Five local unions unite

Local 21 came alive when five IBEW locals in Illinois completed an amalgamation on September 1, 1998. The joining of Locals 185, 188, 336, 383 and 399 into Local 21 creates the fourth largest IBEW local in the nation with over 13,000 members.

Jerry J. O'Connor, IBEW Sixth District International Vice-President, joined Local 21's newly-appointed Officers, Executive Board and Assistant Business Managers to sign the new union charter. President Business Manager/Financial Secretary Donald Moseley assured all members that "Local 21 will be dedicated to serving the membership into the 21st century and beyond."

The primary reasons for uniting the five locals, according to IBEW Vice-President O'Connor, are twofold:

- to better cope with deregulation, unfair competition and the giant megamergers that today plague the telecommunications industry.
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Additionally, the resources and efficiencies available to smaller local unions are inadequate to handle the problems of dealing with large and increasingly adversarial company managements.

President Moseley said, "The Officers and Executive Board of Local 21 understand the importance of organizing and we have a full-time organizing staff to insure the growth of membership of our new local." To hear about the latest organizing efforts or to volunteer to help on an organizing campaign, telephone Local 21's organizing hotline: 630/415-3103.

Communications are vitally important to the health and growth of every local union. In addition to the organizing hotline, Local 21 will communicate with the members in many ways, including:

- right here in the new newsletter Frontline,
- on the local's new website at www.ibew21.org and
- on two hotlines – 630/415-2711 and 217/529-0887 – with multiple ports to provide you with bargaining updates, as well as information on union happenings and data on the companies where members are employed.

During the next few months, as the structure and organization of the new local union are put in place, Local 21 will keep you, the member, as up to date as possible. Although we're bound to make a few mistakes along the way, we hope you'll demonstrate your support for Local 21. Now is the time for all of us to work together to build an effective, united and powerful local union.
“Local 21 is going to work!”

Turning a blank piece of paper into my first column as IBEW Local 21 President-Business Manager is not an easy task. There is so much to report to you concerning the establishment and make-up of our new local, I’m not sure where to begin. Perhaps telling you a little about myself is appropriate, so here goes.

I am married with two grown daughters, one is a Trustee and Recording Secretary of her local union, the other is in graduate school at Indiana University. My wife Mary and I will celebrate 29 years of marriage in November. My dad retired from IBEW Local 697 and last year received his 50-year IBEW service pin. I grew up reading the IBEW Journal.

I began my employment with Illinois Bell as a Lineman. Several years later I became a Splicer and then transferred to the “Plant” department as an Installer. About two years later I became a Cable Repairman and remained in that position before getting involved with the union.

I was appointed as a Steward and Unit Chairman of Unit 7 in the late 1970s. In 1981, Bill Ryan, who was then Vice-President of Local 336, passed away and I was chosen to take his place. I remained Vice-President of Local 336 until 1996 when I became the President-Business Manager of the local.

I am a Veteran of the U.S. Army and served two years from 1965 through 1967. I was stationed in France, and during that time not one Viet Cong made it west of Paris.

Recently, the IBEW International appointed me as the President-Business Manager/Financial Secretary of Local 21. I am both honored and humbled by that appointment. It sounds trite, I know, but I mean that completely.

Local 21 is going to work! That is my pledge to you. In putting our structure together, there are certainly some changes with which we must deal. We are trying to make those changes as few as possible, but have no doubt about it, this local will be structured in such a way as to provide optimum service to the members. I’ll report more on that as we go forward.

For now, stay strong, stay together and do what you can to help your union representatives build our local. Without your support, it cannot happen. See you soon.
At Johnson Controls, union pursues issue of health insurance choice

Local 21 is in the process of obtaining the right to arbitrate the recently bargained-for health care changes at Johnson Controls. Both IBEW and CWA claim that the HMO package added at the bargaining table is an addition to the previous health care package, and that employees should be given a choice of two health plans.

IBEW and CWA are waiting for the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service to set the time for arbitration proceedings to begin. Also, IBEW and CWA filed unfair labor practice charges against Johnson Controls on the health insurance issue.

A memorandum of agreement between the union and management, effective June 30, allows the union limited access into the joblink system. The union now has the ability to check if employee job bids were received, if employee skills have been updated, and where employees rank for specific job bids. Local 21 Business Representative, Johnetta Ryan (630/434-2381), is the union staff person with access.

Information can be given only on the employee involved - no information will be given about any other employee. Additionally, the union cannot influence the test results, and can determine only whether an employee is or is not test-qualified.

If you have concerns about a recent job request, contact your Chief Steward. Provide your job number, name and work location, as well as a phone number where you can be reached. Your Chief Steward will contact Ryan, who will check the joblink system and answer as many of your questions as possible.

Notification - Another new joblink feature is notification letters. Employees should be notified that jobs for which they nominated themselves are filled, if they're a candidate, or why they were not considered. Again, contact your Chief Steward if you have not received such notification.

Force freeze guidelines - Along with joblink access and notification, the memorandum of agreement also changes the force freeze guidelines. Management can use two types of freezes: a complete freeze or a controlled freeze.

A complete freeze restricts movement through joblink for a maximum of six months. If an employee self nomintaes for a position and is deemed a qualified candidate for the job, the employee can be bypassed due to the complete freeze. When a complete freeze expires, the affected group may be put on a controlled freeze for a maximum of three months.

A controlled freeze restricts movement through joblink for a maximum of six months. Management may agree to release employees on a controlled basis, such as one per month, one per quarter or two per quarter. After the controlled freeze expires, no freeze may be implemented for a three-month period.

All freezes must be sent by the Business Unit HR department to the appropriate Labor Relations case manager. The employees in the affected work groups and their Chief Stewards must be notified.

The union filed a grievance when it learned that the management in some areas does not follow the force freeze guidelines. If you believe management violated the guidelines or if you are concerned about a freeze condition in your work group, contact your local steward so he or she can notify the Chief Steward for that area.

Freezes are difficult situations for all craft employees. We need to force management to follow the guidelines so movement can happen at the appropriate time. Although the new guidelines are not perfect, they are a significant improvement over the previous guidelines - which were none.

Union gains access to joblink

IBEW Local 21
Member Newswire
630/415-2711
217/529-0087

IBEW Local 21 T-Shirts Available

• hunter green with white lettering
• large, x-large, xx-large and xxx-large

To order a t-shirt, call Local 21

November 1998
On October 22, 1998, SecurityLink workers at the Ameritech Chicago Branch will vote on IBEW Local 21 representation. It is their third attempt to unionize in three years. The first was in February 1996, the second in June 1997.

During the months and weeks prior to the second union election, SecurityLink management interfered with the workers’ legally-protected rights guaranteed under the National Labor Relations Act. Employees were interrogated, threatened with discipline, and told not to wear union buttons or to talk to each other about their pay.

Employees were forced to attend mandatory, captive audience meetings at SecurityLink's Oak Brook office and at the plush Drake Hotel in Oak Brook. There, trained managers persuaded some workers to view unions as bad. Management provided half-truths and false information to coerce workers to vote against union representation. Despite everything the company threw at the workers, the second election was decided by a margin of only five votes, 69 for the union and 74 against (as opposed to the first election when workers voted against union representation by a 2-to-1 margin).

The illegal conduct and actions of SecurityLink managers were obviously planned. Assisted and trained by outside management consultants, Ameritech intentionally interfered in the election process in an attempt to avoid further collective bargaining with IBEW. On the workers' behalf, IBEW charged Ameritech SecurityLink with unfair labor practices. The National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) issued a formal complaint upholding the charges.

The company denied all labor law violations and appealed the NLRB decision. After months of delay orchestrated by Ameritech’s highly-paid, union-busting law firm, Duvin, Cahn & Hutton, a settlement was reached which required the company to post a “Notice to Employees” that it would not interfere with the employees’ legal right to unionize.

In early 1998, SecurityLink employees who had been leaders among the pro-union workers were terminated. Ameritech said publicly that the terminations were due to redundant work and part of overall restructuring. Yet, the company hired new employees to do the work. More unfair labor practice charges, currently pending before the NLRB, were filed by the union.

Union organizing by IBEW and CWA is underway at SecurityLink branches throughout the country. On September 22, 1998, IBEW Local 21 petitioned the NLRB to conduct a union election for the Chicago Branch service dispatchers. On October 2, Local 21 petitioned for an election at the Peoria Branch. CWA recently succeeded in assisting workers to unionize in Cleveland and in Milwaukee, and is bargaining for first union contracts.

In recent years, Ameritech spent well over one billion dollars buying out alarm companies in the U.S. and Canada. It is now the second largest alarm company in North America. The Chicago Branch, with almost 200 workers, is the national headquar ters. Ameritech spends much money and tire fighting unionization. Greed is the primary incentive: the less the company can pay employees, the more it keeps for itself.

In this alarm subsidiary, Ameritech employees can perform the same job, yet are compensated on an individual basis – many times by who they know, not by what they know or how long they’ve been on the job. The workers pay huge premiums for health insurance, along with high deductibles and co-pays. They have no pension plan, no grievance procedure and no representation. They work in an environment filled with favoritism and discrimination. If they don’t like it, they are told to get a job elsewhere. Many have.

Others decided to stand up for their rights. They learned that the corporation which employs them has too much power, while they have too little. They want a voice on the job, and respect and dignity in the workplace. They want to improve their lives, and to make it better for their families and for those who follow.

As IBEW members, we recognize the struggles that workers face every day and we must assist in every way possible. This is our responsibility as defined in the IBEW Constitution. The Local 21 Organizing Department is currently assisting workers at Ameritech SecurityLink and in other campaigns for justice in the workplace. IBEW 21 members have volunteered to help SecurityLink workers in their struggle. You can too.

Get involved. Help SecurityLink and other working families raise their standard of living.

Together We Will Make a Difference!
On August 28, 1998 at 11:10 am, Ameritech Telecommunications Specialist Len Trentz and his manager smelled smoke in the Wabash DS3 switch area on the first floor of the 520 South Federal building in Chicago.

Further investigation revealed smoke, sparks and hot embers emitting from the air ducts directly over the DMS switch! The building fire alarms were set off. Within seconds, technicians Carol Burns, Les Worosz, Rich Wastag, Ken Campbell, Ken Ziobro and Robert Hines, and Johnson Controls building mechanics, responded to the alarms.

Meanwhile, Telecommunications Specialist Steve Radacovic and manager Dante Biancalana discovered that a contractor welding a pipe in a second floor fan room had ignited a cork liner inside ductwork supplying the first floor A/C. Radacovic used an extinguisher to douse the flame and later soaked the area with water. A Johnson Controls building mechanic quickly shut down the fan system, and Wabash technicians put a number of fans in place to suck smoke out of the building through a side door.

Within 10 minutes of the initial alarm all air filters were changed in the DMS switch and the building was cleared of all smoke. There was no switch outage and the fire did not even generate a trouble report. Thanks to the quick response and thinking of all involved, the switch does not appear to have been corrupted despite being showered with sparks and engulfed in smoke.

During this potentially dangerous situation, the other craft employees in the large Wabash Central Office kept the normal operations running without a flaw. Manager Bill Murray said, “I am very proud of everyone in this office. They all conducted themselves as true professionals. No one was told what to do. They acted as a team and took care of business.”

Local 21 congratulates everyone in the Wabash Central Office for a job well done. Ameritech is fortunate to have you as employees. You’re a perfect example of the fine Brothers and Sisters who belong to the IBEW.
Welcome to the benefit column!

One of the many results from the amalgamation of Locals 165, 188, 336, 383 and 399 into Local 21 is a benefit department. Although still "under construction," setting up procedures, training and more, the department for now is primarily handling benefit issues under the Ameritech, AT&T, Lucent, Johnson Controls and City of Chicago contracts.

Let us introduce you to the benefit staff persons and their areas of responsibility. Benefit Coordinator, Linda Corcoran, is a former Local 336 member and Benefit Coordinator for the last five years. Corcoran also served as the Chairman of the Health Care Cost Containment Committee for the T-4 System Council. She served as Chief Steward for many of the dispatch centers, switching control centers, assignment centers and various clerical entities. Corcoran has 27 years of service and is currently a Telecommunications Specialist. As Benefit Coordinator, Corcoran’s duties are to assist other benefit specialists with issues that need to be resolved at a higher level, assist the bargaining process for benefit-related issues and interface with union representatives to lend help where needed with benefit issues.

Terry Davis, a former Local 399 member, has been involved with benefits for over two years and served on the Health Care Cost Containment Committee. He is a OPT in construction out of Maryville and has over 28 years of service. Davis will handle Ameritech benefit questions or problems, and can be reached at 618/346-7983.

Joan Waskowski, a former Local 165 member and previous Vice-President of Local 165, has over eight years of benefit experience. She served on the Health Care Cost Containment Committee for many years. Waskowski hails from Chicago and has over 38 years of service. Inquiries about Ameritech, Johnson Control and City of Chicago benefits can be directed to Waskowski at 630/960-4466, ext. 245.

Mary Jo Hindes, a former Local 383 member, has been involved with benefits since January 1998 and also served on the Health Care Cost Containment Committee. She is a past Executive Board member and Treasurer of Local 383 with prior experience as an Area Representative at AT&T. With 22 years of service, Hindes currently works in the Oak Brook Customer Care Center. She now assists with Ameritech benefit issues and can be reached at 630/960-4466, ext. 236.

John Gavin wraps up our benefit department. A former Local 336 member, he has 35 years of service, a combination of time with Illinois Bell, AT&T and Lucent. Gavin currently works for Lucent and has been involved with benefits for six years. In addition to being an Area Steward, Gavin is the AT&T and Lucent benefit specialist. His number is 630/960-4466, ext. 402.

Understanding the geographic regions of Local 21, we acknowledge it may cause problems to call long distance from home or from work. If that is the case, call 630/960-4488 and the charges will be accepted. The union is researching the feasibility and cost of a toll-free number that is compatible with our telephone equipment. The toll-free number will be available to union members.

Future benefit columns will include information about benefit problems that are being addressed in the contracts mentioned above. In addition, articles concerning health issues or state laws applicable to any member may appear here or in another section of the newsletter.

Your benefits are bargained by the union through contract negotiations. They are not given to you out of the goodness of the company for which you work. Each bargaining cycle, the union fights for them to be retained or increased, sometimes at the cost of wages or paid time off. The benefit department recognizes it is becoming increasingly difficult for you to receive the benefits to which you are entitled. We are here to assist you in attaining them.

Unions win pension reforms

Thanks to local unions, the Illinois House and Senate passed pension reforms for City of Chicago employees. The enacted reforms bring the city’s long-outdated public employee pension provisions into the 1990s. The win resulted from a united effort by the Chicago Federation of Labor and 48 unions who represent city employees, including IBEW Local 165, now Local 21.

Among the major pension changes are the following:

- A higher annuity benefit by calculating the 3% annual cost-of-living increase on a compounded interest basis rather than a simple interest basis;
- Reduction of the years of service eligibility requirement to 10 years at age 60 to vest in the pension fund, making it possible to receive a pension in 10 years although the benefits would be minimal; and
- An increase in the monthly minimum annuity benefit from $550 to $850 starting January 1, 1999.

The improvements were made possible because of the strong stand the 48 unions and the CFL took together. With the solidarity of many different unions, thousands of working men and women gained a rare, and substantial, victory.
Illinois AFL-CIO
1998 General Election Endorsements

Governor
Glenn Poshard (D)

U.S. Senator
Carol Moseley-Braun (D)

Statewide Offices
Lt. Governor
Mary Lou Kearns (D)

Attorney General
Miriam Santos (D)

Secretary of State
Jesse White (D)

Comptroller
Daniel Hynes (D)

Treasurer
Daniel McLaughlin (D)

RemembertovoteonNovember3
Make your voice heard!

On Tuesday, November 3, union families have an opportunity to stand up for:

- the right to organize and bargain collectively,
- fair and equitable U.S. trade policies,
- a higher minimum wage,
- family and medical leave,
- health and safety on the job,
- corporations to pay a fair share of taxes,
- labor’s right to be part of the political arena, and
- much more.

Big business relentlessly attacks the agenda of working families in Springfield and in Washington, D.C., and corporations outspend unions 11-to-1 on politics (e.g., $653 to $58 million in 1996). But while they have many more dollars, unions have millions more voices.

Make your voice heard!

VOTE Tuesday, November 3.

See labor’s election endorsements on page 7.

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