

SECRETARY-TREASURER'S MESSAGE

t's happened again. Another *Journal* deadline has come and gone, and we still don't know the identity of the next President of the United States.

We go to press with this issue two weeks before the scheduled meeting of the Electoral College. Even that body's meeting—normally a constitutional formality—may not yield a winner, especially if a bogus group of electors appointed by the Florida legislature tries to take the seats.

Many people who live and work in Washington have been transfixed by this situation, talking of little else. Likewise, the media, ever hungry for a sensational story, are playing up the events. I don't think that anyone can say that this is the finest hour of U.S. history. However, I do think it is a tribute to the strength of democracy in the U.S. and the resiliency of the people that life has gone on; there are no tanks in the streets; and working families treat it as an entertaining drama, not a crisis.

Contrast the high profile U.S. election with the national vote in Canada that took place in late November. Prime Minister Jean Chretien and his Liberal Party increased their majority to 220 seats in the Parliament. Combine those with the 13 seats won by the Social Democrats, and the pro-labor parties in Canada had a very good day. I am told many Canadians were disappointed that the 63 percent voter turnout was abnormally low. In the United States, such a high turnout would be cause for rejoicing. I am also struck by the fact that Canada counted all its ballots by hand in a matter of hours and produced an accurate result. It seems that once again, Canada has something to teach its neighbor to the south.

We may not know who the next President will be, but we do know several things. The voter turnout among union households in the United States was very high—26 percent of the total. Voter turnout was extremely high in the key battleground states, especially Pennsylvania and Michigan. Both went for Vice President Al Gore, and Michigan replaced an anti-labor Senator with a new ally for us—Senator-elect Debbie Stabenow. Committed IBEW volunteers were instrumental in helping labor-friendly candidates succeed in numerous tight races for seats in the House of Representatives. We lost a few others, but nobody bats a thousand.

Above all, we learned that we have a lot of work to do in the areas of political action and political education. Mobilizing our members—like organizing new members—is a task that has no end. The importance of effective, united political action by union members was brought home very powerfully in November, and I plan to reinforce this message regularly. President Barry and I are very proud of and grateful to the men and women from our ranks—in the U.S. and Canada—who volunteered their time to work on this election. Your commitment to our democracy and participation is exemplary. We need more like you and we will not stop impressing upon our members the importance of good citizenship.

The new Congress is as closely divided as possible. No major initiative can pass without bipartisan support. We must work hard to make sure that our views on key issues are heard. We must reach out to both parties to seek support wherever it is to be found. If the politicians didn't get the message that the public wants action, not bickering, they will never get it.

If George W. Bush is the next President of the United States, our job will be more difficult. Like Congress, Bush must understand that he has no mandate for a one-sided agenda. If he shows a willingness to seek consensus, we will work with him and his Administration. If, however, his appointees to federal agencies and judgeships seek to work below the public's radar screen to impose an anti-worker agenda on our members, then we will fight, organize and mobilize. We will not go back to the bad old days of the 1980s and early '90s when our rights were routinely trampled.

That is one sure thing you can count on in this uncertain year.



Hail to Which Chief?

EDWIN D. HILL

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