

Canadian comment



Fall 2005



INTERNATIONAL
BROTHERHOOD
OF ELECTRICAL WORKERS
FIRST DISTRICT

PHIL FLEMMING
International Vice President

EDWIN D. HILL
International President

JON WALTERS
International
Secretary-Treasurer

JOE FASHION
International Executive
Council Member
8th District

IBEW Opens New I.O.

The heart and soul of the IBEW is found in union halls and worksites throughout North America, but the symbolic home of the Brotherhood is the International Office. We are pleased that our new building is a fitting symbol of a union proud of its traditions and committed to a progressive future," said IBEW International President Edwin D. Hill as the union took possession of its new headquarters in January.

The new building is at 900 Seventh Street, N.W., in the heart of the emerging area in Washington, D.C.'s East End, a vibrant and bustling center of business and entertainment.

"We believe that this move is in the best financial interests of the Brotherhood and will help us grow and serve our members in the decades to come," adds President Hill.



The 11-story, 350,000-square-foot building is a contemporary design in glass and stainless steel, on the technological cutting edge, full of modern features and conveniences. It will be among the first buildings in Washington, D.C. to use solar panels to help power electricity. And everything in the building, from the workers who constructed it down to the manufacturer of the light fixtures, was 100 percent union.

Aside from providing jobs for IBEW members, the project created investment income and contributions to the NEBF, a multiemployer pension fund jointly administered by the IBEW and the National Electrical Contractors Association.

The IBEW closed on the new building in June, purchasing it for \$115.5 million. The IBEW will only use about half the square footage it occupied in the old I.O., about 100,000 square feet. The remainder of the space will be leased to tenants at market rates, netting an expected

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editorial



Phil Flemming
International
Vice President

Effective Unionism

Unions were created as craft guilds to provide training and ensure quality of workmanship. During the industrial revolution the relationship between workers and employers changed as social issues had an effect on work and workers' lives. As workers fought to gain recognition governments introduced legislation to deal with worker unrest. Legislation weakened worker and union rights and began the separation of the involvement of individual union members and created a reliance on union administrators to work out solutions to workplace issues and, generally speaking, union members have long ago given up their responsibility to uphold the ideal of unionism.

Apathy and animosity within any organization decrease its ability to perform and this is no different in the union movement. The fact is that our membership is the foundation of the IBEW. Without membership participation and support, the IBEW as an organization will not function.

An effective local union membership assists local union leaders to solve problems; is involved in the decision making at every level of the local union; understands the connection between collective action and collective strength

and takes personal responsibility to ensure the union's success. As a result, the organization is improved through participation, and members perceive their union as a vibrant, effective vehicle to address employee needs, and become active in their union at a much higher degree.

Later in this edition, you will note that Statistics Canada shows that Union density has decreased. We need active and positive participation from our members if we expect to grow, and it is our members who are the vehicle for change.

If unions are to remain a viable entity for workplace change, we must get back to basics.

Change only comes through a commitment for change.

“Progress is impossible without change; and those who cannot change their minds cannot change anything”

George Bernard Shaw

Yours in solidarity,

International Vice President

International Federation of Transportation Workers Association

The IFTWA is a labour body whose objectives are to represent unionized members working in the various areas of the transportation industry. At the urging of Local Union 2228 Paul Morse and System Council 11 General Chairman Kevin Kearns, International Vice President Flemming supported the affiliation of the IBEW First District with this organization to support the interests of IBEW members working in the transportation industries. This will allow our Canadian IBEW members to now have an international voice in the international arena of their industry.

Legislative Conference

The Legislative Conference of the Canadian Building Trades was held in Ottawa May 30th and 31st. The conference presents an opportunity for all affiliates to meet face to face with Federal MP's and lobby on issues challenging our members in the workplace. Thanks to the IBEW local unions and 1st District Staff who actively participated, our MP's are unmistakably aware of the two issues we went to the Hill with, temporary foreign workers and mobility assistance for construction workers.

Certainly the opportunity to present our views on a one on one basis to our elected representatives in Ottawa is very powerful and we must continue to influence politicians at every level of government and support your local union in this process.

Pictured below are IBEW Canadian Vice President Phil Flemming (centre) and Ted Crockett (right), from the Operating Engineers, prior to their meeting with Federal MP Shawn Murphy (left) from Charlottetown, PEI.



Shawn Murphy, Phil Flemming, Ted Crockett

O'Connor Retires As International Secretary-Treasurer

Jeremiah J. O'Connor, International Secretary-Treasurer of the IBEW since 2001, announced his decision to retire from the Brotherhood's second highest elected office effective March 1, 2005.

Hundreds of IBEW leaders, members and supporters joined Brother O'Connor and his family at a retirement dinner in Washington, D.C. on April 20.

Jon F. Walters, International Vice President of the Eighth District, was appointed by International President Edwin D. Hill to complete the remainder of Secretary O'Connor's term, and the appointment was ratified by the International Executive Council on February 2, 2005.

On September 10, 2001, O'Connor was elected Secretary-Treasurer at the IBEW's 36th International Convention, held in San Francisco, California. At that San Francisco convention, Brother O'Connor's admirable leadership qualities were on display as he, President Hill and fellow International Officers guided convention proceedings forward in the wake of the September 11 terrorist attacks.

Notably, the 36th Convention was the first in the history of the IBEW to elect an International Secretary-Treasurer. The offices of International Treasurer and International Secretary were combined in 1998 in accord with a membership referendum to alter the IBEW Constitution.

Jerry O'Connor consistently has championed the union cause of justice for working people throughout a distinguished IBEW career. He is admired for his steady, down-to-earth leadership style. Over the years he has inspired countless IBEW members to carry forward the proud IBEW tradition in the fight for justice. Known for his bright sense of humor and ready smile, there's nothing Jerry wouldn't do to help out a union brother or sister.

At the First District Progress meeting in 2002, O'Connor told the delegates: "We must take up the mantle of responsibility for, and action on behalf of our brothers and sisters. We must carry on the proud traditions of the IBEW. And we must use every opportunity to continue down the road to progress and justice. It's a road that never ends Brothers and Sisters, but oh what a ride it is."

Announcing O'Connor's retirement to the I.O. staff, International President Edwin D. Hill noted: "Jerry and I have been working partners for over four years, and my sadness is that I will miss him and my happiness is knowing that he will now be able to kick back and enjoy life."

The Vision of Excellence - Strategic Planning Update

At the All Canada Progress Meeting held in Calgary last year, the attending delegates developed 5 strategic goals to strengthen the IBEW in Canada. This strategic plan was created out of the Vision of Excellence program and is currently being developed concentrating specifically in the areas of: Organizing; Skills Training; Local Union Officer Training; a National Fund and a Political Action and Media Strategy. Local union officers and representatives have been working very hard to put these strategies into a working plan and they presented their results at the All Canada Progress Meeting in August. More information will be provided in our next issue.

IBEW FR Clothing Program Information and FR Apparel to Fit the Risk

IBEW members should recognize the name DuPont™ NOMEX® as synonymous with flame resistant apparel that offers superior thermal protection. Together DuPont Canada and the IBEW have produced a booklet called "Protective Clothing for Electrical Workers" about electric arc blast hazards and how proper FR apparel can help minimize burn injury.

Electric arc hazards are different from electric shock hazards. Even at voltages under 600 volts, electric arc blasts can ignite or melt everyday clothing. The booklet details the variety of electrical occupations at risk for electric arc blast hazards, the hazard ratings of FR apparel and the benefits of FR garments. In view of the supreme importance of safe working conditions, the IBEW is making the brochure available to all electrical workers – unionized and others – who request it.

The collective strength of the IBEW and the union movement goes beyond education, and is also benefiting electrical workers' safety by ensuring a certified source of FR apparel at reasonable rates.

MWG Apparel Corp., (unionized under UNITE Local 459 since 1947), is a leading manufacturer of FR apparel based in Winnipeg. MWG is making small orders of FR apparel for personal use available to IBEW members at the same rates charged to such large volume customers. MWG is ISO 9001:2000 certified and meets, maintains and surpasses the quality standards of regulatory bodies. Contact information for MWG is info@mwgapparel.com or Tel: 204-774-2561.

Visit the IBEW website at www.ibew1st.org for further information.



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Phil Flemming, IBEW International Vice President

The union movement in transition

Union ranks rose from 2.8 million in 1977 to just over 4 million in 2003. However, this 43% growth did not keep pace with employment increases, resulting in a unionization rate (or density) that changed little.

The biggest and most profound transformation in union membership in recent decades lies in the mix of men and women. From a mere 12% in 1977, the share of women rose steadily to nearly half (48%) in 2003.

Union membership declined in the goods sector and increased in the service sector. In terms of density, the gap between the goods sector and the service sector in 1987 (40% versus 31%) had almost disappeared by 2003 (31% versus 30%).

Union density increased in the already heavily unionized public sector (2.3 percentage points), but fell slightly in the private sector. By industry, the biggest gains occurred in public administration and construction.

Union density rose in smaller workplaces, and among part-time workers, non-permanent employees, and persons with short job tenure. The rate fell in larger workplaces, and among full-time workers, persons in permanent jobs, and those with tenure longer than five years.

Source:

Statistics Canada – Perspectives on Labour and Income – August 2005, Vol. 5, No. 8

Tsunami Relief

At the urging of many local unions, the First District office asked all of our Canadian locals to participate in raising money for the victims and families of the tsunami that hit Indonesia and Asia late last year. On May 5, 2005, Vice President Flemming was able to present a check to the Red Cross in the amount of \$27,306.62 on behalf of those locals that donated. Thank you to all those who helped make this possible.



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shipped after final payment has
been made.

Allow 6 to 8 weeks for delivery.

National Benefit Plan

Two years ago, the delegates attending the Western Utility Cable and Telephone Conference came up with a suggestion to assist in organizing smaller companies and contractors in the outside sector. After working out some details at their subsequent annual meetings, it was decided that a national benefit plan should be created that could be used to establish a benefit plan for any number of small groups of workers using their collective size to attain better costs for group benefits. This committee, chaired by Vice President Flemming has now completed the formal portion of the program and is expected to hear back from the participating locals prior to its launch. Watch for more news on this wonderful initiative.

The Electrician's Self Assessment Tool

This CD is a tool developed by an IBEW electrician who now works with Canadian Standards Association and allows apprentices to assess their ability to pass the Interprovincial Certificate of Qualification or Red Seal exam. ESAT is comprised of 1000 sample questions in a similar format to the government exam, covering each block, task and sub-task in the Occupational Analysis for the Construction Electrician. The tests can be run in any one of 6 sections or can emulate the final exam complete with a 3-hour timer. Each test or final exam has different questions randomly selected from a bank of over 1000 questions.

If a wrong answer is given, a report is provided, showing you the right solution, highlighting any relevant code requirement and giving you directions to other learning resources to help you get it right the next time. It will also give you a report summary, providing feedback on your test and your percentage of correct answers.

The IBEW First District office is endorsing this along with the Canadian Electrical Contractors Association and can be found at www.shopcsa.ca or call 1-800-463-6727.

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\$5 million a year in rental income. At the same time, the IBEW sold 1125 15th Street for \$64 million. All figures are in U.S. dollars.

After more than 30 years, the building at 1125 15th Street, NW was showing its age. Elevators and heating and cooling systems were in dire need of replacement and structural shifting of the building had to be addressed. The building's design had outlasted its useful function and was in need of an update. Estimated costs to repair, replace, remodel and upgrade 1125 15th Street were in the vicinity of \$60 million.

The new building is already attracting tenants, who are paying nearly \$50 per square foot, in contrast to the mid-\$30 paid in the neighborhood of the old international office.

Energy management at 900 Seventh Street is light years ahead of the systems used at the old I.O. Sensors automatically divert heating or cooling or lighting resources from unoccupied rooms and smart

computers allow engineers to control the system from off site. Because of the energy efficiencies, the IBEW anticipates significant cost savings.

A new IBEW archives will emphasize the living history of the IBEW. Located on the meeting level – one floor below ground level – the archives will not be the unchanging, museum-like archives of the past but instead will be interactive and dynamic, adjusting and adapting to changing times, like the IBEW itself.

The new building was officially dedicated on April 22, 2005, followed by an open house. As they did at 15th Street, the flags of Canada, the United States and the IBEW fly on the roof of the new building. As part of the dedication ceremony, First District International Vice President Phil Flemming and 8th District IEC Member Joseph Fashion raised the Maple Leaf over the IBEW's headquarters.

President Edwin D. Hill invites all members who visit the Washington, D.C. area to stop by and tour the new headquarters.



IBEW - Canada announces a Special Purchase of training CDs for Windows and Office XP

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