarence Dill’s bills, Dill reciprocated by granting Randolph extended time to present his case to include the porters under the Amended Railway Act of 1934. The bill passed, banning company unions and “yellow dog” contracts that barred workers from joining a union.

Pullman tried to circumvent the new law by disbanding the ERP and creating the Pullman Porters and Maids Protective Association (PPMPA.) Out of fear, many porters signed membership cards for the PPMPA as well as the BSCP, so the Mediation Board insisted on an election. On July 1, 1935 the Board officially certified the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters as the official bargaining agent, but it took two years to negotiate a contract. The four-year contract reduced the work month from 400 hours to 240 and quadrupled salaries.

Later in his life Randolph said, “There was no other group who constituted the key to unlocking the door of a nationwide struggle for Negro rights as the porters. Without the porters, I couldn’t have carried on the fight for fair employment nor the fight against discrimination.”

As the United States war machine geared up in 1940, the unemployment rate of whites dropped, but black workers, who were excluded from the war defense jobs, had high unemployment. Randolph and others decided on a march on Washington to protest the deliberate discrimination by the federal government and the defense

A. Philip Randolph *continued*

industry. The threat of 100,000 people marching on Washington D.C. pressured President Roosevelt to issue Executive Order 8802, which set up the Fair Employment Practices Commission, banning discrimination in the defense industry.

When President Truman proposed the 1947 draft bill calling for universal military training, Randolph seized the opportunity to push for an integrated armed forces. The president issued an executive order in 1948, banning segregation and other discriminatory practices in the armed forces.

To galvanize support for the new civil rights laws, Randolph and Bayard Rustin developed a plan for a march on Washington for jobs and justice in 1963. 250,000 people gathered at the Lincoln Memorial. Randolph was the first speaker, "We have no future in a society in which six million black and white people are unemployed and live in poverty." Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King gave his famous "I Have a Dream" speech.

The march re-energized the civil rights movement. The committee formed a coalition with Presidents Kennedy and Johnson to pass a series of laws that attempted to guarantee social equality in public life, strengthened the right to vote and tried to end discriminatory hiring.

Randolph continued his push for improved civil rights laws and economic justice for minorities until his death in 1979. In epitaph, Bayard Rustin said, "Hardly anything blacks achieved—whether through protest, legislation, negotiation or moral suasion—does not bear the mark of Randolph's leadership and principles"

*If you want to know more, read:
Labor Biographies by Bob Breving,
Keeping the Faith by William H. Harris.
Visit the ILHS website:*

<http://www.kentlaw.edu/ilhs>

You've Been Crowned!

By Ben Alvarez, Steward

Technicians at the Montgomery, Illinois garage held a peaceful protest on March 7th against the proposed schedule changes due to occur before the end of March. Prior to a meeting with the stewards, a local manager responded to various complaints by saying, "If you don't like it, go flip burgers."

It's an insult for a local manager, to make such offensive and ignorant comments to a steward who expressed general disagreement regarding forced schedule changes for nearly 80 technicians at the garage. This manager was a former union steward. Now he's quoting the contract every chance he gets—but with a management spin put on each and every word.



Sadly, he prides himself in thinking that people are just as gullible as he was when he accepted a job with management.

The proposed schedule changes include combining the Installation and Repair lists into one list, and canceling the current 7:30 a.m. start time by converting it back to 8:00 a.m. They also intend to impose a new shift for eight techs to work between 9:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. It has been threatened that if management does not get volunteers, they will force by inverse seniority.

Along with preferencing nine techs out of I&R and into IMO for drops and locates, local management contends that business needs are the driving force behind daily announcements of general changes and more specifically, scheduling.

Maybe it's chapter 1 of the book:

Union Busting – DIVIDE & CONQUER?

Numbers, numbers and more numbers, evidence which was not produced as of today. Some say that these imposed changes are in retaliation for several instances where technicians have taken a stand at work for their basic bargained-for rights.

The technicians at Montgomery fiercely opposed the demeaning comment and more importantly, these NON-NEGOTIABLE changes by wearing 'Burger King crowns and Steak and Shake hats' to the planned meeting. A few people brought in spatulas to get more into the role of "BURGER-FLIPPER." Rumors of a George Foreman Grill with burger patties cooking never came to light, but it sparked

conversation about several other concerted activities and ideas.

We will make it very clear to management that we have much more invested in our so-called "careers" here at SBC than they believe, and that we are the driving force behind this company. We are the techs on the frontlines, PERIOD. A question was asked from craft, "When are you ever going to come out here and have something GOOD to say?" but they had no answer.

An opinion from a technician surfaced during this meeting, "Management is testing every single article of our contract to see where we will put up a fight, and where we won't. They're testing us for June of 2004."

Get Educated – Stay Involved—Save your money for next spring's negotiations.

Building Real Worker Power (Part II)

By Tom Hopper, Business Representative



In the last issue of *Frontline*, my article focused on

job loss, union density and union organizing in our industry. The report included statistics, trends and graphs that with a bit of luck, demonstrated how those specific topics translate to either our power or lack of power during normal contract negotiations. I ended the piece with a commitment to explain in this issue of *Frontline*, the plan to **Build a New Labor Movement**. I believe this “plan” can best be explained by reading the AFL-CIO Executive Council Action Statement from the Council’s February 2003 meeting. All credits for reprint of the following statement go to the AFL-CIO.

An Unprecedented Labor Movement Campaign in Support of the Freedom of Workers to Choose a Voice at Work.

Despite increased efforts to help the tens of millions of workers who want a union get one, the organized strength of workers in America has continued to decline. The percentage of workers with collective bargaining rights has dropped below 9 percent in the private sector, and it is about 38 percent in the public sector. Every other industrial democracy in the world has rates of unionization that are at least two times greater in the private sector and 75 percent in the public sector.

Workers want to organize but can’t. About half of all U.S. workers say they would vote for a union in their workplace, according to 2003 research by Peter D. Hart Research Associates. But with ferocity and regularity, employers block the freedom of working men and women to make their own decision about forming a union. Even workers who succeed in winning recognition through the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) process often find their struggle futile—one-third of employers never negotiate first contracts. Faced with this reality, unions too often fail to invest sufficiently in helping workers organize.

The failure to help workers join together in unions in sufficient numbers to grow and strengthen unions is not a small problem. A new report by the World Bank points to the role collective bargaining

plays worldwide in increasing productivity, economic stability and workers’ economic status. Workers in unions in the United States are far more likely to have good wages, health care coverage and pensions. Through their unions, workers have rights on the job, so that they cannot be taken advantage of, discriminated against or treated unfairly, and they have a stronger voice on such issues as safety and the best ways to get the job done. Good-paying union jobs help the economy and the community and they reap real productivity gains for employers. And unions stand up for all working people on important issues such as affordable health care, Social Security and a higher minimum wage.

So when the share of workers covered under collective bargaining agreements is low, working families, our communities and our economy all suffer. It means a weaker counterweight to unchecked corporate power, with a profoundly negative impact: lower wages overall and rising income inequality; fewer working families with health care, pensions and the ability to send their children to college; stressed families and society; declining American political participation; and finally, control of the White House and both houses of Congress by elected officials hostile to the concerns of working families, deepening the cycle.

The decline in the level of collective bargaining also affects current union members’ ability to protect decent standards of living, health care protections and other benefits in their own contracts.

Reversing this failure is the central moral challenge for today’s union leaders. History will judge us by whether we rise to it. The unions of the AFL-CIO must devote the full measure of energy and resources necessary and available to us to help working men and women come together to improve their lives, and to protect the collective bargaining rights of current union members from attack, especially federal employees. And we must do so despite the most assiduous attempts in a generation by our federal government to weaken unions.

To build a bigger labor movement and increase power for America’s workers, **we must do three things:**

1. We must dramatically multiply our unions’ investments in organizing—financial as well as the recruitment and training

of organizers;

2. We must use our current power and influence to support organizing, leveraging our strength in core industries through bargaining and every means available;

3. And we must radically change the climate for organizing by building a public understanding of the value of collective bargaining to workers and society, generating broad support for workers who are organizing as well as current members whose rights are under attack and neutralizing employer violations of workers’ freedom to organize.

All three of these building blocks require our focused attention and a huge commitment of resources.

Today we launch an unprecedented, unified campaign to achieve the third of these—to radically change the climate for organizing. We must bring about nothing short of a revolution in culture and attitudes, and it will require a revolution-like commitment by our unions. We must educate, engage and mobilize literally millions of union members and people of conscience—a job we are uniquely qualified to do collectively as a labor movement.

For five years, we have developed organizing approaches that help guarantee workers the freedom to choose a “voice at work.” Those efforts have yielded important successes and learning, but they are not enough.

We undertake this campaign at a moment of extraordinary opportunity. Workers express more interest in organizing than has been seen in decades. Young workers and college students are increasingly interested in collective bargaining and workplace justice. Distrust of employers and corporations is high. The naked political attacks on working people provide potential for galvanizing support. And recent experiences, including state-level initiatives expanding workers’ collective bargaining rights, point to the potential for greater success.

But while solid public support exists for strong laws to protect workers’ collective bargaining rights, the level of ignorance of workers’ current inability to exercise those rights under the system of NLRB elections is stunning. Even union members have scant understanding of what workers who attempt to organize face today, despite members’ strong support for

Building Real Worker Power (Part II) continued

legal protections and for organizing as a priority for their unions.

To ensure the freedom of workers to have a voice at work, our new campaign will undertake four over-arching strategies that will be pursued simultaneously, although each builds upon the others:

1. We will change the way we organize, building new alignments of community and political support for organizing and opening our campaigns to expose the ugliness of employer retaliation. By taking our campaigns public, we will make the public case for the benefits of collective bargaining and for the urgency of protecting the freedom of workers to organize.

Many unions already have begun to do exactly this, with federation support. We will build a movement for change out of our collective campaigns. We will develop tools, share best practices and provide support to help every union implement "Voice at Work" approaches in their organizing campaigns. We will join with the building trades in a national public campaign to help construction workers organize. And we will work with the labor movement at every level, especially with state federations and central labor councils, to build ongoing public and community support networks for escalated worker organizing.

2. We will build an environment of public support in which organizing can flourish and unions can win better contracts, as well as policy changes to support good jobs and strong communities.

The first major focus will be on building the active support of current union members through education and mobilization at their worksites, culminating in 2003 with a massive common mobilization led by the AFL-CIO. We will build an army of informed, engaged union members acting in their own self-interest and standing up for the rights of all workers who will talk to their neighbors, friends, employers, clergy and elected officials. Our membership education program will be modeled on the successes of the Building Trades COMET member organizing education program. Union members will work together with our national and community allies to mobilize an undeniable wave of public support, including the support of national and community opinion leaders, for the fundamental freedom to organize and for collective bargaining rights.

The job of building public under-

standing of the benefits of collective bargaining and the reality of employer opposition is a daunting task that will require all the coordinated efforts we can organize. To accomplish this, we will work together with Jobs with Justice, the National Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice, AFL-CIO constituency groups and other workers' and civil rights coalitions. To augment federation-based efforts, we also will help facilitate the formation of an independent organization to join with us in establishing the right of workers to form a union as a fundamental freedom, understood and cherished just as are freedom of speech, freedom of religion and other rights of association such as the right to join a professional organization, political party or religious congregation. The independent organization will play a key role in recruiting allies and building an echo chamber to make the case with politicians and the public that coercive employer behavior directed against organizing efforts is an abuse of fundamental human and civil rights.

3. We will harness political gains at the state and local levels to expand workers' rights and power, targeting and winning new workers' rights initiatives in 2003 and 2004. Recent examples of "linking politics and organizing" in communities and states inform and inspire a new generation of efforts to expand workers' collective bargaining rights. State-level initiatives such as New York's card check law for non-NLRA private-sector employees, Washington State's expansion of collective bargaining rights for a range of state and state-funded employees and California's law requiring mediation of first contracts for farm workers provide valuable models for expanding workers' rights. We will also target 2003 and 2004 state and local political races for campaigns to advance workers' rights, from electing union members to electing mayors and governors who support workers' rights. And we will provide a clearinghouse to share tactics and models for effective state and local initiatives.

4. Finally, we must and will build majority support in the U.S. Congress and support in the White House for protections of existing collective bargaining rights and for legal reform that protects the free and fair choice of employees to form a union without interference from management and enables more workers

to enjoy the benefits of collective bargaining. We will target and implement a comprehensive program of congressional education and mobilization in Washington, D.C., as well as congressional districts nationwide, and we will create a congressional workers' rights caucus in 2003.

We will develop and advance proposals for federal labor law reform that we will ask 2004 candidates for federal office, including presidential candidates, to endorse. As the respected international human rights organization Human Rights Watch confirmed in a book-length September 2000 report, the current legal framework utterly fails to protect workers' democratic rights. "Loophole-ridden laws, paralyzing delays and feeble enforcement have led to a culture of impunity in many areas of U.S. labor law and practice. Legal obstacles tilt the playing field so steeply against workers' freedom of association that the United States is in violation of international human rights standards for workers," Human Rights Watch reported. Our laws must be reformed to prevent employers from suppressing workers' freedom to form a union and bargain collectively, with a focus on protections for voluntary recognition of workers' unions; workers who choose to be represented by a union must have a meaningful right to collective bargaining that ultimately results in a contract on fair terms; employers who break the law must be held accountable, with punishment that fits the crime and is severe enough to deter violation; and protections of the law must be extended to all workers, regardless of their placement in easily manipulated, contingent workforce categories, in recognition of changing employment relations in the new economy.

In addition, we will fully integrate workers' rights as an issue in our national election work, targeting federal races to elect candidates who support workers' freedom to organize. A campaign of this magnitude requires dedicated resources at the AFL-CIO, coordination among our unions and an unparalleled level of engagement of the labor movement at every level. The need is urgent. Our response must be similarly urgent. We will not shrink from the challenge.

CYA at SBC

By Jim Foster, Business Representative



“CYA,” remember that? If you were here in the early seventies you might remember the saying, and the buttons put out by Local # 399.

The issue was Illinois Bell’s “Force Management Program” and the company was disciplining techs for not making time on orders and repair, poor quality samples, falsifying company records, and being out of route. Sounds familiar doesn’t it? Well CYA is back. For those who don’t remember or weren’t here, CYA is “Cover Your Ass.”

Their name has changed, but they think the same. SBC is having a field day with GPS, Tech Expectations, Safety Rules, and Code of Conduct. It doesn’t matter if you’re in the top 10%, the bottom 10%, or have no previous discipline on any

of these issues. When the managers do a job sample and find a deviation, they are going to bring you in on the carpet. With the low volume of work in some areas, the company is looking for reasons to suspend people, and save a buck. In addition, there are some managers with little or no phone experience, who with the touch of a button, or a stroke of a pen in one of the eighty plus boxes on a job sample, could call you into their office.

You need to be where you’re supposed to be, doing what you’re supposed to be doing, and following all company guidelines and work rules. If you change anything in your daily route you need to check with your boss for the OK, and document it on your time sheet, job ticket, or time envelope.

If you are told to go to a different job other than the one you’re assigned to, told to close a job that’s not done, or told to back up a clear time in order to make a commitment time, question your boss about falsifying company records. And request a job ticket for the location where your boss sends you. If he refuses, document it, do what you’re told, and notify

“doing what you’re supposed to be doing, and following all company guidelines and work rules.”

your steward. I know it’s more paper work, and we have plenty, but it could be the difference between suspension and staying at work. So keep in mind, do what you’re told, follow all company guidelines and work rules, and document any changes by management.

SAFETY FIRST , QUALITY SECOND, QUANTITY LAST .

VERMILION COUNTY

Area Steward Doris Halls and I have been meeting with the County to try and resolve a State Labor Relations Board (SLRB) charge on the Non-Judicial

Contract. I feel that by the time *Frontline* goes to press the matter will be resolved, and I apologize for the delay in the copies of the contract. Informal discussion raised the possibility of starting negotiations early, and we hope to make this formal soon. I have no idea what to expect considering both Vermilion County’s economy, and the world economy.

Congratulations to Local 21 Retirees		
September 2002	November 2002	January 2003
Richard D. Ledford	Patricia A. Benjiman Betty Boyd Michael Coughlin Ed Mitchell	Denise Grandon Robert A Johnson Jim Peterson Saundra Taylor
February 2003	March 2003	April 2003
Sandie Arreguin Sue Cousin Helen Davis Horace Green Raymond Hirsch Donna Krok Nancy Malloy Sue Mathauser Lorraine Shannon Thomas Smith Deirdre Webb	Ernestine Fraise Diane Libman Elizabeth McGuire Sheila Barragan Deness Tanner	Craig Boedewig Diane Haywood
<p>Information Alert Local 21 members who retire in good standing are eligible to receive a gift certificate. The Steward, Area Steward, Chief Steward, or Business Rep must call Nancy Kopydlowski at the Union Office 630 960-4466 X234 to request an application, fill it out, and fax it back to Nancy.</p>		

2003 UNIT MEETINGS

MAY

Unit 1

Thursday, May 8, 7 PM
Hillside Holiday Inn
4400 Frontage Rd
Hillside IL
708 544-9300

Unit 2

Tuesday, May 13, 7 PM
Lansing American Legion
18255 Grant St
Lansing IL
708 474-6413

Unit 3

Thursday, May 15, 7 PM
Best Western Elgin Plaza
345 West River Rd
Elgin IL
847 695-5000

Unit 4

Wednesday, May 14, 7 PM
Lemont VFW
15780 New Av
Lemont IL
630 257-9859

Unit 5

Wednesday, May 21, 7 PM
Days Inn
77 N Gilbert
Danville IL
217 443-6600

Unit 6

Tuesday, May 20, 5:30 PM
IBEW Local # 193
3150 Wide Track Dr
Springfield IL
217 544-3479

Unit 7

Monday, May 19, 7 PM
IBEW Local # 309
2000A Mall St (Rte 157)
Collinsville IL
618 345-5112

JUNE

Unit 1

Thursday, June 12, 7 PM
Habetler Bowl
5250 N Northwest Highway
Chicago IL
773 774-0500

Unit 2

Tuesday June 10, 7 PM
Slovak Club
6920 Broadway
Merrillville IN
219 756-5101

Unit 3

Thursday, June 19, 7 PM
Gurnee American Legion
749 Milwaukee Av
Gurnee IL
847 244-9282

Unit 4

Wednesday, June 11, 7 PM
IBEW Local #145
1700 52nd Ave Suite A
Moline IL
309 736-4239

Unit 5

Wednesday, June 18, 7 PM
VFW Post #630
1303 E Main
Urbana IL
217 367-4197

Unit 6

Tuesday, June 17, 5:30 PM
IBEW Local # 193
3150 Wide Track Dr
Springfield IL
217 544-3479

Unit 7

Monday, June 16, 7 PM
American Legion
916 Main St
Mt Vernon IL
618 242-4561

JULY

Unit 1

Thursday, July 10, 7 PM
Musicians Hall
175 W Washington
Chicago IL
312 782-0063

Unit 2

Tuesday, July 8, 7 PM
Gaelic Park
6119 W 147th St.
Oak Forest IL
708 687-9323

Unit 3

Thursday, July 17, 7 PM
IBEW Local # 364
6820 Mill Rd
Rockford IL
815 398-6282

Unit 4

Wednesday, July 9, 7 PM
American Legion Harwood Post 5
705 S Larkin
Joliet IL
815 729-2254

Unit 5

Wednesday, July 16, 7 PM
American Legion Post 979
4501 S Airport Rd
Bartonville IL
309 697-2432

Unit 6

Tuesday, July 15, 5:30 PM
IBEW Local # 193
3150 Wide Track Dr
Springfield IL
217 544-3479

Unit 7

Monday, July 21, 7 PM
Alton Sports Tap
3812 College Av
Alton IL
618 465-2539

IBEW LOCAL 21

1307 W. Butterfield Rd.
Suite 422
Downers Grove, IL 60515-5601



Non-Profit
Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Downers Grove, IL
Permit No. 424

