

A PARTNERSHIP FOR PROGRESS

Years of U.S./

Part III Consolidation, Confrontation, Cooperation

1941

IBEW celebrates its 50th anniversary in St. Louis. Canadian national and regional War Labour Boards suspend normal collective bargaining and essentially freeze wages for all employees.

1943

Machinists strike Montréal's Fairchild Aircraft over indexation of wages.

1944

UAW strikes Ford at Windsor, Ont., over interpretation of grievance procedure. Normandy Invasion begins June 6 (D-Day).

1945

World War II ends. UAW strikes Ford at Windsor, Ont., resulting in the Rand Formula, a union-dues checkoff in which union and nonunion workers pay a fair share for representation.

1947

IBEW's National Electrical Benefit Fund becomes effective. Progress meetings for IVP districts established.

When the delegates met at the 24th Convention in Miami in 1950, the AFL and the CIO were separate entities, the IBEW was affiliated with the Trades and Labour Congress of Canada, and a ship couldn't sail from the Atlantic into the Great Lakes. By the end of the decade, all three situations had changed—and the IBEW leadership made a start on mending its shaky relationship with Canadian members. The previous decades of strain drove Canadian members to seek more independence in addressing economic, social and trade issues in their country.

During the 1950s the U.S. and Canadian economies expanded, and IBEW growth almost matched that of the 1940s. Only 8,157 Canadians called themselves IBEW members in 1947, prompting measures to attract Canadians. The union established all-Canadian vice-presidential and IEC districts and greater autonomy for locals. The postwar industrial boom also helped organizing. By 1954 the international had 18 organizers assigned throughout Canada and membership had grown to 24,000 in 172 local unions.

"Houses of Labour" Unite

In 1952 new leadership took over both the AFL and the CIO. Secretary-Treasurer George Meany became president of the AFL, and United Auto Workers President Walter Reuther became president of the CIO. Advocating a united front for organized labour, they agreed in 1954 to stop raiding each other. And, in 1955, the AFL and the CIO merged completely as the AFL-CIO. IBEW International President Dan Tracy

served on the committee that investigated the feasibility of the merger. His committee's report said that merging the AFL and the CIO would "contribute to the strength and effectiveness of the trade union movement and to the economic well-being of working men and women throughout the land." Shortly after his work on the Joint AFL-CIO Unity Committee ended, President Tracy resigned from the IBEW.

To succeed Brother Tracy as International President in 1954, the IEC chose Canadian-born International Secretary J. Scott Milne. Brother Milne, a Vancouver, British Columbia, native, not only served as International President, he was the first President to previously serve as International Representative, Vice President and Secretary. (See sidebar.) Although President Milne died within two years after becoming President, he was well-respected by U.S. and Canadian members. Upon his death, Bill Farquhar, press secretary of Local 353, Toronto, wrote to the *Journal*: "In Canada, to most of us, Scott Milne was the

Canada IBEW Unionism



The IBEW Exhibit Booth at the Canadian National Exhibition in 1959.

(Photo provided by Local 1603, Toronto.)

IBEW. ...Contact between Canadian local union officers and International Officers was rather remote, and ... [other than a] visit by the International Vice President, attendance at a local union meeting by [a] top-ranking officer was an unheard-of event. Scott Milne changed all that ... by personal visits with local union officers, and by taking a genuine interest in affairs of the Brotherhood at the local union level. He made us feel that our problems were shared by him." And from Charles E. Anderson of Local 804, Kitchener, Ontario: "We, here in Canada, were proud and honored to have a native of this country become President of our Brotherhood. ...We are deeply indebted to him for our progress in this country...."

In April 1956 two Canadian counterparts of the AFL and CIO—the Trades and Labour Congress of Canada and the Canadian Congress of Labour—merged their forces to become the Canadian Labour Congress. Representatives from several IBEW Canadian local unions were among the more than 1,600 delegates at the first convention of the CLC, one of the largest conventions held in Canada at that time. Gordon M. Freeman, who succeeded Scott Milne as IBEW International President, said of the merger, "We are proud to salute our friends across the border on this decisive step. We are pleased at the part played by our

own Canadian members of the IBEW in the action." The new labour body set a precedent in the history of the North American labour movement by electing the first woman to the high-level post of vice president: Huguette Plamondon of Montréal.

Autonomy ...or Separation?

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, many Canadians called for additional measures to ensure their autonomy from their U.S. Brothers and Sisters. In western Canada, members sought a vice-presidential district for their expanding region; eastern Canadians wanted a separate Canadian convention and an executive committee to rule on Canadian matters.

The international assigned more organizers to Canada, but was unwilling to appoint a second vice president for Canada until the district's membership increased significantly. And the international was firmly opposed to a separate Canadian convention. The leadership, which viewed such a move as divisive and reminiscent of the Reid-Murphy split, declared in 1954, "If we are to continue our forward march, we cannot have competing district committees. ...This proved disastrous to our Brotherhood and caused the secession movement in the years 1908 to 1913."

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1949

NATO established for mutual defense of U.S., Canada and 10 other nations.

1950

Changing the Convention from every two years to every four submitted to referendum vote, which affirms change in 1952. Korean War begins. U.S. sends military advisors to Vietnam.

1953

Korean War ends.

1954

IBEW Convention in Chicago is largest labour union convention ever held.

1955

AFL and CIO merge to form the AFL-CIO.

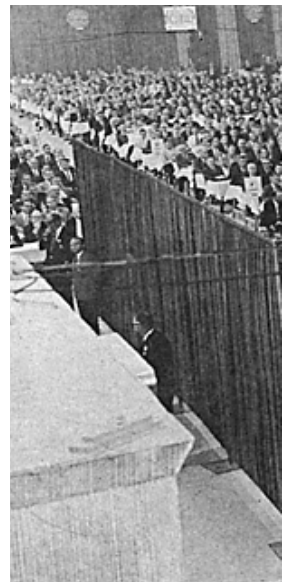
1956

CLC formed by merger of the TLCC and the CCL. First transatlantic telephone cable connected.

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A PARTNERSHIP FOR PROGRESS

Years



1959

St. Lawrence Seaway opens.

1961

Diplomatic relations between Cuba and U.S. severed after Fidel Castro assumes power.

1962

Rand Corp. and IBM develop robotics, which changes forever production processes in many manufacturing facilities.

1963

U.S. Supreme Court ruling supports authority of IBEW Constitution. The National Union of Public Service Employees merges with the National Union of Public Employees to form the Canadian Union of Public Employees.

1964

International Typographical Union strikes Toronto newspapers over automation of typesetting, a strike the union didn't formally end until 1972.

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Many members resented this interpretation of their sovereignty concerns. They sought a nationwide forum through which they could deal with Canadian federal, provincial or municipal issues. One Canadian delegate to the 1970 Convention cited the remoteness of decision-making as one reason for the popularity of national unions like the Canadian Electrical Workers: "The [IBEW] progress meeting [is] split up into three, an eastern, a central, and a western progress meeting. But nowhere do the rank-and-file members [as one group] have the opportunity to develop and debate ... the problems within Canada," he said.

The few changes implemented during this period did not mitigate some of the economic problems confronting Canadian members. For example, the 1966 Convention approved an increase in IBEW pension premiums. The measure was intended to safeguard the solvency of the pension fund; but it also raised the cost of membership for construction members, who were compelled to participate. Canadian construction members called that unfair because they were losing members to low-dues unions; they could not deduct the contributions from their income taxes, as Americans could; and they already contributed to a more generous national pension system. Thousands of Québec IBEW members left the union over the pension issue, and many feared the rest of the district would also leave.

Cooperation Within The Union's System

The loss of so many members was serious, but First District International Vice President Ken Rose (1973-1987) believed that political radicals were using the pension issue to gener-

ate dissent for their own purposes. In a speech to the 1974 Convention, Brother Rose stated emphatically, "There are many international unions that ... are not as democratic as the IBEW when it comes to the United States and Canada. [Their members] don't have the voice. ...When a delegate to this Convention gets up at the CLC—and I can only assume [the member] doesn't read the Constitution—because [the member] said we don't have the right to elect our Vice President ... to elect our own officers. ...Yet any member that has been in Canada ... knows that Canadians do have that right, and we enforce that right."

Vice President Rose was proud of his Canadian heritage, but he was an international trade unionist first. When the CLC insisted Canadian sovereignty took precedence over an international union's constitutional law, Rose protested and withheld the IBEW's dues for a few months. But Rose also worked throughout the 1970s to establish relationships with other unions in Canada. He helped establish coordinated bargaining relations with, among other unions, the Machinists, the IUE, and the UE. He helped organize the Canadian arm of the AFL-CIO's Building and Construction Trades Department, chaired its executive board and helped organize its all-Canadian convention, which first met in 1978.

Vice President Rose did not neglect his membership's continuing demand for increased representation. He established the biennial all-Canadian progress meeting in 1975, which allows rank-and-file leaders to meet as a group every other year to discuss Canadian issues and problems. Although this measure didn't keep everyone happy, it significantly reduced the bitterness and dissension expressed by Canadian delegates during previous IBEW Conventions.



Above, a view of the dais and some of the delegates to the 27th IBEW Convention in Montréal, Québec, in 1962.



Left, the June 1958 "International Night" hosted by Locals 1788 and 910. From left: John Raymond, First District Vice President; Ken Day, vice president, Local 910; Walter Maxim, business manager, Local 910; Lorne Clark, chief steward, Local 1788; Borden Cochrane, International Representative; and Max Mueller, Local 1788 member.

Joint Projects Promote Cooperation

Although the U.S.-Canadian relationship was somewhat contentious on policy questions, relationships between rank-and-file U.S. and Canadian members often exemplified a spirit of international union cooperation and camaraderie. Over the years members have worked on numerous joint U.S.-Canada construction projects. One project, known worldwide, marked its 40th anniversary in 1999: the St. Lawrence Seaway. Opened in 1959, the seaway connects the Atlantic Ocean to the Great Lakes and serves the region as a key hydropower source. Construction required coordination among four major agencies of both countries and a number of consultants, contractors and subcontractors. IBEW local unions from both countries supplied electrical workers for the project, including Local 1788, Toronto, and Local 910, Watertown, New York. These two locals conducted many joint social events, including an "International Night" dinner and dance for their members, reflecting the cordial relationship developed while working on the seaway.

A TRULY INTERNATIONAL OFFICER

J. Scott Milne

J. Scott Milne was born in Vancouver, British Columbia, of Scottish parents. He served in the Canadian Army during World War I. Upon discharge from the service, he moved to the United States and eventually was initiated into Local 125, Portland, Oregon.

Brother Milne served his local in many capacities, including as business manager and financial secretary. Once, when the local faced financial difficulties, he sold his Liberty Bonds to help keep the organization going. In October 1929, he was appointed an International Representative and proceeded to organize in Oregon, Washington, California and western Canada. In May 1936, he was appointed Vice President of the Ninth District. Eleven years later President Dan Tracy appointed him International Secretary of the IBEW, and he was elected unanimously to that office at the 1950 IBEW Convention.

In April 1954 Brother Milne was appointed International President to serve the remainder of President Dan Tracy's term. A few months later, he was elected President by the delegates to the 1954 IBEW Convention. J. Scott Milne, a native Canadian, thus became the first International President of the IBEW to have also held the positions of International Representative, Vice President and International Secretary.



J. Scott Milne