

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

*(The following is a summarization of my speech to the IBEW Construction Conference given on March 31, 2000.)*

Our founders banded together 109 years ago to forge strong bonds that could withstand the power of the employers. We revere the ten men who created the organization that became the IBEW, but it is important to remember that their strength came from the fact that they spoke for other linemen and wiremen in places like Toledo, Philadelphia, St. Louis, Duluth, and others. Their collective strength flowed upward and outward, spreading their voices and their influence over industry, government, and other areas of society. In the year 2000, as in 1891, it all starts with the journeyman.

Our education and organizing efforts have resulted in nothing less than the rebirth of the IBEW. And the results came from the dedicated efforts of the rank and file IBEW organizers who turned our industry around.

With organizing comes another responsibility. The purpose of bringing new people into our trade is not merely to help them put a few extra dollars in their pocket or their pension. If that's all that binds us together, then we are destined to fly apart at the first sign of trouble.

No, we have something much stronger to give. We have values that are real and lasting. We seek to uplift the entire person—materially, intellectually and socially. We seek to improve the lot of those in society who make their living by their labor. In that, we are consistent with the teachings of virtually every major code of morality and religious belief.

When a member joins the IBEW, he or she should know or be willing to learn more than electrical skills. With the

IBEW card comes an acceptance of the concept that you are not just out for yourself. With it comes a commitment to stand with your brothers and sisters, even when times are rough. It means acceptance of your union brothers and sisters regardless of who they are. It means striving at all times to practice the ideals that we espouse, but of which we sometimes fall short.

If we fail to aim high in anything we do, we are destined to fall short. If we look out for our own selfish interest and don't help those in need, we have failed. If we think that the work of the future with its emphasis on technology will be handed to us after a half-hearted effort, we will fail. If we let slide our commitment to organizing, training, and the ideals set forth by the founders of this union, we will fail.

It all starts with the journeyman. We are we proud of where we have come in the past 15 years. We have done nothing less than turn around an entire industry and rediscover our roots. We have rekindled an ethic of organizing, innovation and excellence.

We did not do it only for ourselves. We knew that the great union we inherited was in danger. We did it for the memories of those who went before us, but more importantly for those who are to come after us. Ideas and leadership and concepts may have emanated from Washington, but it was the local leadership and the journeymen who made it work.

May we always be worthy of the honor we have been given. May we always honor the IBEW by our work. And may we always do our best for our members. For, after all, it all starts with the journeyman.

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