

FRONTLINE

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President/Business Manager's Report

Time to Prepare

By Ron Kastner



Is it too early? It's never too early to think about your future, the future of your families, and the future of organized labor. Consider this! In just eleven

short months, we have the power to elect a new president of our country. That thought alone makes me think that it is NOT too early.

Some of what happens with our government actually frightens me. For example, did you know that President Bush and his allies in

Congress plan to eliminate overtime pay for at least 8 million American workers who rely on it to balance their personal budgets? Did you know that current Republican legislation is attempting to reduce health care benefits for 8 million employees? Furthermore, the Republicans have proposed a dramatic change in retirement policy that will cost millions of older workers half their private pension benefits. And, our current President owns the worst job creation record in

seven decades, with a record setting 9.4 million Americans unable to find work. As President/Business Manager of Local 21, I can't tell you how to vote. But, along with other elected union officials, I certainly intend to spread the word about important labor issues, as well as issues that affect jobs and the economy.

Local 21 has been dealing with anti-union employers for a long time, their attitude becomes obvious pretty quickly. Lately, however, even companies like SBC, AG Communications and Verizon, just to name a few, have picked up some not so subtle Union busting tendencies. It's my opinion that this new arrogance is a result of big business having the support of our

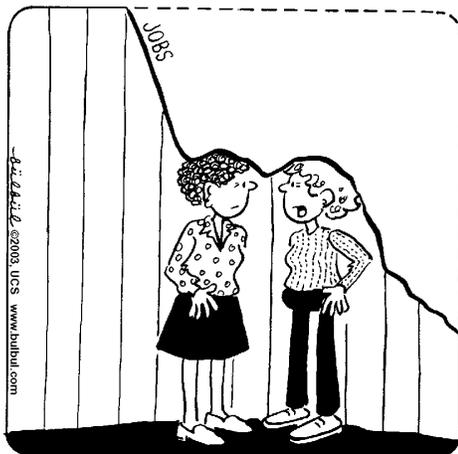
governmental leaders to do whatever they want. We must be diligent:

this new arrogance is a result of big business having the support of our governmental leaders

what they cannot pass in Congress, they will attempt through changes in regulations, or even lowly accounting procedures. The time to keep our collective eyes and ears

OPEN to their attacks is NOW.

These employers mentioned have forgotten that it is labor which adds value. They have become obsessed with the bottom line profit. Even worse, they look only at the stock price and the "compensation" paid to the CEO and the highest level of management. They just don't care. They



"Bushonomics."

have the right person in the White House to back whatever they do, no matter how ludicrous it sounds to us. They may have ways to deal with Unions, but what they can't figure out is how to stop you. If you get involved it is lethal. We will be preparing you and educating you from my office, count on it.

As you can see involvement in politics is absolutely essential today more than ever. It's never too early. Together, organized labor can and will send out a mandate for change next year.

The holiday season is here. We all have many reasons to give thanks this season. We are lucky to live in a country where our voices are heard and often respected. Make sure yours is heard in the upcoming year.

Happy Holidays!

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INSIDE

By Rick Gessler, Vice President/Assistant Business Manager

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As usual SBC continues to amaze us with their new interpretations of the contract.

The company appears to be ignoring past

practice and grievance settlements. They impose their own interpretation on things. It forces us to file grievances on the same subjects over and over again. The latest is the scheduling of off hours, weekends and holidays. The Union has past practice on all of the above, but the company prefers to ignore it and invent their own new meaning. It makes you wonder if this is the "Texas" version of labor relations.

The company informed us that there is no longer a surplus in I&R, but they need to permanently transfer seventy-four System

Is this the "Texas" version of labor relations?

Techs to other garages throughout the state of Illinois. This plan would again involve transfers across exhibits and many move packages as families are uprooted. We met with SBC and asked that, at the very least, they hold off on this until after we have a decision in the "cross over" arbitration, which is scheduled to be heard in November. We are waiting for an answer.

We negotiated with the company to offer job openings in Peoria to the laid off members before they go through the transfer system or hire off the street, even though the jobs are outside of the title group.

In November as we prepare for the arbitration on the contracting out after a layoff, the Union needed to request an arbitrator to issue a subpoena in order for us to get documentation. SBC has refused to comply with our requests for information we need to move forward to the hearing. This should not strike us as a surprise since we have to fight them in everything we do lately. But it is disappointing that the company is less interested in resolving a problem, than in delaying the process.

We have processed over 900 hundred grievances so far this year with SBC, and the Union has approximately 200 cases pending arbitration. Arbitrators have begun hearing the cases of the brothers and sisters who were fired after the company discovered staffing hadn't followed their own hiring rules. We anxiously await decisions on these cases.

Despite these problems, as Union members we are fortunate. Did you know the number of Americans without health insurance rose by 5.7 percent to 43.6 million individuals so far in

2003? The number of people living below the poverty line (\$18,392 for a family of four) climbed to 12.1 percent--34.6 million people.

As I reported in the last *Frontline*, next year is going to be a very busy year for Local 21 with the SBC bargaining. We need all of the members' help and we need your attendance at the meetings along with your input. We ALL need to let the company know we are going to stick together and not settle for a substandard contract. See you at the meetings! Happy holidays!



"Hawaiian Shirt Day and Funny Hat Day didn't boost morale. How about Give Us The CEO's Bonus Day or Stop Sending All of Our Jobs Overseas Day?"

Year-end Wrap-up...Crystal Ball Report...Welcome Union Busters?

By Michael Sacco, Business Representative



I hate to repeat myself, but this time last year I said I was happy 2002 was over because it sucked. Sadly, 2003 sucked just as bad,

maybe worse. Some of my gloom is from the general state of the world and some is home-grown inside the union and on the job.

First, **the world**: One superpower against the world? The stuff of cold war thrillers? Not true. Our nation has unilaterally pitted itself against the world at a time when we are the largest debtor nation on the planet. We owe money to everyone. As our dollar deflates (something happening for the last year), the bankers (mostly foreign lenders) are less anxious to help us and we can and will be spanked.

Should we then invade them with our overpriced military might and take them over?

We can't keep our military commitments now. Who's ready to ship off their kid for a draft?

I know many of you voted for Bush, for a variety of reasons. But he is an absolute disaster for workers (us). He is a threat to our basic rights and he is the best president corporate money can buy. Believe it! Some of you feel more sympathy with the corporate class because you think you are members of it. Wake up, this class requires many millions of dollars to join. Not the six figures that makes some of us feel "rich." Get smart.

Locally I'm worried because, increasingly, many of our sisters and brothers act like "contractors." They act like one-person shows, protecting their own asses, sucking up to the bosses as if they have to make their own deal everyday—just like a contractor. This, by the way, is exactly how management wants us to feel—separate and alone. This is not the case! We are regular employees with a collective bargaining agreement and a grievance

process. We are a lot more secure than management would ever let on. The best cure is reading the contract, talking to your steward, getting to know and befriend your neighbor and going to a union meeting.

Now, **the report from the crystal ball**: the economy will continue badly, but the numbers; like gas prices, unemployment rates and GDP will look good for election time. Those numbers will have little depth or staying power but will be propped up courtesy of the Federal Reserve and the oil companies. The Democrats will again have little stomach to tell people the truth about corporate power and how it should be controlled.

Crystal Ball 2: We are in for a hell of a contract fight next spring at SBC. The workers will prevail because the company was dumb enough to start the war several years ago and we now do believe that the company is run by greedy, rotten scoundrels who will take whatever they can out of our pockets. They are not "basically good" as many of us used to believe. Most of us are

ready to fight and the rest of us will be on board when the going gets tough and we

The best cure is going to a Union meeting

will win against the union-busting SBC.

Union busting? That's right, I believe that **SBC is a union-busting company**, no different than AT&T, Comcast or Wal-Mart. If you read Rick Gessler's column (to the left), he cites statistics of more than 900 grievances and more than 200 arbitrations—that, brothers and sisters is what union-busting looks like! These are record-breaking numbers. Additionally, the company is also using known union-busting law firms to subcontract some of its anti-union work. As all of us know, the company is slowing down the grievance process and ignoring past practice. All tactics of the union buster. Do not expect the company to do the right thing! This is a war.

To fight a war you need troops to be mobilized for battle. That's all of us. Most of you have noticed "Mobilization" flyers and posters around announcing **Mobilization plans**. Mobilization is an effort to educate members on the facts about SBC in order for people to organize

themselves around grievances and bargaining and take action to resist the company's plan to roll back our rights and take our money. Look for the materials on your bulletin board and on the website (www.ibew21.org) and hotline (630-415-2711). If you want to know more or get involved more deeply see your steward or call the union office and leave your name and phone number, we'll add you to our growing list of hellraisers—I mean activists.

Sometimes I'm accused of being a gloom and doomer. Sometimes I am. In this season of joy, a lot of things are a mess, but I'm thankful for two smart and healthy teenagers and my own good health and the health of my family. I'm thrilled and proud to be part of our union and able to serve our leadership and members. I hope and pray for a more just and peaceful world and promise to do my part to make it happen. Peace.

Do You Owe Back Dues?

You may owe back dues through no fault of your own. SBC, especially, makes a mess of dues accounting, but it could cost you your job! Another audit has been done of the Local's books to identify members who are in arrears. There is a long list of members who owe anything from a few dollars to a few hundred dollars. All these members have been notified by mail and back moneys owed must be paid up by December 10, 2003. Those still in arrears after December 10, 2003 will have letters issued to the company asking that the employee be removed from the payroll. Don't get in that trick bag. Do your part and pay up. If you have any questions call the union office at 630-960-4466.

Political Action Protected Our Pensions

By Larry Moeller & Rosetta Shinn, Committee On Political Education



We have good news to report on Pension Reform! The Bush Administration, with its allies in the business community and Congress set

out to change the rules in regard to the funding of traditional pensions. They wanted to change the rate used to calculate lump sum options, and allow corporations to replace traditional pensions with cash balance accounts (CBA's). Happily, as of Nov 7th two out of three of these disastrous changes will not happen this year. Proposals to allow corporations to replace traditional pensions with CBA's were tabled earlier this year. More importantly there is little chance that final legislation will touch lump sums,

although the legislation does temporarily change the funding rate for pension liability for a 3 year period. This is significant because the business community previously insisted that any change in the pension-funding rate that lasted more than 2 years would have to include a change in the lump sum calculations.

This good news is due to the support we received from political allies, the IBEW COPE Department, the AFL-CIO Public Policy Department and most importantly members like you who voiced their opposition to any reduction in our pensions.

A word of caution—these issues are likely to pop up again. So much depends on who is the President, and which party controls Congress. 2004 will be a busy year—the SBC contract negotiations will dominate our thoughts, but we also need to pay attention to the national election. The Bush Administration has proven it is no friend of working families. There is an old adage “reward your friends and punish your

enemies.” The Local 21 COPE Department tries to do that by educating our membership on pro-labor issues and making campaign contributions to friends in both parties. If you are an SBC Local 21 member you can make a difference. It aggravates the bean counters so sign up for a payroll COPE deduction. For information on how you can help call 630-960-4466 X 221. “Show Bush the door in '04.”



WE WON -- FOR NOW!!!

The House of Representatives voted 221-203 to instruct their conferees to adopt the Senate position and block the Department of Labor from implementing any rule that would take away overtime pay for any worker. This vote is non-binding on the conferees, and sustained pressure on Congress to do the right thing is needed.

Overtime pay is important to many working people in America who rely on it to support their families. The Labor Department has proposed new eligibility standards that would take overtime pay away from up to 8 million working Americans.

Your COPE committee lobbied in Washington DC. Your voices were heard. Thanks for all the calls, emails and faxes. Keep the pressure on.

Editor's Note: At press time, the White House restarted this fight. Go to www.ibew21.org for the latest.



Benefit Report

Keep Your SBC Telephone Concession

By Linda Corcoran-Cox,
Benefits Coordinator &
Recording Secretary

Frontline would need to be a daily paper to keep up with all the changes in hospital contracts with United Health Care. Provena settled their contract and will remain in the network. St. Francis Hospital in Blue Island has terminated their contract effective 12-10-03. Additionally, nine family practitioners and specialists, associated with St. Francis, also have terminated their contracts with UHC. You'll need to check with your family doctor or specialists to make sure they will remain in the network for 2004.

Originally, we were advised, **in error**, that Ingalls Memorial, Little Company of Mary, Roseland Community and Palos Community had also terminated their contracts.

Those 4 hospitals will remain in the network. We have not heard anything definite on the Advocate contract, which expires 12-31-03. Although Advocate

insists, to their patients and physicians, they have terminated their contract with UHC, SBC says they have not received a letter of termination and are confident the contract will be renewed. As soon as the results are known, we will update the hotline.

In the meantime, since open enrollment has closed, if the hospital or physician contracts affect you, you can still make changes to your medical plan option when you receive your confirmation of coverage or enrollment. If you miss that timeframe, you can change from PPO to UHC after the 1st of the year but the change will not be effective until the first of the following month. However, the reverse is not true. You cannot change from UHC to

any other plan except during open enrollment and after you receive your confirmation of coverage or enrollment.

SBC Long Distance has caused a wave of problems with **telephone concession** for active employees as well as bargained-for retirees. It's no wonder, as 23, 000 letters were sent to active employees, designating them as retirees. So here's the scoop! **As an active employee, you do not have to choose SBC for Long Distance and it will not affect your concession.** If you opt to have SBC as your long distance carrier, all you need to change is your long distance PIC. Do not change or elect anything else, as the packages that are being offered are not concessionable. Current retirees must choose SBC as their long distance carrier by December 31 of this year or lose their concession. With the exception of pre-divestiture retirees, all pension eligible retirees and current employees will receive a 10% discount on their long distance service.

We have just learned of a

erroneously, because it looked like 1-1-04 was the real retirement date.

Before anyone gets upset or thinks they are entitled to the 6% increase, let me state the facts. If you retire in 2003, you are only entitled to the pension band amount that is in affect in 2003. If you retire in 2003, you are entitled to the Treasury Rate in effect for 2003. Lastly, if you retire in 2003, you are not entitled to vacation for 2004. No one is entitled to retire in 2003 and get anything that's in effect for 2004!

The immediate concern is for those planning to retire this year. The Pension Center is trying to identify the people who received incorrect information prior to discovery of this error November 10th, and they will send corrected info. However, the programming error is not fixed yet, so going forward, all projections and calculations will have to be done manually. This takes time.

Because the system added one more day to anyone who has retired and in some cases, perhaps, gave them a higher value to

their pension band and/or applied the wrong Treasury Rate, the programming error has the potential of negatively impacting anyone who has already retired. As an example, if someone retired 12-31-2002, it's possible they were given the pension increase for 2003 and the lower Treasury Rate of 4.96% for 2003.

This combination would cause a much higher pension amount. On the other hand, it's also possible, under certain conditions, that the pension could have been understated. There are too many what-ifs right now to fully determine what the fall out will be, but be assured we will monitor this very closely and will inform you of the resolution.

The Benefit Department wishes everyone a safe and happy holiday season from Linda Corcoran-Cox, Mary Jo Hindes, Lynn Arwood and Elly Augustyn.



L to R Linda Corcoran-Cox, Mary Jo Hindes, Lynn Arwood and Elly Augustyn.

programming error involving all pension calculations and projections that affect those still on the payroll and those who have left since approximately December of 2002. We don't know the full impact of this yet, but we do know that anyone who has requested a pension projection or final calculation using a last date on the payroll of 12-31-03 was quoted with the 6% pension increase in error. From what we've learned, the pension system was programmed to look at the last day on the payroll (term date) and add one day (benefit commencement date). In this case, 12-31-03 is the term date and the benefit commencement date is 1-1-04. The system automatically applied the 6% increase,

IS THERE ANYTHING GOOD?

By Mike McCormick, Business Representative



After thinking long and hard if I should even write an article for this edition, I decided something is better than nothing.

Knowing that

this article will be for the holiday issue, why not start out with the “HOLIDAY SCHEDULING,” that once again is being forced down every I&R technician’s throat. It does not matter that for years we have used the MAJOR & MINOR way of scheduling for holidays, because at SBC, the “union friendly” corporate giant, “We will schedule the way we want. We do it this way everywhere else. We don’t have this problem with CWA.” So once again the Union is told to grieve it. By the way, **HAPPY THANKSGIVING.**

What does this mean to all of the outside repair and installation technicians? It means that there will probably be more techs scheduled on Thanksgiving and less scheduled on the day after Thanksgiving. By the way, it’s good to note that almost all the higher up managers will be home with their families on the holidays. It is also good to note that SBC is “a family oriented company.”

To understand scheduling you must know what has been agreed to, and know what the past practice is. Each steward has been trained on how to look at the ASKME report and what can be challenged. With the company’s new “HOLIDAY METHODOLOGY,” a steward will not be able to look at the information, nor challenge anything.

On the Central Office side of the house, please don’t feel left out—the company is looking at ways to try and curtail overtime. This has been an ongoing issue. Many different suggestions have been discussed. The latest idea is to break up the area into small orbits. This would mean smaller vacation lists, smaller overtime lists,

and more off-hour scheduling. By the way, **MERRY CHRISTMAS.**

Now the Dorchester Center. When is the ax going to fall? When is this “family oriented” company going to come out and say that we are closing the center, along with Cicero and Arlington Heights, and move everyone to Lakewood, in Hoffman Estates? Knowing that SBC cares about your family, doesn’t it make sense to drive or take a bus or a train approximately 40 more miles to work, because that way you can spend more time with your family? By the way, **HAPPY NEW YEAR.**

The Construction department is scaring me right now because we are not hearing anything and that makes me wonder. FWG is also quiet, but I believe



that is because you have so much work. Within the FWG department please watch out for other groups coming into your area to do your work. If you see it or know about someone coming into your area file a grievance.

The IM department should not feel left out either. Right now I hope that there is a lot of rehab work going on for the southside of Chicago. That has been a concern of ours because of the excessive amount of technicians scheduled on off-hour shifts. Hopefully, we will see a decrease in scheduling soon. Rumors are flying about the locate situation, but right now they are just rumors.

What about the common issues that effect each and every one of us? First of all

are benefits, where the company is challenging FMLA and WORKER’S COMP cases that were always paid before. Once again we have to grieve cases that never had to be challenged before.

Dismissal cases? Way too many. The Audit arbitration cases have started. These are the cases where thirty-three members were let go because this BIG, BEAUTIFUL, CARING, FAMILY ORIENTED company decided after 2 years of employment, to fire these members because, as their lawyers state, “We made a mistake, we should never have hired them.” THESE CASES SHOULD BE PERSONAL TO EACH AND EVERY ONE OF US.

Maybe it is time for us to come together and have JOB ACTIONS? Quite possibly each and every one of us has had enough and the time is right to have our concerns taken care of.

I have also been sitting in on the negotiations for the 911 Center. Though at times it feels that we are not getting anywhere, the stewards involved know that the main goal is to change that god-awful language. We will fight to get that accomplished.

Please keep your eyes on the UNION BULLETIN BOARD for very interesting information. Older members please share history with our younger members.

This upcoming contract will be their first. Over 50% of our brothers and sisters have less than five years of service. History will mean a lot to these members; they want to understand what you struggled to obtain, at contract time in the past. We must come together. All for one.

Besides prepping other arbitration cases, meeting on third step grievances, etc. there is hardly anything going on. HA, HA or should I say HO, HO.

C.J. and I are trying hard to visit each and every location. With help, I hope you see a change.

On behalf of everyone at the union office, we wish all our brothers and sisters the happiest of holidays.

What Are You Prepared to Do?

By Michael O'Connor, Chief Steward



A dramatic scene in the movie, “The Untouchables,” frames Sean Connery’s wizened, old beat cop asking a young Elliot Ness, “What are you prepared to

do?”

Local 21 members working at SBC should be asking themselves the same question—and be prepared to answer it.

Sixteen pay periods remain until the expiration of the current collective bargaining agreement. But many of our members remain oblivious to this fact. The company is counting on you remaining so.

Our brothers and sisters on the East Coast at Verizon won a good contract against immeasurable odds. Only through hard-fought, persistent mobilization were they able to beat back a massive attack on their rights, wages and benefits. They did it with a coherent effort by both IBEW and CWA members working together. They held rallies in most of the big cities on the East Coast.

They ran radio ads to counter the company’s deceit and inform the public of the real issues. Every single Saturday, members rallied in front of Verizon CEO Ivan Seidenberg’s house to let him know that they all stood together in this fight. Every Saturday a member in a giant pig costume walked in front of the home of the one of the biggest CEOs in America, pounding home the message that Verizon’s anti-family, anti-worker, pro-greed business plan was unacceptable to the unionized membership at Verizon.

What are you prepared to do?

We all have someone in our workplace disillusioned about the union. “What do I get for my dues,” they say. Or “What has the union done for me lately?” To best answer that question, why not ask one of our laid-off brothers and sisters who had to take a non-union job with companies like AT&T or RCN or other SBC competitors? They surely know the value of a union contract.

We, all of us, must come together in

the next seven months to work for one goal. You, your family, and our union are all under attack by SBC. The company is sending managers to plant school to learn our jobs. They won’t be anywhere as good, but they will be on the street if we have to strike. A manager in the Kedzie garage in Chicago is telling his workers there is another layoff coming and this time it will be by productivity. He’s flat wrong, but that is the kind of intimidation you, we and I need to stand up against.

How many of us are willing to come to work an hour early and do **informational picketing**? How many of us that work inside would agree to eat lunch on our break and picket on our lunch? It will take action like this and much more to defend our wages and job security. The Verizon workers succeeded in part, because they were willing to work to the rule of the contract. That forced Verizon to eat the housing and associated costs of all the strikebreakers they had brought in at the expiration of the contract. Are we willing to do the same? We all take shortcuts that make our job easier. That has to stop. **The company would suffocate under its own rules.**

Are you detailed out from your work location, maybe closer to your home and pocketing travel pay, too? Consider, that you are doing work that one of your laid off brothers and sisters could be doing. Are you prepared to refuse to volunteer for that detail? Yes, the company will force others to go in your place. But the bitter taste that creates for those workers has to be tasted so they recognize what this company will do to them in pursuit of its profit margin. How many are willing to bring a co-worker to the next union meeting or even attend the next one yourself?

Things are brutal in our workplaces today. Out of control discipline, ridiculous attendance guidelines. If we are not united they will surely get worse. When your steward or chief steward goes to bat for you on a grievance, the manager across the table from him or her must understand that they are dealing with the entire workgroup, building, or membership. That representative is not just one person opposing the manager. He represents everybody in the union. Management likes to think he is just one person across a table. We have to make certain every manager knows that each steward or area steward has

a wall of support behind them.

On the eve of the American Revolution, with the colonies split in their resolve to break away from England, Benjamin Franklin gave the young Congress some chilling advice, “We must all hang together or we shall surely all hang separately!”

What are you prepared to do?

Verizon Facts

The unions were able to secure a contract that safeguards protections in areas where the company was determined to gain concessions.

- 1. Workers did get a wage increase.**
- 2. They do not have to pay for healthcare.**
- 3. They kept the lump sum option on their pensions.**

But it took hard work and solidarity on the part of the union members.

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

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Larry Moeller

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Part 4: Executive Board Members

By Jacquie Fields, Treasurer



This month I'd like to explain the role of the Executive Board, probably one of the least familiar parts of Local 21's structure.

The Executive Board members are elected officers, not appointed staff members. They meet together once a month with the President/Business Manager, Financial Secretary, the Recording Secretary, and the Treasurer to hear their monthly reports. They also inspect the monthly expenses of the Local. The board is comprised of seven members, one per unit, keeping with the constitution of the IBEW to have an uneven number for voting purposes. Once the officers have submitted their reports, they leave the meeting to the E-Board.

The Executive Board members can take any action that has to be performed

before the next Union meeting. At the monthly union meetings, the E-Board member for that unit reads the minutes of the Executive Board meeting and reports on the board's actions. It's submitted to the membership for approval.

The board is required to cooperate with the other officers and representatives of the local union. Other duties may be assigned to E-Board members, and some of them serve on the various committees formed to keep the local running efficiently. Although it is a rare situation, E-Board members are also empowered to act as a trial board to hear all charges and try all members for violation of the Constitution, Bylaws, and working rules of the Local Union. Local union funds must be audited

quarterly, and this action is cared for by the E-Board.

On a personal note, I am very impressed with the seven individuals that make up our E-Board: Unit 1 – Bill Lawrence, Unit 2 – Kevin Curran, Unit 3 – Jim Noble, Unit 4 – Larry Schuler, Unit 5 – Alison Watson, Unit 6- Rosetta Shinn, and Unit 7 – Bryan Smith.

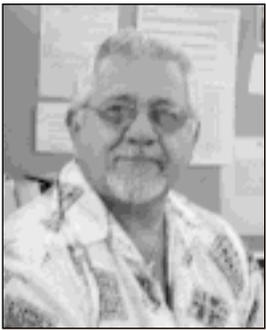


L to R Kevin Curran, Bryan Smith, Larry Schuler, Alison Watson, Jim Noble, Rosetta Shinn, and Bill Lawrence.

Outstate News

Brother Plottner Mourned

By Jim Foster, Business Representative



Anyone who has recently retired, or is planning to retire soon needs to contact their steward, Chief Steward

Mike Roach, or myself so we can request your retirement package from the Union. We also want to make sure your name appears in the *Frontline* for recognition. If any active members know someone who's already retired, and might not see this, please let them know.

The battles continue with SBC on issues from work details of one work group to another, different towns, scheduling of late shifts and weekends,

contractors doing work we can do, and various other issues. Most of these are in the grievance process, and ready for third step meetings or Arbitration. Not a location in the state is free from some or all of these problems.

On a sad note, the members in Champaign/Urbana recently lost a friend and fellow union brother when I&R technician Mark Plottner was killed on his way home from work. My condolences to his wife Angie, his family, and the brothers and sisters of his union family. He is the third friend and union brother tragically lost at this location in the last four years. I&R tech Jamie Wynja, and Construction tech Kevin Pellum also suffered untimely deaths. Each time all of the employees in both towns were allowed to attend the services. Each funeral procession included a caravan of over seventy phone trucks. Once again, my condolences to all.

Vermilion County

Bargaining continues with little success. The wage offer from the Judicial and Non-Judicial were both rejected. If progress is not made soon, the Union will request a Federal Mediator. Make sure you have a current union card because only dues paying members with updated cards will be admitted to contract overview meetings and allowed to vote on contract offers. If your card is not updated or you don't have one contact your steward or Area Steward Doris Halls.



Breakthrough in Bargaining for Engineering Assistants

By Kurt Schmidt,
Business Representative



Bargaining with SBC for the Engineering Assistants has taken a turn for the better. After these employees were organized through a certified card

check election, the company came to the table wanting a separate contract for the 165 Engineering Assistants. The Union maintained from the very beginning that these new members be included in the SBC Collective Bargaining Agreement currently in effect until June 26, 2004. Not until the most recent bargaining sessions did the company agree to have the assistants brought into the existing contract. This was accomplished through the strong efforts of President Ron Kastner, who reminded the company of Local Union 21's recent support for long distance and our support for UNE-P pricing reform in the Illinois legislature.

Inclusion in the CORE agreement is a plus for the members. There still is some hard bargaining ahead of us because the company does want some carve outs in order to bring this group into the CORE agreement. The issues of benefits and wages still need to be brought to the Union for consideration. Several items of contention between the Union and the company disappeared when SBC agreed to allow engineering assistants entry into the CORE. In addition, both parties have tentatively agreed to several articles.

Please, all Engineering Assistants, let your managers know that you want a fair and speedy conclusion to this bargaining. Keep abreast of the most recent bargaining news by listening to the hotline (630-415-2711). Maintain and impose your solidarity during this bargaining. The Union will be meeting with the company in the next couple of weeks in more bargaining sessions to get an agreement.

SB-885 Ruling—The UNE-P Saga Continues

By Rosetta Shinn & Larry Moeller, Committee on Political Education

It didn't make the front page, but the 7th Circuit Court of Appeals has ruled on SB-885, the bill addressing SBC's UNE-P wholesale rates. The court did not rule entirely on behalf of SBC. This decision would not allow the new law to go into effect. The court did however order the Illinois Commerce Commission (ICC) to review SBC's current wholesale rate in Illinois. The ruling recognized the wholesale rate "is long out of date" and must be updated "speedily."

The court realized not all factors had been reviewed—currently only fill and depreciation are used to set rates. SBC has always said not all factors were being reviewed correctly. The decision says in order to be TELRIC (TEL regulations Illinois Commission) compliant, all factors that go into rates should be reviewed.

"This would not be where it is today," said Local 21 President Ron Kastner, "if this union and our members had not gotten involved. The hard work

by many made this happen." Although the bill will not be made law, it does guide the legislature and provide direction to state regulators as they set wholesale rates.

The court also took VOICES FOR CHOICES, the front group who filed the case, to task and changed the case to AT&T v. Illinois Bell. We know this non-union friendly company and have been dealing with their underhanded ways for years.

Local 21 is aware it will be weeks before the Illinois Commerce Commission receives the order from the 7th Circuit Court of Appeals. In the future we again may call for your help with the ICC to let the regulators know that fair calculation of UNE-P rates is needed for good IBEW 21 union jobs. President Kastner and the COPE department thank every sister and brother again for all your help with this fight. SBC knows we made it happen, and when the call goes out, IBEW 21 members are the best.



News At JULIE

By Melanie Probst, Business Representative

On a sad note, the members at JULIE recently lost a friend when member Patti Krabbe died from hemochromatosis, which means her system builds iron and deposits it into main organs. All of us at Local 21 wish the best to her family.

With the expanded Work At Home Program, steward Shelly Miller and I have been making home visits to these twelve members. We'd like to thank them for welcoming us into their homes. Our visits enable us to see their work stations, key in on frequently asked questions and keep them informed on union/company updates.

Time after Time

By Nancy North, Area Steward



Truthfully, I'm worn out from working overtime. Usually I'm immune to a stack of cases mushrooming on my desk, but I've been

working on a big project for months now. I kept telling myself that everything would be under control a month before the cut, then three weeks before the cut, then the due date moved, okay two weeks, a week. Even ten or twelve hour days didn't seem to make a dent in it.

I'd get home at eight o'clock at night and plop down on the couch

too tired to think, too tired to eat, too tired to even reach for the remote to turn on the television. My children lost interest in the "treat" of fast food or carryout.

"Mom, when are you going to cook for us?" For once they agreed on something. I don't know how my dad worked overtime all those years.

Yes, the paychecks were nice, but the positive reinforcement only lasted the

thirty seconds it took me to write the deposit into my checking account register. At least I was earning time and a half, then double time. I'd joke with the manager staying late that we earned more per hour than they did.

On the drive home, before my mind numbed out, I'd think about people who don't get paid overtime if they work over forty hours a week—mostly minimum wage workers, or even worse, women and children slaving away in third world sweatshops for twelve hour shifts, earning barely enough to eat.

Yes, I was well paid for my time, but my life was out of balance. It's important to have balance. Early labor

organizers had a slogan, "Eight hours for work, eight hours for rest, eight hours for what we will!"

The struggle for

discretionary time began with a fight for the ten-hour day. President Andrew Jackson declared a ten hour day in the Philadelphia Navy Yard to quell discontent caused by the Panic of 1837. By 1838 one third of the nation's workers were unemployed due to the economic hard times. President Van Buren responded by proclaiming a ten hour day for all federal employees on public

works in 1840. Connecticut and Massachusetts passed laws prohibiting children from working over ten hours a day. Delegates formed the New England Workingmen's Association to fight for the ten hour day. First, New Hampshire, then Pennsylvania passed ten hour day laws. When employers violated the new law,

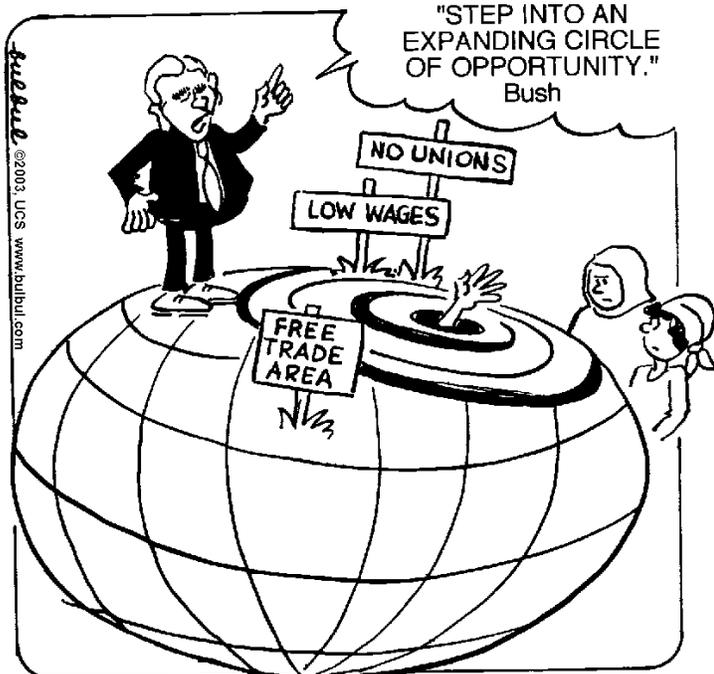
women mill workers rioted and attacked the factory gates with axes.

After the 13th Amendment to the Constitution banned slavery in the United States, the Great Eight Hour League was formed in Massachusetts in 1863. The first federal eight hour day passed in 1868, but it only applied to laborers, mechanics and workmen employed by the government. Most workers were not covered, so they continued to fight. Chicago workers rallied for an eight hour day in Haymarket Square. At the end of the rally a mysterious explosion triggered a police attack into the crowd. Business leaders had too much influence in 1886, and prominent activists were tried and convicted with no real evidence. Five were hanged. Over time, individual unions were successful, but it was not until President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal in 1938 that the Fair Labor Standards Act established a minimum wage of 25 cents and time and a half for hours over 40 per week.

1938, it took a long time. Today workers are defending time and a half pay because the current administration wants to change the rules to please business.

This year take a little time and celebrate the holidays with your loved ones.

The Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 established the 40 hour work week.



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

Workers' Rights Are Human Rights

"We had a lot of workers that were just scared. They just weren't educated on what the law was, and they were scared the plant was going to shut down. We had the election in a small cafeteria which was at the plant. When they knew that they had won the election, they let us know that they didn't want us there and that's when the chaos broke out. That's when I was beat up, and punched in the back of the head, and spit upon and maced." RAYSHAWN WARD, FOOD PROCESSING WORKER

Think this brutal retaliation took place in Somalia, El Salvador or the Dominican Republic? No—it was much closer to home. Every day right here in our communities, employers violate the legal and moral right of workers to choose to form unions. Most of the public believes it's wrong and shameful of employers to lie to, spy on, and fire workers trying to form unions—but two thirds of those polled in research for the AFL-CIO have no idea how widespread and routine these abuses are. In fact, nearly a third of employers illegally fire workers for supporting a union. More than three-quarters use workers' own supervisors to pressure workers in one-on-one meetings. Ninety-two percent of employers force workers to attend meetings against the union, according to Cornell University researcher Kate Bronfenbrenner.

Some 42 million U.S. workers say they would form a union tomorrow if given the chance, according to a February 2003 survey by the nationally respected polling firm Hart Research. Workers realize a union gives them a say in their working conditions, wages, benefits and the quality of the services or products they provide.

Until recently, Carol Farel of Ashton, Pa., was an employee of Cintas, the nation's largest uniform rental and laundry company. She wanted to form a union because "for one thing our rights are being violated, we have no say in anything, you just have to do what you are told. I feel that there is discrimination—people of color are forced in the back or are doing only basic jobs that make it impossible to move up. Most Mexican and Puerto Rican workers were forced only in the bad laundry area."

But when she and her co-workers tried to form a union, they were threatened with termination. Farel says she was harassed and forced to do heavy work despite a doctor's note confirming her back was hurt. She was even prevented from talking to her co-workers. The company used consultants as informants, meeting with every worker in the plant. Job security was nonexistent.

Unfortunately, stories like Farel's are the norm rather than the exception. On December 10, 1948, Eleanor Roosevelt and delegates from four-fifths of United Nations member countries signed the **International Declaration of Human Rights** guaranteeing, among other human rights, the freedom of workers in every nation to come together into unions and bargain. This should have prevented scenarios such as those Ward and Farel have endured.

On December 10, 2003 tens of thousands of workers are gathering to tell their stories. In Chicago there will be a Rally at 4:15 in Federal Plaza, 230 W. Dearborn. It will be followed by a march to Chicago Temple First United Methodist Church, 77 W. Washington where a hearing featuring testimony of workers whose right to organize has been violated will be held at 5:15PM. It is crucial that we send a message loud and clear that, as Americans we refuse to continue to let our rights be trampled. Please mark your calendar. If you cannot be in the Loop at 4:15 make your presence felt at 5:30!

In a massive mobilization across America, workers are making it clear that workers' rights are human rights. In rallies, town hall meetings, teach-ins and other gatherings, we're demanding changes in the system that permits routine violation of workers' fundamental freedoms of speech, association and "to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests" guaranteed by the declaration. With the **Employee Free Choice Act** in Congress, we have a new and unique opportunity to turn the wheel of democracy and ensure strong legislation to protect the rights of workers forming unions. America's workers are America's voters, and our elected

leaders at all levels need to know that we stand together on the side of workers whose fundamental rights are being denied.

Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.) and Rep. George Miller (D-Calif.) are co-sponsoring the new law, which will:

- Allow employees to freely choose whether to form unions by signing cards authorizing union representation.
- Provide mediation and arbitration for first contract disputes.
- Establish stronger penalties for violation of employee rights when workers seek to form a union and during first contract negotiations.

More than 13 million workers in America are union members, earning an average 26 percent more than workers without unions. Union workers also are much more likely to have health and pension benefits, according to the U.S. Department of Labor. Studies show states in which many workers have unions also have lower poverty rates, better schools and less crime.

The Employee Free Choice Act is part of a union movement-wide Voice@Work campaign to restore workers' freedom to form unions. Union members and their allies are contacting their U.S. senators and representatives, urging them to co-sponsor the Employee Free Choice Act.

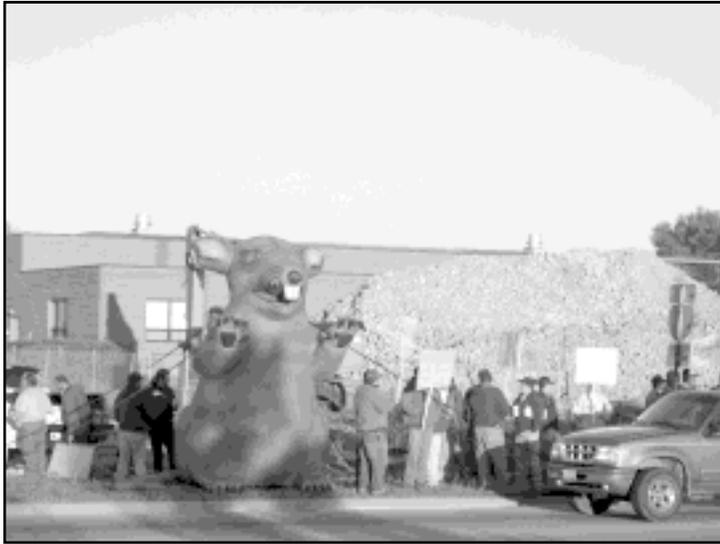
The moving and shaking doesn't stop on December 10th. Together we can turn the 2004 congressional and presidential elections into a referendum on the freedom to form unions.

What is good for workers is good for our society and our democracy. And our candidates must realize that a strong economy depends on workers having a strong union voice on the job.

From Voice@Work, with contributions by Dave Webster, Business Representative

COMING SOON TO A WO

Harvey



Griffith

Villa Park

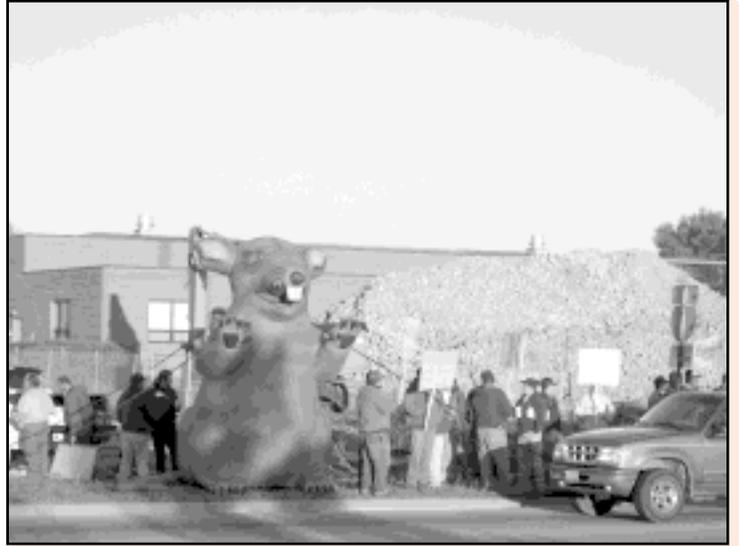


Photos by Mike Kunas

ARK LOCATION NEAR YOU



Lyons



Chicago Ridge

THE RAT !!!

Orland Hills



✓ DO BUY

SHOPPING ON LINE IS 'NO SWEAT'

Union Buyers Learn of Great Label Deals Through 'Word of Mouse'

Is the union label an idea whose time has come...again? Last year, the founders of No Sweat Apparel, the world's first and most extensive brand of union-made casual and athletic apparel, bet the rent on it. Nine months later the company is making sales in 49 states, 22 countries and 6 continents.

More than 50 percent of sales—everything from T-shirts to

yoga pants to fine twill button downs, come from their on-line store at www.nosweatshopapparel.com.

"Word of mouse" advertising—e-mail referrals by customers to friends and family—is what makes it possible to pay a living wage and still provide price competitive, quality clothing.



On-Line Shopping for Union-Made-in-the-USA

The internet has become a great place to shop: It's easy, quick and reliable. And, unlike those traditional shopping malls, you can focus your internet shopping on genuine union-made-in-the-USA goods and services. When you do, you'll be "voting with your dollars"—and those votes will be counted. The ULSTD encourages you to support the e-ventures listed below. If they thrive, more will follow.

Remember too: it's your right to demand the union label on all your purchases. Merchants pay attention to consumer demand. They'll stock union-made products if buyers demand them.

www.nosweatapparel.com

Check out the new No Sweat line of 100 percent union-made casual clothing and athletic wear. Designer tees, fashion athletic wear, sweats, hoodies, yoga pants, fleece pullovers, twill button downs, scarves, caps and more. Plus wholesale tees. All produced in UNITE! shops in the US and Canada.

www.unions-america.com

This excellent company provides a full range of internet service, web hosting and more, all powered by members of GCIU.

www.sweatx.net

L.A.'s first union cut and sew shop (UNITE!). SweatX, opened last year. They primarily sell wholesale T-shirts but have a few retail items available on line.

www.natchezss.com/boots/html

This link will take you to Natchez's on-line storefront providing Matterhorn's

famous union-made hiking and hunting boots. Enduring quality and values. Represented by UNITE!

www.diamondcutjeans.com

Will the last union-made jeans in America please stand up? Top quality, durable denim jeans for men, women and children. All cotton, all union. Represented by UNITE!

www.leathercoatsetc.com

At Excelled Sheepskin & Leather you'll find beautiful, sturdy and stylish leather coats, jackets, vests and pants, reasonably priced and all union-made. Represented by UNITE!

www.unionthreads.com

This excellent site provides union-made decorated work wear. Their appliqués are great. They anticipate expanding to include Redwing shoes shortly. All produced in UNITE! shops in the US.

www.redwingshoes.com

Speaking of Red Wings, you can buy "the boot that built America" on line at their site. Rugged, comfortable and stylish—and union-made. Brought to you by members of IAM and UFCW.

www.powells.com

The legendary independent book store with the all-union work force (ILWU). Would this list be complete without it?

www.unionmadeclothing.com

Graybear/Unionline manufactures a wide range of work clothing, casual wear, jackets, coats and accessories. Wholesale buyers and those buying bulk quantities

can order direct from the company web site. For individual purchases, the web site will direct buyers to retail outlets carrying Graybear/Unionline products.

www.cingular.com

Unionized wireless phone service—not so hard to find. CWA-represented employees at Cingular Wireless provide top-notch cell phone service at competitive prices nationwide.

www.unionplus.com

From auto needs, to insurance, legal services, credit card, real estate and education services, insurance and health products—Union Plus is the union source. Check out the Union Plus web site for a complete list of the benefit programs to which your union subscribes.

www.unionvacations.com

This outfit will hook you up with fabulous vacation plans and packages and steer you to union-staffed hotels—all at very competitive prices. All employees are represented by Teamsters Local 150. Make sure your vacation isn't had on the back of your fellow workers by using this website to make your bookings.

www.UnitedUnionInternet.com

U.U.I. provides discount internet service and more. All workers are represented by the CWA.

THANKS TO: American Income Life, the Detroit Convention & Visitors Bureau and the Portland (OR) Hilton Hotel for generous contributions to the UL&STD's project to revamp the on-line Do Buy list.

**Give the Gift of Good Jobs:
AFL-CIO Promotes "Buy Union Week"
for the Holidays**

"Holiday shoppers have a new way to support good jobs as well as please family and friends," AFL-CIO President John Sweeney announced AFL-CIO support for "Buy Union Week," Nov. 29 – Dec. 7.

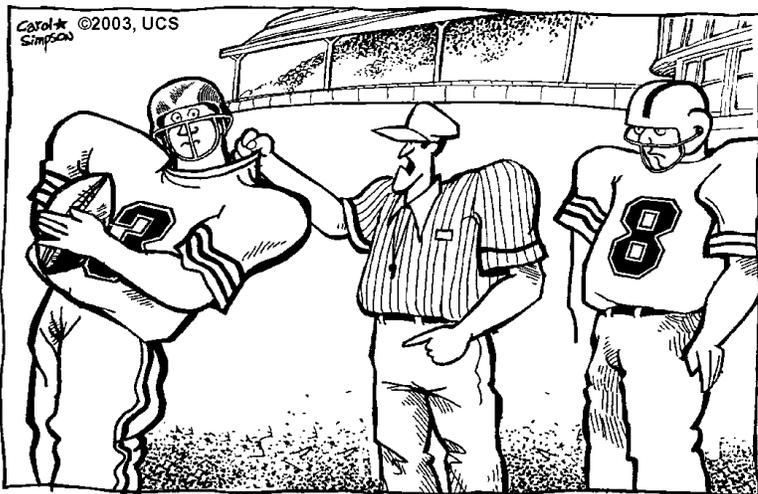
"Shoppers can take the sweat(shop) out of holiday shopping and can give the gift of good jobs – the gift our country needs most of all," he added

Consumers can visit new Internet web sites that specialize in selling union-made clothing and other items. One site – www.nosweatshop.com – serves as a "virtual mall" populated by such union companies as No Sweat Apparel; SweatX; Union Jean and Apparel; Union Threads and Unionwear. Shoppers can also visit the AFL-CIO's The Union Shop at www.aflcio.org/shop, and Justice Clothing www.justiceclothing.com

"You can fill 10 shopping carts with union-made gifts through these companies. You could shop all day at any mall in the U.S. and have problems filling even one cart with U.S. union-made goods. That's an indication of how bad the economy is for U.S. workers, but here is a chance for us to start turning things around," Sweeney said.

Union Do Buy List

www.unionlabel.org



"15 yard penalty for wearing a uniform made by a Third World sweatshop."



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Union Bookstores on Line

www.readingonwalden.com

an independent bookstore in Chicago
UFCW Local 1546

www.powells.com

an independent bookstore
ILWU



“MAKE\$ \$ENSE”

By Bob Borucke, Member

Much has happened since last we spoke. Let's see: Enron, Martha Stewart, the war in Iraq, et al. Hmm! Add to that mix a stodgy stock market, business and jobs going overseas, a contracting job market dragging wages down, etc, etc, etc—it adds up to a bleak financial future. Or does it?

Do we roll over and die, or gird up our loins and fight? I'll take the latter! Folks, I'm not the world's greatest authority on anything, but I've studied economics in college (got a C) and some accounting. I've also followed the financial news for five or six years, read numerous books, articles, and newsletters. So I'll tell you what I think! My first feeling is that we need to get active in bringing jobs back HOME. This means writing, calling, and emailing your elected representatives. If they won't listen, run against them or campaign for someone you believe in. The following statement sickens me: “What's good for GM is good for America,” Shouldn't it be “What's good for America is good for GM?” What's my point? Try backing what's good for the USA- not special interests. Shouldn't America be first? That's the mantra of a non self-serving politician.

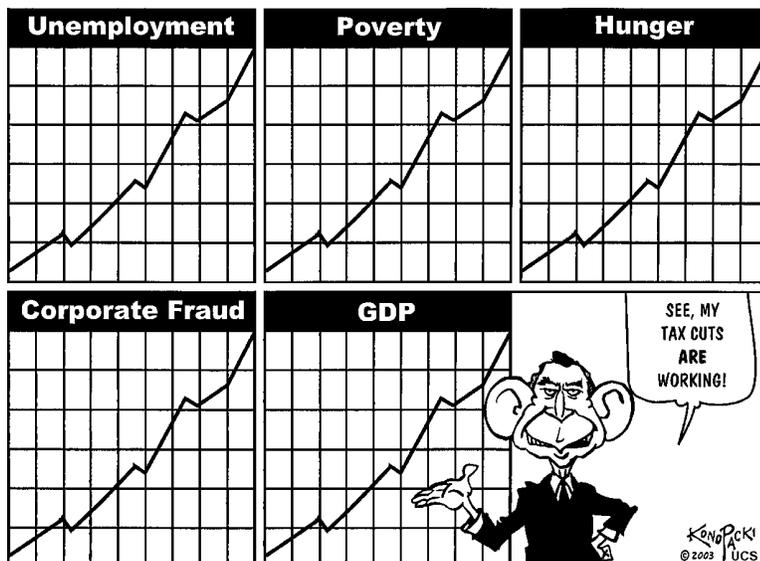
Enough with politics! Financial advisors say to not expect the big returns in our 201k's (formerly 401k's—just a joke!) we saw in the '90's. Those returns were a result of the Internet explosion, the Fed printing money and lying about inflation (which I feel they're still doing), and the short term profits of mid to large business going overseas. The Stock Market's value became inflated as the hot air emanating

from Washington and Wall Street made investors (read: taxpayers, middle class, working stiffs) the bill payers for the largesse.

So how do we avoid this in the future? Sticking with total stock market and bond market index funds is my first approach. To get a secure retirement, smooth out the big bumps. Index funds have the lowest fees, tax consequences, and least volatility. When someone gives free \$\$\$, take it (see your 401k). The New York Stock Exchange was organized in May 1792 by a group of twenty-four brokers and dealt largely in bonds. So for more than 200 years now, the stock market has, overall, risen. Yes there have been corrections, but down markets are when stocks are at their cheapest and a bargain. The total market doesn't rise as fast as individual stocks, but it also falls much less. It boils down to a more wimpy roller coaster ride, which is just fine at my age!

Lastly, as I'm no expert, get thee to a REPUTABLE financial advisor, ASAP. Why? They (the good'uns) know the tax implications for your moves, your pension and your 401k plans VERY well, which boils down to knowing the best time to jump ship! If I can be of any help, my email is 'my2boys5267@yahoo.com'. Feel free to ask. No funds, individual stocks, fund families or financial advisors will be recommended, but I can help smooth over many rough spots. Next time, let's talk about talk radio and how much GOOD advice is available for free.

Editor's Note: *Bob Borucke is a working member of IBEW Local 21 at SBC. His opinions are solely his own and do not necessarily represent the views of this newspaper or IBEW Local 21.*



Letter to the Editor

Dear Editors,

I've sent the following shareholder proposal for proxy vote to SBC. Members should pay close attention when they receive their proxy information in the mail.

This proposal is to provide the Human Resources Committee of the Board of Directors with the tool to enact a “Common Sense Executive Compensation” level. This will return maximum value to the shareholder while eliminating excess expense in the corporate suite.

Proposal:

The Human Resources Committee of the Board of Directors will set the maximum executive pay level of 1000% (one thousand percent)* of the average SBC craft workforce base pay.

This maximum executive pay level is to include all forms of executive compensation including but not limited to salary, pension and bonuses.

Sincerely,
John O'Halloran
SBC Construction

Editors' note: *John O'Halloran is a working member of IBEW Local 21 at SBC. His opinions are solely his own and do not necessarily represent the views of this newspaper or IBEW Local 21.*

Look at the math. *This would be 10 times. The highest paid craft job is Project Coordinator, earning \$1,179.00 a week. This proposal would limit executive compensation to \$11,790.00 a week. Currently Ed Whitacre earns \$369,183.00 a week totaling \$19,197,475.00 annually in total compensation, including stock option grants.

Don't Be an Idiot!

The Greek word “idiotes” referred to people who were so self-involved they focused on their own life and were ignorant and uncaring about the common good.

By *Jim Hightower*

The greatest offense against our society these days is not any one law or a particular assault on our freedoms. Rather, it is the persistent, insidious effort by those who shape our culture to reduce the American citizenry to idiots. From corporate advertisers to political sermonizers, from boards of education to the entertainment programmers, their goal is idiocy.

By “idiots,” I’m referring to more than the constant charge that we’re all a bunch of dummies. That’s just manufactured media fluff. Far from being a nation of numbskulls, people (and especially young folks) are smarter than ever. But to what end?

The original Greek word “idiotes” referred to people who might have had a high IQ, but were so self-involved that they focused exclusively on their own life and were both ignorant of and uncaring about public concerns and the common good.

Such people were the exact opposite of the Athenian democratic ideal of an active citizenry fully involved in the civic process, with everyone accepting their responsibilities to each other and all of humankind. This is the ideal that Jefferson and Madison built into our nation’s founding documents, the ideal that Lincoln embraced when he spoke of striving for a “government of the people, by the people, for the people,” the ideal that Justice Louis Brandeis was expressing when he wrote that “The most important office” in our land is “that of a private citizen.”

Be an involved citizen? Forget about it, Jake. Don’t waste your time. Get a job, keep your head down, play the lottery, don’t be different, take a pill, watch “reality TV,” buy things, play it safe, live vicariously, don’t make waves, pre-pay your funeral. Oh, and on those big questions—such as economic fairness, going to war, “rebalancing” that liberty/security equation, and the shrinking of democracy itself—don’t hurt your little gray cells by focusing on “them,” for there’s not a lot you can do

about “them,” we know more than you do, and don’t worry ... we’ll take care of you. Go about your business—be a good idiot.

Come on, America, that’s not us! Don’t let BushCo and the Kleptocrats steal our country and trivialize We The People as being nothing more substantial than passive consumers who can even be made to cower in duct-taped “safe rooms” whenever the governing authorities shout “Code Orange!” out their windows. (How pathetic is that?)

America wasn’t built by conformists, but by mutineers—we’re a big, brawling, boisterous, bucking people, and now is our time!

Our democracy is being dismantled right in front of our eyes—not by crazed foreign terrorists, but by our own ruling elites. This is a crucial moment when America desperately needs you and me to stand as full citizens, asserting the bold and proud radicalism of America’s democratic ideals.

You think democracy asks a lot of us—too many meetings, too much risk of getting your name on Ashcroft’s database, too much confrontation with authority? Try walking a few miles in the shoes of Aung San Suu Kyi. Burma’s military thugs would love to kill her, and the threat of this is a constant reality in her life, but for now they know that they could not withstand the popular explosion that would follow such a murder, for she’s the symbol of the people’s suppressed democratic yearnings. Instead, they held her under house arrest for seven-and-a-half years, and, though she was officially released last year, she is hounded, harassed, monitored, and followed everywhere she goes in an effort to intimidate her and Burma’s other democracy activists. They wish she would leave, but she wouldn’t even go to Stockholm to accept the Nobel Peace Prize she won in 1991, because she feared she would not be allowed to re-enter her country.

“Is this a private fight, or can anyone join in?”—Old Irish saying

Be my guest. Unfortunately, **there is no shortage of fights to join these days.** Fortunately, however, we’re a country of democracy fighters, and you can join one or more wherever you are—or start your own! I don’t mean to fight for fighting’s sake, but fight to take our country back.

Join Global Trade Watch to stop the latest sovereignty-choking glob of global greed called Free Trade Area of the Americas, which “frees” corporations to privatize everything from schools to postal services in your city or anywhere else in the

Western Hemisphere, whether we want it or not (www.tradewatch.org).

Join the millions of people working in cities all across our country to stop Ashcroft and Ridge from getting local police to assist in federal surveillances, interrogations, and other autocratic actions that violate our civil liberties and constitutional rights (www.bordc.org).

Join a growing number of grassroots organizations daring to confront the very heart of corporate power by challenging the absurd notion that a corporation is a “person”—a fiction that, ironically, gives these paper structures more power than a real person has, or, as we’ve seen, more power than an entire nation of actual living, breathing persons (www.reclaimdemocracy.org).

Join the fight for living wages in your city, the fight to reclaim our public airwaves, the fight to make public schools work again, the fight to stop redlining and predatory lending, the fight to let patients and doctors decide about medical marijuana without the police intruding, the fight for public funding of your local and state elections, the fight to [FILL IN YOUR FAVORITE HERE]:

Don’t wait on “heroes” or national leaders. Be your own hero—everyone can do something, everyone makes a contribution. Everyone who does any heavy lifting in the democratic cause is a hero. As writer Elbert Hubbard noted a century ago, “God will not look you over for medals, degrees, or diplomas, but for scars.”

The important thing to know is that you are wanted. You are needed. You are important. You are not only what democracy counts on, you are what democracy is.

Thomas Paine saw in America something breathtaking, which he expressed as the opportunity to “start the world over again.” Paine and others got America off on the right foot, but our leaders have stumbled badly of late. That’s why we have to step in now. You and I have the chance to bring our great country back to the ideals that launched it, ideals that remain gently nestled in our hearts.

Live your ideals.

Editor’s Note: *Getting involved in our union would also fit into Brother Hightower’s ideas for making change. Jim Hightower is the author of Thieves in High Places (Viking 2003), from which this was excerpted. This column is a reprint from In These Times. Subscription information can be obtained at 1-800-827-0270 or www.inthesetimes.com/subscribe.*

Union Says “NO” to Chicago on Concessionary Bargaining

By Jerry Rankins, Business Representative



When we opened negotiations with the City of Chicago during the Summer, we made clear our understanding of the situation in our opening statement:

“There’s no doubt, since September 11, 2001, our nation and our lives have changed tremendously. Our homeland security depends on the dedicated hard work of the Police Communicators and the Aviation Communication Operators who help secure the lives of the public as our first line of defense. The city needs to remember this as bargaining opens for our 911 members.”

“IBEW Local 21 recognizes that these are tough economic times for our local governments. However, as we begin meaningful contract negotiations, we are here to move forward and not backwards. Local 21 is here to bargain in good faith. The bargaining unit (PCO’s/ACO’s) is 80% women. Therefore, it is important that we have benefits that are progressive and meet the concerns and needs of these working families.

City of Chicago employees are the best in the world. So, the pay and benefits must be the best. Local 21 and its members are equally concerned about the training, the leadership and the morale in the workplace. The job is very stressful. Good morale is key in a successful workplace. Workloads are increasing. The bargaining committee is the eyes and ears of the entire unit. A harmonious relationship is crucial in ensuring progressiveness and good faith between the parties, the public and the media. All would benefit. In closing, Local 21 and our bargaining committee is looking forward to successfully bargaining a contract that we all can be proud of.”

City Proposals show they don’t understand us. Here’s their line: “The City will make a proposal on wages – contingent upon the union adopting their proposal on concessions. Here are the concessions:

- The right to cancel work before the beginning of the work day and/or send an individual home prior to the end of the

work day. In other words, working less than a 40 hour work week. (any approved time off is treated as time worked)

- Holiday/personal – will grant the time off with no pay but willing to pay time and a half for hours if you work the holiday.”

- Health care – the city has not made a proposal – but the union anticipates a substantial increase of health care costs at the expense of the workers. Currently 7 cases are pending for Arbitration at the OEMC

*Please call the **HOTLINE #**
312 409-5314 or www.ibew21.org
for future updates.*

COMCAST CARES? CARES NOT!

In their latest public propaganda campaign, Comcast Cares Day, it really should be called Comcast Cares Not Day or, Comcast The Mastermind of Public Deception. They claim to be public servants and family friendly by volunteering to work at senior citizens’ homes and public schools and community centers, but they are really not. Hypocrites are what they really are— one of the biggest UNION BUSTING companies in America. Hiding behind the mask, they pretend to be honorable, but they deprive workers of their right to organize, and refuse to bargain with the union in good faith. Stalling on contracts that help working families achieve a better standard of living, they are nothing more than a vehicle to moral and social decay. There can be no social justice until you have economic justice! Comcast and its overpriced products rip off consumers with charges of nearly \$100 per month for its platinum cable TV package and nearly \$50 per month for high speed data.

On September 26th, Comcast was dealt a big blow in a decertification election held by the NLRB at the Park Forest/Orland Park garages. Workers sent a strong message that they are sick and tired of the lies and deceit by voting “Union Yes.” This is a tremendous victory for the Comcast workers and the 13,000 members of Local 21 who support their brothers and sisters.

Comcast spends hundreds of thousands of dollars on captive audience

meetings—bringing in their hotshot Vice Presidents’ lawyers from all over the country in an attempt to deceive workers into believing that they can be their voice. Workers are not stupid. The VPs are now in-house UNION BUSTING attorneys formerly employed by law firms such as Seyfarth/Shaw the notorious UNION BUSTING firm located in Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, and Philadelphia that charges up to \$800 an hour to hurt working families.

Workers everywhere are sending this RAT outfit employer a strong message that they have had enough. Recently, in captive meetings held by the company, workers turned their chairs around so the VPs and managers had to speak to their backs. In one meeting where six workers were laid off in February, Comcast has admitted to wrong-doing and is willing to bring the workers back, but with no back pay, in an attempt to starve the workers out due to the time period for arbitration.

These workers’ names were placed in a raffle, and to the surprise of the company a laid off worker won the prize. This was a big embarrassment to the company. One other worker won a DVD player, only to give it back and ask that it be liquidated for cash to give to the laid off workers.

Remember, the case where the Union and the company successfully negotiated wage increases for the Merrillville unit, then six months later the company took back the increase, for some workers up to \$4 an hour. We finally had an arbitration hearing on this case. Up to their same old dirty tricks, the company purposely did not bring their star rebuttal witness to the hearing, creating a second day of hearings—scheduled for January 20, 2004, apparently with company hopes to decertify the unit. Forget it, it will never happen. Comcast really is TCI keeping the same baggage that AT&T Broadband carried. They want to pay like AT&T did. Workers everywhere must get involved. You are not just my brothers and sisters, but you are my family and friends. Stay informed at www.ibew21.org. Hotline 630 415-2711 #2 WE WILL WIN! SOLIDARITY.

REMEMBER SUMMER ?



George Perez's son Francisco and his daughter Alina enjoy the pinata.

At the 3rd annual **Tech-nic**, recreation was found by enjoying food, drink, a bonfire, and a 'piñata whacking'. A good time was had by all. Tech-nic is hosted yearly by the craft workforce near Oswego, Illinois.

The festivities take place in late August or early September. It's hard to get the word out to everyone, but all craft are invited to attend. There are no managers...no exceptions!

Contact Ben Alvarez 815-941-1714 or by e-mail admin@digital-boundary.com if you would like to stop by next year and keep the Ma Bell tradition alive. Hope to see you there.



Comcast Coalition goes National

By Dave Webster, Business Representative



As the readers of *Frontline* know, Local 21 has been fighting AT&T/Comcast for years with only one end in sight. The goal is for Comcast workers

throughout the Chicago Market, that is all of Chicagoland, to be IBEW Local Union 21 members. President Kastner has made the commitment to do what it takes for as long as it takes to help these workers organize despite threats, intimidation and coercion from the company towards workers who take the initiative to organize themselves. Well, we plan on turning up the heat a notch.

With the help of the National Organizing Director of the AFL-CIO, Stewart Acuff, both IBEW International President Ed Hill and International President of Communications Workers of America (CWA) Morton Bahr have agreed to join forces to combat the cable TV/telecommunications giant on a national level. That means we will be working in concert, much like the two unions did out east in the Verizon struggle. The idea is to work together in a national leverage campaign to urge Comcast to allow its workers to exercise their legal right to organize of their own free will. Organizing is supposed to be about what the workers want, not what the bosses want. Now is the time to put more pressure on Comcast—escalating until they act like they care about what the workers want. Comcast workers

have worked way too long without a fair contract, either because they have a contract that Comcast refuses to bargain anew, or because they have never had one and are fighting for their first contract.

The IBEW and CWA are joining forces to become one of the largest consumer advocates for subscribers of Comcast. We will be making the public, community groups, social justice groups, politicians, other unions and definitely Comcast aware of any and all violations that Comcast commits. We will shine a light on all of the things Comcast tries to hide from public view. They will be forced to deal fairly with workers' legitimate needs and concerns. When management is convinced they have a lot more to lose than they have to gain, they will play ball. For Comcast, the color of pain is green and we intend to hit them in the pocketbook. For more on this—but not during work—check out two new websites and do your part as an involved union member - get involved in spreading the word on our efforts: www.ibewnow.org and www.comcastwatch.com.

The Importance of the Independent Telco to Unionism

By Mike Christianson, Steward

Consider this—the small independent or tiny, seemingly isolated union shops are just as important as Verizon or SBC shops.

Why? Well, for starters, they're paying dues and are entitled to equal treatment and representation. If these groups become lost or complacent, disillusioned or apathetic to the point where they are effectively non-union, it will be tragic and wrong. You can spend and spend and organize until doom's day and never get them back. In a competitive telecom environment, you will compete with them for work, wages and benefits... union or not. We need to make sure the desire for union representation remains strong. We also need to be sure their energy and passion hasn't turned against us. The decision to be a union shop or not is one sale away for a lot of companies.

Those small shop battles, arbitrations and grievances won and lost can change the future labor climate for us all. For example, NLRB actions that are lost or abandoned

because of lack of support from the Local can become bad case law that we all have to live with. Equally bad are the past practices that result from nothing being done at all. Think it won't affect you? Don't be too sure. **Today's unfair labor practice has a nasty way of becoming tomorrow's standard management rule.** This is also why being politically ignorant or complacent is a luxury that working people cannot afford..

Small groups are often more active and vocal, some might even say more radical. Great labor movements often began in small shops, or by a few brothers and sisters who simply had enough. Large companies may have many members who are active and vocal, but they are seldom 25% to 50% of the workforce. **In small shops often half the workers are outspoken.** These stewards frequently stick their necks out defending their brothers and sisters from arbitrary and parochial managers. They expect the Local to cover their backs. They cannot afford to fail and you cannot afford to fail them. Encourage and support them and they will support you.

The Local needs to make sure they know and absolutely understand the local practices, contract and culture of the small telco they represent. **Often, smaller telcos have articles in their contracts or local practices that SBC or Verizon members would envy.** Don't confuse their contract and past practice with SBC, and don't undermine them by making decisions based on the way it's done at SBC. Learn from the stewards who are in the trenches and back them up when they battle management. Their past practice or contract provision may be better already. Don't compromise it or them by ignorance or arrogance.

So, what does this mean to you? It means that there are gains to be had for all when any of us advance. These advances contribute to better industry standards and working conditions just as sure as our losses anywhere erode them. Consider that as well.

Editor's Note: *Mike Christianson is a Local 21 member working at Gallatin River Telephone in Pekin, Il.*

Safety First is Painstaking Work

By Ben Alvarez, Steward

Through the keyhole

Senior manager T.L. was spotted in the bar of the hotel where Local 21 held one of its monthly unit meetings. Afterwards when someone asked T.L. about being in the same place as a Union meeting, the manager acted surprised and claimed he only came to hear the band.



One Tuesday afternoon at the Montgomery garage, as trucks began rolling in, one manager, who had a clipboard in one hand and a great big safety smile on his face, greeted them at the gate. While he stopped people to verify seat belt compliance, one attentive technician noticed that the manager himself was performing an unsafe act while attempting to promote safety.

He was **STANDING IN THE WAY OF TRAFFIC WITHOUT A SAFETY VEST ON!**

As SBC technicians, we recognize that no job is so important and no service so urgent that we cannot take the time to perform our work SAFELY!

The following day a team of safety managers surveyed this garage and rode with managers who made surprise job visits on most of the technicians. A wide variety of deviations were noted throughout the day including: low tire air pressure, low tire tread, no D.O.T. card, no drivers license, failure to wear seatbelts, ladder hooks not turned in, and a whole bunch more.

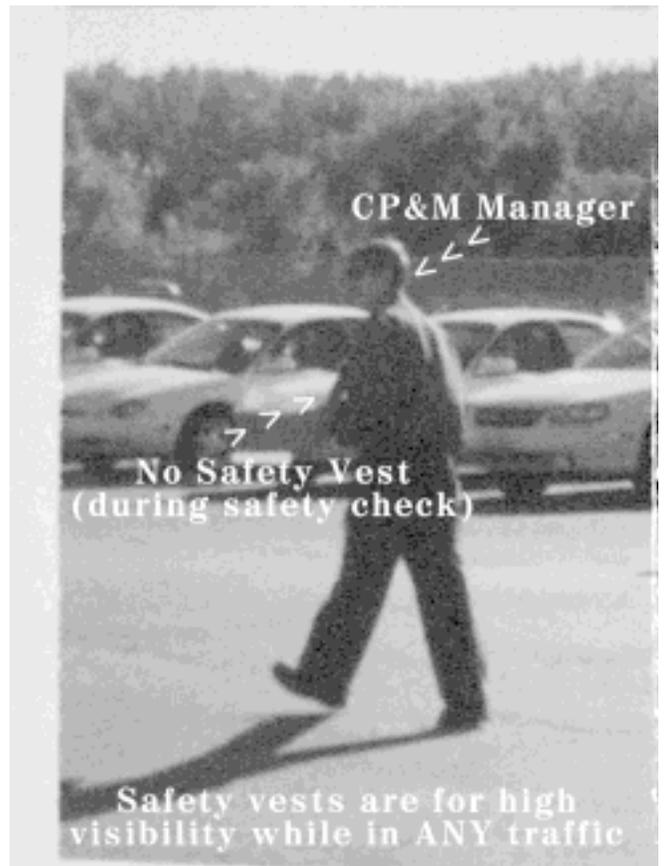
Thankfully this list of deviations was brought to the attention of many unaware technicians. So, the following day the entire craft workforce made sure to do the required daily safety check on their vehicles BEFORE leaving the garage. As technicians approached the front lot, they turned off their trucks, set their parking brakes, placed out cones, turned on hazard and beacon lights and went to work checking SAFETY with their vests on. Some technicians noticed that treads were low on tires, oil levels were off, windshield washer fluid reservoirs were low, headlights and tail lights were burned out, and so on.

Unfortunately, the 8:30AM

compliance rule had to be set aside in order to perform these REQUIRED DAILY SAFETY checks. Remember – They’ll tell you you’re wrong when they find a deviation – and they’ll tell you you’re wrong when you attempt to correct the problem.

SAFETY is JOB #1 – CUSTOMER SERVICE is #2

GJ18 is irrelevant without these items FIRST!



Stand up for yourselves out there, and don't let these managers intimidate you. Do what's right and stay informed.

LOCAL 21 RETIREES

June 2003

William Andrews
Linda Jensen
Carolyn Brumfield
Bruce Waide

July 2003

Bob McElrath
Rick Schneider
Harold Hess

August 2003

Sue Klisiak
Angelika Betz
Linda Kuzelis
Emilia Quinones
Mariaelena Perez
Harold Hess

October 2003

John Jones Jr

September 2003

Richard Weinmann

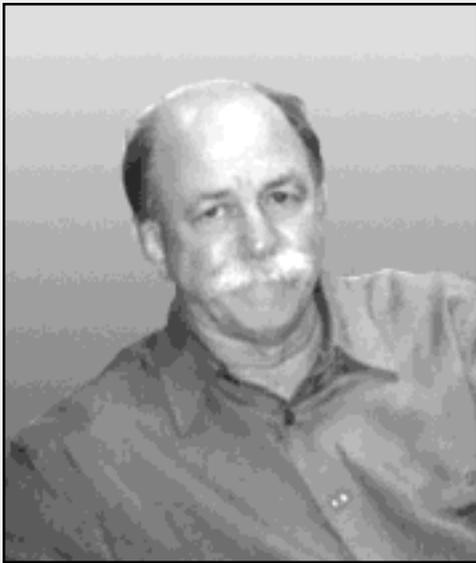
Farewell Harold!

Local 21 Business Representative Harold Hess retired in July after working nearly 32 years for the telephone company. He started at Illinois Bell and worked as a central office technician. The title changed to telecommunications specialist, and the company became SBC.

Harold served as a steward in the IBEW since the 1970's. He was a chief steward from 1994 to 2000. Then in 2001 he was promoted to Business Representative covering the Fox Valley area as far as the Quad

Cities. He also handled Johnson Controls and Altura, the former FBCS.

Harold Hess will be remembered as an absolute character. His mannerisms could make you laugh. He was plain spoken and often drew on his Pennsylvania Dutch background. One of his more frequent phrases was, "Quit your bretzen." In other words, stop your



whining.

Harold has lots of plans for retirement. He wants to improve his golf game, travel, and work in his woodshop. We will miss you!

IBEW Local 21 Retired Member's Club Coming Soon

Why establish a Retiree's club?

- To help pensioners enhance their lives
- To provide a means for unified expression
- To maintain a linkage to the local union
- To develop educational programs for workers nearing retirement
- To devise a political and legislative agenda

Over the next few months we will start to establish the new club. Please inform friends who have recently retired and friends you have kept in touch with that this is in process. Over the next few months we will be sending out a mailing with more information to every retiree we currently have on file. Please spread the word and if you know of anyone who would like to get involved please have them contact:

Chief Steward Jim McLauchlan @ 630.960.4466 ext. 354 or email to jmac21@sbcglobal.net

Correction

The editors wish to apologize for misspelling retiree Karen Major's name in the last issue.

2004 UNIT MEETINGS

January

Unit 1

Thursday, January 8, 7 PM
Musicians Hall
175 W Washington
Chicago IL
312 782-0063

Unit 2

Tuesday, January 13, 7 PM
Gaelic Park Banquet Hall
6119 W 147th St.
Oak Forest IL
708 687-9323

Unit 3

Thursday, January 15, 7 PM
IBEW Local # 364
6820 Mill Rd
Rockford IL
815 398-6282

Unit 4

Wednesday, January 14, 7 PM
IBEW Local #145
1700 52nd Ave Suite A
Moline IL
309 736-4239

Unit 5

Wednesday, January 21, 7 PM
American Legion Post #979
4501 S Airport Rd
Bartonville IL
309 697-2432

Unit 6

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

Unit 7

Monday, January 19, 7 PM
American Legion Post #141
916 Main St.
Mt. Vernon IL
618 242-4561

February

Unit 1

Thursday, February 12, 7 PM
Holiday Inn Hillside
4400 Frontage Rd
Hillside IL
708 544-9300

Unit 2

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

Unit 3

Thursday, February 19, 7 PM
Gurnee American Legion
749 Milwaukee Ave
Gurnee IL
847 244-9282

Unit 4

Wednesday, February 11, 7 PM
American Legion Harwood Post #5
705 S. Larkin
Joliet IL
815 725-4333

Unit 5

Wednesday, February 18, 7 PM
Danville Inn
388 Eastgate Dr.
Danville IL
217 446-2400

Unit 6

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

Unit 7

Monday, February 16, 7 PM
IBEW Local # 309
2000A Mall St (Rte 157)
Collinsville IL
618 345-5112

March

Unit 1

Thursday, March 11, 7 PM
Habetler Bowl
5250 N. Northwest Highway
Chicago IL
773 774-0500

Unit 2

Tuesday March 9, 7 PM
Lansing American Legion
18255 Grant St
Lansing IL
708 474-5906

Unit 3

Thursday, March 18, 7 PM
Best Western Elgin Plaza
345 West River Rd
Elgin IL
847 695-5000

Unit 4

Wednesday, March 10, 7 PM
Lemont VFW
15780 New Ave.
Lemont IL
630 257-9859

Unit 5

Wednesday, March 17, 7 PM
VFW Post #630
1303 E. Main St.
Quincy IL
217 367-4197

Unit 6

Tuesday, March 16, 5:30 PM
IBEW Local # 193
3150 Wide Track Dr
Springfield IL
217 544-3479

Unit 7

Monday, March 15, 7 PM
Alton Sports Tap
3812 College Ave
Alton IL
618 465-2539

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



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