

This, Too, Shall Pass

I don't have to tell anyone reading this article how dismal the work prospects are for construction right now. We have a lot of members going through some very hard days and, if you're one of the fortunate ones with steady work, I hope you're doing what you can for your union brother or sister.

I know that so many of you are frustrated with these uncertain times and a bit angry with the hand that we've been dealt. However, now is not the time to abandon your union. It's time to come together.

In fact, our union would be in far more dire straits if we had not come together as a One Union organization before this recession hit. It was in 1994 that your leadership announced to the local unions of the IUPAT that we would begin to operate under a district council system, or what is often called full affiliation. This restructuring plan has taken a long time to complete, but we have been successful in changing the way we do business. In fact, every district council in the union has improved its financial situation since the full affiliation plan was announced at the 1994 General Convention. As a result, the IUPAT is in an excellent position to serve you and do whatever we can to help you survive, and even prosper, in these hard times.

So, what are we going to do for you? First, we've put new membership classifications in place to ease the cost of membership for those who need such a break in these tough times. Our next step is to make certain your district council departments have what they need from the International to serve you best. We will continue to provide organizing financial assistance, we will continue to grow our curriculum in training to give you the skills to become more marketable in a competitive workplace,

and we will continue to work every day to put political leaders in place at the local and national levels who will remember the rights and interests of working families when they carry out the duties of their offices.

That last point is very important, because there is so much potential out there for us on the political action front: Those we elect may appoint us to workforce investment boards, as well as give careful consideration to the IUPAT when we apply for state or federal grants for training and building new facilities.

We can't assume that there aren't opportunities for us in this crisis. In fact, District Council 26 in Michigan, one of our smallest councils (for now), just received a nearly \$800,000 grant from the state to augment its training program. Business Manager/Secretary-Treasurer Jeff Kelly has talked the talk and walked the walk when it comes to doing whatever it takes to make us a stronger organization. Think about it: Michigan may be the state that is suffering the most in this economic crisis, yet the local leader of the IUPAT worked with his community partners to get a substantial grant. It's an amazing accomplishment, and it proves that you don't have to be the biggest district council



JAMES A. WILLIAMS
GENERAL PRESIDENT

in the International to make big things happen for our union. You just need a good plan.

Your International has a plan in place to create work opportunities for you. At the same time, we're working every day to make certain we protect every single benefit you have in being a union member. That includes your pension. There's an article in the Pension section of this issue of the *Journal* that details some changes we had to make to the Pension Plan. I urge you to read it carefully and thoughtfully. If you have any questions, please contact the Pension Department to get your answers. We're ready to give you the answers you need.

In August, we're going to meet for our 30th General Convention. We meet every five years for this, and I am in awe of how much has changed since we last met for the convention. That's why I think it's so important that

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we remember the phrase that serves as the title of my article—"This, too, shall pass." I'm sure most of you have heard it before, but not many of you have probably considered how powerful a statement it is.

The short version of the story behind this saying is that a leader commissioned the wisest of his advisors to invent a phrase that would be true and appropriate in all times and situations. The phrase they came up with was, "And this, too, shall pass." Now, most of us use this phrase to remind ourselves that, although we may be in bad times, eventually good times will come again. That's where we are right now, and those words do bring some comfort. However, when the good times do return, those same words serve as a warning—this, too, shall pass. Change is inevitable. I can assure you that your leadership has heeded this warning in the good times and prepared your union for these harrowing days.

We will see better days ahead. And, when those days do come, your union will be ready to represent you on the jobsite to make certain you get your fair day's pay and the benefits you and your family deserve. A lot of companies will be out there, ready to take advantage of a workforce that is hungry for steady work by offering

only substandard pay and benefits. Companies will cut corners on the jobsite to save money, creating an unsafe workplace. They will do this because they will believe that working men and women will be out of choices and will take the job at any cost.

They will be wrong. As One Union, the members of the International Union of Painters and Allied Trades will always have a voice on the job. That is why it is so important that all of us come together in this crisis.

I receive quite a few e-mails and letters from you, and I want you to know that I make a point of reading them all. I can't answer all of them, but I do my best to answer most. You'll find some of those questions and my answers in this issue of the *Journal*. Take a moment to read them and, if you have a question of your own, feel free to send it my way on the card included in the magazine.

I'm looking forward to putting another plan in place at this next convention that will allow our union to better serve you and your needs as an IUPAT member. I'll see many of you there this coming August, and I hope to see many more of you at the local union meetings I'll be visiting over the summer.

Stay strong, stay union and take care of each other.

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