

## THE SAV-Rx UNION PRESCRIPTION

Employees of Sav-Rx Prescription Services in Fremont, Nebraska, gained a union voice last year when they won IBEW representation—and, consequently, the Brotherhood now has an IBEW represented carrier for its U.S. prescription drug benefit programs covering its staff.

“I am pleased to announce a change in our IBEW prescription benefit program,” stated International Secretary-Treasurer Edwin D. Hill in a November 1999 memo. “Employees of Sav-Rx Prescription Services voted unanimously to be represented by the IBEW, and an agreement was reached on September 1, 1999, between Sav-Rx and the newly chartered IBEW Local 2001.”

Effective December 1, 1999, the IBEW implemented a contract with Sav-Rx to cover the IBEW prescription card and mail order benefit programs. The Sav-Rx Card is recognized at some 50,000 pharmacies across the United States.

Local 2001 currently represents approximately 40 Sav-Rx employees, including a Chicago Unit. Eleventh District International Vice President William C. Eads said that number is expected to increase to some 150 members in the next 12 to 18 months. ■

## IBEW Organizer on the Trail

When Local 25 organizer Kevin Barry got a tip in 1995 that a nonunion electrical contractor was working on a project at the Nassau County Bay Park Sewage Treatment Plant in Long Island, New York, he put on his detective’s hat and took action. The eventual outcome was that Local 25 helped secure an award totalling \$229,000 for the nine workers who were being exploited by the unscrupulous contractor.

Brother Barry found out that the nonunion job was located at the central warehouse for the sewage treatment plant. (Local 25 had previously picketed the job for weeks, and the employees had signed representation cards, but the election was lost.)

When he went to the Nassau County Department of Public Works to examine the pertinent job documents, Barry discovered big discrepancies—the certified payrolls didn’t match up with the official sign-in time sheets. This raised a red flag, and the organizer knew his next move was to try to talk with the workers.

Having gained entrance to the jobsite, Barry spotted a couple of men pulling wire and went over to talk. But the workers at first led him to believe they did not speak English. The next day Barry returned to the jobsite and presented the employees with a spreadsheet of what he surmised they had been paid and what the prevailing wage rate was at the time. That opened a discussion about how Local 25 could help the workers get the money owed to them.

“We had a large back-pay liability documented, and we started the legal action against Leon Industries [by suing] its bonding company,” said Barry. “A bonding company not

only insures that [its client company] completes the project to specifications, it also guarantees with a payroll bond that the workers will be paid correct wages. The bond is the lifeline for any contractor that does prevailing wage work.

“Because of its financial liability, the bond company put an immediate freeze on any bonds issued to Leon Industries, which stopped Leon from bidding any more prevailing rate work,” Barry said. As a result, Leon Industries is no longer in the electrical construction business. The bonding company finally settled, and the **nine workers were awarded \$229,000.**

“We were able to get rid of an unscrupulous contractor...and to help a group of workers who were being exploited,” said Local 25 Business Manager William Lindsay. “This just shows that it doesn’t cost any more to build union.” ■



**Local 25, Long Island, New York, organizer Kevin Barry (center) with four of the nine workers who received a back pay award from an unscrupulous nonunion contractor.**

# Clerical Workers Click on IBEW

At the Pacific Gas & Electric Company corporate headquarters complex in downtown San Francisco, a group of previously unrepresented clerical workers voted in a January 1999 election for representation by IBEW Local 1245, Walnut Creek, California.

Local 1245 represents virtually the entire physical and clerical work force at the company, with a total of more than 13,000 IBEW members employed by the utility in central and northern California. The new group was folded into the existing clerical agreement with Pacific Gas and Electric, with some modifications.

Instrumental in the success of organizing the new members were Local 1245 Business Representative Debbie Mazzanti and Sisters Donna Ambeau and Leslie Davis, who are stewards in the clerical unit. ■



Photo by Eric Wolfe

**A group of previously unrepresented clerical workers at Pacific Gas & Electric Company headquarters in San Francisco voted for representation by IBEW Local 1245, Walnut Creek, California. Pictured with Local 1245 Business Representative Debbie Mazzanti (third from right, back row) are the new IBEW members: Puri Mojica, Donna Jones, Patty Sadaya, Paz Lee, Beatriz Foronda, Jeanne Walsh, Tawnya Carter, Maryann Dennehy and Richard Kozakiewicz.**

## My Experience as a Salt

As a proud member of IBEW Local 481, Indianapolis, Indiana, I am writing to convey my experience as a salt. I have salted twice now for the same reason—I needed a job, and the nonunion sector had the work while the union sector did not.

Labor unions must organize every man and woman who works for wages. If union labor controlled the market, I would not be salting and would not have to leave my local's jurisdiction and travel the countryside to find work that pays a living wage. When your turn comes, quickly volunteer to salt and actively support the organizing movement with your time and energy.

When I agreed to salt, I was afraid—afraid of the unknown, afraid I would be physically beaten, verbally attacked and have my personal property damaged. As it turned out, nothing could have been further from the truth. When I got to each jobsite, I found the people

were just like me—trying to make a living and provide for family. I learned that the nonunion worker, like myself, has hopes of pursuing the American dream and wants to be a good electrical worker.

I also found that the nonunion electrical worker is oppressed by his employer. The nonunion contractor is primarily interested in big profits at the expense not only of the worker but also of his customer. The nonunion employee is expected to provide most of the tools of the trade. In one case, the “tool list” was three typewritten pages and included benders, power tools, fish tapes and much more. Drinking water, dust masks and safety harnesses were not provided at all by one contractor. There were no women on the jobs and only young men. Is discrimination alive and well? I think so.

I found that one young man did not have the money or the insurance cover-

age to get emergency root canals on two teeth. One day on the job, the infection burst and he swallowed so much poison he lost two days of work.

Another man from New York told me his last employer required him to have a number of power tools, including a 1/2-inch electric drill, a reciprocating saw, a band saw, a small roto-hammer, a 4-inch side grinder and extension cords. This was in addition to all the other “required tools.”

In both of my salting experiences, I found the customer was shortchanged and did not get a quality job. The nonunion contractor takes advantage of the customers' lack of knowledge about electrical construction and delivers shoddy workmanship in violation of the National Electrical Code.

What a difference a union makes! My experiences have been first-hand, and I have seen the tragedy of how nonunion contractors oppress workingmen and -women. When will you get involved so this will not happen to you? (Submitted by Dan Voglund, Local 481, Indianapolis, Indiana.) ■

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## DISPATCHES

Nineteen employees of **MSE Technology Applications Inc.** voted in December 1999 for representation by Local 233, Helena, Montana. The new IBEW members work as instrumentation and control technicians, plant operators and toolroom/warehouse employees.

The 19 new members join 25 other employees (electricians, mechanics, groundsmen, welders and machinists) at MSE who are represented by Local 233. Local organizer Keith Allen said the original members were very helpful in organizing the new group and made the December victory possible. The company, located in Butte, Montana, does a great deal of contract work for NASA, the U.S. Department of Energy, and other government entities and also performs mine cleanups.

Twenty employees working for **Asplundh Tree Expert Company** in southeastern Colorado gained a union voice when they voted unanimously in December 1999 for representation by Local 667, Pueblo, Colorado. Business

Manager Chris Grinstead said the new Local 667 tree trimmers and line clearance cutters are employed in the geographical area of the state served by WestPlains Energy, a subsidiary of Utilicorp United Inc.

IBEW Local 288, Waterloo, Iowa, got the vote of workers employed by the **municipal utility in the city of Osage, Iowa.** The 12 employees voted 10-2 for IBEW representation in an election held December 1, 1999. Of the new members, four are linemen in the electrical distribution department, four are in gas distribution, two are in electrical generation, and two are clerical workers.

Local 288 Business Manager Ritchie Kurtenbach said, "The municipal utility is in the process of expanding into telecommunications distribution for television and the Internet and, as a result, the number of members in the unit can be expected to increase."

In Las Vegas, Nevada, 35 employees of the **IBEW Plus Credit Union** won card-check recognition with Local 396 in September 1999, when a majority of the employees signed union authorization cards in favor of representation by the IBEW local.

The Credit Union, with two branches in Las Vegas, offers membership to all union members who reside in Nevada.

Fifty-four employees of **NoCuts Inc.**, a utility locating service, gained a union voice when on October 1, 1999, they voted overwhelmingly in favor of representation by IBEW Local 108, Tampa, Florida.

NoCuts Inc. is a subsidiary of Sprint. Business Manager Robert Suggs said the new Local 108 members employed by NoCuts "have the responsibility for locating underground

utilities in six counties in west-central Florida." Assistant Business Manager Jimmy E. Connatser said, "If you see one of them along the side of the road, give them a big IBEW welcome."

Eleven service employees at **Eastern Natural Gas Company** gained representation by Local 573, Warren, Ohio, in a November 1999 election. The employees install gas pipelines and work as meter readers for the small gas distribution company located in eastern Ohio.

At **Public Service Company** of New Hampshire, three employees in the Transmission and Distribution Asset Department voted in November 1999 to be represented by Local 1837, Manchester, Maine.

The three new members (two secretaries and an easement specialist), join some 400 other Local 1837 members employed by the electric utility as field service workers and plant operators.

Fifty-four employees at the **South Carolina Electric and Gas Company Cope Generating Station** gained a union voice when they voted by a 3 to 1 margin on January 20 for representation by IBEW Local 398, Charleston. These employees work in the operations, maintenance and electrical departments. SCE&G is an investor-owned utility whose parent company is SCANA Corp.

IBEW Locals 398 and 772 (Columbia, South Carolina) together represent some 900 SCE&G workers. With the January 20 organizing victory, the IBEW now represents SCE&G's six coal-fired generating plants.

"This victory shows the labor movement is alive and well in South Carolina," said Local 398 President Roger Clyde. 