

# Remaining Diligent

**T**he old adage, "All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing", applies to life in more ways than one. In addition to being an apt statement of how we should live out our personal lives, it is just as pertinent in the way we do business. All officers and members alike must remain diligent in our duties as union leaders.

Typically, the word audit strikes fear into the soul of every working man and woman who pays taxes. However, as a former financial secretary of my local union, I took comfort in the fact that the local union trustees painstakingly audited my books and records. I found comfort in it because after such an audit, I knew in advance of the annual Certified Public Accountant (or Chartered Accountant in Canada) audit, that my records were clean and accurate. I knew that someone other than me had made certain our local was in full compliance with the magnitude of the IRS and Department of Labor rules and regulations we had to follow. The membership knew too, because the trustees reported their findings in detail to the members.

Since I have been serving as your general secretary-treasurer, I have seen that almost all of the cases of district council or local union financial mismanagement could have been caught earlier or avoided altogether if the trustees were truly performing their duties instead of merely rubber stamping the work of the other financial officers.

Years ago, I served as special trustee for a local union where the financial officers and the executive board of the local union (men of good intentions) entrusted all the financial duties to the office manager. Because there was a lack of oversight, this person was able to embezzle tens of thousands of dollars from the local union. Incredibly, this breach wasn't even discovered until much later when a trusteeship was imposed for other reasons. This financial malfeasance would have been detectable if only each of the officers had played their constitutional role.

The Department of Labor has received additional funding for auditors to perform Compliance Audit Program audits on unions. Now more than ever, financial officers of our union at all levels need to be diligent in the performance of their duties. Being honest is not enough; a mistake or wrong procedure can be a serious problem if a Department of Labor audit is performed.

Recently my office received copies of letters from the Department of Labor to various unions regarding delinquent LM reports. Those letters threatened the officers responsible for filing these reports with criminal prosecution. Understand, this proposed legal action is not about embezzlement or a related crime, it is about being fully compliant with the rules and regulations set forth by the IRS and the Department of Labor. We have never in the past seen such serious warnings in a letter for delinquency.

With all that being said, the good news is that ninety-nine percent of our officers on all levels are honest people performing a service for their union. No one should fear holding office in our union if they learn and perform their constitutional duties and insist that the other officers do the same. To accomplish this goal, my office has developed a financial officers class.

Among other subjects, the class covers how to use the IUPAT Integrated Member Services (IMS) computer system to perform their constitutional duties as well as how to access a database on our members' training information, pension status and more. This two and a half day class not only covers the utilization of the IMS system, but its deployment in the district council with the technical support of my staff as well.

The class is taught at our International Training Center just outside of Washington, DC and the next one is scheduled to take place this spring. Financial Officers interested in attending this training should contact their district council business manager/secretary-treasurer for details on how to register.

If we all take our oath of membership and office seriously, then it does not matter who comes to audit; we will have done our duty. May God bless us in our endeavor to serve our union to the best of our ability.



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