

# Summer, 2006

## President's Column

### POLITICS

A mid term election is once again upon us. I have to say things are not too grand. The Republicans have been in charge of our country for more than a decade and have a woeful record. The Federal deficit is currently \$477 Billion, and spiraling out of control. Health care reform or any thing resembling improvement is and has been non-existent with the present Bush administration. An unnecessary war in Iraq that seems to have no end in sight and continues operations off the books (this war is not in the country's annual budget). Contrary to the Bush cabal "Mission Accomplished" is a ways off.

It seems that the Republican Party Plank for the fall election consists of gay marriage and stem cell research. How can they continue to get away with these non issues? Statistics and studies tell us that the gay population stands at a low of 2.8% up to a high of 10.7%. I think the rational thing would be civil unions / no marriage. On the stem cell front, anything past the approved stem cell line constitutes cloning a human or wanton destruction of human life. Neither is the case. Advances in possible cures for diabetes, pancreatic cancer and paralyzed folks, to name a few, are in the balance. If you are of the persuasion that life starts in the Petri dish shouldn't grow human beings be given a consideration?

The Republicans have no record to run on and continue to get away with fear mongering and hot button moral issues. Don't allow them to get away with it. Let's ask ourselves, what about Health Care, Education, Infrastructure, Seniors, Social Security, Children's Issues, the Iraq War, Immigration and our standing in the rest of the world? Their (Republicans) grade should be a huge "F"! We need to change leadership in this country as soon as possible. This November would be a good start. Get out and exercise your right to vote. This Republican majority has got to go if we are to get this country on the right track.

### RETIREES ON MEDICARE

A slight change in pharmacy coverage for our retirees on Medicare A & B will become effective 8/01/06. A detailed communication should have been received by the retirees affected. If you have any questions in this very important issue give me a call Carving this group out of the existing drug

coverage saved the fund 8% on the future price hike we would have had to pay in August. The impact should be no more than 10% changing medication and 10% paying slightly more than they do now. Some retirees will see a decrease. Additionally, pharmacy co-pays will be three tiers at \$10/\$25/\$50.

The Trustees are doing everything we can to contain cost without huge increases to pharmacy charges. All the new information and any questions you have will be answered at a special retirees meeting on 7/27/06, 11:00 A.M. Lunch will be served. Please call Ralph Hall or Norville Naes if you plan to attend so we have enough food. Our only hope at this point is a government led by the progressive middle that develops a national health plan for all citizens.

### PENSION & WELFARE

A special membership meeting was held on July 9th for increases in the health insurance and pension. This meeting was after this newsletter went to press. Both increases are for status quo. The insurance, at a \$.15 increase, would leave things as they are and the pension, also at a \$.15 increase, would maintain our \$106.00 credit. Also in July a Pension & Welfare Trustee Meeting was held of which the results will be in this space next Newsletter.

Plans are in the making for a special meeting, in the fall, to discuss all aspects of the health and welfare survey conducted in March. Husbands and wives are welcome and I encourage them to attend.

I hope everyone had a great 4th of July holiday. A reminder: Safety is #1; Productivity is #2. Have a safe month.

- Chuck Decker

### Business Manager's Column

Work has picked up this past month. We worked 160,309 hours and dispatched 51 men to 23 jobs. This of course was for the month of June.

We are closing in on our first year of our three-year term. We have seen our work steadily increase throughout the year. Our unemployment hit a high of around 12% this winter and stands currently at 5%. It looks like we are finally turning the corner. There are quite a few good-sized projects coming up in the

near future and the business agents in their respective areas will report on them in their columns. The future is looking bright and I do believe the second half of this year is going to be the beginning of full employment for the next couple of years.

Even though work is going to be going strong for a while, we as ironworkers have got to upgrade our skills with the proper certification classes. As I have stated in previous newsletters, there are requirements that are needed to enter certain jobsites. Starting September 2, for all Ameren U.E. Powerhouses, you will be required to have OSHA 10 Safety Training and all supervisory personnel must have OSHA 30. The Holcim Concrete Plant in Ste. Genevieve and River Cement in Festus will require MSHA (Mine Safety) Training.

Of course all these jobs will require drug testing and most will require welders to be certified. Enclosed in this newsletter is a schedule of the classes that will be available throughout the months of August and September. We will continue to have classes throughout the year and hopefully by January 1, 2007, we will have 100% of our local with OSHA 10 Certification. These certifications are important tools not only to fight the non-union but also to procure our jurisdiction among the other trades, because if we don't supply the qualified manpower, they will.

### STATE POLITICS

The mid-term elections are coming up this fall. We need to get more members involved not only in the labor clubs but also volunteering for phone banks, knocking on doors, etc. At this writing, the polls are showing that we have an opportunity not only to pick up the M.S. Senate seat with Claire McCaskell, but also some state senate, state representative and other local municipal seats. So, let's try to find some time to get involved and give the Cope Committee Chairman, Bill Trendley, a call. Tell him you are available to help if needed.

In closing, I would just like to say we have completed a rough 4 years of work in our local and the future looks great. But the fight goes on - the fight against the non-union and the other trades. We have got to continue the work attitude and the work ethic that makes us the most productive trade in the Building Trades.

Work safe!

- Tom McNeil