



IBEW LOCAL 21 FRONTLINE



Volume 8, Number 1 • February 2005

President/Business Manager's Report

Competition at the Speed of Light

By Ronald Kastner



Competition! We hear about it all the time. Competition has driven the phone company ever since the break up of the monopoly in 1984. But, right

now SBC seems unable to deal with this concept of competition. I have never in my entire career as a Union representative witnessed this kind of uncertainty at SBC or any other company represented by Local 21.

Project Lightspeed is SBC's current answer to competition. However, the lack of direction on Project Lightspeed, your future and the future of this Union by the way, is just plain scary. Maybe, pardon the pun, the lack of Lightspeed on the company's part upsets me the most. According to the leaders at SBC, Local 21 workers need to get fiber to the customer, and we need to get it there in "Lightspeed."

The plan involves using 3,000 feet of copper from a node or junction point into the homes of existing customers. In new construction, **fiber to the premise** is planned. I have been told that these 3,000 feet of copper wire need to be in PRISTINE condition. To quickly complete this job, recall our 500 plus workers and let's get it done. It seems easy enough to me; SBC just does not see it this way. They feel the project can be done by the existing work force, but management isn't doing ANYTHING at all.

This new work, by the way this, doesn't only benefit outside technicians. Fiber to the customer provides work for everyone in our Local. Our members market it, our clerical members support it, our MA's dispatch it, and it is switched through central offices.

We are ready and willing to help this company remain competitive, but they don't seem too interested in our help.

My frustration with Project Lightspeed brings home what seems to be upsetting our members the most these days... MISMANAGEMENT. Our members have been complaining to the Union about how screwed up this company is, continuously taking it out on Union Representatives. I was just recently reminded that you can't grieve MISMANAGEMENT; you can only take it out on people who will listen. I feel your pain first hand. It appears that all corporations share in this style of MISMANAGEMENT.

This uncertainty, lack of direction, and MISMANAGEMENT has me worried. I have been told that the Chairman of SBC and I have something in common. We both want more Lightspeed faster. I only hope that very soon something will give me a better picture of the future of this company. OUR future depends on it.

The **Telecommunication Rewrite for 2005 in Illinois and HB 1518 and HB 1693 in Indiana** are just starting to heat up as *Frontline* goes to print. Local 21 will study these issues very closely. Regulatory issues in both Illinois and Indiana have a large impact on our jobs now, and will be more important as the competition increases. These political decisions will affect all the telecommunication companies, as well as other Unions in both states. We will need all IBEW Local 21 members to follow our lead on these issues. Don't fail to get involved when asked by the Local Union.

In other areas of the Local, negotiations continue to be very difficult in many of our contracts. **Comcast** negotiations have seen tentative agreements in some areas, but some very tough issues remain. The members continue to show solidarity in that unit on a daily basis. Solidarity is needed more than ever during this long bargaining.

I ask our members there to continue to hang tough.

Bargaining with the **City of Chicago for our Emergency 911 members** has become a problem also. The city continues to pass concessionary proposals to the Local 21 Bargaining team. The coalition of Unions representing the city workers is planning more meetings with city Alderman hoping to gain more support for our cause.

Peoria-Bellwood Nursing Home just ratified their contract after a brutal round of bargaining with the county. Holiday comp-time and scheduling were the biggest issues, but our union solidarity prevailed and consensus was eventually reached.

Additionally, the bargaining team for our **SBC Datacomm** members just completed their efforts. This tentative agreement will be mailed to our members with Home Garaging language in the contract for the first time. After serious discussion, the bargaining team is recommending a YES vote.

Some **Vermillion County members** will be enjoying a settlement to a favorable board charge decision filed by Local 21. The county had refused to abide by negotiated contract raises that were agreed to in bargaining. This back pay will be awarded shortly.

At **Altura** printing delays caused us to mail out locally produced copies of the new contract. Local 21 Altura members work across the US and some areas have cell phone use issues. The Union is addressing those problems.

In conclusion, please remember that our Union works for the members every day of the week, whether you see representatives in your work location or not. Local 21 is committed to representing skilled workers who are able to thrive and produce in the competitive markets of this century.

FRONTLINE

IBEW LOCAL 21

Official Bi-Monthly Publication

International Brotherhood
Of Electrical Workers
Local 21, AFL-CIO/CLC

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

New Year – Same Problems

By Rick Gessler, Vice President / Assistant Business Manager



I&R Scheduling continues to be a problem throughout the Local as SBC ignores our agreed to language in the contract. They tell us Local 21

makes it too difficult for them to schedule for the “needs of the business” in Illinois. We have filed multiple grievances and will continue to pursue them. The company feels there is no longer a need to share the data used to support their position and management can just impose unreasonable scheduling upon us. I hope every member who is involved in this scheduling disaster is able to give the company pain in their own way. SBC seems to think that this is a quick fix to increase productivity and cut overtime. I predict it will do just the opposite.

9:30 a.m. and 12:00 p.m. starts never have been productive shifts and never will be!

The Datacomm Layoff Court case is proceeding. Motions were due February 11th. Responses were due February 25th, and final responses were due on March 4th. The court will then render a decision.

President Kastner and I met with Kirk Bannock, President of SBC Midwest. We are somewhat disappointed with SBC's plan for **the fiber build, as they don't seem to have a plan.** They claim that they must do the project with the existing work force, meaning they have no intention of recalling or hiring permanent

employees. Texas instructed them to be ready to start this build by June. We don't see them getting the resources to do it, and we are concerned they will attempt to contract out more of our work in order to accomplish this task. SBC constantly reminds us that Illinois is the only state where they can't contract out and Local 21 makes it too costly for them to do business.

It was brought to our attention at the January Unit meetings that the company was training defensive driving and telling our members that they could not ride motorcycles or bicycles while on company business, **including callouts.** When we objected and questioned SBC, they informed us that it was brought to Illinois by error and is not intended for IBEW Local 21 members (go figure.) We asked them to make a retraction on this training. As usual they are not moving quickly when it comes to items like this.

If you see a contractor or management **moving boxes, tools, furniture or anything else** between locations please contact your Steward or Chief Steward. This is Local 21 work! The company has surplused some of the members that perform this work while they are secretly contracting it out or having their managers do it.

The holiday scheduling arbitration case will have gone to hearing by the time you read this and we will be waiting on the Arbitrator's decision

We continue to work sporadic surpluses mostly in the downtown Chicago areas with some success.

Come out to one of the seven Unit meetings during the month for more in depth news!

Remember the \$1,500 Success Sharing payout was negotiated in your Union Contract. Now it's a Memorandum called The Midwest Team Performance Award TPA, in Appendix A on page 157.

Old Lessons, New Lessons

By Michael Sacco, Business Representative



My last call on December 23rd was to a bright young brother with a large family. I had to tell him that he lost his job. I

didn't tell him that it was unfair or outrageous or that the Union would go "all the way" to get him back to work. That's a speech I've made many times, but not this time. Why? Because the brother used the company's gas credit card to fill his personal vehicles, \$196.00 worth. He was caught on camera and admitted it. There is no recourse for him. There is nothing we can do to save his job. For \$196.00 (which he paid back) he laid himself off.

These kinds of cases sadden and sicken me. Last year, nineteen members in my area were fired for various reasons. Three returned to work after suspensions, three cases were "outrageous" and our Union will go to arbitration to try and return these members to work. However, thirteen of these cases are lost forever because the member "laid himself off" by stealing, violating the rules, abusing or defrauding the disability system, harassing or mistreating customers and co-workers, or failing to address a substance abuse problem long after they had exhausted all sympathy from bosses or co-workers. Sadly, none of these brothers were strangers to discipline. None of these cases would have a chance of being ruled on favorably by an arbitrator and these brothers are sent out to a cruel and thin economy of low-wage and non-union jobs.

It's time to remind everyone of a few things for the New Year: **1) Surveillance in trucks and offices is pervasive at SBC.** Don't do anything you wouldn't do right in front of your boss. **2) Company property is just that. It's not ours, it's for the job.** This includes computers, cell phones and pagers. **3) Security or "Asset Protection" is not your friend!** They may play that, but they are at your work location to collect a scalp. If

you don't understand this, watch any cop show. **4) All members have a right to union representation** (your steward) in a disciplinary meeting with any management of the company-including Asset Protection. Don't think it will "go light" without your steward. When Asset walks into the work location, you're half-fired. **5) Our only real goal at work is to get home safely to our families at the end of the day.** Cutting corners or doing work unsafely without the proper tools, training and people, may make you a favorite of the boss, but it could make you dead or maimed. Demand your rights to a safe work place! If you are in an unsafe position, you have the right to refuse to perform that work under federal law. **6) We get paid to follow the rules.** The company makes the rules. When we do the job we should follow each and every rule to the letter. Yes, the bosses push hard to finish as many jobs as possible, but the goals of the boss and the rules are often in conflict. If you follow the rules, "the paper" supports you. If you follow the boss (as he flouts the rules) he will be nowhere to be found when you get in trouble. Remember my simple dictum, "You've only got two hands and eight hours."

I'm seeing two things lately that really disturb me. The first is a smattering of

people "tattling" on co-workers. Remember that word from your early days in school? Remember your Mom or Dad telling you that no one likes a snitch? Our parents wanted us to learn how to work things out with our peers. They wanted us to get along without being "teacher's pet." Our folks understood that to make it in the big world you needed to be part of the larger group that could support each other all the time. If you have a problem with a co-worker, but need a mediator ask your steward, chief or area steward or business rep.

The second disturbing trend is stress-related breakdowns of our sisters and brothers driven by the grinding of the machine of SBC. In some cases, harassment from the boss is a big factor. But I've noticed something when talking to the harassed and the "left alone." People who react to the boss are pushed more and more to produce. The people, who ignore the boss' petty jibes and just do the best they can, get left alone. If this sounds familiar, it is, it's called bullying. My mother always counsels "don't let 'em get a rise out of you." Usually, a bully is someone who has been bullied themselves. The most successful bosses I know support their employees and try to remove roadblocks. They know that to get respect you have to give it. Think about it.



"We found a country where CEO's work for \$5 per hour."

Administrative Changes Affect Members

By Linda Cox, Business Representative & Recording Secretary



Dependent Eligibility

SBC has plans to begin verifying all dependents enrolled in their health and life plans. This applies to all bargained-for

and non-bargained-for active employees and retirees. The process is being done in waves with the SBC Midwest Region beginning in mid-April, ending mid-June and it's called the "amnesty period."

The process involves a series of emails and/or letters outlining what steps you must take to verify that your dependents (spouse, Registered Domestic Partner, children, full-time college student, etc.) meet the eligible dependent requirements set forth by SBC. During this process you must certify, through the intranet, Internet or by calling SBC Connect, each eligible dependent and provide their Social Security Numbers. You will receive a confirmation of the certification. If you fail to complete these steps, your dependent(s) will be dropped from coverage. If you re-enroll the dependent within 31 days, the coverage will be retroactive. If you re-enroll after 31 days, the coverage won't be effective until the first of the following month.

After the amnesty period ends, SBC will conduct an annual random dependent certification audit. You will be required to provide documentation of dependency and eligibility (e.g., birth certificates, tax records, college records.) If a dependent is inappropriately enrolled or you fail to provide evidence of eligibility, coverage will be terminated for the ineligible dependent and disciplinary action, up to termination, could be taken.

We agree the company has the right to verify eligibility. However, we do not agree with the method and have advised them. Watch for your notice, take the proper steps and make sure all dependents are legitimate.

Caremark changes and problems

Caremark incorrectly processed claims when the cost of the prescription is less than

the co-pay. The rule is **if the drug cost is less than the co-pay, the drug cost applies.** If the drug cost is higher, the co-pay applies. Caremark is in the process of correcting the claims paid incorrectly.

They are sending out a notice reminding employees that maintenance (medicine taken over long periods of time) prescriptions for the same drug and the same dosage amount can be filled only twice at a retail pharmacy. The retail rule is an initial fill for up to 30 days plus one refill. Any additional amounts must be sent mail order. This applies to new prescriptions as well as existing prescriptions.

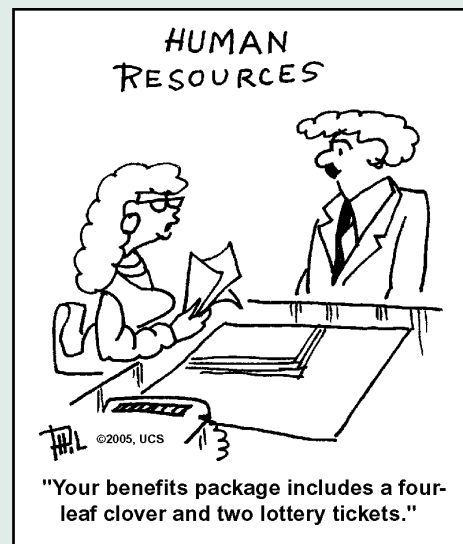
Caremark has established an appeal process for the following conditions:

- 1) A formulary or non-formulary co-pay when a generic exists
- 2) A formulary co-pay when a non-formulary drug has a generic and/or formulary alternative and that non-formulary drug is the only safe and effective treatment

Appeals should be sent to Caremark Inc., Appeals Dept./SBC, MC 109, PO Box 52084, Phoenix, AZ 85072 or faxed to 1.866.689.3092. The appeal process is for active employees and for retiree's who left the company after 4-4-2004. You can file an appeal before or after purchasing a prescription drug.

United Health Care claim error for radiology, pathology and anesthesia

UHC is denying claims for the physician services above when performed in a hospital facility. The claims we identified were connected with ER visits and/or hospitalizations. UHC has admitted an error in their system caused the failure. They insist that all the claims they are aware of have now been paid. However, they have not conducted a scrub of all claims filed, nor has the system error been fixed. If you had a claim denied from October 2004 forward and it falls in this category, be sure to call UHC to have the claim reprocessed and paid. In the mean time, we'll continue our pursuit to have the problem fixed and all claims reprocessed.



Asset and Liability Pension Plan Merger

Effective December 31, 2004, several SBC Pension Plans, including the Ameritech Pension Plan, merged their plan assets and liabilities into one pension plan and trust called the SBC Pension Benefit Plan. The names of the former plans will change and become programs under the SBC Pension Benefit Plan. All provisions and calculations will remain as they were before the merger, which means there are no plan changes.

Pension Vendor change, coming in 2006

Hold on to your hats; here we go again. SBC notified us they are changing pension vendors from Mellon Human Resource Solutions to Fidelity Investments effective 1-1-2006. This date could change as the project progresses. There will be no change to the existing pension plan or its provisions. It will just be a different phone number. Currently, there are no plans to change the administrator of the Savings and Security Plan, which is currently handled by Mellon.

Savings and Security change effective 1-1-05

The bargained for increases that were to be effective 1-1-05 were not programmed until mid January, delaying not only the increase but the company's match as well. After many discussions with SBC, they now realize that effective 1-1-05 means just that. Most of us won't see the increase on our checks until mid to late February. SBC is working on an action plan to allow make-up contributions, with the company match. More information will follow when they share their plan.

SBC Workers' Comp Vendor Chooses Concentra as Medical Provider

By Linda Cox, Business Representative & Recording Secretary

SMAART, the vendor hired by SBC to administer Workers' Compensation, has hired a firm called Concentra to handle all medical treatment related to a Workers' Comp injury or illness. Managers will receive an announcement soon to direct employees to a **Concentra** medical provider. We see this causing numerous problems. Concentra's main focus will be to deny needed treatment or provide less treatment and get the employee back to work as soon as possible. SBC paints a wonderful picture that this is a positive thing for the employee and the company. Approvals for medical care will be quicker. Bills will be paid in a timely manner. Employees will be able to return to work sooner and will feel better being productive, etc. etc. etc.

Don't fall for this! Here are the facts folks! Under the **Illinois** Workers' Comp Act, if you are injured on the job, seek medical treatment at the nearest medical facility. You do not have to go where the company directs you to go. You cannot be disciplined or retaliated against for going to a medical provider of your choice. All necessary medical expenses such as first-aid, emergency room treatment, ambulance service, hospital service, physician fees and prescriptions are covered as well as any appropriate physical, mental or vocational rehabilitation. All medical bills should be sent to SMAART, not to your manager. Do not file any medical bills with your company provided medical plan.

Your responsibilities are to report the injury to your employer right away. The notice of injury must clearly relate your injury or illness to something that happened while performing your job assignment, including the time, place and cause of the injury as well as what body part is affected. **Fill out an accident report even if you don't seek medical treatment right away.** Some injuries worsen so medical treatment is needed at a later time. An accident report documents that the injury occurred. Your manager needs to call SMAART and report the injury if there is loss time from work or

medical treatment is provided.

Get prompt medical attention. **In Illinois**, you have the right to choose your own doctor or hospital. Emergency room treatment or treatment provided by a Concentra provider does not count as your choice of medical providers. (Other states, like **Indiana**, allow the employer to choose where medical care is provided.) Make sure that you describe to the medical provider exactly how you were hurt even if you are not asked. Tell them what your job requirements are, e.g. bending, stooping, sitting, lifting, kneeling, squatting, etc. With this information, the medical provider can properly evaluate when you will be able to return to work and whether there should be any restrictions. Do not tell your medical provider there is no light duty. Let the medical provider tell SMAART what you can and cannot safely do. Let SMAART decide if you can be accommodated with restricted duty or if you should remain off work.

Keep records. Make notes about the injury. Write down the names and addresses of any witnesses. If you are exposed to a toxic substance, try and get a sample, if you can safely do so. If not, try and get a label indicating the name of the substance, with any warnings, and the Material Data Sheet. Make sure your co-

workers and the Union know about the injury or illness.

After initial treatment and during continuing treatment, you may be directed by SMAART to see a physician of their choice. Under state law, you must comply. This is typically referred to as an **Independent Medical Evaluation (IME)**. The employer must pay for this examination and pay, in advance, enough money to cover your travel to and from the examination by the most convenient means. SMAART may assign a rehabilitation nurse to accompany you to your physician appointments. Don't be fooled by their attempt to be your friend. They are there to help SMAART not you and remember they do not have the right to be present during the actual examination or treatment unless authorized by both physician and you.

Lastly, seek legal advice and/ or assistance. SMAART's job is to save SBC money. If they can deny a Workers' Comp claim, they will. Whether your claim is approved or denied, you should always consult with a Workers' Comp attorney to make sure you are receiving everything you are entitled to under the law. Never agree to settle your case without first talking to a competent attorney.



Do you have a News Story?

We need your contributions. It's easy. Email an attachment in Word to both addresses as insurance.

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Complete information about all Union Privilege services is available online at www.unionprivilege.org.

Young Workers: Someday It Will Be Your Pension!!!

By Rosetta Shinn & Larry Moeller, Committee on Political Education



Now is the time to take a stand regarding your pension, because if we don't the Bush plan will cut more than 40 percent in the coming decades for every American senior. Whether you are retiring in the next few years or decades down the road, stand up and let your voice be heard. Social Security



is this nation's most successful family protection program; these proposed benefit cuts are part of Bush's plan to privatize Social Security.

Bush's plan calls for freezing the standard of living for retirees by pegging Social Security benefits to the increase in prices rather than wages. Because wages rise faster than prices, this would cut the amount of Social Security benefits retirees receive. Under this formula, a person retiring at age 65 in 2075 would see a 46 percent smaller benefit than under the current system.

Social Security is the one federal program that knits generations together. You, your children, and your grandchildren will all be hurt by benefit reductions and private accounts. Over two years ago analysts warned Bush's privatization plan would mean large benefit cuts. The Century Foundation and the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities calculated that workers retiring in 2066 would face a 41 percent cut in benefits under Bush's proposal.

Face it, if Bush's plan becomes law, don't count on Social Security benefits to make your golden years carefree. Plan on working longer because the money and benefits will not be there for YOU or YOURS.

Now, on to promises made during the election regarding Education. We all hope our children will do better for themselves than we did. Education is the path to better jobs and better wages and better benefits. During the 2000 election, our so-called "Education President" promised to raise Pell Grants to \$5,100. These are federal grants to students from low and middle income families for college costs. During the 2004 campaign, Bush said, "I will continue to expand Pell Grants to make sure that people have an opportunity to start their career with a college diploma." So have the President and Congress made good on the campaign promise? Again the answer is **NO**. This is the third year in a row

Pell Grants will remain at the same level, **\$4,050**. College tuition has risen 14 percent in 2004. Of the 5.3 million Pell Grant recipients, all but a handful come from families that earn less than \$40,000 annually.

About 84,000 students will lose eligibility for Pell Grants according to the Congressional Advisory Committee on Financial Assistance and the American Council on Education which represents 1,800 colleges and universities. 1.2 million students will see their grants reduced. One study found that a \$1,000 increase in Pell Grants would raise undergraduate retention rates by at least 15 percent. This President and the Republican leaders say that a good education system is the best economic policy. So don't they read these reports? Why do they make it harder for even one young person to go to college? Our congress should do everything it can to make college more affordable. Over half the voters say that investing in education and health care should take priority. **WHY IS NO ONE LISTENING?** Here we go again, the snake oil salesmen in DC are trying to take your money to their bank. They are denying your kids and grandkids an education.

The Truth about Privatizing Social Security

From Working Families e-Activist

You heard a lot of claims about President Bush's blue-print to privatizing Social Security in his State of the Union address. Here's the truth.

Privatizing Social Security will not mean more money for you. Privatization will cut benefits by 30 percent even for workers who don't choose to have private accounts. That adds up to \$152,000 lost by the average worker who lives 20 years beyond retirement. And if you do choose a private account, the government will take back 50 cents for every \$1 in your account – on top of the 30 percent benefit cut.

- Privatizing Social Security is not really voluntary. You'll get the benefit cuts even if you don't want a privatized Social Security account.
- You won't be in charge of your privatized Social Security account. Politicians will hand-pick Wall Street firms to control the investment accounts – paving the way to corruption and Enron-ization of Social Security.
- Retirees can't pass privatized Social Security account money on to your heirs. The accounts will be converted to annual payments.
- We have time to strengthen Social Security the right way – not by slashing benefits. Social Security can pay full benefits until 2042 even with no changes at all. We should strengthen Social Security with common sense approaches – like requiring Congress to pay back money it has borrowed from Social Security or rolling back the most egregious tax breaks for the very wealthy.

He called it "personalizing" Social Security because his pollsters and spin doctors know America's voters oppose privatizing Social Security. No matter what word spin he uses, the reality is this: Privatizing Social Security will cut benefits, add \$2 trillion to the federal deficit in just the first 10 years, push seniors into poverty and replace guaranteed retirement income with "personalized" risk.

Take action to protect Social Security by going online and signing the petition:

<http://www.unionvoice.org/ct/D1qy1wY1rcr/>

Please share these facts with your friends, families and co-workers.

The Future has Arrived...

By Dennis McCafferty, Committee on Political Education



Has anyone been reading the newspapers lately? It was front page news for nearly a week. SBC and its former parent

President of SBC Indiana and SBC representatives from Illinois in preliminary legislative meetings. Our Union will keep you updated on the status of this legislation and alert you to any action we feel is necessary.

New Governor not wasting any time... Well, it didn't take long did it? Less than 48 hours after taking his oath of office, Governor Daniels began his assault on working people in Indiana, by **repealing the collective bargaining rights** of over 25,000 state employees.

Amazingly, he did this by hiding behind the care of the least fortunate children of our state, whose lives are affected by the Department of Family Services. The governor claims that he cannot make the changes necessary to "clean up" this department and many others because of their unions. If there are people on the state payroll who are not doing their jobs, then by all means, deal with those INDIVIDUALS swiftly and directly. But to unilaterally blame ALL the employees and the UNION who represents them for the ineptness of a very small percentage is insidious and moronic.

On the VERY SAME DAY, **"Right to Work" legislation** once again reared its ugly head in the State General Assembly. Governor Daniels, claims that this legislation is not a "priority" but he won't stand in its way. So basically he's saying: You're gonna get screwed, just not by me. If this bill reaches his desk, he will sign it into law in a heartbeat.

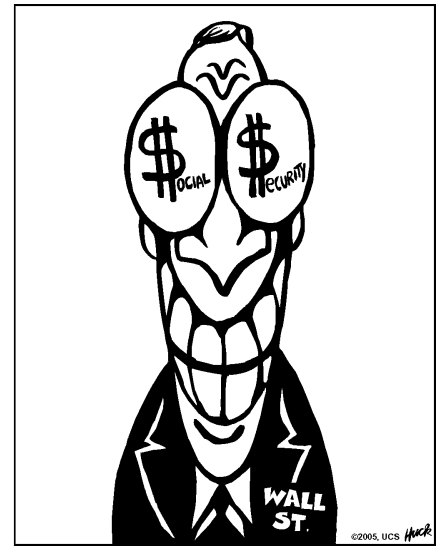
On the National front... President Bush has decided that we should consider scrapping the most successful social program known to man, because he thinks (and so do they) that the Wall Street boys could do a better job making THEMSELVES more money with more of OTHER people's money. Is it a crisis? According to the Department of Labor statistics the **Social Security Trust Fund will remain solvent through at least 2042.** Will "private accounts" solve the problem? On February 16th in New Hampshire Bush acknowledged that the private accounts "don't fix the system." He also says he has not ruled out raising taxes on those who earn more than \$90,000 a year to help bolster Social Security's finances. Weren't those higher

company AT&T are about to merge in a \$16 billion deal. One can't help but ask why we were forced to break up in 1984. The dismantling of "old Ma Bell" did not produce the economic lift it promised in the way of jobs, infrastructure improvement & investment, and real savings to consumers.

Company spokesmen talk about 2006 as an effective date since the FCC needs to approve the merger. In the meantime Local 21 needs to study the issue. A major concern is the almost inevitable lay-off that always occurs because of the duplication of services. Just once I'd like to hear the FCC or the SEC tell these mega-corporations that they will not allow the merger without a no-lay-off agreement. I wonder how many of them would go through with it then?

SBC is competing with the notoriously anti-union, non-regulated, Wal-Mart of the Telecommunications industry, otherwise known as Comcast. Not to be outdone, SBC has sponsored **bills in the Indiana General Assembly**, (HB 1518 and HB 1693) seeking to become as unregulated as their competitors by the summer of 2007. SBC feels they MUST have this legislation in order to compete in the new markets of the future, most notably Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP) and video.

In Illinois, the General Assembly is re-writing the **Illinois Telecom Act**, which expires in July of 2005. Our Union is putting a lot of time and effort into researching the possible effects this legislation will have on our membership. We don't have a problem with helping this company succeed to our mutual benefit, but our support should not be taken for granted. Protecting good-paying Union jobs is our main goal. President Kastner brought that point home very clearly to the



tax limits part of John Kerry's plan?

Here's the real kicker, the cost of privatization will exceed \$2 Trillion in the first ten years alone. (Once again the government's numbers, not mine.) And you will pay for it through the inevitable reduction of benefits, whether you participate or not. They are planning a media campaign to sell Americans on the idea that there is an immediate problem. Money's no object because of the payday they'll receive if they're successful.

I tell you Brothers and Sisters, you gotta love the politics of gloom and doom. Debate an issue on its merits? No. Instead, we have a government run by a small group of individuals who would have you believe that anyone who disagrees with them is intellectually inferior or morally bankrupt.

All working people, not just those in organized labor, should be outraged at the direction we're headed in this country. An injury to one is an injury to all. When are we all going to wake up and see these people for what they really are?

Till next time, good luck and God

Greenspan Urges Caution

In Washington, Greenspan lent a respected economic voice to the political debate, saying Congress would be wise to take a cautious approach to setting up personal accounts. He said increased government borrowing would be needed to cover Social Security obligations to current retirees because a portion of the payroll tax would be diverted to the private accounts.

CSI: Consumer

By Kevin Curran, Business Representative



Uncovering vital evidence while following legal guidelines is a key component of television police drama. Evidence is

also a crucial part of Union work and often leads to success for our members.

In the Total Grace Consumer office, we experienced a major problem with local management over the processing of numerous grievances on discipline for job performance. Management refused to provide the documentation which our Stewards and Chief Steward Deb Maples had demanded. The Union took the position that this action by the company was an attempt to intentionally delay the processing of these grievances. Not only did we escalate these grievances, Local 21 also began the steps necessary to take

appropriate legal action against SBC for this violation.

Finally, management approached us and asked what it would take to settle this issue. At this point, we felt the only fair resolution was for all of these the grievances to be decided in our favor. Through these actions, the Union was able to win all 22 grievances and overturn numerous job performance warnings and suspensions. The members involved were reimbursed for all lost wages. Thanks to the hard work and persistence of our dedicated Stewards: Bethany Shavins, Michelle Lee, Kim Townsend, Joy Watson, Ray Bravo, Rick Sada, and Lamont Payton, and thanks to the Sisters and Brothers at Total Grace for their support and patience.

In the West LACC, a member was suspended pending dismissal for alleged customer mistreatment. After reviewing the documentation we had demanded from SBC, something just didn't add up. There were references to an investigation being

conducted by local management to determine if the allegation against the member in question was true... *But*, there were no results of the investigation. Right before the Union-Management Review Board panel was held, Area Steward Winnie Brown and I confronted the Senior Manager with this obvious discrepancy. After some initial "company-speak" misinformation, it became clear that they didn't actually conduct *any* investigation at all. Since one of the basic requirements for an employer to have just cause for discharge is that they conduct a "**full and fair investigation,**" the Union was able to get the member immediately reinstated without even holding the hearing.

Also in the West LACC, the Union reached agreement on the settlement of two pending arbitration cases as well as an Unfair Labor Practice charge filed against SBC with the National Labor Relations Boards regarding suspensions for attendance and alleged customer mistreatment.

In The Field

By Steve Unterfranz, Business Representative



Productivity, it seems to be the only thing SBC thinks about today. If you can do X amount of work they are

happy, if not then they put you on a performance plan. But just what is true productivity? When a technician does an installation or a repair case, it is the only thing he or she has to do at the time, and **it would seem that it should be done right.** Makes sense. So why does the company expect everyone to do a good

job and also do X amount of jobs? Maybe because they just don't know any better. Every "good" manager out there knows that good quality work leads to good productivity, but they're also pushed to get good numbers, (their pay and even their job depends on it, just ask) and so the cycle of quality and numbers goes on and on.

Lets face it, we need to be in control of the job we are working on at the time and **do the job as though it was our own service.** This goes for all the work we do: construction, I&M, transportation, dispatch, marketing, etc. Each and every job should be done right; the numbers will come on their own. Remember, give the company eight for eight. Be where

you're supposed to be, and do what you're supposed to be do.

On another subject, **CDL licenses.** Every employee who carries a CDL is in a random substance testing pool. The pool is comprised of employees who need their CDL primarily for company business. If your job function does not require that you drive a vehicle requiring a CDL, you do not have to be a part of this pool. You can still maintain the CDL license for your personal needs if desired. Your manager can make a phone call to get your name removed from the list. Call your Chief Steward or Business Rep. with any questions.

Chicago Workers Vent Their Frustration

By Jerry Rankins, Business Representative



City workers are fed up with Chicago's union busting. On December 14th over 3,000 workers stormed the Thompson

Center and marched around City Hall singing labor chants and "enough is enough," the theme of the rally. The demonstrators belong to Unions representing over 30,000 workers: Fraternal Order of Police, Firefighters, Laborers, SEIU, Nurses, Carpenters, Trades, AFSCME, and the 911 members, of IBEW Local 21. They are frustrated and tired of the union busting attacks by City Hall during twenty months at the bargaining table, with little progress. The City has refused to meet with Dennis Gannon, president of the Chicago Federation of Labor. The workers see the city's zeal to privatize their jobs. It's evident that the City of Chicago has turned its back on working families. Since achieving collective bargaining rights under the late great honorable Mayor Harold Washington, workers have never experienced such anti-unionism.

The constant cry of employers blaming budgetary problems on 911 has gotten stale. In 2002 the city found no problem with giving aldermen a 4% annual increase for the next three years. The city is still



Business Rep. Rankins at the Thompson Center rally.



Sister Paula Singleton Aviation Security Officer at O'Hare spoke at the Thompson Center rally.

proposing to do away with all holiday pay and the normal 40-hour work-week. They claim the right to cancel work hours before or during any work shift, the right to implement 3 unpaid furlough days annually, and the complete elimination of overtime after 8 and 10 hours. They want to raise health care premiums and out-of-pocket expenses over 300% while offering pennies for wage increases. We must stand together and show the city we will not go back but forward.

Grievances – working conditions at the OEMC are horrific. Never have there been so many grievances. The violation of the workers' rights under FMLA has prompted Local 21 to ask for a complete audit by the Department of Labor.

Numerous grievances are working their way to Arbitration: violation of 5.2 notification, complaint investigations that are over a year old where the city is issuing discipline, and sick- no pay discipline, to name a few.

In any meeting with management that you believe could result in discipline, request union representation. No member should be eager to give a written statement without consulting with a shop steward. The bottom line—request union representation before advancing to a meeting

with management. This is the safest way. Remember an informed member is a strong member.

COMCAST

Carla Turk CSSR who works at the Park Forest office thanks you for your generous giving of finances, clothes and prayers. Sister Carla's home was totally destroyed by fire leaving her and her spouse and their 3 children homeless. You, the members stepped up big with your giving. Again, brothers and sisters, I thank you for your support.

If we can build on 2004, then 2005 will be the workers at Comcast best year in a long time. 2004 was a good year - 8 workers who were removed due to layoffs and terminations were brought back and made whole in wages and benefits totaling over \$300,000. Since Labor Day the Union and the company have bargained economics at the table. The company refuses to provide pertinent information relative to wages paid throughout the greater Chicago market. This hampers the Union's ability to make intelligent proposals related to wages. Comcast acknowledges that union workers possess same skills and perform equivalent work to the non-represented, but still refuses to offer pay and benefits comparable to the market. The Union refuses to let Comcast off the hook in the payment of back raises to 2002.

Stay tuned, stay strong 2005 is our year. Solidarity.

It's Time to Update Your JOBS Skill-set

By Kurt Schmidt, Business Representative



Well, here we are in a new year, and still dealing with the same old items with SBC.

Attendance enforcement is

changing the craft position you currently occupy.

2) Make sure when you update those skills and qualifications that you **do it before you nominate for the job** requisition. If you nominate for the job, and then update your skills and qualifications, those changes will not be considered for that job opening. They will apply for the next nomination you make.

3) A hint to help get the most points for the job. **Have the job opening faxed to you before you nominate.** They will fax to home or work. The first page of the job opening will list required skills and desired skills. The desired skills are the extra point value items. So, you can see what the job needs to make sure your skills are completely updated and accurate before you nominate yourself for the open position.

4) **Time on assignment** may keep you from being selected for an opening. Each

craft position has a time in title associated with it. As an example, if you are hired as a Service Representative, change jobs to a Service Representative or change Business Units but keep the same title you must serve 18 months before you can move to another position.

5) It is also required that you to have a **satisfactory rating for job performance** to be considered for open positions.

6) **JOBS has a different attendance policy** than some of the offices. You could be satisfactory under your office attendance policy but not satisfactory with the JOBS attendance policy. The opposite may also be true. Here is the current attendance policy for JOBS which would disqualify a candidate from being selected:

- If an employee has incidental absences of more than four occurrences or 4 days in a 12-month period.
- Two disability occurrences in two years, or three occurrences in five years, or if disabilities equal 10% of the employee's scheduled workdays.
- More than six tardies of five minutes or more in the most recent 12 months.

7) If you do not hear from the company after the job is closed you can **call the non-management staffing group for status.**

8) Because of the high number of candidates for every job opening, **you may not be called to test for the job.** If the requisition has three openings and 186 candidates, SBC won't test all 186 candidates. It will start with senior most qualified and if a test is needed for the next candidate you will then be called to take the test.

So please, update your skills and qualification inventories today. You can call into JOBS at 1-888-722-1787 or go through the SBC Intranet.

up, performance enforcement is up, Code of Business Conduct discipline is up, but headcount is down. The one good bit of information is that **there are occasional openings in JOBS**, formerly known as Joblink or the Upgrade Transfer Bureau. Because we have not seen this for the past two years I felt it was a good time to review some key items about JOBS.

1) **Update your skill and qualification inventories with JOBS.** We have all gained additional skills over these past two years and need to be sure we have them listed. You should make this a yearly item on your check-list if you are interested in

Members In The News

In the Oakbrook BCS office Latonia Watson, Melissa Richburg and Steward Tracey Mix-Mays collected \$364 for Red Cross Tsunami Relief in January. It was matched by SBC.

Steward Rick Mobley suggested that *Frontline* provide a feature where the members could send in short news pieces about events in their lives like new babies, weddings, graduations etc. So, the editors are pleased to introduce "Members in the News."

To have your news posted please send a short email to nancy.north@comcast.net with "Frontline Members in the News" as the subject line.

Altura Issues, SBC Issues

By Mike McCormick, Business Representative



On the Altura side of the business, Local 21 received a memo from the National Electrical Benefit Fund

NEBF. This memo was mailed to all NECA Chapters and All IBEW Local Unions, and addresses a change to NEBF Policy on Qualified Relations Orders (QDROs) for Eligible Divorced Participants.

Currently, NEBF accepts and processes "Shared Interest" QDROS for eligible divorced participants to determine benefit eligibility for former spouses. Under this type of QDRO, a former spouse may be awarded the right to share in the benefit payable by NEBF to the participant during his or her lifetime, and may be treated as the surviving spouse of the participant upon the participant's death.

Under the law, a second type of QDRO has been recongnized called a "Separate Interest" QDRO. Under this type of QDRO, a former spouse is awarded a separate interest in the benefit payable by NEBF, which is measured by the alternate payee's own life expectancy.

Effective January 1, 2005, NEBF will accept and process both "Shared Interest" and "Separate Interest" QDROs.

An outstanding issue is the presence of **Local 3 technicians**, who are being brought into our represented areas in Manhattan NY to do work. Altura claims they are here because of their Avaya training. Some technicians contacted me, and we know that the company's explanation is not completely true. I'm still working on this issue with the Human Resource person. If anyone knows about these technicians coming into your area and you haven't told your steward, please contact me with your information. Please include date or dates of incidence, name of the technician who came into your area,

and if you talked to your manager about the issue. What other work, besides Avaya equipment, did that technician work on?

The other issue is the **cellphone**. I found out about this issue at the beginning of February. There are many questions that have to be answered by Altura management. I have received a few answers so far, but the issue is far from being resolved.

Finally, the **contract book** issue. Because of the entire foul up on getting the contracts approved and printed. I have received permission to mail out copies of what I use right now. Hopefully, everyone has received their copy in the mail.

On the **SBC** side of the business we are still dealing with DISMISSALS. I will try to explain a dismissal panel again but I also would appreciate it if **one morning, each steward could stand up in front of the members to talk about the "evidence" the company uses**. We could bring up many examples: excessive cellphone bill, not completely doing a particular job which would be considered **fraud**, not being where you are suppose to be which would be considered **falsification of company records**, a customer complaint, an attendance issue, etc.

Once a particular reason has been brought up, then your managers start to build a case on an individual, to document they are a terrible person. Without fail, the managers will automatically pull up these three things: **GPS** (several months of data to try to spot fouls), **attendance records** (to count days off or tardies), all the **web ad information** that the manager has kept on the technician. Within the dismissal panel the Labor Relations representative will portray the member as an individual who shouldn't be employed by the company. Depending on the case they will read a few generic statements out of the **Code of Conduct** followed by some generic language out of **Tech Expectations**.

We as Union members, need to realize that SBC does not care about us,

or what we have done in the past. It's only concern is reducing headcount, any way that it can.

Grievance concerns. Many members feel that if they tell a steward that they want to grieve something that it is automatically filed. This is not always true. What each member should do is request a **fact finder form** for the grievance. Fill it out. Make a copy, one to keep for yourself and one to turn over to the steward. The steward will inform you if it is a grievable issue. If it is, then within fourteen days, you should know if the steward was able to resolve the issue at his/her level. If not, the grievance will be moved to the Chief Steward. The grievance at this point has a number assigned to it and it is now trackable.

Finally, it must be understood that a steward is responsible for the members that he/she represents at their report location only. A member does not have the right to request a particular steward from another location to represent them. If a member does not feel comfortable with their representation, feel free to call the Chief Steward with the reason.

Hopefully, I've shared some valuable information. Maybe it will stir some conversations at your work locations.

Need Help With Health Care For Your Kids?

The State of Illinois has two programs: KidCare and FamilyCare which cover pregnant women and children through age 18 with a series of subsidies and grants to provide free or discount health care. A family of four making up to about \$40,000 per year could be eligible.

For additional information or to enroll, call 1-866-468-7543. or visit on the web:
www.ilmaternal.org/coveringkidsIL.index.htm

SBC Datacomm Contract

By Michael Sacco, Business Representative

Local 21 opened bargaining with SBC on the CPE business unit January 6th for a **new contract**, replacing the extension we negotiated last year. As usual, the company cried poor. However, they refused to give us financial statements to back up their claim. To add insult to injury they added another whole layer of management into the business unit. They make it hard for us to believe they are hurting for money. On February 6, 2005 the extension came and went. Another 7-day extension was signed. On Tuesday February 8th, the company put their "Last, Best and Final offer" on the table which included unpopular Vehicle Use language. After fierce debate the Union bargaining team agreed to endorse the "Final Offer." Ballots for the contract ratification vote have been mailed to the members, due back March 1st.

In other news, the company is now installing **GPS surveillance equipment** on all Datacomm vehicles. So much for "trust" in the SBC "family." For years Datacomm members have home-garaged, driven to the job largely on their own time, and made a pile of money for the company to boot. Many of the members are angry and resentful, feeling betrayed by a management team who they thought shared the same goals of serving the customer and making money. But, as always at SBC, the dream dies hard.

Our sixteen Datacomm brothers are still **illegally laid-off**. Local 21 has made two trips to Federal Court arguing that SBC promised no layoffs in their "Evolving Technologies" letter to our Union last summer. The judge is giving the company lots of latitude to do their usual foot-dragging. Our next court date is February 22, 2005. Stay abreast of Datacomm by calling the hotline at 630-415-2711 extension box 3, checking our website at www.ibew21.org or sending an e-mail (from a personal e-mail address) to ibew21@sbcglobal.net to get on a Datacomm-only list serve. At press time, a Yahoo discussion group was being organized called "Local21Datacomm." Check it out.

I'll close on a "**Good News-Bad News**" note. The company has consistently denied us information on contractors doing our work since at least 1998. We have grievances on this issue, but still the company lied, claiming they used no



IBEW Steward Bonnie Purkey met Barack Obama at the Grundy County Democrats' "Welcome to the Candidates" night on October 28th at Eagle Cliffs in Morris IL.

Gallatin River Countdown!

Only 15 more pay periods until your current contract EXPIRES!

By Roestta Shinn, Chief Steward

Brothers and sisters, prepare yourselves. The Gallatin River Communications LLC contract expires on September 30, 2005. With the check on March 4th, that leaves only 15 pay periods for you to set aside funds and plan for the worst. Why should you believe this could happen? Why would we walk or fail to get a new agreement? Why would the company impose a "final offer" that your Union bargaining team won't be able to endorse?

Here are just a COUPLE of the many issues that could cause this.

INSURANCE – If you think it's bad NOW, with all the high premiums, co-pays, deductibles and loopholes used to reduce or deny payment of your claims, just wait. Your coverage has eroded every year and your costs have gone up. The company has been grabbing back your raises this way and they

are still not satisfied. We expect this to be a major issue.

LANGUAGE CHANGES – We expect the company to try and bargain out ALL the job protection language we have won in past contracts and to try and insert other clauses that will basically allow them to own you, use you and dispose of you as they see fit. This company desperately wants to run Illinois operations like the rest of their non-union, right-to-work sites. Just observe their actions, not their words.

If you don't have decent wages, decent benefits and insurance, job protection and the right to balance your time between work, play and family then just what DO you have?

In my opinion, you don't have much. Let's hope for the best and prepare for the worst.

contractors, or just withheld the information. Finally, in frustration, Local 21 filed Unfair Labor Practice charges at the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) against SBC. The company, within days, produced a two-inch thick stack of information and we withdrew our charges. The bad news is that as we suspected, the company is giving thousands of hours of our work to contractors, union and non-union, while laying off our members. Stay tuned for more on this developing story. Work safe!



Know Your Legal Rights

By Tom Hopper, Business Representative



One of the most vital functions of a Union steward is to prevent management from intimidating

employees. Union members are always better off when they know their legal rights, including when to request union representation.

Nowhere is this more important than in closed-door meetings when supervisors or company Security agents, often trained in interrogation techniques, attempt to coerce employees into confessing to wrongdoing.

In 1975, in *NLRB v. J. Weingarten Inc.*, the U.S. Supreme Court announced the rights of employees to have union representatives present during investigatory interviews. Since that case involved a clerk being investigated by the Weingarten Company, these rights have become known as Weingarten rights.

What is an Investigatory Interview?

Employees have Weingarten rights only during investigatory interviews. This occurs when a supervisor questions an employee to obtain information that could be used as a basis for discipline **or asks an employee to defend his or her conduct.** If an **employee** has a reasonable belief that discipline or other adverse consequences may result from what he or she says, **the employee has a right to request union representation.**

Casual workplace conversations:

Not every management-initiated discussion is an investigatory interview. For example, a boss may talk to a worker about the proper way to do a job. Even if the boss asks questions, this is not an investigatory interview because the possibility of discipline is remote. The same is true of routine conversations to clarify work assignments or explain other company related items.

Nevertheless, even **an ordinary shop-floor discussion can change its character** if the boss is dissatisfied with the employee's answers. If this happens, the employee can insist on the presence of a union representative before the conversation goes any further.

Here are a couple of final points to keep in mind:

Employees have **the right to be notified, in advance**, by their employer of any meetings, discussions or interviews at which discipline might be assessed, discussed, or which might reasonably be anticipated to lead to discipline. This is especially important with the new emphasis on job performance numbers leading to PIP discussions, warnings, and suspensions. Don't rely on your boss to enforce your legal rights. Don't ever let down your guard!

If a worker is asked to provide information about another employee, he or she also has the right to ask for a steward. Why? Because failing to answer could lead to disciplinary action.

Managers can have private conversations with workers that will not *lead* to discipline. On the other hand, workers should know that a casual conversation with a supervisor that starts harmlessly (over work, for example), but begins to lead to the possibility of trouble, can be stopped until a steward can be asked to be present.



If this meeting or discussion could in any way lead to my being disciplined, terminated, or cause an effect on my personal working conditions, I respectfully request that my union representative, officer, or steward be present at this meeting. Please consider this a continuing request, without representation; I shall not participate in this meeting or discussion. I shall not consent to any searches or tests affecting my person, property, or effects without first consulting with my union representative.

IBEW LOCAL UNION 21

IBEW Local Union 21 encourages all members to exercise their Weingarten rights with company bosses, should the need arise. If you don't know what to say, simply read the boxed statement. It is on the reverse side of every member's union card. Feel free to cut it out and keep it with you at work.

The Rules

Under the Supreme Court's Weingarten decision, when an investigatory interview occurs, the following rules apply:

Rule 1:

The employee must make a clear request for union representation before or during the interview. The employee cannot be punished for making this request.

Rule 2:

After the employee makes the request, the employer must choose from among three options. The Employer must either:

- Grant the request and delay questioning until the union representative arrives and has a chance to consult privately with the employee or
- Deny the request and end the interview immediately or
- Give the employee a choice of (1) having the interview without representation or (2) ending the interview.

Rule 3:

If the employer denies the request for union representation, and continues to ask questions, it commits an unfair labor practice and the employee has a right to refuse to answer. The employer may not discipline the employee for such a refusal.



King's Last Campaign

By Dave Webster, Business Representative



With February being Black History month it's time to write about the role of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in the Labor

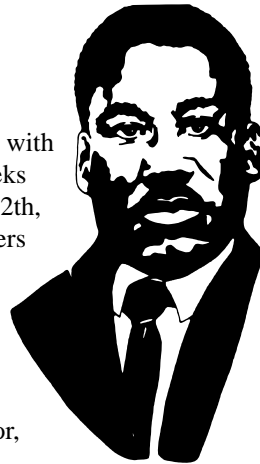
Movement. Everyone knows about some of the great things he accomplished to promote civil rights in this country. King was noted for his leadership in the Montgomery bus boycott, the freedom rides, the Birmingham campaign, the march on Washington, the Selma March, and the Chicago Campaign, to name a few. In 1964 he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his work in the civil rights movement. Of course King was also well known for his non-violent, civil disobedience, following the teachings of Thoreau, Tolstoy and Ghandi. **What many people don't know is that when Dr. King was assassinated he was fighting for a union contract for sanitation workers in Memphis – workers rights are civil rights too!!**

Memphis put King's principles to the test as he supported the striking sanitation workers. During a heavy rainstorm on February 1, 1968, two black sanitation workers had been crushed to death when the compactor mechanism of the garbage truck was accidentally triggered. In a separate incident, twenty-two black sewer workers were sent home without pay due to the inclement weather while their

supervisors were retained for the day with pay. About two weeks later, on February 12th, the sanitation workers began a strike for job safety, better benefits and **UNION RECOGNITION.** The Memphis mayor, Henry Loeb, was unsympathetic to the workers' demands, especially their demand for union recognition. Civic groups appealed to the mayor to resolve the issued and avoid conflict, but the Loeb remained stubborn.

As the strike lengthened the workers built support within the black community. Organizations such as COME (Community On the Move for Equality) established food and clothing banks in churches, took up collections to help workers pay their rent and mortgages, and recruited marchers for frequent demonstrations. King lead a city-wide boycott to support striking workers along with Reverend James Lawson, pastor of the Centenary Methodist Church who also served as an advisor to the workers. Lawson was a seasoned veteran of the civil rights movement and an experienced trainer in the philosophy and methods of nonviolent resistance.

King spoke at a rally in Memphis in early March and agreed to lead a large march later in the month. Unfortunately, the demonstration on March 28th turned sour when a group of rowdy students at the tail end of the long parade of demonstrators used the signs they carried



to break the windows of some businesses. Looting ensued. The march was halted, demonstrators dispersed, and King was safely escorted from the scene. About sixty people suffered injuries, and one young man, a looter, was killed.

The outbreak of violence deeply disturbed King. In the following days King and his coalition attempted to negotiate with the city leaders of Memphis on behalf of the sanitation workers. When assured of their unity and commitment to nonviolence King returned for another march to be held on April 5th. On the evening of April 4th, 1968 as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. stepped out of his motel room to join his colleagues for dinner, he was tragically assassinated.

An equal opportunity to earn a living wage is the foundation on which all other civil rights can be built.

Conversation in Passing

By Liz Hodges, Business Representative

Let's look at that one dirty word SBC is becoming famous for **L**SURPLUS... SURPLUS, SURPLUS. Over the last eight months or so SBC has used this word, and as a result of this seven letter word more of our fellow brothers and sisters have joined the ranks of the unemployed. It's so frustrating and disheartening when people you've known for years who were looking forward to ending their career on a high note are gone in the blink of an eye due to that dirty word SURPLUS. People with years of devoted service are gone forever.

Often people ask me in passing, "Liz, is the company making an offer to leave, maybe 3 + 3? That's all I'm waiting for is an offer. I'm ready to go." Then all of a sudden that ugly word rears its head and some people can now get their wish. But it was not their wish, it was only conversation in passing.

For those who wish for a 3 + 3 retirement offer, or anything close to it be careful what you wish, for SBC may grant your wish sooner rather than later.

Let's Do Lunch

By Louella Byrnes, Area Steward

This is a reminder for everyone who has recently had or is about to have a milestone anniversary with the company ie: 5 year, 10 year, 15 year, 20 year, etc. In addition to the service anniversary gift, you are entitled to have a luncheon on the company for yourself, your manager and one person for each five years of service. This is ON THE

COMPANY. You can choose to go to a local restaurant, or have a joint luncheon for your group.

The process is simple. Your manager needs to contact the HR group, get a special card with the money amount on it, set the date with you and invite your guests. Don't delay because there is a limited time frame for this benefit.

You Can See Mine...Can I See Yours?

By Bob Przybylinski, Area Steward



Now that I have your attention, get your minds out of the gutter I'm talking about our Union Pins. Every year around this

time the membership is looking around talking amongst themselves on how they haven't gotten their new Union Pins. Then we get them and where do they go? I rarely see them on the members after that time. Most often the pins can be seen in the ashtray of our trucks, on bulletin boards, still in our company pigeon holes, and some even end up as part of pin collections. Is that why we get all excited? So we can let them sit in a place where no one will see them? I hope not.

Through the years workers have fought and died for the right to join Unions and wear their pins. In our own local we have seen many fights for the right to wear Union Pins and apparel, or to display IBEW bumper stickers. At SBC the

company tries to tell us we can't wear Union clothing. In negotiations at Comcast the company presented numerous proposals to regulate the size, type and how many pins could be worn. We fought back the efforts of both companies. Our employers can't stand it when we act in solidarity and show our Union affiliation. That's why they try so hard to limit us. Let's drive the bosses crazy and all start wearing our pins.

Our Union Pins should be a part of our uniform. Find a place to keep your pin at home so when you get dressed for work you remember to wear it. Mine goes on top of my wallet to remind me the money in it is because of the pin I wear.

When I'm working at a new construction site I know who I can turn to for help. I look for the worker with the Union Pin. I know they are the ones who understand what is really going on with the job. It identifies them from the scabs and it separates them from the bosses. If you look at workers in other trades you can always identify the Union worker because of the Union Pins they wear with pride. We should be doing the same.

Our Union Pins stand for a way of life.

Because we are IBEW members we enjoy higher wages and benefits, we have better working conditions, safer work places, and more job security. Honor those who came before us and fought for what we have today wear your Union Pins everyday with pride. Solidarity!

Scheduling Woes Hit Downstate

By Mike Roach, Chief Steward

As we all know, SBC is continuing to do as they please without regard to contract language. The newest is the addition of later shifts in the I&R department. The first reason offered was that the other four states in the Ameritech region implemented this with dramatic increases in customer satisfaction. According to article 18.03 of the collective bargaining agreement "Before adding additional shifts outside of regular hours, (8am to 5pm) the local manager will discuss and review the data being used in this decision." With this article in mind we requested data from the company similar to the Saturday/Sunday data already being provided to the Stewards. The company's response was nothing like what we requested.

We also take the position that if there is so much work that later shifts must be added, all technicians who are detailed to other departments must be returned. As of the writing of this article, that is yet to happen.

Grievances have been filed on these issues with the late shifts, and have been denied at the second step. Third step meetings are being scheduled at this time. We can use all the ammunition we can get, so if you are on the later shifts please let your Steward know when you are running out of work, or doing futures.

Memories

By Nancy North, Area Steward



Frontline Editor Larry Moeller was interviewed as part of an article on AT&T that made the front page of the business section in the Sunday

Chicago Tribune on February 13, 2005. He reflects back to the day he heard about the breakup of the Bell system. He talks about the change from a monopoly culture to a competitive business culture.

It didn't take long to learn your mission was service. The mandate of the one million employees was to build the world's best telephone system. The article

reminds us that our memories of a more caring company are not wrong.

Everything changed with competition in the 1980's.

This time of year is "kickoff" season when upper management visits the offices and talks about the year's business plan, financial statistics, incentives and prizes. The new goal is faster turn around time for every department, and fewer management people between outside sales and the Union Customer Advocate who types the order. Speed.

When he was asked about the role of morale the vice president only responded about incentives. He didn't understand that we want something from the old days. We want respect. And it doesn't cost a dime.



Thanks for Helping

By Timothy J. Dodge, Member

On December 2, 2004 I was listening to the local radio station and heard about Operation Care Package where people could donate for the needs of our troops. They put a major request out on the air for phone cards. I thought what a great chance to help out our troops since my son Ryan T. Dodge is a 3rd Class Petty Officer in the Navy on the USS John F. Kennedy Aircraft Carrier. His duty (job) is in the crash and salvage. When an accident occurs, Ryan and his team suit-up in case of fire, and risk their own lives to save others in danger. The USS John F. Kennedy just returned to Jacksonville, FL. Monday December 13, 2004.

I called Chief Steward Terry Sheehan who gave me Larry Schuller's phone number. I asked Larry if IBEW Local 21 could buy phone cards or donate \$1,000. Within two hours, Larry called me back and told me the great news. The Union issued a check made out to Operation Care Package. Boy, I was like a kid getting a great gift.

Then I thought what about SBC doing their share? So I called John Quinn,



Tim Dodge and his son Ryan, stopped by the Local 21 office to thank President Kastner and E-Board member Larry Schuller. Left to right President Kastner, Ryan, Tim Dodge & Larry Schuller.

Director of External Affairs, and asked him if the company could match IBEW Local 21's contribution. That was Friday December 3, 2004. The next day my son Ryan called me on my cellphone. He calls from ports when the ship docks as often as he can. I told Ryan how our Union is going to donate \$1,000 to Operation Care Package to buy phone cards. He told me that phone cards are the second item our troops check for in their care package,

usually the first thing is candy or gum.

Over that weekend Joliet Elk Lodge #296 agreed to donate \$500. On Tuesday, John Quinn called with the news that SBC would match the Union's donation with \$1,000. On Saturday I dropped off the checks to the Operation Care Package Team who donate their time to wrap and organize the care packages. They could not thank me enough for putting my resources together so quickly.

Did you make less than \$35,000 in 2004?

The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) is a government program to assist low-income workers that was written into law in 1975. Here is some info from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) to help determine if you or your family is eligible for the EITC, a program which puts new money into the pockets of low-wage workers.

- The maximum amount of income you can earn and still get the credit has increased. You may be able to take the credit if:
- You have more than one qualifying child and your earned income was less than \$34,458 (\$35,458 if married filing jointly),

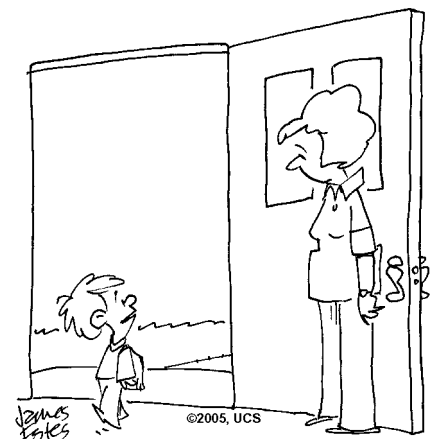
- You have one qualifying child and your earned income was less than \$30,338 (\$31,338 if married filing jointly), or
- You do not have a qualifying child and your earned income was less than \$11,490 (\$12,490 if married filing jointly).

Investment income amount is more.

The maximum amount of investment income you can have and still get the credit has increased to \$2,650.

Nontaxable combat pay election. You can now elect to have your nontaxable combat pay included in earned income for the earned income credit.

For more information, contact the IRS at **1-800-TAX-FORM** or at www.irs.gov.



"I found out today that I'm really good at diagramming sentences. Can you make a living at that?"

Wal-Mart OK's Chinese Unions; Can This Be Real?

The recent news about Wal-Mart's dance with the Chinese government over unionization may be more about politics and public relations than any sincere move on either side to endorse workers' rights. But where it matters most, on the ground, it is clear that some Chinese workers are beginning to stand up for themselves, regardless of the obstacles.

Last fall, China's state-run "union," the All-China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU) threatened to sue several multinational companies if they continued to block Chinese workers from forming unions. The companies included Wal-Mart, Dell, Eastman Kodak, McDonald's, KFC and Samsung Group.

According to an analysis by *Business Week* magazine, the ACFTU's blacklist made a splash in Beijing, but could be seen as a propaganda ploy to steer workers into the state-run federation and get them out of the streets. The number of worker-led street protests in China's manufacturing zones mushroomed to more than 300,000 in 2003, according to the China Labor Bulletin, a Hong Kong labor rights group, so the government has reason to worry.

Both the president and the premier of China are publicly pressing ACFTU to expand and push for safer working conditions – but the federation is viewed as

near-powerless by most Chinese, as it is "a relic of the state-planned past," says *Business Week*.

When Wal-Mart appeared to cave in and promised not to impede "associates" from voluntarily forming unions in its 40-odd Chinese stores, it looked strange to Americans and many observers, who are used to the company's hardball tactics opposing unionization in the U.S. and Canada. Here is what Wal-Mart said:

"Currently there are no unions in Wal-Mart China because associates have not requested that one be formed. Should associates request the formation of a union, Wal-Mart China would respect their wishes and honor its obligation under China's Trade Union Law."

That is not so different from anything Wal-Mart would say officially about unionization in North America, where they always promise to follow the law.

It will be interesting to see whether Wal-Mart speaks up in support of 12,000 workers at a Uniden plant in Shenzhen, which supplies cellphones to Wal-Mart. The workers were on an unusual mass strike in December, protesting 11-hour days and \$58 monthly salaries.

As reported in the New York Times, many workers like them want a real union, and are becoming bolder about pressing their demands.

Another View: Rising Poverty, Declining Investment

By Jim Hightower

While the economic numbers for the vast majority of Americans continue to be bad, there is one little noticed group that is showing remarkable growth: Poor people.

In America, the richest country in the history of the world, the poverty rolls are rising dramatically...and shamefully. The number of poor people is up by 4.8 million in the last four years. That's just the "officially poor." There are another 39 million people who are now among the "working poor" – while technically not in poverty, their jobs pay so poorly that they can't make ends meet for the basics in life.

Unfortunately, these folks are mostly out of sight and out of mind. The mass media ignores them, and we just had a national election that supposedly was about moral values, yet neither party even mentioned the immorality of rising poverty in the midst of plenty.

Worse, the Bushites are going after the few effective efforts we are still making to address poverty – from education to retirement security. Much of the monkey-wrenching being done by Bush & Company takes place in the dark, quietly trying to dismantle popular programs that actually work.

For example, the **Community Reinvestment Act** has been a solid success in helping low-income communities get the investments and bank services they must have to revitalize their neighborhoods. This 30-year-old law has caused banks all across America to serve low-income people, channeling more than a trillion dollars into loans for small-business development and home ownership in inner cities and distressed rural towns.

Despite its proven success, Bush's laissez-faire ideologues are working hard to gut the law. Two federal agencies charged with enforcing it are proposing to exempt at least 1,000 banks, as well as many S & L lenders, from having to comply, thus abandoning entire communities most in need of opportunities for development.

To help stop this assault on the poor, call ACORN, (202) 547-2500.

– Jim Hightower is a syndicated radio commentator and the author of *Let's Stop Beating Around the Bush*.



CONGRATULATIONS LOCAL 21 RETIREES

July 2004

Louis Kuchar

November 2004

Susan Stoeck

December 2004

Bobbie J Beasley

Betty Blake

Jozefa Dabrowski

Barbara Echevarria

Charles Gant

Mary Jakubczak

Earscell Jones

Virginia O'Beirne

January 2005

Connie Bersano

Mary Kathy Fidler

Shirly Haynes

Joe Ott

Carmel G Piquette

Madelynn Williams

Mary Wilson

February 2005

Althea G. Laseter

Breck Luster

Ronald J Sovola

Steward Mike Stachewicz 1966-2004

Our Union suffered a great loss last Autumn when Roscoe/Chicago Construction (SBC) Steward Mike Stachewicz died suddenly of a cerebral hemorrhage. He was 38 years old. Mike, a member of the IBEW for 14 years, was a second generation telephone worker. His father, Leon, has been a member of the IBEW since 1968 and is also employed by SBC. Mike was appointed a steward in 2001 and quickly became a leader in both his shop and at Union Meetings. Brother Stachewicz was a bright young leader in our Union, with a deep commitment to justice. His positive outlook inspired all of us to be better. As an example, when they heard Mike had died, leaving behind his wife Gina and three kids, 2 of them still teenagers, Local 21 Cable Splicer Duane Schustek and Construction Manager Al Miranda came together to organize a fundraiser for the family. The event raised nearly \$4,000 with craft and management pulling in the same direction for once. Brother Stachewicz will be missed by all.

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.

Lucent Workers Approve Contract

Union members working for Lucent Technologies have a new seven-year contract after more than 90 percent voted in favor of the agreement. Workers will receive raises of more than 16 percent during the life of the agreement, plus a lump-sum ratification payment, and a yearly cost of living adjustment beginning in 2008, according to the Communications Workers of America (CWA), which represents 3,000 Lucent installers and technicians in various locations.

The contract also covers about 250 clerical and technical workers, mostly in Columbus, Ohio, who belong to the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers.

Under the agreement, active workers will see some increase in health care co-pays and deductibles and retired workers will share in the cost of premiums beginning in 2005, with those costs ranging from 2 percent to 4 percent of their monthly pension rate, depending on retirement age

and family status.

Retiree premium contributions will increase by one-half of one percent per year over the contract term, but workers who retired prior to March 1, 1990, will continue to have employer-paid premiums, according to CWA.

The company had demanded steeper increases in employee contributions and co-pays, but the union was able to scale back those demands during negotiations, according to CWA.

"Lucent's financial situation made it imperative that we find a solution that would help ensure the survival of health care coverage for our members and retirees," said Ralph Maly, CWA Vice President for Communications and Technologies.

The agreement also provides for a no-layoff guarantee for installers and opens up new job opportunities within installation.

Lucent makes telecommunications equipment. It was spun off from AT&T Corp. in 1996.



Rest In Peace

James K. Hubert

SBC Datacomm

1958-2004

IBEW Member Since 1983

Gary M. Druen

Johnson Controls

1948-2004

IBEW Member Since 1997

UNIT MEETINGS 2005

MARCH

Unit 1

Thursday, March 10, 7 PM
Days Inn & Suites
2175 E Touhy
DesPlaines IL
847 635-1300

Unit 2

Tuesday, March 8, 7 PM
Gaelic Park Banquet Hall
6119 W 147th St
Oak Forest IL
708 687-9323

Unit 3

Thursday, March 17, 7 PM
Gurnee American Legion
749 Milwaukee Ave
Gurnee IL
847 244-9282

Unit 4

Wednesday, March 9, 7 PM
IBEW Local #145
1700 52nd Ave Suite A
Moline IL
309 736-4239

Unit 5

Wednesday, March 16, 7 PM
VFW Post #630
1303 E Main St
Urbana IL
217 367-4197

Unit 6

Tuesday, March 15, 5:30 PM
IBEW Local # 193
3150 Wide Track Dr
Springfield IL
217 544-3479

Unit 7

Monday, March 21, 7 PM
American Legion Post #141
916 Main St
Mt Vernon IL
618 242-4561

APRIL

Unit 1

Thursday, April 14, 7 PM
Holiday Inn Hillside
4400 Frontage Rd
Hillside IL
708 544-9300

Unit 2

Tuesday, April 12, 7 PM
Slovak Club
6920 Broadway
Merrillville IN
219 756-5101

Unit 3

Thursday, April 21, 7 PM
Holiday Inn Hotel & Suites
495 Airport Rd
Elgin IL
847 488-9000

Unit 4

Wednesday, April 13, 7 PM
American Legion Harwood Post #5
705 S Larkin
Joliet IL
815 725-4333

Unit 5

Wednesday, April 20, 7 PM
Danville Inn
388 Eastgate Dr
Danville IL
217 446-2400

Unit 6

Tuesday, April 19, 5:30 PM
IBEW Local # 193
3150 Wide Track Dr
Springfield IL
217 544-3479

Unit 7

Monday, April 18, 7 PM
IBEW Local # 309
2000A Mall St (Rte 157)
Collinsville IL
618 345-5112

MAY

Unit 1

Thursday, May 12, 7 PM
Haebetler Bowl
600 W Washington Blvd
Chicago IL
312 474-4186

Unit 2

Tuesday May 10, 7 PM
Lansing American Legion
18255 Grant St
Lansing IL
708 474-5906

Unit 3

Thursday, May 19, 7 PM
IBEW Local # 364
6820 Mill Rd
Rockford IL
815 398-6282

Unit 4

Wednesday, May 11, 7 PM
Lemont VFW
15780 New Ave
Lemont IL
630 257-9859

Unit 5

Wednesday, May 18, 7 PM
American Legion Post #979
4501 S Airport Rd
Bartonville IL
309 697-2432

Unit 6

Tuesday, May 17, 5:30 PM
IBEW Local # 193
3150 Wide Track Dr
Springfield IL
217 544-3479

Unit 7

Monday, May 16, 7 PM
Alton Sports Tap
3812 College Ave
Alton IL
618 465-2539

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.

IBEW LOCAL 21

1307 W. Butterfield Rd.
Suite 422
Downers Grove, IL 60515-5601

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Join Us for the St. Patrick's Day Parade

On Sunday March 13, 2005 IBEW Local 21 will participate in the South Side Irish St. Patrick's Day Parade with a float. We invite all members and their families to join us, because the event is a lot of fun. The Parade step off is at NOON at 103rd and Western Avenue in Chicago.

If you are interested in participating, please call the Union hotline 630 415-2711 a few days before the parade to check the exact location to meet at the float. If there are any questions, please contact Business Representative Mike McCormick at 630 960-4466, ext. 401.

