



INTERNATIONAL BROTHERHOOD OF ELECTRICAL WORKERS

LOCAL 1288

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March 2009

WEBSITE ADDRESS: www.ibewlocal1288.com

Newsletter

OFFICERS

William "Rick" Thompson
Business Manager

Trent Ward
Assistant Business
Manager

William "Bill" Hawkins
Assistant Business
Manager

J.D. Cox
President

Paul Lundy
Vice President
Chairman of Board

Ruth Taylor
Recording Secretary

Jacqueline D. Tabor
Financial Secretary

Marie Shotwell
Treasurer

Sleeping Through A Revolution



Rick Thompson
Business Manager

At some point in high school, many of you probably read the story by *Washington Irving* called "*Rip Van Winkle*". If you will recall, when *Rip Van Winkle* went to sleep, King George was on the throne of England, and the American colonies were still under British control. When he woke up, King George was no longer on the throne and the colonies had become a new nation with George Washington as its President. This story is not just about a man going to sleep for a long time. ***It is about a man who was unaware of what was going on while dramatic changes were taking place all around him.***

A revolution can be defined as "*a sweeping or dramatic change*". When we look at the history of Memphis Light, Gas and Water Division, it is clear that a number of sweeping and/or

dramatic changes have taken place. During these periods of change or revolution, many of us, like *Rip Van Winkle*, have slept and continue to sleep through the changes or revolution. We are often in a state of ***unconsciousness*** or ***unawareness*** of the changes taking place around us.

Memphis Light, Gas and Water Division has gone through leadership after leadership and this can signal a dramatic change in this company, in what many say is "*in the wrong direction*". It signals a counter revolution or a change backwards where this company once again appears to become tolerant of exclusion, injustice, harassment, treating customers wrong, etc. This counter revolution, like the revolution in *Rip Van Winkle* did not occur overnight, it occurred over a period of time. The changes which led to this counter-revolution occurred over a period of time when Union members failed to remain awake and alert. Many of ***those among us, to whom much had been given, did not continue the struggle that was required to sustain the gains that had been made.***

"Wake up everybody, no more sleeping!" It is high time the employees wake up at MLGW. Take off the "*rose colored glasses*" and "*smell the coffee*". There are a ***few*** employees that are giving away their employment by using drugs, alcohol and other substances that will be detected when a drug test is done.

It is time for all employees to rededicate ourselves to our jobs for security and the good of our company. We need to reestablish pride and love for one another as sisters and brothers. When one of us hurts, we should all feel the pain. When one of us loses our job senselessly, we all should feel the loss. We need to reinvent our job skills, training and education, to demand the jobs we want and are qualified to perform.

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EXECUTIVE BOARD

ELECTRIC:

Brian Cook
Tony Carter

GAS:

Greg Vailes
John Jones

WATER:

Corey Hester

GENERAL SERVICES:

Brunetta Mason
Michael Jones

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Union Leaders, members and others must remain awake and committed to the vision that none of us can find justice as long as there is *injustice anywhere*.

Open your eyes and minds to what is being done at the company. There appears to be a strategic move to change the company and its culture from the good customer services we once delivered to customers and the level of training of its employees from *quality* focus to *quantity goal driven*. There is so much focus on serving a lot of customers, and not in totally satisfying the customers. It seems to be all about the number's impersonation and not the true reality of what is needed for our customers and the employees.

In April 1968 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered what many have called his most prophetic speech in Memphis. In that speech he warned that we faced some difficult days ahead. As we stand in the 21st century, we are indeed living in perilous times and it seems clear that we will indeed face difficult days ahead.

We can overcome the obstacles and barriers that are placed in our way, as we have always done, by uniting and then finding a way around them. Thus, while we will have to deal with the most Anti-Union leadership and a lot of mean spiritedness that is directly in opposition to our progress, *"This too shall pass"*. For our part, we can speed up that day when dramatic changes will again lead Memphis Light, Gas and Water Division back to the values Dr. King believed in and spoke about. What is needed is for those of us who are leaders, members and others to remain awake and committed to the vision that, *"If there is no justice, there is no peace"*.

It is a new day, a new morning and a new beginning for all of us. It is time for a change in all of us at MLGW, in what we do and how we do what we do as it relates to our jobs. America just elected *Barack Obama*, our first black, President and Commander in Chief of these United States. This was a dramatic and radical change for our country. This country has finally reached a point of wanting a change so bad that race, color nor gender did not matter. It should be motivational and inspiring to all of us by the removal of racial barriers in making the right choice to move this company, this city and this country forward.

In conclusion, we at Memphis Light, Gas and Water Division must be of the same mind set as we were in electing President, Barack Obama. We must want *positive changes* so bad at MLGW, that we will do everything in our power that is *legally* possible, to accomplish that goal.

IBEW NEGOTIATION 2009

By Rick Thompson, Business Manager

IBEW's Union Contract expires, January 1, 2010. We are getting ready to start contract negotiations with MLGW's management. The IBEW negotiation team members have been selected. The negotiation team members are:

Rick Thompson, Business Manager—Chief Negotiator
Bill Hawkins, Assistant Business Manager
J.D. Cox, President -----Electric Department
John Jones, Executive Board -----Gas Department
Corey Hester, Executive Board --Water Department
Ruth Taylor, Recording Secretary--General Services

The negotiation team members were selected because of their dedication, high attendance to all meetings and their hard work as your elected officers. The negotiation team members represent each division of service at MLGW and serve as stewards or chief stewards of that division of service.

We are soliciting your support with any ideas that you have to make changes to the language in the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). Please submit your suggestions in writing to the Union Office within the next thirty (30) days. The Union's negotiation team will start meeting in March 2009. IBEW's contract proposals must be exchanged with MLGW's contract proposals by July 1, 2009. The contract negotiation must be settled by November 1, 2009 to avoid an impasse. If the contract is not settled by November 1, 2009, per city ordinance, IBEW's and MLGW's last best offer in their proposed contract will go before the Memphis City Council to be settled. The City Council will choose one or the other contract offer. They will not cherry pick parts or pieces of either contract, but will decide on a total contract of IBEW or MLGW. IBEW's team will negotiate in good faith and be reasonable and hope MLGW's management negotiation team will do the same.

UNION SUMMIT

By Rick Thompson, Business Manager

Unions across the country are experiencing one of the worst economic times that has been witnessed in the last fifty (50) years. This economic situation is having a major adverse impact on all Unions across the country. IBEW Local 1288 Union will be spearheading another Union Summit in the City of Memphis in the *very* near future.

The Union Summit will be aimed at bringing all Unions together in Memphis and Shelby County. To come up with a strategic plan to *unify*; in an effort to survive and protect Union jobs. There are approximately 40,000 employees represented by Unions in Memphis and Shelby County times 4 family members represent approximately 200,000 people affected.

Many of the local Politicians will also be invited to participate in this effort to prevent possible job loses in this city and county. The Union Summit participants will first meet and look at involving their company's Executive Management Team and other directors in city and county government that have involvement with Unions.

J.D. POWER SURVEYS

By Rick Thompson, Business Manager

For the last few years, Memphis Light, Gas and Water Division has come in last place, as it relates to rating the division in terms of giving the customers good Customer Service. The Bargaining Unit employees at MLGW really care about the customers of Memphis and Shelby County. MLGW's internal surveys are not a true representation of the reality of the over all perception of the customers or the employees. **While it is the Union's position, that the employees of MLGW are the best workers in the country and come second to none.** However, we must agree with the past and present J.D. Power Surveys for a number of reasons:

1. Management makes policies that hurt customer service.
2. Management does not utilize the employee's expertise properly.
3. Management does not listen to employees who are doing the job.
4. Low employee morale at MLGW is negatively affecting customer service.
5. Employee's lack of trust and confidence in management also affects customer service.
6. Employees believe that management/executive level is sabotaging the company.
7. Many management employees that are being hired or promoted, do not know or understand the culture of their departments, employees and customers they service.
8. Many employees believe that management tries to hurt the customers and employees.
9. Employees feel that their management lacks the skills and training to manage them.
10. Employees' perceptions are that executive level management has set the tone for insensitive and little respect for the customers and the employees.

To get off the bottom of the J.D. Power Survey, many management/executive level at MLGW must change their total mind set. Management must stop giving the pretense/illusion that they are taking care of the customers, and **truly** start taking care of the customers by **really** meeting their needs. Many of the Customer Service/Customer Care and other departmental management/executive employees appear to lack the expertise and or ability to manage employees and are totally **void** of what customer service is about.

Management must acknowledge that the employees are the first line of communication and must begin treating them with respect as team members and show them respect in their profession. This will be a major step forward to help **boost morale** in a positive way. When management stops "**back door**" trying to tear down and destroy the Union leadership and divide it from its membership; then the Union's leadership can encourage employees to become positive **ambassadors** for the company and to the customers. Management should realize and must understand that the IBEW Union's leadership and its members are one in the same and come as a package deal. When MLGW did treat its employees and customers with respect, the morale was high. That was why we were rated at the top of the J.D. Power Surveys. Once executive level management sets the tone and **truly** start treating our members/employees with total respect, then we stand willing and ready to encourage our members to be ambassadors to help move MLGW to the top of the J.D. Power Surveys.

ORGANIZING/MEMBERSHIP INVITATION

By Trent Ward, Assistant Business Manager

While the union membership of IBEW Local 1288 is higher than it has ever been, we still are short of our goal, which is **100%** membership of bargaining unit employees at MLGW. The number one priority of the International Union and IBEW Local 1288 is organizing all bargaining unit employees. It is mandated by the International Convention, to the International Executive Council, to the International President, to the International Vice President, to the Local Union Business

Manager, to the Chief Stewards, Stewards, Alternate Stewards and membership and enforced by the International Representative, that we hold two special organizing campaigns a year. If every steward and member in each department would work to sign-up all non-members, we would be at 100% membership and will not be required to have special organizing campaigns, bi-yearly.

Points of Interest

By Bill Hawkins, Assistant Business Manager

- 1) All IBEW Union Chief Stewards, Stewards, Alternate Stewards and Committee Members should be present at at-least fifty percent (50%) of the General Membership Meetings on the first (1st) Thursday of each month at 5:30p.m. and be present at fifty percent (50%) of the Steward's Meetings on the third (3rd) Thursday of each month at 5:30p.m.
- 2) IBEW Union staff and all Chief Stewards will meet with Jerry Collins and his Vice Presidents on a quarterly basis to address concerns and issues in departments and try to team build beginning in March 2009.
- 3) The Gas Distribution Department's Overtime Committee just recently created and signed their first Overtime Policy with the assistance of the Union's Business Manager, Rick Thompson and Labor Relation's Assistant Manager, Steve Day.
- 4) Employee's grievances are being held at third (3rd) step, bi-weekly, four days a week at different locations in an attempt to hear and resolve the grievances. Stewards, employees, foremen/chiefs, supervisors and managers are expected to make every effort to resolve grievances at the lowest possible level.
- 5) MLGW's Apprenticeship Programs have a high dropout rate. Business Manager, Rick Thompson, is trying to develop a plan to schedule quarterly meetings at the Training Center/MLGW University with CEO, Jerry Collins and all the apprentices, in an effort to try to resolve the high dropout rate in the programs.
- 6) Bargaining Unit employees have asked IBEW about the possibility of having a separate United Way campaign from MLGW. Some Bargaining Unit employees want IBEW to use its extra payroll deduction slot for their separate United Way donations. IBEW will look at the feasibility of taking on such a campaign.

General Membership Meeting

1st Thursday of each Month – 5:30pm

Stewards Meeting

3rd Thursday of each Month – 5:30 pm

Reduction in Work Force

By Bill Hawkins, Assistant Business Manager

January 2009, a decision was made by MLGW management to have a reduction in work force in the Gas Distribution Department. There has not been a reduction in work force in the Gas Department in our work history at MLGW. The decision was made by MLGW management to eliminate one crew leader's position in the Gas Distribution Department. IBEW Union was also given the information that if the economic situation in Memphis and Shelby County do not improve by June 2009, then management could possibly eliminate an additional five to six more crews in the Gas Distribution Department.

IBEW Union has requested information from MLGW management regarding all the management's positions that they have created and/or filled for management employees since 2004 in the Gas Department. Once this information has been received, IBEW union will do a review of all positions in management to make sure that MLGW management and professional exempt positions are not increasing while they are decreasing the number of bargaining unit positions. IBEW Union will do everything to make sure that it protect its members (bargaining unit employees) from being affected negatively by any reduction in work force or lay offs at MLGW.

It is time for the workers to come together and support your union as your union support and represent you in these challenging economic times. Your support and input is needed now more than ever by attending the monthly general membership and steward meetings. Employees in every department are the eyes and ears of the union; and there are often changes occurring in your department that can signal a negative change is about to happen to affect your position. Your union stewards also need your help in being watchful. Please inform your union of any changes in the work you do or in your department, no matter how small or insignificant it may seem to you.

As we go through these uncertain economic times, your union will do everything within its power to make sure you and your family are protected.

Thought For Today

The tragedy in life doesn't lie in not reaching your goal. The tragedy lies in having no goal to reach. It isn't a calamity to die with dreams unfulfilled, but it is a calamity not to dream. It is not a disaster to be unable to capture your idea, but it is a disaster to have no idea to capture. It is not a disgrace not to reach the stars, but it is a disgrace to have no stars to reach for. Not failure, but low aim is sin.