



The Journal of Electrical Workers and Operators
Our Silver Anniversary

On November 28th, 1916, our Brotherhood will be twenty-five years old. During that period of time we have had our ups and downs. We have indeed had a hard road to travel, being continually engaged in combating our antagonistic employers and overcoming the obstacles placed in our way. We have felt the stings of defeat at times, as well as having rejoiced in our hours of victory. We should not say defeat, for the reason that we have never conceded that we have been defeated. It is true we have met numerous set-backs which only tended to spur us on to greater efforts and better organization, and again meet our opponents in battle in our fight for the uplift of the electrical worker of the North American continent.

Our own members were responsible for most of the set-backs we have received, through deserting us at the critical moment, for the interest of the employer, forgetting the obligations they assumed when they joined forces with us and betraying their fellow men for a few pieces of the employer's tainted silver.

We have made many mistakes during our existence, which our enemies have taken advantage of to the detriment of our members. It is only natural that we should make mistakes when it is realized that we are one of the youngest labor organizations in existence. Had we avoided the dangers of which we were warned through the old line trade unionists, we would have avoided many of the set backs we encountered but it seems fate decreed that all organizations of toilers must learn from the hard school of experience as they do not seem to hear the bells of danger which are being continuously rung by the toilers that have marched through the fields of organized labor before us.

We were prone to follow the straight and narrow path, ready to fight at the drop of the hat any employers who dared to impede our progress.

We have learned much from those struggles and have become convinced that strikes should only be resorted to after all other honorable means have been tried to settle the differences that arise with our employers from time to time.

Our quarter of a century of existence has shown us the wisdom of maintaining friendly relations with our employers through the trade agreement. **The first few pages of the history of our organization show that we were irresponsible as an organization for the agreements entered into by our Local Unions with the employers. It was a general occurrence for a Local Union to enter into an agreement today and deliberately violate or repudiate it tomorrow. These conditions prevailed to such an extent that at one period of our existence many of our employers refused to enter into agreements with us on the ground that we were not responsible for them.**

In those days a large portion of our members were compelled to continuously travel from place to place in pursuit of their livelihood. They were rovers in a sense and had the rover's well-known disposition. It made no difference to them how far away from home they were or whether they were working in a city or the country; if anything displeased them they stopped work immediately and after doing so went on their way, leaving the job to take care of itself. It mattered not to them whether an agreement existed between the Local Union and the employer. If you hurt their feelings of pride they were through and that was all there was to it and it was not necessary for the pride of all to be hurt; one was sufficient with no thought of Constitution, by-laws, agreements, Local Unions or the Brotherhood at any time. But as we grew older we grew wiser and the great change brought about by the evolution of our trade brought to our members the realization that if we hoped to have an effective and comprehensive Brotherhood we would have to do our business on a strictly business basis; that when we made laws they were to govern all of us; that if any of us violated those laws we should be held personally responsible for those violations and when we entered into agreements with our employers we must keep them inviolate during their legal existence.

From that time on our success was assured. It is true that the progress we have made has been slow but it has been sure. Our Brotherhood is directly responsible for the conditions and wages enjoyed by the electrical workers throughout our territorial jurisdiction. This applies to the non-unionist as well as to our members.

The electrical workers are not the only ones who have benefited by our organization as we have by our efforts obtained added protection to the life, limb and property of the general public.

Our organization has been directly responsible for all of the protective legislation along these lines that is on the statute books throughout the United States and Canada. No one who understands will question but that the electrical workers has reduced to the minimum the loss by fire through defective electrical installation.

While the progress we have made within the past twenty-five years has been good we should make the next and succeeding years to follow overshadow the accomplishments of the past. Let the slogan be, "Advance ever; retreat never!"

PERFECT ORGANIZATION FIRST

Many Local Unions are made ineffective and useless by becoming involved in difficulty with their employers before they are properly organized. It is plainly written on the pages of trades union history that a Local Union which makes demands and strikes to enforce said demands before it has in membership a sufficient number of workers, does not keep pace with the Local Unions which organize comprehensively before undertaking to strike for better conditions.

Thousands of Local Unions have gone out of existence through making this fatal error, and wherever a Local Union has gone out of existence for that reason it is mighty hard to organize another Local Union in the same territory for it is difficult to convince the electrical workers there that a Local Union can be established and made effective after their disastrous experience with the first one.

If labor organizations could guarantee to the non-union wage earners better wages, better working conditions and a shorter work day immediately, they would experience no difficulty in thoroughly organizing their respective crafts as many non-unionists take the selfish position that unless a labor organization can better their conditions, immediately, they will not become affiliated with it.

A labor organization is a business organization and should be conducted on strictly business lines. As the child must creep before it walks, a labor union must move slowly so as to avoid the path of error and mistake in its younger days.

The employer, when he learns that some of his employees have joined a trades union welcomes demands from that organization as he realizes it is easier for him to destroy the union while it is young and while there remains a good percentage of his employees outside of its fold. It seems that young Local Unions play into the hands of said employers too frequently with the result that they soon go out of existence.

The labor movement is always ready to encourage and assist an organization to better the conditions of its members and willingly renders all the assistance possible to a young organization involved in difficulty but strikes cannot be won by a ten, twenty or thirty per cent organization, and such a Local Union is merely sounding its own death knell if it undertakes to enforce demands by striking.

The Local Unions that thoroughly organize and move conservatively and slowly are the ones that are enjoying the best conditions today. There is nothing gained by biting off more than we can chew and the men who organize today and go on strike tomorrow before they are familiar with the principles of the trades union movement or have attained the proper knowledge of conducting a trades union make a grievous mistake.

Organization and education are the first principles of the trade's union movement that should be sought by the members of our young Local Unions. After they have become

educated in and familiar with the trades union method or organization, their way to better conditions will be easy. They will have learned how to overcome the obstacles placed in their way by antagonistic employers and the enemies of trades unionism as well as how to convince the non-unionists in our calling that it is their duty to join forces with us and help us to increase our wages, reduce our hours of labor and better our working conditions.

They should not expect a dollar out of the treasury of a labor organization unless they have paid a dollar into it. It necessitates the spending of money to maintain and operate a trades union. **The necessary money must be provided by the members. If the members decide upon low dues and a cheap administration of its affairs it must be satisfied with cheap returns.**

SELECT COMPETENT OFFICERS

Some members run for office in their Local Unions just to find out how popular they are; they have no intention of performing the duty of the office they decide to run for and if elected they either resign or stay away from meetings until their office is declared vacant.

But if they chance to be defeated what a holler they raise about it. They charge their friends with double-crossing, threaten never to attend any more meetings; they are through for good as far as activity in union affairs is concerned, and make all kinds of statements under the moment's impulse.

We have in mind a case of a member of a certain Local Union, an extremely good mechanic and a mighty good fellow and very popular with the members. He neglected his education in his younger days so much so that it was an impossibility for him to keep the books of a Local Union properly, which is many a good true union man's deficiency.

This brother was nominated for the office of Financial Secretary. He knew full well he could not fulfill the duties of that important office, in fact his friends also knew it, and they would have voted him anything the Local had if he needed it, but they figured they would be doing the Local Union, themselves and him an injustice if they voted for him and he was defeated for the office by an overwhelming vote.

He said nothing to anyone after the result was announced, but the following day informed all who spoke to him that he was through with the union as far as attending meetings and activities in the Local Union's affairs were concerned, and we are informed he never attended another meeting while he remained in the jurisdiction of that Local Union.

He felt grieved because the members among whom he was popular did not vote for him. He knew in his heart he could not properly attend to the duties of the office, but still he wanted the honor bestowed upon him.

It is unnecessary to state that the members did right in casting their votes against him, and he was wrong in allowing his name to go before them as a candidate for the office.

The question of officers should not be decided by the popularity of the candidates but by their competency and ability to fulfill the duties of the office to which they aspire.

Cold-blooded horse sense should be used in selecting officers. Pick out the candidate you know has the required ability to conduct the affairs of the office properly, the fellow you know will be at the meeting hall promptly and ready to do his duty when the time for opening the meeting arrives and who will in the interim between meetings, attend to the business of the Union referred to them.

The fact you may not like a candidate personally should not influence you in this important matter.

A union to exist and progress must transact its business in businesslike manner and you must have officers who not only know how to transact the business of their respective offices but who will transact it properly and promptly.

TEACH THE APPRENTICE

What are you doing towards the welfare of your apprentices? Remember that they will be the journeymen of tomorrow and that it is your duty to assist them in every way possible to learn the trade properly.

Increasing their wages while learning is not as beneficial to them as knowledge of the trade and efficiency in it for with those two elements mastered their earning power will be established and they will be able to demand and receive good wages when they have the full responsibilities of life on their shoulders and don't forget his trades union education is as important as his mechanical.

HELP! HELP!! HELP!!!

We are growing at a nice healthy rate each month thanks to our members and organizers. Let us all put our shoulders to the wheel and help the good work along. Co-operation will accomplish results where individual effort fails. Let us have more co-operation in the future than we have had in the past. The I.B. will benefit thereby which means we will all benefit.

Send for some organizing pamphlets and distribute them among the non-unionists you know.

A TOAST

Here's to the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, which has raised our wages, bettered our working conditions, shortened our workday, brought sunshine into our homes, made life worth living for us. May it grow stronger and wiser as it grows older and continue to exist and progress so long as the sun rises and sets so that those who follow us in our calling will benefit and prosper by it.

A good way to prevent dissension from spreading in you Local is to search for the chairman of the rumor committee, find him and make him report to the next regular meeting. If he refuses expose him. Then he will have to make good or hold his peace.

Let us hope the next twenty-five years will see the Brotherhood reach the highest rung in the ladder of the American Labor movement.