



## **INTERNATIONAL BROTHERHOOD OF ELECTRICAL WORKERS LOCAL UNION 953 NEWS - MARCH 2016**

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Hello Brothers and Sisters:

Winter is winding down and Spring is in the air! Soon we will be enjoying the outdoors without having to be all bundled up, like we were at the Local 953 Ice Fishing Contest. Five below zero -5 at the start of the contest. Even with the cold weather, we had our largest turnout to date, 63 members signed up bring along family members for a grand total of 92 participants. Now, if we could just get the fish to bite! This year's fishing prizes went to:

1st Place - Landon Romsos

2nd Place - Keith Zenner

Consolation prizes went to Carter Luzinski, Ryan Secraw, Chase Secraw and Eric Losinski.

The winners of the Raffle prizes consisting of 3 guns were: Sherwin Newman, Steve Harleson and Martin Link.

There were also several \$100.00 drawings given out as a result of the gun raffle. Congratulations to all of the winners!

This year is election year for all of the officers and delegates to the International Convention. The required information is enclosed in this newsletter. Please take the time to read the information carefully and if you have any questions, please contact the Union Hall.

I have made the decision to retire at the end of this term in July and I will not be running for the Business Manager position. I wish to thank all of you who have supported me while I was an Assistant Business Manager for Local 953 and most of all for the last 6 years while I have been your Business Manager/Financial Secretary. It has been an honor and a privilege to work with you and for you the last 17 years - Thank you!

In Solidarity,

*Dale Blank*

Business Manager  
Financial Secretary

Are you aware that if you are being interviewed by your employer and you have reason to believe that your answers may lead to discipline or other adverse action, you have the right to request that Union representation be present before answering any further related questions. Even if the individual carrying out the interview makes a statement similar to something like he is only interested in finding out what happened, if you have reason to believe that it may lead to discipline, stop the meeting exercise your rights and request that union representation be present before proceeding. The rights that I am referring to are your Weingarten Rights and they were established by the Supreme Court in 1975. If an individual was to make a request of management for representation only to have that request denied, first off, management would be guilty of an unfair labor practice and secondly, chances are that anything stated by that individual would more than likely be discarded by an arbitrator at a later date. Keeping in mind of course that the individual asserted his rights and did in fact first request to be represented. Also there is some question as to whether or not the company has a responsibility to inform the individual of those rights. Even though there have been some arbitrators who have ruled that a members contractual just cause provisions go beyond Weingarten and that management has a responsibility to inform a member of their right to representation, rather than depend on the inconsistent opinion of others, I highly recommend that our members make their own request thereby eliminating any question. Likewise, management does not have the right to appoint your representation, the Union reserves that right.

Regarding your Weingarten Rights, your options are as follows;

1) Request Representation; ..."I believe this discussion could lead to my being disciplined. I therefore request that my union representative be present to assist me at the meeting. I further request reasonable time to consult with my union representative regarding the subject and purpose of the meeting. Please consider this a continuing request; without representation I shall not participate in the discussion. I shall not consent to any searches or tests affecting my person, property, or effects without first consulting with my union representative."

2) If representation is not available you have a right to;

A- Request to discontinue the meeting until such time that representation is available. (Remember, the Company does not appoint your representation)

B- Continue on with the meeting.  
(Not recommended)

On another matter, the Union recently filed a grievance against the Company for violating the Labor Agreement. In that grievance, the Union stated in part that it was not in agreement with either the training of, or future utilization of the gas and electric distribution classifications to perform cross-functional locating duties. No dates to meet have been received from the Company at this time.

Thanks to all who have supported the Union in any way regarding this concern. Your support of the Utility and Service Technician Classifications has been nothing short of outstanding.

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## THE SCAB

"AFTER GOD HAD FINISHED THE RATTLESNAKE, THE TOAD, AND THE VAMPIRE, HE HAD SOME AWFUL STUFF LEFT WITH WHICH HE MADE A SCAB.

"A SCAB IS A TWO-LEGGED ANIMAL WITH A CORKSCREW SOUL, A WATERLOGGED BRAIN, AND A COMBINATION BACKBONE MADE OF JELLY AND GLUE. WHERE OTHERS HAVE HEARTS, HE CARRIES A TUMOR OR ROTTEN PRINCIPLES...JUDAS ISCARIOT WAS A GENTLEMAN COMPARED TO A SCAB FOR BETRAYING HIS MASTER. HE HAD THE CHARACTER TO HANG HIMSELF-THE SCAB HASN'T...THERE IS NOTHING LOWER THAN A SCAB."

JACK LONDON

Robert J Lahti, Asst. Business Mgr.  
Practicing Solidarity Since 1981

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Dear Brother and Sisters,

It was great to see the record turnout for the ice fishing contest on February 13<sup>th</sup>. Participation by members and their families, from many different Units that are represented by Local Union 953, continues to increase and it will be interesting to see how big this event gets in the future. It is a great day of fun, camaraderie, and a great show of solidarity.

If you were not aware, Jump River Electric Cooperative (2 separate units) was organized and Local 953 was certified as the exclusive collective bargaining representative by the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) on November 27, 2015. We have been spending a great deal of time working on informational requests, acquiring about the employees concerns, and preparing a draft contract for proposals to the employer. We had our first bargaining session on February 22<sup>nd</sup> and will be working to negotiate first contracts for both bargaining units.

Between the months of May 2016 and January 31, 2017, Local 953 has 15 contracts expiring and due for negotiations. As members, you should be thinking of the amendments you want to bring forward for negotiations and when it is time to Vote on your contract, exercise your right to do so. The Agreements reached through negotiations between the Union and the Employer establish your wages, hours, benefits, grievance procedures, and working conditions; all benefits that we as Union Members have come to cherish and can only be changed through negotiations or effects of the law. The vast majority of individuals in our Country in the private sector do not receive these benefits and if they do, they can be stripped of them in a moment's notice by the employer because the employees have not exercised their right under the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) to organize and form a Union. As we have seen in Wisconsin and in many other States in this Nation, the governing bodies have decimated the collective bargaining rights of public sector workers and those so called leaders are continuing to chip away at any civil service protections those employees have or had. The aforementioned is a very important reminder to Union members because it shows us why we need Unions and why they were formed in the first place. We must remain members, stay united, and with a collective voice continue the fight to maintain and improve the terms and conditions of our Labor Agreements and make sure that Unions stay in existence for the workers that come after us.

In addition to negotiations, we have the normal day to day issues and grievances so the next several months will continue to be very busy. As normal, we will be looking for the continued knowledge, assistance, and support from the stewards and all members. Thanks to all for your past help and we look forward to working together with you as we attack the many challenges that lie ahead.

In Solidarity,  
Martin Sandberg, Asst. Business Mgr.

Hello Brothers and Sisters;

Once again, days are getting longer and the weather is getting warmer, the Spring season is just around the corner.

I just want to thank all of you that braved the bitter cold and came out to enjoy the annual ice fishing contest. we had a total of 92 registrants, several nice fish were measured and many great prizes were awarded.

I am currently working very hard on organizing the employees at several locations, if your company hires NON-UNION contractors please let me know who they are and where they are working, this helps me out a great deal as it can be very difficult to find these contractors!

Local 953 currently has over 1,500 members, if all of you members keep an eye out for NON-UNION contractors working in the field, you can imagine how this will help our efforts in organizing. If you work alongside these contractors in the field don't be afraid to talk to them about the positives of working under a collective bargaining agreement, things like this go along ways when it comes to organizing. Remember always treat them with respect, we want to leave them with a positive thought about Union workers!!!

Always wear your PPE as it is the first line of defense.

In Solidarity,

Stacey Nelson  
Local 953, Organizer

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Dear Members,

I would like to give a brief update on some important topics many of you are associated with. First, I am happy to report that Local 953 and 2150 jointly settled the Power Agreement which covers Union electrical projects performed by contractors in Wisconsin. Both Unions entered into early negotiations to address funding issues, due to increases in Health Insurance costs. A three year extension was reached that included new funding levels for Health Insurance and a conversion to a Health Reimbursement Account (HRA) attached to

the plan. A general wage increase of 3% effective June 1<sup>st</sup> this year and next year, concluding with 3.25% wage increase the last year of the agreement. I feel this is a strong settlement, which I hope sets the tone for upcoming negotiations at many of your Co-ops, Dairyland Power and Xcel Energy.

Second, I wanted to give a brief update on the Badger Coulee transmission power line project. As many may know this 180 mile high voltage project was approved by the Public Service Commission (PSC) in Wisconsin last April and will connect a 345 KV line from La Crosse to Madison. IBEW Local 953 worked along with other interested parties to endorse and promote this project along the best possible route. This project will supply countless job opportunities for us and create a stronger more reliable transmission system in the Midwest. Some work has already started with the majority of the project to begin later this Spring and Summer.

Third, I wanted to share with you that Local 953 is in the process of negotiating the first contract for newly organized workers at Jump River Electric Cooperative in Ladysmith and Hayward, WI. I will be working along with Assistant Business Manager Marty Sandberg who has been preparing for this contract. Marty and I had our first negotiation session on February 22<sup>nd</sup> with more dates scheduled in March and April. Please support these workers in their effort to secure a first agreement. Thank you!

Brady Weiss  
Asst. Business Manager

