

# FRONTLINE

**IBEW LOCAL 21**



**Volume 10, No. 2 • April 2006**

## *Local 21 Members in Action After the Springfield Tornado*



Photo Credit: Mike Roach

*Dan Gady and Mike Sturgeon hard at work after a tornado wrecked havoc in Springfield IL.*

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# Knowledge is Power

By Kevin Curran, Vice President/Assistant Business Manager Marketing



## Research Department Update

One of the goals of our Research Department is to arm our Union staff with the information and knowledge they need to fight for our members. Several initiatives move us towards that objective, our Union will be sending representatives to the Chicago Program on Labor Law and Labor Arbitration. This program includes training by veteran arbitrators and labor law professors on issues which

affect our members every day: Disparate Treatment, Attendance Policies, Past Practice, Duty of Fair Representation, etc.

In addition, our Union has retained the services of an Arbitrator with over 3 decades of experience to train all of our Business Representatives on arbitration presentation and post-hearing brief writing. We may not be able to out-spend employers like AT&T and Comcast, but we can outwork them by being better trained and better prepared than our adversaries. Our Union's Research Department will find the best training available so that we are prepared to fight the battles to come.

## Global Markets

**Surplus** – As we have been reporting on the Union Hotline, on February 9, 2006, AT&T declared a surplus in the Global Markets Business Unit affecting 40 members in Chicago and Oakbrook in the job titles of MSS, CA, and TA. Many developments here:

- Three grievances have been filed at the 3rd step of the grievance procedure regarding this surplus on the issues of movement of work, SIPP offers, and "At Risk" group.
- While we are processing the grievances on this issue, we are also engaged in what's known as "effects bargaining" over the issue of the surplus. Here's what has been negotiated so far:
- We have successfully bargained to include the IT group at 225 W. Randolph in the SIPP offer. There are 32 MSS's here which are being offered SIPP to create openings to help relieve the surplus.
- We have also gained agreement that the 11 Network MSS's in the River Grove E911 Center be offered SIPP to create openings to help relieve the surplus.
- Through the expansion of SIPP offers to these other groups as well as the movement of some work into Global Markets which we negotiated, the surplus has been significantly reduced from 40 down to 12. As *Frontline* goes to press, only 5 employees remain at risk.
- We have negotiated a SIPP offer being made to Service Reps both in Consumer throughout the

state and in Credit and Collections (at the West LACC). This has created 15 openings to help place the remaining surplus MSS's and CA's and potentially satisfy the surplus.

**Project Coordinator Issues** – It has come to the Union's attention that a conference call was held with all Project Coordinators on Wednesday, March 15th, concerning wide-ranging changes in Global Markets affecting our members who hold the job title of Project Coordinator. Please be advised that the Union is NOT in agreement with these changes, nor were we informed of this announcement. After reviewing the announcement, the Union believes several of these changes are in violation of the Collective Bargaining Agreement. Here are some examples:

The company has announced that no overtime will be allowed and instead Project Coordinators should use "flex-time". The Union has not agreed to any "flex-time" arrangement and any hours worked in excess of 8 in a day must be compensated at the overtime rate per Article 19 of our contract. If denied by management, please immediately contact your union steward and file a grievance.

In addition, the company has announced as part of this reorganization, that they intend to move work functions that Project Coordinators perform to management. This is UNACCEPTABLE and a violation of the contract. Please inform your union steward of any instances that you are aware of in which management performs Project Coordinator work.

Brothers and Sisters, the Union stands ready to oppose these unlawful actions by AT&T through any and all legal means at our disposal. The Union appreciates your support and we ask that you continue to notify your union steward of any company actions which may be a violation of our contract or a violation of the law.

## Consumer

On April 6th Local 21 received a decision out of the U.S.

District Court for Northern Illinois on AT&T's refusal to arbitrate the Consumer Performance Management Plan (PAR.) Judge George W. Lindberg ruled in the Union's favor, ordering AT&T to arbitrate the issue. This ruling defeats the company's attempt to sidestep our Collective Bargaining Agreement.

**Incentive Plan** – Over the past couple of weeks, the Union and the company have engaged in negotiations over an incentive plan in Consumer. AT&T proposed a plan that would have allowed the company to make drastic modifications to the plan each month, including who was eligible to participate, without negotiating with the Union. We refused to enter into such an agreement and informed them that if this was going to be part of their proposal, there was no need to have any further discussions. As *Frontline* goes to press, we did finally reach an agreement on an incentive for the month of April. It requires the company to obtain the Union's consent before any changes are made in the incentive plan.



## Healthcare Solution?

By Ronald Kastner



I was very encouraged when I read about the **IBEW healthcare plan** in the March, 2006, *IBEW Journal*, an article I hope many of you also read. I had the opportunity to speak directly with Secretary Treasurer Walters at the most recent Telecommunications Conference, and I was even more excited. As I'm sure you know, Unions across the country have been conceding wages in order

to keep pace with rising healthcare costs, and, in some cases, it's impossible to keep up. Other concessions have been made to ensure retirees also maintain their benefit levels. How nice it would be to take healthcare off the bargaining table because we have our own National Health Insurance Plan through our International!

Of course, the collective bargaining agreement would need to be amended to direct contributions into the new plan, but this has already started in our Construction Branch of the IBEW. I'd like Local 21 to be on the leading edge to bring it into the Telecommunication Branch. Currently, I am waiting for my counterpart at AT&T to return a call so that we can further discuss this trend. Until then, our Local is willing to talk about this with any of our employers. I also have a call into our International to hear more about how the program works and what we need to do to have our situation evaluated properly. I'm sure more information will be forthcoming at upcoming unit meetings.

### Project Lightspeed

has finally started to pay dividends. Some time in April members from the 2002 layoff will start returning to the payroll. Approximately 175 to 200 new members will be hired in groups of 15 every week through June. The Union has negotiated a 90 minute orientation session with these new members, when they attend plant school. I

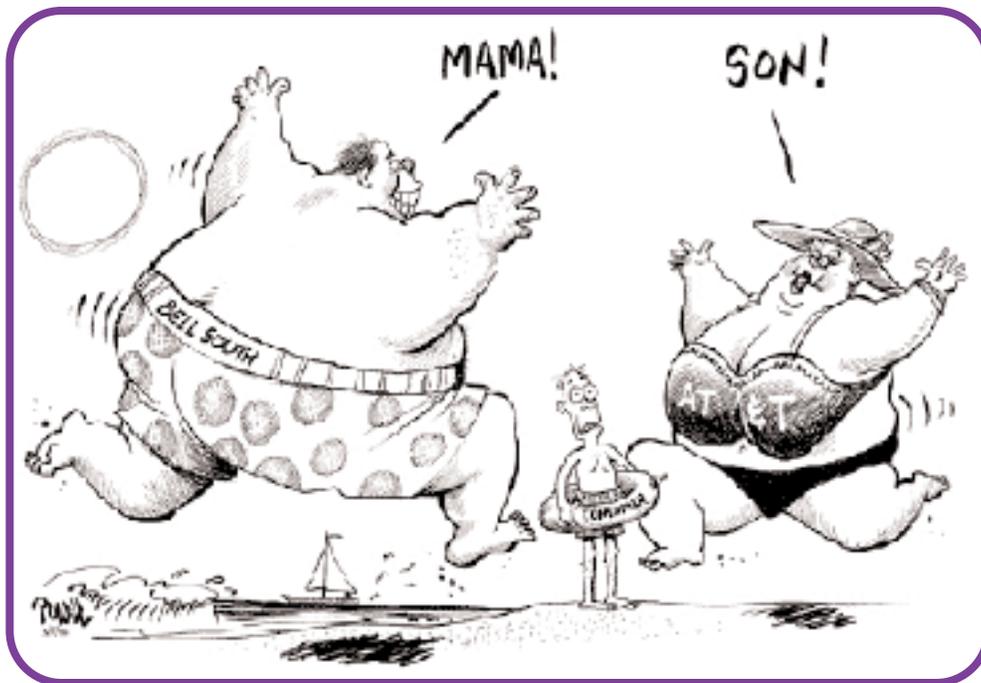
appointed a committee which developed a uniform package to present to our new members. This gives us the opportunity to educate these returning members on what our Union is all about, teaching them all the benefits of being a Union member. This is something that I feel has been needed for a long time.

Many of you might feel a Union's only role is protecting people who get into trouble, and that companies just give you all those benefits out of the goodness of their hearts. This misconception is very common in the Industrial Union setting, where the members are hired by a company or employer and then sign up into the Union as a condition of employment. The fact of the matter is that **every benefit** you enjoy everyday has been fought for and won by your Union through the collective bargaining process.

We have heard back from our International Union and the AFL/CIO regarding the **Pension Reform Act**. Both confirm that our Contract secures the way the lump sum pension is calculated in the AT&T agreement. The Pension Reform Act will affect all members represented by Local 21 whether you have a lump sum option or not. The reform will influence the funding of all employers' pension plans. I can assure you that the Political Department at Local 21 will be closely watching this issue.

Local 21 has opened up bargaining with AT&T over the **inside IPTV work** that was bargained for under our last agreement in 2004. This work is the actual wiring of the house and installation of set-top boxes in all the homes that purchase this new technology. This work has the potential to increase our

bargaining unit by large numbers. Potentially, our Local can acquire more work in connection with the marketing of this new product. This inside work is scheduled to begin some time in the 3rd or 4th quarter 2006, making it imperative we reach an agreement soon.



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

## An Overtime Shell Game

By Jerry Gast, Assistant Business Manager Network



In Construction there is NO OVERTIME, however I&R techs are working on details to Construction and working all kinds of

overtime in their own department. What's wrong with this? Construction has no budget for overtime and I&R does. We are going to arbitration in July for this issue. CROSS OVER in the contract.

AT&T is creating a false work load using another department's techs and budget to create no overtime for our Construction techs. The Construction department is trying to cut costs by using three, eight-hour shifts on road jobs and cut cables, yet I&R is on overtime.

When you report to the job, be sure all OSHA standards are met, like bathroom facilities etc. Manhole safety requires two men in a manhole, or a talker set up between holes Your lunch hour is paid if

you can not leave the job per Article 18.11. If you have to leave the manhole, one tech guards the hole from on top while the other tech is gone or you must close up the hole.

In other departments, the grievance for the TA to TS title for the DOG clerks is settled. The clerks were promoted to the TS title as of first payroll period in March. The construction TA to TS issue is still in the grievance process going to arbitration; we are still meeting trying to work out a settlement.

Mike McCormick and I are meeting with Labor Relations and Randy White to resolve the issue of Holiday Scheduling. We were able to reduce good Friday scheduling by 303 techs. The Union still feels they are overstaffing. We urge all I&R techs to work their entire shift and document any lack of work.

The Grievance/Arbitration for conduit inspector work Downstate is settled. It defines what work is Union work and what work is management/T-10 work.

Grievances scheduled for Arbitrations in April include: the company not negotiating back to work agreements, and four dismissals. Remember to work Safe!

## Workers' Memorial Day

By Dave Webster, Business Representative



The first Workers' Memorial Day was observed April 28th, 1989. This day was chosen because it is the anniversary of the Occupational Safety and Health Act and the similar day in Canada. Trade unionists around the world mark April 28th as an "International Day of Mourning" to recognize workers who have been killed or injured on the job.

As we remember those who have died in workplace catastrophes, suffered diseases because of exposure to toxic substances or been injured because

of dangerous conditions, we rededicate ourselves to the fight for safe workplaces. As such, a typical theme for Workers' Memorial Day has been "Mourn for the Dead, Fight for the Living."

Take a moment from your busy schedule to remember those that have fought and died for safer working conditions for us all and help in the continuous battle to continue to strive for improvements today.

# Welcome Radicals

By Michael Sacco, Business Representative

When we come onto a new job, we are indoctrinated into the culture and legends of that job. This becomes part of our common narrative.

When I started in the 1970's, there were still many men on the job who were hired in the 1940's. One of the things those men taught me was how Illinois Bell never in its history laid people off. Even in the Great Depression of the 1930's, people shared jobs so that no one starved.

Another thing I learned was how the people who organized our union in the late 40's got along pretty well with management who came up through the ranks and benefited from unionization. This worked for a couple of decades. These workers were joined by a tough group who joined in the 1960's, many fresh from combat in Vietnam, who refused to take any s\*\*\* from management. These workers walked the strike line in 1968 for nearly 5 months and made these the good jobs we have today.

Most of these workers are retired. The bulk of "the older folks" now are guys like me who "suffered" through a short 10 day strike in 1983 and the misery of divestiture, something I never lost a day's pay from, but some people lost careers over.

In 2002, SBC trashed more than a century of proud history and laid-off nearly 600 of our members. Put them on the street to starve. There are many sad stories

around this lay-off. Broken homes and families from the economic violence wrought by this company. This Spring, nearly a couple of hundred of those workers join the 300 to 400 workers already recalled into other jobs. This includes 113 DSL workers, about half of whom worked non-union for years, until they got smart and organized into our union around the time of the lay-offs.

I'm calling this group the "600 radicals of '06." That's right, "radicals." The number is rough, the presumption of radicalism is mine and mine alone. I have a proud memory of the fine union people I've worked with over 27 years. But, I must say, none of us have suffered through what these people experienced. Steel gets

tougher when you harden it in the heat of a crucible. There is no hotter crucible than unemployment in this country.

I am proud of our union for not forgetting about anyone, even when their right to a job expired. Like the Marines, we always bring back our dead and wounded. But, I'm more proud to welcome back the "600 of '06" and look forward to working with and serving what I believe will be the most radical and legendary group to be a part of our union. A resourceful group who will not be bull\*\*\*\*\* into believing the company will always do the right thing and take care of them. A group who will share their story of hard times to make us all better union members. Welcome back sisters and brothers! Solidarity!

## Benefit Report

### A Rose by Any Other Name

By Linda Cox, Business Representative & Recording Secretary



Since the merger of SBC and AT&T, there have been several vendor name changes, same vendor only a new name. The current name

for the disability center, SMAART is no longer appropriate. Any of you who have dealt with the center on any disability, workman's compensation, or job accommodations in the past know this name was never appropriate. On March 1, 2006 SMAART became the **AT&T Integrated Disability Service Center**. All services and phone numbers remain the same, so we have little hope they will be any smarter. Also on March 1, 2006 SBC Connect became the **AT&T Health Benefits Enrollment Center**. All services and phone numbers remain the same.

The change from Mellon to **Fidelity** for our pension, savings and stock ownership plans is an important one. After the transition on April 3rd, any pension projections will need to be done online or you will face a delay in receiving

it. The phone number for Fidelity is 1-800-416-2363 and the website is <http://netbenefits.fidelity.com>. When the time comes, you will be given instructions on how to establish a new Personal Identification Number (PIN). Current beneficiary information will transfer from Mellon to Fidelity. After the transition is complete, it would be a good time to update your beneficiary information.

As before when the vendor was changed, you will receive an ending savings plan statement and a beginning savings plan statement from Fidelity. No, there has not been a change in the funds we can invest in.

For those who participate in **Care Plus**, beginning March 1, there will be no monthly deduction through the end of the year. Evidently, the claims have fallen below the premiums collected. When that occurs, a waiver of future contributions is allowed. Believe it or not, we are getting something for nothing with no strings attached! Additionally, coverage has been extended to surviving dependents just as medical coverage is today and the lifetime maximum has been eliminated for all.

There is a new form for **Caremark** mail-in prescriptions. It gives you the option of requesting next day or second day delivery, and lists the charges.

## Join us on the



This year on Sunday May 7th The IBEW Local 21 team will participate in the annual **Walk against Multiple Sclerosis**. This fun and important event is three miles along Chicago's beautiful lakefront. There are 10 other locations across Illinois. If you would like to join the team, or provide monetary support to fight this debilitating disease, please email Business Rep Michael Sacco at [mjsaccoibew21@sbcglobal.net](mailto:mjsaccoibew21@sbcglobal.net) or go to the MS Society website at <http://events.msillinois.org>.

COPE Report

## News from the Illinois Capitol

By Rosetta Shinn, Committee on Political Education



2005 was a very difficult year at the state Capitol. We did have a few Labor related legislation bills that passed. Among the numerous

election code changes made in **HB1968, a paid leave program for Election Day** was created. Employees are allowed up to two hours of PAID leave to vote on election days, unless they had time to vote before or after work. Voting early up to several weeks is also now allowed at your county office.

Effective 1/1/06 Illinois Public Act 94-

33 creates the **Employee Blood Donation Leave Act**. The act requires that all private employers with 51 or more employees must provide one hour of paid leave every 56 days to eligible employees who donate blood.

Illinois SB 1627 established a new **Military Leave for Spouses and Parents**. This act applies to employers with 15 or more employees. The act states that an employee who has worked for the same employer for at least 12 months and at least 1250 hours for the last year is entitled to take UNPAID job protected leave to visit with a spouse or child who has been called to military service that will last longer than 30 days. Employers with between 15 and 50 employees must provide up to 15 days of leave. Those with more than 50 employees must provide up to 30 days of leave.

**VESSA** (Victims Economic Safety & Security Act)

The Illinois General Assembly approved HB3486; it was signed into law August 3rd. Paragraph 93-591 requires an employer of 50 or more employees to provide up to 12 weeks of unpaid intermittent leave for employees who are victims of domestic or sexual violence or have family members that are victims of domestic or sexual violence. Employers may not discriminate against employees who are victims of domestic or sexual violence or who are "perceived" as victims of domestic or sexual violence.

These are just a few laws, and they all have criteria that must be met to be eligible. Again thanks to all who signed up for the IBEW 21 COPE drive. It was the most successful campaign to date.

COPE Report

## Watching & Waiting

By Larry Moeller, Committee on Political Education



We continue to monitor Pension Reform, because members of the U.S Senate and House of Representatives are meeting in conference to find a

compromise to combine SB 1783 and HB 2880 in an attempt to bolster defined pension plans in the private sector. The good news is **our contract protects us from any adverse effects of pension reform as it is proposed on 4/7/06**. This is not just our opinion but the collective

opinion of two ERISA attorneys, the IBEW political department in Washington D.C., and the AFL-CIO. We will continue to monitor this until it's over.

At the risk of sounding like a broken record I'd like to stress the importance of our membership participating in the election process. Union members and their families as a group **vote in higher percentages** than others; we need to continue being good citizens. Local 21 will gear up soon for the 2006 election in November by conducting a voter's registration drive at the Union meetings and by mail. The Local will participate in endorsement sessions with the Chicago Federation of Labor, the Indiana and Illinois AFL-CIO. These **recommendations** will be listed on our new web site, in the

**Frontline**, and on bulletin board postings. Members can also expect to be contacted by endorsed candidates by phone and mail with our permission.

We do this to earn a seat at the table when issues affecting our jobs are proposed in Indianapolis, Springfield, or Washington. Many of you will recall the Illinois Telecom rewrite of 2005, well it expires in 2007, and we are planning to be part of the **Telecom rewrite process in 2007**. We will do this by speaking to Illinois Legislators ahead of time, attending committee hearings, using the IBEW state conference's new lobbyist and our most important asset, **you**. By going out and voting, writing letters or E-Mails to legislators, members strengthen our hand when crunch time comes.

# They Just Won't Give Up

By Dennis McCafferty, Committee on Political Education



On the legislative front, the Governor of Indiana signed **HB 1279** into law, allowing the state to change the way our business will be

regulated in the future. While we would have preferred to support legislation that would have raised the bar for all providers, we did support it to solidify job security. Now it's up to AT&T to make good on its promise of infrastructure investment and increasing employment and training opportunities.

In Illinois, representatives of Local 21 attended and testified at **public hearings held by the Illinois Commerce Commission (ICC)** all around the Chicagoland area. The ICC plans to make a determination of their own whether or not to ease regulatory restrictions based on their current perception of the marketplace. We reminded them of the lay-off of over 600 of our members back in December of 2002 as proof of the direct results of that competition. We are currently awaiting their findings.

Last month, Congressional leaders announced that phone companies may soon be able to apply for **NATIONAL**

**cable franchises** while existing cable companies will have to continue to abide by local franchising requirements until the phone companies have reached a 15% share of local video markets. This is huge for any company whose future includes video. Congressional leaders say something could get done as early as Easter.

I'd like to complete my report by sharing something that happened in the final moments of the Indiana General Assembly because I think it's important that everyone understand just what kind of people we're dealing with here. About 10 minutes before the midnight deadline to offer amendments to legislation, a Republican representative introduced an amendment to an unrelated bill that would have made Indiana a **"Right to Work"** state.

"Right to Work" is the most deceptively titled piece of s\*\*\* legislation to ever be introduced. The only right it guarantees is the right to work for less! Its intent is to weaken Unions and the Organized Labor movement. In the end the amendment was defeated, but what troubles me the most is the way they chose to do it and the message these cowards sent by attempting to sneak this by like thieves in the middle of the night, while hoping our guard was down. This was their way of telling us that they're not going away and that if we don't stay on our toes and keep our acts together, they

will bury us!

I think it should be a moral imperative of every working class American and every member of this Union to take our States and Country back from these people. Brothers and Sisters, get registered and vote! Until next time, take care and GOD Bless!

## CWA: Critical Opportunity in AT&T, BellSouth Merger

AT&T's planned acquisition of BellSouth creates "an opportunity for change in the telecom sector that, if carried out properly, could make a great stride in fulfilling the promise of technology and high speed communications for all citizens," according to Larry Cohen, president of the Communications Workers of America (CWA).

The \$67.1 billion deal is subject to approval by shareholders and regulators. It also involves Cingular Wireless, now a joint venture of the domestic wireless divisions of AT&T and BellSouth. AT&T has said the three networks will become a single, fully integrated wireless and wireline Internet Protocol network.

While the merger will bring some 10,000 job cuts, AT&T reported that most "redundancies" will occur through normal attrition. CWA represents some 200,000 workers at the three companies. A spokesperson said the union does not expect any of its members to lose their jobs, and added that the union is still evaluating the full merger proposal.

Cohen said the union "looks forward to discussions with AT&T and BellSouth management about this merger in terms of the career opportunities" for CWA members.

Commenting on the potential to improve the U.S.'s world ranking regarding telecom service from 16th among leading economies, Cohen said, "We need to make sure that government, policy makers and citizens truly grasp the promise of this industry. Equally important is that our potential to regain the global lead in communications services as the backbone of our economy not simply be an adjunct to entertainment for the rich and upper middle class."



Union grievance procedure



Non-union grievance procedure

Carol Simpson ©2006, UCS



• • • In the **Access Service Center in Springfield**, management is checking for personal calls made from the desk. Then they re-cover the member on the policy and watch for further calls in the future so they can take discipline.

...Service Reps in **Rock Island Consumer** were offered a voluntary SIPP. All who applied received it. The Union is still focusing on the mandatory overtime issue.

...In **Peoria Credit & Collections**, the Union prevented the company from combining attendance and performance into one discipline track. Both are improving, and remain separate on a trial basis.

...At **Gallatin River Communications**, President Kastner assigned a committee to work on the random drug testing issue. Yes random drug testing reared its ugly head again, but the committee is working on it.



By Vickie Burroughs, Business Representative

• • • Some **Downstate** members and managers would be wrong to assume weekend and holiday scheduling is chosen by seniority. When the dust clears from the holiday scheduling arbitration Mike Roach and I will meet with the appropriate AT&T managers for the purpose of agreeing to a uniform holiday scheduling policy.

...The recent decision from the **conduit inspector arbitration** was disappointing, what we got is a clarification on the 1997 memo. The clarification deals with what bargaining unit work is, what management work is, and if their work is assigned to our members we get 10 % additional pay. The Local was successful in reinstating the past practice of meeting with a company representative prior to these jobs hitting the field.

...At **Vermillion County** non-judicial the Local was unsuccessful with the Funeral Leave arbitration. The contract language stating the county may grant 3 days funeral leave was enough to persuade the arbitrator to side with the county in spite of a strong past practice allowing 3 days off for funerals.

...In the February *Frontline* I reported that the recent **Project Lightspeed** preferencing went smoothly. Considering the number of members involved it did, but not everyone got the job or location they wanted, so I will be talking to the company to see if more jobs can be opened up in C&E.



By Jim Foster, Business Representative

• • • At the **Total Grace Consumer Center** we've had many successes because members have learned to pay attention to their coaching files and observations. They involve their stewards and use the grievance process. As a result, the Union won over 50 grievances for first and final warnings for performance. In addition, 25 suspensions were reversed with an award of 3 to 5 days back pay.

...On the **bi-lingual side of the house** all discipline for performance from 1/1/05 through 1/1/06 was removed. Swing tour pay was won for 20 members who were forced to work a combination of day and night shifts to accommodate a training schedule.

...The Local achieved success with panel arbitrations. As an example, one member accepted a back to work agreement, but pending grievances were won after the panel. The back to work agreement was removed, the member received 18 days of back pay and the discipline was removed.

...Success like this comes from team work. When stewards and members work together members and the contract are protected.

Here are 6 actions you can take to **protect yourself**:

- Always ask for your steward, any meeting can lead to discipline. With a steward you have an accurate account of the meeting and a witness to what was said.
- Always ask for a copy of anything put into your file from any meeting, it's your right to have one.
- Always listen to the calls you are observed on, ask questions, often it's a T-10 observing the call.
- Always ask questions.
- Always ask for a steward when Asset Protection (Security) is present. They work for the company and they have no interest in helping you
- If a manager tells you, you don't need a steward, GET ONE FAST.

...Due to management abuse Total Grace Consumer is participating in concerted activity against PAR. On Mondays we wear black, on Fridays it's red. T-shirts saying stop PAR were purchased and 100 members wore them. Each member is questioning and grieving their PAR results.



By Michael Cohns, Business Representative

# S T H E L O C A L . . .

• • • In **North Suburban area I & R** the company has replaced one director and split up the responsibilities among three new directors. The Union will set up a meeting as soon as possible to discuss ongoing scheduling problems, establish an area-wide reasonable notification policy on Day at a Time and EWD requests, and other issues affecting the area.



By Dan Gruenich, Business Representative

• • • **AT&T** announced a surplus of forty members the **Global Markets** Customer Care Centers in February. The office in Downtown Chicago is hardest hit, impacting the entire MSS group of 15. Also 10 CA's and 2 TA's are surplus. The other 13 members are in the Oakbrook office. The Union and the company have met three times on this issue to come to a satisfactory conclusion.

...The company has taken the work and responsibilities of the **Project Coordinators** and given them to management. Account Managers and SSM's will be the first point of contact. Certain PC's are losing their assigned accounts to SSM's who will now distribute work to the PC's. This is a complete and total change to the Project Coordinator role. The Union has met with the company and plans to grieve the issue, to the point of arbitration if necessary to insure the job security of our PC's.



By Liz Hodges, Business Representative

• • • On the **south side of the city** things are mostly quite. Members are preparing to report to their new locations due to Project Lightspeed. To everyone who will be leaving us we wish you well, it was a pleasure serving you.

...We will be losing a couple of stewards at the **Prospect garage**, Darin Angus and Dave Carr. We thank them for their service to the members. Cesar Rodriguez and John Kronenberger are the new stewards at that garage, and we thank them for their willingness to serve.



...We will begin to see people from the recall list as soon as they finish school. To all new arrivals welcome to the South Side of Chicago.

By CJ-Cleveland Johnson, Business Representative

• • • The word out of **Illinois Valley** is that management is attempting to contract out the placing of cable, somewhere in the area. This creates a turn key operation for the company **THIS IS OUR WORK** and a violation of the contract. **KEEP YOUR EYES AND EARS OPEN** and call Chief Steward Terry Sheehan or me if you see this going on.

...In **FWG** the company continues to detail people into Illinois Valley instead of training the people already there to do the work. Isn't it funny that in the city of Chicago it is a priority to train people, but in some suburban areas management would rather detail people in than train their own.

...Contracting out is also rearing its ugly head in **FWG** where the company is trying to give our **CEV** work away, if you see it grieve it.

...A meeting with **AT&T** is scheduled for mid-April discuss full implementation of the weekend scheduling of **DSL** members who are now in **I&R** and cross-training repair and **DSL** techs to do each other's job.

...To date there have been two conference calls with **Altura** stewards. Some stewards have missed the call, if they didn't get my E-Mail on the times and dates please contact me so everyone hears the same information.

...In March I met with **Verizon** techs in the DeKalb area to hear their concerns.

By Mike McCormick, Business Representative



• • • As I drive around **Chicago** I'm seeing more and more instances of underground techs setting up worksites improperly, especially when it comes to traffic control, sign boards, etc. **OSHA** can hold you personally responsible for violations. If your boss refuses to provide the proper equipment to set up safely and legally in a street, refuse to block traffic, and call the union office. This is not only illegal, it is very dangerous!

...Speaking of safety, it's spring and the streets are getting more crowded with kids. Please be alert to this and help keep them safe and alive by navigating slowly through their locales.

By Michael Sacco, Business Representative



• • • At the **Lakewood NDC & NCSC**, since the first of the year the Local has been dealing with MA-office-network expectations, the attendance policy, and code of conduct issues, the network appraisal, new performance scorecards, and company objectives. Whew! All of this has been laid on Local 21 members at this location. It's a wonder they have time to service AT&T customers much less techs in the field.

...Speaking of customers—MA's are being disciplined for customer mistreats. All it takes is one disgruntled customer or a supervisor monitoring a call to cause someone to be called on the carpet.

...Field techs need to know that according to AT&T policy they are to be treated the same as external customers. So when you hear, "Is there anything else I can do for you?" Don't laugh, the member you're talking to is following the script and the call is recorded.

*By Melanie Probst, Business Representative*



• • • All **DSL** members have been placed in I&R locations; the next goal is cross training in order to provide equal access to overtime and scheduling.

...The apprentice committee will meet to iron out payroll problems due to the transferring of members from I&R and Marketing business units for Project Lightspeed who should have received a bump in pay when they entered their new job title.

...**I & R members** should know that under normal conditions your supervisor cannot require you to work overtime to complete their work load.

...Again, Local 21 members should remember to be where they are supposed to be, doing the work assigned to them while on the company clock. Members who forget that risk long suspensions or termination. **BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING.**

*By Steve Unterfranz, Business Representative*



• • • Please be the eyes and ears of your brothers and sisters, I ask this because **Asset Protection Management (SECURITY)** with the co-operation of supervisors has been ambushing Local 21 members in the offices. Here's how it works, the company supervisor approaches our member, pulling him or her off line to have a few questions answered. The meeting takes place in a remote part of the office in a conference room. Upon entering, the member discovers the person looking for answers is from asset protection management and this is no innocent meeting. Smart members will ask for a Steward ASAP but some members are intimidated by the secret police tactics. This is where the eyes and ears of you--the members of Local 21 come in. If you see a stranger in the office, notify your Steward. The Steward can then ask the member if they would like some help.

...Some good news from **Consumer in Oak Brook**, a grievance won by Chief Steward Louella Byrnes resulted in 103 members receiving premium pay for an entire day in December 2005. Merry Christmas!

*By Kurt Schmidt, Business Representative*



## Memorial

On June 19, 2004, with little fanfare from the press, but with great love and dedication from over 20,000 participants and organizers an amazing event took place. A granite memorial wall was dedicated commemorating the soldiers who lost their lives in Middle East conflicts from 1980 Desert Operation One and the Lebanon barracks bombing to present day.

The wall was constructed by volunteers and private donations and is currently 70 feet long and 6 feet high and sadly, has inscribed the names of approximately 3,500 service men and women who have fallen in the line of duty. It stands at 200 Riverside Drive in Marseilles Illinois, just off I-80 exit 97.

Since its dedication, two new panels have been added to the memorial. New panels are already halfway filled with names, and the memorial will expand as needed to honor our troops. An account has been set up to cover costs of maintaining and updating the names on the memorial. This fund also helps with educational or medical expenses for the children of veterans who have made the ultimate sacrifice for our country.

Your support is greatly needed. Please spread awareness of the existence of this fine memorial to people across the nation so that our service men and women and their families know we care and they will never be forgotten.

*For information contact:*  
The Freedom Run  
PO Box 388489  
Chicago IL 60638

*Questions E-Mail*  
Anthony Cutrano  
Chancecutrano@aol.com

*Or visit*  
[www.ilfreedomrun.org](http://www.ilfreedomrun.org)

**Complete information about all Union Privilege services is available online at [www.unionprivilege.org](http://www.unionprivilege.org).**

# Poor Management at Chicago's OEMC 911

By Jerry Rankins, Business Representative



Last month, I was in court subpoenaed by Daniel Biederman, the attorney representing a family whose home was hit by a tragic

fire. Family member lost their lives. They have filed a lawsuit against the City of Chicago. For over three hours, I was drilled with questions surrounding staffing at the Office of Emergency Management Communications (OEMC.)

Being under oath, the subpoena demanded that I relinquish any and all correspondence and other information like the Task Force Study (TFR) of 1998, an internal study regarding the OEMC operations. The most noted TRF problem was “**staffing.**” The lack of call takers and dispatchers will result in the escalation of overtime (mandatory) that would lead to employee burnout. It would cause more employees to take medical leave and alternately destroy the morale in the work place.

The study also cited “**scheduling**” 6 days worked 2 days off known as 6/2. No other major metropolitan city has such a shift in their 911 center because the nature of the job is itself stressful. Another problem is training; employees need better and on-going training.

The AM/PM power watch shift, which seems to be helpful in providing relief between the watches, was eliminated by the genius who currently manages the OEMC. Even though staffing has been an issue for a very long time, never have working conditions been the way they are now. Bad management has created a work environment likened to an electronic sweatshop. The cancellation of lunches, breaks, and the extension of the tour – all are unacceptable.

## **Mandatory overtime should be rare.**

The contract states, “a reasonable amount of overtime is required.” Imagine being a new hire or a junior employee and being consistently asked to work overtime. You probably would quit or be totally burned-out due to these stressful working

conditions. Never in the existence of the OEMC or prior has anyone been required to work such ridiculous amounts of O.T. Fairness, unity, and Union SOLIDARTY are why the bargaining committee as a whole agreed to the rotating of mandatory overtime. Again mandatory overtime should be rare.

The real problem is years of neglect to the 911 centers. The stress is too much! Summertime is nearing, it is the worst time of the year for 911 centers.

However, the Executive Director says, “We have no staffing problem.” Better yet he insists, “The recent new hires of call takers/and dispatchers will fix the problem.”

The bottom line is that things must change. It's very clear management won't change. You, the Union the member must be willing to take the fight to management (to the streets.) This, I guarantee will get the attention of the public and Mayor Daley. It's my belief, the mayor doesn't have a clue as to what really goes on at the OEMC, and would be stunned, and not to mention completely embarrassed. It's time to let management know that you are sick and tired of their incompetent leadership! That's called UNION SOLIDARITY. You must trust the leadership of Local 21.

My promise to you is that this problem will get fixed! There's no way I believe that Mayor Daley knows the level of stress workers are under and the working conditions that are a direct threat to the safety of Police Officers and Public Safety. The 911 center is the first line of defense for homeland security. We wonder what may happen should you have an emergency and have a problem getting through, hmmm? The Union has scheduled 3rd step grievances meetings for May 2nd, 4th, 10th, 17th, and 24th with respect to the back-log of grievances. Will keep you posted. Solidarity.

## **Comcast Bargaining**

The former Jones 336 is the last unit to get a contract. Hopefully, when this article arrives at your home a tentative agreement has been reached. Certainly, I will be reporting more about this Union busting company in future articles and the hotline. Stay in touch, Solidarity

# Learning From Chile's Privatized Pension

by Jim Hightower

George W called it “a great example,” declaring that our country should “take some lessons” from it.

The “it” that so has enamored George is the privatized social security system that was imposed on the people of Chile 25 years ago by the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet. His system of having workers pay into personal pension accounts managed by private investment banks is called the Chilean Model, and it has long been hailed by laissez-faire think tanks and by the Bushites as a model for privatizing our own nation's Social Security program.

Before we swallow this pill of privatization, however, we might want to ask the people of Chile how they have fared under its marketplace magic.

Not well.

Chilean workers who participate have 10 percent of their paychecks deducted and put into the hands of the private pension bankers. Yet half of the Chilean people cannot afford this deduction, so they end up with no old-age pension whatsoever. Of those who do participate, the rules are so rigged that 40 percent cannot accumulate enough money in the system to have a livable retirement.

As a top official of the economic commission for Latin America bluntly puts it: “The bottom line is that this system does not work.” Well, it might not work for the people but it's working very nicely for the bankers. The six funds now running the privatized system are enjoying an average annual profit of 50 percent!

The reason for such astonishing profits is, of course, the same reason that U.S. banks are riding high: exorbitant fees. The World Bank finds that Chilean pension managers are ripping off between a fourth and a third of the workers' payments in the form of commissions and other fees. Compare that to **our own Social Security system, which takes only one percent for administrative costs and covers everyone.**

Bush is right. We can “take some lessons” from the Chilean Model. Lesson Number One is: Forget it!

– Jim Hightower is a nationally syndicated radio commentator and the bestselling author of *Thieves In High Places*.



*Steward Mike Lombardi & Coin Collector Elaine Williams*

## **The Last Collector Standing**

*By Mike Lombardi, Steward Coin Department*

Since the earliest days of telephone service there have been coin operated pay per call telephones, in part because a billing system did not exist yet. In the long history of Illinois Bell Telephone Co. and its predecessor The Chicago Telephone Co. the job of Coin Collector has existed as long as there have been pay phones...until AT&T had a different idea.

So it is both sad and historic to announce that the last Collector in our history, Elaine Williams, was involuntarily SIPP'd as of 03/17/2006.

## **City Road-eo at Prospect Garage**



*Business Rep Clevepland Johnson congratulates winner Kevin Kassling.*



*Finalists were Dominic Piergier, Keith Kalinski, Kevin Kassling and Henry Barber.*

# Anatomy of a Surplus

By Nancy North, Area Steward



The company informed the Union in a Full Committee meeting on February 9th of a surplus condition of forty employees in Global Markets located in downtown

Chicago and Oakbrook. The next day local management held a floor meeting and made the announcement. Everyone was stunned.

Most people were too numb to ask questions. The meeting ended with the promise that all the details would be covered on Monday in the small meetings presented by Labor Relations.

Although the timeline is outlined in the

contract, article 30.21, parts of it felt like they were moving very quickly, and then very slowly.

Unlike the surplus several years ago, people were not given an individual packet of information including their pension and JOBS skill set. The managers scrambled to get a printout of each employee's skill profile. They passed out copies of pages 116-119 of the contract and two forms. The Supplemental Income Protection (SIPP) Employee Acknowledgement Form, if you wanted to retire and take the SIPP payout – a maximum of \$28,500. The Surplus Transfer Request Form referred to as the STR if you were interested in a different job. Everyone in the office is surplus, but not everyone is at risk.

"There's nothing in JOBS!" was a worried cry. All the lateral and downgrade positions have been pulled by Staffing. Everyone in a surplus office has priority

for these jobs, but no one can say what these jobs are. People need to make their choice and send in their form by March 15th, a month away. Worry and wait.

Small things take on a big importance, like finding a fax machine that actually prints a confirmation sheet. Nobody waits long to send in the STR because testing will start soon, even though no actual job offers are expected until March 15th. The agonizing decision to choose retirement takes longer. After the fifteenth, people started receiving job offers. At risk employees who failed the first jobs test can re-take the failed test within thirty days.

Although the company said they would announce if a person's SIPP offer was accepted on April 14th, they sent notification sooner. For at risk employees remaining, the off payroll date is May 12th and job offers are still coming through. Worry and wait.

## Members In The News

Mike Cohns was recently elected to the Lake County Bowling Association Hall of Fame. His induction banquet will be held on November 4, 2006. Local 21 congratulates Mike on receiving the association's highest honor.

And the winner is Ron Kastner...

The oldest Local 21 joke was real when President Ron Kastner actually won the COPE raffle at the Unit 3 meeting in February. Ron donated the money back for a second chance drawing which was won by member Mark Banning of Lakewood.

The February *Frontline* detailed the Local 21 members who volunteered to work near New Orleans to help restore phone service due to Hurricane Katrina. They are all safely home, a job well done.

Jim Locke, technician from East Dundee, was appointed delegate to Northeastern Illinois Federation of Labor AFL-CIO. The central labor council of AFL-CIO serves labor organizations in Lake and McHenry Counties. Jim joins other delegates, Cheryl Rottmann, Tony Tellez and Joan Welton representing Local 21.



To have your news posted please send a short email to the editors [nancy.north@comcast.net](mailto:nancy.north@comcast.net) and [ljm336@ameritech.net](mailto:ljm336@ameritech.net) with "Frontline Members in the News" as the subject line.

# CONGRATULATIONS LOCAL 21 RETIREES

## 2000

Kenneth Jim McCurley

## 2001

Bill Hunter  
Ray Hascall

## 2004

Phil Derby  
John Novick  
Roger Kennedy

## November 2005

Victoria Bosque  
John Sprouse  
Judy Downs  
Barbara Salamen  
Sharon Phillips  
Annette Johnson  
Gloria Escobar  
Maritza Hoffer  
Leesa Jones  
Veronica Nieto  
Sherman Jackson  
Loraine Cartwright

## December 2005

Richard Belter

## January 2006

Maria Vicki Cano  
Pedro Prado  
Marilyn Ruth Hams  
Paul Haisch  
Carole Ann Bailey  
Gloria Jackson  
Roger DeJohn  
Steve Hock  
Rita Sullivan

## February 2006

John Lafenhagen  
Carmen Lowry  
Fred Mitchell  
Joe Perez  
David Rodriguez  
Norman Banks  
John Beuten  
Michael Whitney  
John Eakins  
Jerry Pannbacker

## March 2006

Denise Peters  
William Sidlinger  
John Lasch  
Bob Garcia  
Ron Opalinski  
Sherry Arnett  
Cheryl Wargin  
Judith Kania  
Margret Strezewski  
John Olsen  
Elisa McDonough  
Elaine Williams  
Tom Porter

## April 2006

Theresa Kucybala  
Mary Naumann  
Dale Wagenecht  
Ed Myers  
Richard Sharp

### Information Alert

Members must be in good standing for 10 consecutive years with IBEW Local 21 (or former Locals 165, 188, 336, 383, or 399) immediately preceding their retirement in order to receive a retirement from the Local Union. These members must be severing their employment with the employer. Stewards, Area Stewards, Chief Stewards, and Business Reps can request applications by calling Nancy Kopydlowski at the union office 630 960-4466 X234.

## Letter to the Editor



Dear Editors,

*I am a Maintenance Administrator and have been working for the company for 20 years. I have always enjoyed reading the **Frontline** Newsletter. However, I am very upset regarding the little poem someone sent in on page 5 of the February issue. The line "We phone guys would probably all be garbage men" is insulting. While they are complimenting their Union stewards in a cute way, they have insulted other union members--garbage men.*

*My husband is a garbage man for the City of Chicago and a Union Member. I know it is not a glamorous job. I know that some people feel it is demeaning like the author of this poem. My husband works very hard through all kinds of weather and deals with all kinds of deplorable conditions in the alleys of Chicago. Not everyone would be able to handle it!! He is a great provider and father. If the author feels that this is not an important job, let them think about the consequences of a garbage man strike!!!! Not a pretty picture!!!!!!*

*I feel insulted! I always felt that our Union was about supporting its members and other Union employees. In my opinion, they should have never printed this poem.*

*Thank you for your time.*

*Susan Niedospial  
Transport Tech Support*

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*Dear Susan,  
Thank you for your point of view, we assure you no disrespect was intended, and are glad to print your letter. We do feel a sense of humor is important in these trying times, but you correctly reminded us that one of the goals of the Union movement is to provide dignity on the job regardless of the nature of the work.*

# UNIT MEETINGS 2006

## MAY

### Unit 1

Thursday, May 11, 7 PM  
IBEW Local 21 Conference Center  
1307 W. Butterfield Rd. Suite 424  
Downers Grove IL  
630 960-4466

### Unit 2

Tuesday, May 9, 7 PM  
Gaelic Park Banquet Hall  
6119 W. 147th St.  
Oak Forest IL  
708 687-9323

### Unit 3

Thursday, May 18, 7 PM  
Holiday Inn Hotel & Suites  
495 Airport Rd.  
Elgin IL  
847 488-9000

### Unit 4

Wednesday, May 10, 7 PM  
American Legion Harwood Post #5  
705 S. Larkin  
Joliet IL  
815 725-4333

### Unit 5

Wednesday, May 17, 7 PM  
Danville Inn  
388 Eastgate Dr.  
Danville IL  
217 446-2400

### Unit 6

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

### Unit 7

Monday, May 15, 7 PM  
IBEW Local # 309  
2000A Mall St. (Rte 157)  
Collinsville IL  
618 345-5112

## JUNE

### Unit 1

Thursday, June 8, 6 PM \*  
IBEW Local #134  
600 W. Washington Blvd.  
Chicago IL  
312 474-4186

### Unit 2

Tuesday, June 13, 7 PM  
Lansing American Legion  
18255 Grant St.  
Lansing IL  
708 474-5906

### Unit 3

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

### Unit 4

Wednesday, June 14, 7 PM  
Lemont VFW  
15780 New Ave.  
Lemont IL  
630 257-9859

### Unit 5

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

### Unit 6

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

### Unit 7

Monday, June 19, 7 PM  
Alton Sports Tap  
3812 College Ave.  
Alton IL  
618 465-2539

## JULY

### Unit 1

Thursday, July 13, 7 PM  
IBEW Local #21 Conference Center  
1307 W. Butterfield Rd. Suite 424  
Downers Grove IL  
630 960-4466

### Unit 2

Tuesday July 11, 7 PM  
Slovak Club  
6920 Broadway  
Merrillville IN  
219 756-5101

### Unit 3

Thursday, July 20, 7 PM  
Gurnee American Legion  
749 Milwaukee Ave.  
Gurnee IL  
847 244-9282

### Unit 4

Wednesday, July 12, 7 PM  
IBEW Local #145  
1700 52nd Ave. Suite A  
Moline IL  
309 736-4239

### Unit 5

Wednesday, July 19, 7 PM  
IBEW Local #146  
3390 N. Woodford St.  
Decatur IL  
217 877-4604

### Unit 6

Tuesday, July 18, 5:30 PM  
IBEW Local # 193  
3150 Wide Track Dr.  
Springfield IL  
217 544-3479

### Unit 7

Monday, July 17, 7 PM  
American Legion Post #141  
916 Main St.  
Mt Vernon IL  
618 242-4561

Information on attending your closest Local 21 Union meeting can be obtained by contacting the Union office at 630-960-4466 or ask your Steward.

\*note time change

**IBEW LOCAL 21**

1307 W. Butterfield Rd.  
Suite 422  
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