

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

f there was ever a year that called for some perspective, 2000 is it.

The year began by showing that the dire predictions about Y2K disasters were totally unfounded. It ended with signs that the wild ride of the stock market may be over and with the fracas over the U.S. Presidential election swirling into December. But the real story of 2000 is told in the day-to-day struggles and triumphs of working people—like us.

In bargaining, in organizing and in political/legislative action, we worked together to make 2000 a truly memorable year. Our construction membership moved above 300,000, we had some truly historic contract settlements, and continued to move ahead on such major concerns as protecting our members during continued utility deregulation. Strikes broke out at Verizon and Raytheon, but in both cases solidarity pulled our members through and set the stage for progress in the future. During the run-up to the U.S. elections, we did more than our part in labor's best ever grass roots campaign effort. We said one vote counts, and now no one can dispute that.

We have unprecedented prosperity, a comparatively peaceful world, and multiple successes for our Brotherhood. But we still live in tension, uncertain whether 2001 will take us down or up still higher.

We're told the "New Economy" is centered in North America and there's nothing but bright prospects. But we continue to see closings and layoffs in basic industries and such long-range problems as shortfalls in the nation's job training goals for the high-tech future. We still see too many companies trying to move pensions off defined benefit plans. Technology companies go out of business before we knew they existed. Obviously, the nation needs to take advantage of the new technologies to benefit everyone, but not at the expense of our base, those industries on which this vibrant national economy was built.

And there is no consensus on uses of the federal budget surplus, not even on the all-important goal of a stable Social Security System.

Pardon us trade unionists if we're more than a little cautious, feeling the tensions between what could be and what is. It's our nature. Unions are agents of change in the pursuit of a better life for working people and a good year, like 2000, teaches us not only what it takes to succeed but also what to look out for.

We are realists and know the cycles our economy and our members have to go through. No one says it will be easy in 2001, but we have seen the unity required to make the best of it—whether we're playing offense or defense.

Throughout our Brotherhood, the key to the unity we need to continue organizing successes is keeping our system open to all newcomers. New jobs—some of which are virtually all-new professions—continue to be added every day. Our emphasis on training programs has paid rich dividends in keeping up with those new job openings.

It has been a good year and a good start for the new millennium (whether you believe the millennium started on January 1, 2000, or will start with the coming year). With unity and steadfast determination, we can keep it that way.

I would like to wish each and every member of the IBEW family a happy holiday season and health and prosperity in the New Year. We have much to be thankful for and much more yet to accomplish together.

A Whirl of a Year

J. J. BARRY



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