

April, 2006

President's Column

CAPITOL RALLY

On March 28th the Missouri Building and Construction Trades Council held a rally in Jefferson City at the State Capitol Building. The purpose of this get-together was to protest the shabby treatment that union construction workers get from our Republican lead Legislature. Working families are not getting a fair shake from their state government.

We fanned out and got the chance to go around and talk to several of our State Senators and Representatives about the issues affecting us on a daily basis; *job targeting, project labor agreements, and right to work* to name a few. Several thousand construction workers showed up from all over our state. I'm proud to tell you that Local 396 had 108 members in attendance. Officers, retirees, members laid off, members who took a day off and apprentices comprised our group. It was a great day and a great turnout for us.

Getting involved at any level is an important factor if we expect to get this state going our way again. A huge thank you goes out to the members that made the trek to Jeff City an enormous success.

41ST INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION

Nomination of Delegates and election of judges were held at the March meeting. A sample ballot will be mailed soon. The nominees and judges are listed in this Newsletter. The election will be held on Saturday, April 29th, 8:00 A.M. to 6:00 P.M. at the union hall. Please plan to vote in this very important election.

BIG BOX STORES

Wal-Mart gets bashed a lot these days for their business practice. I think it is deserved. With that said, obviously people continue to shop Wal-Mart in very large numbers. I don't shop there and will knowingly shop other places that have higher prices with the hope that the employees are earning a living wage. The flip side here is that I understand household budgets and the bottom line of limited resources.

Maybe the baby can be split. I am referring to Costco. This is not necessarily an endorsement of Costco, but a comparison of these two mammoth corporations might help people caught in the middle of trying to do the right thing and being on a tight fixed budget.

A huge part of the problem is Wal-Mart's corporate philosophy: Executives first, then shareholders, then customers, then suppliers and finally employees. Costco on the other hand puts customers first, then employees, then vendors, and lastly are the shareholders.

Average Hourly Wage		Percentage of U.S. Workforce in Unions	
Wal-Mart \$9.68	Costco \$16.00	Wal-Mart 0.0%	Costco 17.9%

Employees Covered by Company Health Ins.		Employees Who Leave After One Year	
Wal-Mart 48%	Costco 82%	Wal-Mart 21%	Costco 6%

**Info for above table referenced from Dollars & Sense Jan./Feb. Magazine.*

How does Costco do it? By the latest figures, in 2004 Wal-Mart paid CEO Lee Scott \$5.3 Million, while a full-time employee making the average Wal-Mart wage would have received \$20,144.00. During this same time period Costco paid CEO Jim Senegal \$350,000.00, while an average full-time Costco employee was compensated \$33,280.00. Wal-Mart wages are 12.4% below the average wage for retail workers. They are 15% below the average wage of workers at large retailers and when you factor in unionized grocery workers, Wal-Mart trails by 30%. Wal-Mart's average wage is \$9.68. The average U.S. wage is \$17.80 and Costco pays an average of \$16.00 an hour (as presented in the box). So... if you do or must shop Big Box, Costco is clearly better to their employees.

A reminder: Safety is #1; Productivity is #2. Have a safe month.

- Chuck Decker

Business Manager's Column

We worked a total of 182,539 man-hours for the month and dispatched 24 men to 18 jobs. Work continues to be slow coming out of the hall but there are many indications from various contractors that they will need plenty of help in the near future.

HOLCIM CONCRETE PLANT

There was a groundbreaking ceremony on March 24 for the Holcim Concrete Plant in Ste. Genevieve County. Almost 500 people were in attendance and after seven years, this project has finally become a reality. The plant will cost around 1 billion dollars and will employ up to a couple hundred ironworkers for over 3 years. At the present time Bloomsdale Excavating has over 100 men working on the project, who are operators, laborers and teamsters. The general contractor bid packages are presently going out to bid and hopefully by the 3rd Quarter of this year, we will start seeing a significant number of ironworkers on the job.

LABOR RALLY

The Missouri Building Trades held a Labor Rally on March 28 in Jefferson City and we had a terrific turnout. We had over 100 members make the trip, which included retirees, unemployed ironworkers and ironworkers who took the day off. There were well over 3,000 building tradesmen in attendance, which made the Rally a huge success. This was a big day for the Building Trades to show our Republican leadership the solidarity that we have in the Building Trades and the dissatisfaction that we have with their leadership in our state.

We had nominations for our 41st International Convention at our March Union Meeting. The election will be April 29. We will have 9 delegates representing us at the Convention in August. Hope to have a big turn-out on Election Day and everyone exercises his or her right to vote.

Work safe.

- Tom McNeil