



COAST TO COAST UPDATE
AU COURANT D'UN OcéAN À L'AUTRE
 INTERNATIONAL BROTHERHOOD OF ELECTRICAL WORKERS
 FRATERNITÉ INTERNATIONALE DES OUVRIERS EN ÉLECTRICITÉ



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Greetings:

As predicted, the question of temporary foreign workers is heating up with the Merit Shop Contractors non-union sector salivating with the thought of a plethora of low wage offshore construction workers at their fingertips. I think all workers in Canada should be anxious and concerned with the way our governments at every level are handling the situation and playing footsy with employers with only one thing in mind; **LOW WAGES**. The decline of wages and benefits in one sector will surely cause a slide of hard fought gains made over the years by unions in all industries.

In an article in the Globe and Mail recently a spokesperson for the Merit Contractors Association blamed the ratio of Journeypersons to Apprentices as causing “an artificial labour shortage”. It won’t be enough that these people convince governments of the need of temporary foreign workers but they will use the opportunity to pick away at our training and job safety.

On March 2, 2005 the Vancouver Sun Newspaper ran a story titled “Contractors hiring globally” asserting that a shortage of skilled trades in Canada is forcing contractors in British Columbia to look overseas for workers.

The article quotes B.C. Construction Association President Manley McLachlan as saying that B.C. companies will participate in an international career fair in Great Britain later this month, with an eye to scooping up European carpenters, electricians and plumbers. Also quoted is B.C. Industry and Training Authority CEO, Brian Clewes, indicating that BC companies are being forced to look abroad for workers

in order to keep pace.

The article goes on to quote another source as indicating that the British Columbia and Federal Government have an agreement to speed immigration applications for workers in designated sectors, such as construction.

Let’s be clear that we are not against immigration – everyone knows that immigrants have made a huge contribution to the building of our Country. What we are opposed to is the use of temporary, low wage foreign workers being taken advantage of for the benefit of a few. We all know that there are many construction workers unemployed across the country. The Canadian Building Trades estimate that 20 – 25% of trades people in Canada are unemployed at any given time.

We need to educate our politicians and they should know that mobile construction workers need assistance either through EI, tax relief or both when travelling to jobs outside of their community and paying for room and board while away from home.

It has never been more important that we lobby government for these changes. If you haven’t registered for the Legislative Conference scheduled for Ottawa, May 30 and 31, please make it a priority to clear your calendar to attend. These issues are on the agenda and your support is required.

Phil Flemming
 International Vice President

Organizing

In Churchill Falls, Newfoundland and Labrador,

negotiations have just been completed for a new group that was organized into IBEW Local 2351. Certification was won at the labour board for this group of Maintenance Planners, IT Technicians and Cleaners last December.

Meanwhile in St. John's, Local 1620 made application for a group of maintenance people with Fortis at buildings in St. John's. The ballot box was sealed initially while the local and the employer sorted out new hires and employee reclassification, but the local won the vote for certification and now has 10 new members. Negotiations will take place for this new group. This organizing success with Fortis may be a breakthrough for organizing other Fortis workers in various parts of the country.

Other good news for Local 1620 is that they have received voluntary recognition of 11 district representatives at NL Power who were out of their scope and are now members. The local is in the process of negotiating their inclusion into the collective agreement.

Another Merit Shop is Organized by the IBEW

For the second time in ten months, a Merit Electrical Contractor has been convinced that being signatory to the IBEW makes good business sense.

The story began two and a half years ago when Local 625's Market Recovery Program succeeded in taking a large commercial job away from the Electrical Division of Germain Mechanical and Electrical. Every large commercial and institutional job awarded in the tri-county area has gone Union since that time. With full employment in the area and workers coming in from all over the Province to help fill the jobs, the workforce at Germain began to leave to join the IBEW or find work with other non-union shops.

In August of 2004 Germain won a bid for a large department store in Bridgewater. With only a skeleton crew and a low budget, it became diffi-

cult to get workers to take a job two and a half hours removed from their home location. They began to hire 625 members from the area and nearby Halifax. Nearly all the non-members hired signed cards or were already applicants who were directed to apply for employment by the Local's Organizer. By the time the job peaked, the Union had a strong majority and applied for certification on November 9, 2004.

As is the usual practice, the Company included names of office workers and previous employees in its response to the Labour Board request for a list of all bargaining unit employees. A Certification was not granted and a vote was called for on December 9, 2004. The vote was held and the Union requested the ballot box remain sealed while the true bargaining unit was determined.

Three days in January were set aside for hearings and the Union submitted its arguments for excluding those not employed on the date of certification, not working in the Electrical trade or not legally working in the Electrical trade.

With overwhelming evidence, the Union appeared at the hearing, but the Construction Industry Panel did not convene because the Contractor requested a meeting with the Business Manager Cordell Cole and Organizer Tom Griffiths. With lawyers in attendance they began to inquire about negotiating a settlement. An outline regarding an amicable transition was agreed to and the contractor consented to an Order of Certification from the Labour Board. A friendly and cooperative relationship has now developed and the contractor and local are working together to grow the company and secure work for the now larger union workforce in Southwestern Nova Scotia.

Those members and applicants who contributed to this successful campaign deserve thanks and congratulations for a job well done. Also, those previous Organizers who laid the groundwork,

planted the seeds, and kept notes many years ago deserve credit for making this campaign a successful one.

Local 2085 Has More Organizing Success

Local Union 2085 Business Manager Ron Stecy and Organizer Russ Shewchuk have taken it upon themselves to organize all the electrical contractors in Manitoba's second biggest city, Brandon, in addition to the Local's organizing program in Winnipeg.

Over the past year the Local Union has successfully added D.C. Electric and Park City Electric to its stable of union electrical contractors in Brandon and Russ reports that Hardy Electric has joined the union contractor ranks as of March of this year. Joined means that the union was granted an automatic certification by the Labour Board as over 65% of the Hardy Electric employees chose IBEW Local Union 2085 to represent them.

The challenge facing Local 2085 now is to organize the last big non-union electrical contractor in Brandon, Jamison Judd. Jamison Judd, a 20 person shop, has been around Brandon for a long time, is well established in the area and will be a tough nut to crack.

Congratulations to the membership of Local 2085, Ron and Russ and good luck in Brandon.

Local 353 signs Tricin Electric

There has been a multi-year, multi-local on-going organizing drive on Tricin Electric in Toronto and surrounding areas. It has just been reported by Local 353 Business Manager Joe Fashion that they signed Tricin on May 4, 2005 and along with that signature comes 110 new IBEW members. Ninety-seven employees voted and the result was ninety-six in favour of the IBEW and one against. Congratulations. This may be a feature article in a future Coast to Coast.

IBEW Yes

The winds of change continue to blow across the

electricity industry in Ontario. In the most recent storm front to hit our organization, Local 636 found themselves engaged in a representation vote as a result of a merger between Hamilton Hydro and St. Catharines Hydro. We are very pleased to report that the employees at Horizon Utilities have supported the IBEW as their "Union of Choice" (in a vote conducted on March 10, 2005 vs. CAW). This campaign was led by Business Representative Domenic Mardaca and owes its successes to the efforts of a dedicated team of volunteers including: John Thornton, Mark Morris, Peter Gould, and Lori Thornton.

The IBEW has had the privilege of representing workers at Hamilton Hydro for many years. We welcome those who may not know us – and renew our partnership with, and commitment to, those that do. The addition of 69 members from St. Catharines brings the total in this bargaining unit to 304. We will do our best every day to earn the trust and confidence of these members. With their ongoing support we are confident that Local 636 continues to serve as the leading voice for municipal electrical workers in the province.

In other news we are happy to welcome the (12) employees with the Orillia Parks & Recreation Department and; the employees from PenWest Utilities(Office) to the IBEW family. We thank them for the confidence that they have shown in choosing our Union as their bargaining agent and; we look forward to building a long and prosperous relationship.

More Successful Negotiations

IBEW Local 435 signed a memorandum with Manitoba Telecom Services Inc. (MTS) on February 2, 2005 covering 960 members of their MTS Unit. On March 10 that memorandum was ratified by an 80% margin. The three-year agreement provides for increases of 3%, 3%, and 3% covers the membership through to January 31, 2008.

In addition to wage increases the local union was successful in negotiating an enhanced Vol-

untary Termination Incentive Program (VTIP) that allows employees age 55 or over to retire early with up to 52 weeks pay. Minor wording changes, in favour of the union, were made to the body of the collective agreement and the negotiating committee is happy to report that they didn't give anything up.

It only took two months to negotiate this agreement, which is a huge change from previous agreements. Congratulations to Brian Murdoch and his negotiating team.

In addition to the 960 members at MTS, Local Union 435 also represents employees at ADT Security Service, Protelec Limited, Servo Electronics and AAA Alarms.

IBEW Local 2067 signed a memorandum of agreement with SaskPower on December 9, 2004 covering 1,350 members of their SaskPower Unit. In January that memorandum was ratified by a 67% margin. The three year agreement, runs until January 1, 2007 and provides for government mandated increases of 0%, 0% and 0% with a 1 ½% increase in benefits in the last two years. On January 1, 2007 a COLA clause kicks in for the period November 1, 2005 to October 31, 2006 providing cost of living wage increases.

Tied into bargaining was a Job Classification Review (JCR) which ended up providing a 5.17% increase in base payroll and was paid out in 2004 and 2005. It took 14 months to negotiate this agreement, largely due to the government mandate of 0% increases. Congratulations to Tim Perry and his negotiating team.

In addition to the 1,350 members at SaskPower, Local Union 2067 also represents employees at Luscar Mine at Coronach and the City of Swift Current.

Western Canada Conference and Western Winter School

From February 23 through 25 IBEW delegates

from across Western Canada participated in yet another successful Western Canada Utility, Telephone and Cable Conference, held in beautiful Victoria, British Columbia.

More than thirty delegates, representing all aspects of the unionized Utility, Telecommunication and Cable Industries convened for three full days of networking on issues ranging from privatization, deregulation and collective bargaining to National Benefit Plans.

Special thanks to WCUT & CC Chairman, John Briegel, along with Secretary-Treasurer, Gerry Larson, for all their hard work and dedication thereby ensuring a well run, effective and invaluable Conference again this year!

Immediately prior to this year's Western Canada Utility, Telephone and Cable Conference the 1st District held it's annual Western Canada Winter School on February 21 and 22, in Victoria, B.C.

1st District International Representative Vair Clendenning lead the facilitation, with assistance from International Representatives Laird Cronk, Christine Pynaker and Luc Couture. The course consisted of a main "Train-the-Trainer" session for all participants, followed by a full day of individual "Instructor Role Playing" to allow attendees the opportunity to practice and hone their own facilitation skills.

This year's program included a Train-the-Trainer course specific to the newly introduced IBEW New Member Orientation course. Participants received instruction on both the Industrial and Construction versions of New Member Orientation and were provided materials enabling the facilitation of both versions for their Local Union memberships.

Apology to IBEW Local 213

On April 2, 2005 the Vancouver Sun ran an article that read as follows:

In the October 5, 2002 edition of The Vancouver Sun, we published an article in which Phil Hochstein of the Independent Contractors and

Businesses Association unfairly characterized the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers market recovery program as “an unseemly system of kickbacks”. The article also included Mr. Hochstein’s false allegation that the market recovery program represents a substantial tax loss to both the federal and provincial treasuries. The Vancouver Sun is not aware of any factual basis for these allegations. The Sun apologized to IBEW Local 213 and its members for having printed these allegations.

Legislative Conference

In spite of the uncertainty on Parliament Hill these days, the Legislative Conference will proceed as planned on May 29 – May 31, 2005 with a great agenda put together by the organizers. One of the key lobby topics will be foreign workers, so you are encouraged to attend.

JEPP Becomes First Skills Development Sponsor

The Electrical and Utilities Safety Association (E&USA) of Ontario have launched a Skills Development Centre campaign to raise funds for their new Training Centre. Congratulations to the Joint Electrical Promotion Plan (JEPP) for being the founding sponsor with a \$100,000 donation. JEPP is a joint body of the Electrical Contractors Association of Ontario and the IBEW Construction Council of Ontario.

E&USA trains nearly 8,000 participants each year with a training program of over 100 courses. The Skills Development Centre, located in Mississauga, will become E&USA’s permanent site for training.

IBEW’s New Home

Fortunately for those who attended the Construction and Maintenance Conference and International Secretary-Treasurer Jerry O’Connor’s Retirement Dinner, they were also able to attend an open house for the new IBEW Headquarters. There was a ribbon cutting ceremony on the morning of April 21 and then up to the

rooftop for the flag-raising. This was a great honour for IVP Phil Flemming and IEC member Joe Fashion to raise the Canadian Flag on the top of this wonderful new office building.

Strategic Planning Committees

All five Strategic Planning committees are now meeting regularly and making great progress with reports coming into this office. Thank you to all the committee members for investing your time and skills in preparing to report at the Progress Meeting in August.

Training Centre Infrastructure Fund

We are aware of some locals that have submitted their letter of intent to apply for financial assistance through this Training Centre Infrastructure Fund that was announced for Union Training Centres. This is a reminder that the deadline for the funding application is June 17, 2005.

IBEW Local 213 Electrical Apprentice Goes for Gold in Finland

Adam Byron of Vancouver will be representing Canada in the prestigious World Skills 2005 Competition to be held from May 26 to 29 in Helsinki. The competition, held every two years, presents vocational skills specialists from all over the world testing their skills in the fields of technology, industry and services. About 800 competitors from nearly 40 countries will be participating.

Adam began his training early in the British Columbia Institute of Technology secondary school apprenticeship electrical program at Princess Margaret Secondary School where he received his entry level trades training. Adam recently completed his second year of technical training in the electrical trades at BCIT School of Construction and the Environment. He has won regional and provincial skills competitions and placed second in the national Skills Canada competitions.

A knowledge of European wiring standards,

tools and equipment will be necessary for the competition so he has been receiving support from the BCIT faculty and staff, the Electrical Contractors Association of BC, Mott Electric, the Electrical Joint Training Committee and the BC Electrical Association in preparation for the event.

Adam will resume his training at BCIT and continue his apprenticeship at Mott Electric upon his return from the competition in Helsinki.

Progress Meeting Training

The training that will take place on Monday, August 22, 2005 prior to the Progress Meeting in Ottawa will focus on Time Management and Stress Management. Included with this newsletter is a package with all the details regarding this. Participants in this course can include Business Managers, Officers, Assistants, Representatives, Organizers, Trainers and Support Staff, and of course delegates to the Progress Meeting.

Canadian Labour Congress Convention

The CLC Convention is scheduled for the week of June 13 – 17, 2005. There have been some resolutions submitted that support nuclear power plants. There are about 21,000 Canadians directly employed to operate and maintain these plants and many of them are IBEW members. There are thousands of building trades workers employed by contractors at these nuclear plants, and many of these are IBEW members.

For those planning to attend this conference, you are urged to speak in favour of and support these resolutions that resolve to refurbish and maintain Canada's nuclear power plants in a safe manner.

Tsunami Relief Fund

On May 5, 2005 we wrote a letter to the Ca-

nadian Red Cross to inform them that the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers and the IBEW Local Unions listed as follows are proud to forward a cheque for \$27,306.62.

Thank you to the following locals for their contribution that made this donation possible:

105, 213, 230, 258, 319, 424, 435, 529, 568, 625, 636, 773, 804, 894, 993, 1003, 1149, 1432, 1615, 1651, 1687, 1739, 1888, 1928, 2034, 2038, 2085, 2330

Comments

It is with sorrow that we report the death of Garth Ivey on May 5 from lung cancer. Garth was Local 2038's President for years and was currently the Business Manager of the Saskatchewan Building Trades Council. Garth was liked and respected by all who knew him.

Local 303 members must have been proud to see the article titled "Shipshape in Ontario" on the front cover of the March, 2005 IBEW Journal where it described how Local 303 members contribute to such a complex and interesting project as the refurbishment of a Great Lakes Vessel.

The Construction Organizing Video is now complete and orders have been flowing in. Thanks to Andrew Kohl for putting on the finishing touches. To date approximately 12,000 DVDs at \$2.00 each have been ordered, but there are a number of locals that have not placed an order yet. If your local participated in this project, you are featured in some segment of the video, so you should have some DVDs in stock to show the non-union what life is like in the IBEW.

You can order the Organizing DVD by contacting Andrew Kohl at Kohl Productions Inc. by phoning (519)622-4669, fax at (519)622-8772, or email to andrewkohl@gto.net.

Once again, this is to let you know that the First District Office has a supply of IBEW Cookbooks and Barbecue Aprons. Please let your membership know these items are available.