

# Organize Or Die!

**T**hat statement has been made by many in the labor movement and, over the years, organizing has met many roadblocks.

One of the roadblocks was funding for our organizing campaigns. In the last five years, the International has granted more money to organizing than in any time in its history. Furthermore, all of our district councils not only have more resources, but they also have formal organizing plans.

Education of those new members was also a hurdle. I can remember early in my career when my business manager told me that he didn't want me to organize a company I was trying to sign. He wanted me to get them to the table and put them out of business instead. To some of you new to the labor movement that might seem a bit bizarre. Why would we put a company out of business that might mean more work and members for us? You see, the mindset back then was to eliminate competition, not organize it.

Well, in the end, we wound up signing the company. They're still in business today and they're still union. They're one of the lucky ones in my hometown. I'm sure many of you can think of more than one company in your area that used to be an industry leader but is now closed. Or, maybe the work we once did in a town is now being done by someone else.

As the saying goes, the only way we are going to survive is to organize. That brings us to the age old question I just hinted at in the story above. Do we take new members into the union or do we only sign the contractors and man the jobs with our own people? Like I said, the old mindset was to eliminate competition. No need to bring more people into the union to compete for our jobs.

The answer to that question is simple; we organize the contractors and the workers. I think the current state of the organized labor movement is proof of that. Those people we took jobs from when we organized their shops didn't just drop their tools to pursue another career in something like electronics. They continued to paint, to glaze and to do whatever other craft they know. In other words, they became our unorganized competition. Those workers are going to work in their trade whether they're with us or not. Why not work to make them a part of us?

So, our ongoing mission for 2008 is to bring those qualified crafts men and women into the union so we can maintain a skilled workforce for our contractors. We must continue to give them a competitive edge by supplying skilled labor that cannot be found anywhere else.

And, once we do have those workers in our ranks, we have to educate them on what their duties as a union member entail. It's not enough to be skilled at what you do, you also have to be an employee that contractors want to hire over and over again. No job lasts forever. Each job should be

thought of as a test for the next one.

I was recently looking at a member's employment history and saw that he was employed by 88 contractors over the last seven years. What's that tell you? Were all 88 contractors wrong? Or, were his skills not up to par for the job? First of all, I think it's great that we even had 88 employers in his area to hire him. That shows our members have some good opportunities out there. Mainly though I was disappointed that we clearly did not provide those employers with the best craftsman out there. We floated him around hoping he'd make it somewhere. Instead, maybe we could have brought a skilled unorganized worker into the union and given him the job. If we strive to be the best at what we do we'll never have to worry about competition – the cream always rises

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**JAMES A. WILLIAMS**  
GENERAL PRESIDENT

IUPAT FINANCIAL

OCTOBER 1, 2007 - NOVEMBER 30, 2007

		GENERAL FUND	CONVENTION FUND	ACCIDENTAL DEATH FUND	DEATH BENEFIT FUND
<b>INTERNATIONAL UNION OF PAINTERS AND ALLIED TRADES CASH BALANCE REPORT</b>					
BEGINNING CASH BALANCE	10/01/2007**	\$23,328,783	\$3,265,539	\$215,347	\$14,697,396
RECEIPTS:		6,347,260.03	214,993	13,907	773,944
DISBURSEMENTS:		(4,847,278.77)	-	(20,000)	(340,225)
INC/DECR IN MARKET VALUE OF INVESTMENTS:		19,472.90	2,197	-	(567,720)
INTERFUND TRANSFER		0.00	-	-	-
CANADIAN EXCHANGE:		(5,110.94)	(419)	60	(1,086)
<b>(ALL FUNDS)</b>	ENDING CASH BALANCE 11/30/2007	\$24,853,348	\$3,483,147	\$209,313	\$14,564,481

\*\* Building Fund Balance is not included in General Fund

**GENERAL PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

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to the top. The best man or woman with the tools will always get the job.

I recently asked our organizing department to give me what we call the "born on" dates of our contractors. The born on dates represent when a particular contractor signs with our union. I asked for the dates for a couple of reasons. First, I wanted to see the trends in our organizing success throughout the years so that we can refine strategy and resources. The second reason was to see how some of the old line companies have been performing through the years. If they're having trouble, I wanted to examine the possible reasons why they are having problems. Is it competition, poor management or a victim of these hard economic times? Could it be a combination of the three? It's important to know because it might tell me something about the training and management of our members in that area. We may not be able to do anything about poor management or hard economic times, but we can do something about the competition. If we're the best of the best on the job, then our employers are going to get the work over our non-union competition.

An effective organizing drive brings the best crafts men and women to our union, which in turn brings the work to us. Thankfully, the old ways of thinking about organizing have, for the most part, been replaced with the spirit of growing this union for the benefit of all. When we controlled the market and had no competition, we could afford to be selective. That just isn't the case today. There are too many projects in the United States and Canada going forward without us.

We must and we will organize because I can assure you if we don't, we, along with the rest of the labor movement, will continue to die a slow death. I am not prepared to let that happen without a fight. I'm relying on each and every one of you to join me.

**EXECUTIVE GENERAL VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

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show in Los Angeles at the end of last January. He attended several meetings and seminars, collected contact information from prospective employers and was even invited to be a guest speaker at a forum hosted by the Painting and Decorating Contractors of America.

God only knows how many hands he shook of signatory employers, non-signatory employers and, most importantly, some of our rank and file members. Not only did they have a chance to personally meet the general president, but they also had a chance to see how union business is conducted. Since the International is always on the lookout for new leaders, it was a welcome bonus for the general president.

The dinners serve their purpose as well. They are far from the unbridled feast many suppose they are, instead it's an opportunity for us to take some time and literally break bread with those who present new prospects for the men and women of the IUPAT. It is a real opportunity to make connections where there may have not been connections before.

When the week is over, all those assigned to the show are required to submit reports detailing contact information acquired, needs for follow-up and suggestions on how to better prepare for the next show. The International has even instituted an online survey to make certain this debriefing is as timely and thorough as possible. We then process this information and start preparing for the next trade show.

As you read about the craft of trade show work in this edition of the Journal, remember the business your union conducts at these shows as well. The men and women who both build the booths and work at them are our ambassadors. The hope for a stronger union and a bigger market share for our employers rests on their shoulders. It's not a job to take lightly and no one knows that better than them.