

THE ACT REPORT

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The ACT Foundation is an association of West Virginia building and construction trades unions, with offices in Charleston and Clarksburg. Bruce Tarpley, President; Steve Burton, Vice President; T.L. Ranson, Secretary Treasurer; Roy Smith, Executive Director; Steve White, Director.

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Organizing, Education, PR Key Issues New Leadership For AFL-CIO

Elections at this year's AFL-CIO convention are expected to bring an almost completely new executive board to lead the state labor movement.

The West Virginia AFL-CIO is set to hold its annual statewide convention and elections on October 15 through 17 in Charleston.

With over half of the executive board seats being vacated by retirements a major change will take place at the convention.

According to Roy Smith, Secretary-Treasurer, the West Virginia State Building and Construction Trades Council is supporting a very diverse slate for this term, and in fact it is made up of more unions than ever before.

"We have worked hard over the last year to pull together two teams. First we support

the team of Jim Bowen of the Steelworkers and Kenny Perdue of the Sheet Metal Workers for President and Secretary Treasurer.

"We are about to see a major change in the AFL-CIO, we have no one to blame but ourselves if we don't ensure the change is for the benefit of our members and all working families in West Virginia."

**-Roy Smith,
State Building Trades**

The Steelworkers and the Trades represent almost half of the AFL-CIO's membership and

we believe by working together we can advance the whole labor movement."

"At the same time we came together with a very strong group of trade unionists to establish a new executive board."

Smith points out the vice president slate includes only three of the twelve current office holders.

"We set out to find the most active, hardest working leaders who had significant membership in the state. We ended up with great diversity in the type of union people represented, and probably most importantly, people who ex-

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General Pipeline Signs Agreement

A Boone County project putting in 4500 ft. of 12" pipeline was picketed in mid-September for four days until the contractor, General Pipeline, signed a contract with both the Laborers and the Operating Engineers.

According to Gary Tillis,

business manager for the Laborer's District Council, the project's owners were Cranberry Pipeline Corporation (Cabot Oil and Gas).

General Pipeline, based in Amma, W.Va., employs about 20 Laborers in its peak season.

"We signed a statewide agreement with General Pipeline's owner, John O'Dell, that covers all of General

Pipeline's future small pipeline contracts," Tillis said.

The informational picket was manned by members of Laborers Local 1353 — Jim Mobley, Craig Harvey, Walt Jarrett, Burl Melton, John Kincaid, Otho Tillis, and Kenny Mobley; and members of 543 Henry Dillon and Tim Millne.

Tillis said the 20 new La-

borers will probably be signed up to Local 1353.

"I want to thank the members of 1353 and 543 for helping, as well as the employees of General Pipeline," Tillis said, "because without them we wouldn't have gotten it signed."

General Pipeline was going through mine property at

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Pipefitters/Ironworks Sign Contract

A contract between Plumbers & Fitters Local 625 and Ironworks Fabrication Services in Cross Lanes was signed in September.

Its approximately 20 employees are now members of Local 625.

The company was organized by the WV State Pipe Trades Association's new full-time statewide organizer, Tim 'Squirrel' Jividen.

Jividen said the company

was first targeted in February, and the employees voted in July to join the union.

The contract was negotiated by T.L. Ranson, business manager for Local 625 and Ironworks' president Kent Miller.

"Negotiations went smoothly and peacefully," Ranson said. "We didn't have to picket, the agreement was signed and both sides are happy."

The agreement brought the shop up to the same standards

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SIGNING THE CONTRACT are T.L. Ranson, Pipefitters Business Manager and Ironworks President Kent Miller.

Schodder Strike Results In New Contract

After a month-long strike against Schodder Manufacturing Co. in Wheeling, seven employees were rewarded with a new contract.

Members of Sheet Metal Workers Local 33 employed by Schodder went on strike August 11 through Sept. 12.

The new contract is for building trades residential construction and a light service

agreement, according to Randy Gombos, organizer for Local 33.

Gombos said he and fellow Local 33 organizer Matt Oakes negotiated the contract.

He said the company was targeted in November of 1996 because he "ran into them on some prevailing wage jobs and I knew they were growing -- they had as many as 15 employees at one time."

Employees install, fabricate,

repair, and service heating and air conditioning systems.

An election was held in Feb-

"We would like to welcome Schodder aboard and hope they grow with us."

**-Randy Gombos,
Local 33 Organizer**

ruary of this year and it went in favor of the union.

"But on the day of the election, some unfair labor prac-

tices occurred -- some employees were laid off and some company vehicles were taken away," Gombos said.

"The strike was over unfair labor practices -- failure to bargain and a violation of workers' rights," Gombos said, "so the new contract cancels the failure to bargain complaint."

According to Gombos the other unfair labor charges concerning the violation of work-

ers rights have not been dropped.

"Those charges are still under investigation by the National Labor Relations Board. I'm hoping we can come to some type of agreement before they run the gamut but we are prepared to take it all the way," Gombos said.

"But we would like to welcome Schodder aboard and hope they grow with us," he said.

BIG CAT IS BIG FAN



R.A. "Big Cat" Soccorsi, a 25-year member of Laborers Local 379 in Morgantown, was named the No. 1 Mountaineer Fan prior to the WVU Marshall Football game August 30.

He beat out more than 100 other contestants to win a Mountaineer Football.

Soccorsi, of Brookhaven, helped build the Mountaineer Field which was completed in 1978.

Pipefitters/Ironworks Contract

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Local 625 has in other fabrications shops in the area. The workers got a substantial hourly wage increase and a pension and annuity plan.

Jividen agreed, saying "the negotiation went unbelievably well. T.L. spent a lot of extra hours and time on this contract."

Ironworks is currently fabricating pipe for Columbia Gas, Ashland Oil Co., and Rhone-Poulenc among other projects.

"We didn't make promises that we couldn't keep, so the campaign hinged on credibility, as most of them do. Once they trusted us, everything went okay."

During the course of the organizing campaign, three employees were fired from the company, one on the day of the election and two shortly after.

The three were immediately made members of Local 625 and put to work within a week, with help from Parkersburg Local 565, Jividen said.

That part of the case was still pending before the NLRB, and was supposed to go to

court in November, according to Jividen.

"It would have involved reinstatement of their jobs and possibly backpay, but the men did not want to go back -- they decided they liked their new jobs.

"So I called the NLRB and had the charges dropped."

Jividen said in fact the suc-

cess of the three in immediately getting good jobs was very good for the campaign.

"The rest of the workers at Ironworks saw that the union took care of the guys that got fired.

"The campaign went smoothly once they learned we stood behind what we said,"

Jividen said.

Conventional ACT Members



ATTENDING ACT'S FIFTH ANNUAL PLANNING CONFERENCE are (from right) Steve Burton, business manager for Tri-State Building Trades Council, Dave McComas, business manager for Laborers Local 543, Huntington, Randy May, business agent for Carpenters Local 302, Huntington and T.L. Ranson, business manager for Plumbers & Pipefitters Local 625, Charleston. The convention was held in Morgantown.

New Leadership For AFL-CIO Organizing, Education, PR Key

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pressed a great willingness to participate and work on behalf of the labor movement."

Being elected to the executive board is an honor and a responsibility Smith noted.

"If elected, we expect them to work as a team and to remain active with the AFL-CIO and also to be active politically and to support the issues of the working men and women of this state," he said.

Among the many issues being pushed by Bowen, Perdue and the executive board slate are more emphasis and support for organizing, education, public relations and Central Labor Council involvement.

If this slate is elected, the building trades will have one member who is the secretary-treasurer and four people on the executive board.

Smith said he would like to urge building trades members who are delegates to the convention to support the slate because "it has been developed with the cooperation of building trades members from all over the state."

Whether or not there will be

opposition for any of the positions will not be known until the convention. Vice Presidents are nominated in caucuses held for each congressional district. And all positions must be elected by the majority of delegates seated at the convention.

Also on the agenda for the convention are several resolutions for changing the constitution.

"We are supporting a resolution that has to do with this slate and adding an additional vice-presidential seat to the third district because of the recent affiliation of 6,500 members of UMWA District 17," Smith said.

Additional proposals will be an increase in executive board meetings, from two per year to four, and a requirement that vice presidents who retire or those who stop participating will be replaced.

"We are about to see a major change in the AFL-CIO, we have no one to blame but ourselves if we don't ensure the change is for the benefit of our members and all working families in West Virginia."

State Building Trades Endorsements

1st District

(Northern Panhandle & North Central)

Sterling Ball

United Food & Commercial Workers

Dave Bielski

American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees

Bob Brown

American Federation of Teachers

Larry Linch

Carpenters

Bruce Tarpley

Operating Engineers

2nd District

(Central region & Eastern Panhandle)

Sheila Hamilton

United Auto Workers

Elaine Harris

Communication Workers

Larry Matheney

Steelworkers

Gary Tillis

Laborers

3rd District

(Southern region)

Teresa Ball

Service Employees

Steve Burton

Carpenters

Joe Chapman

Steelworkers

Bob Phalen

United Mine Workers

If you're a Delegate to the AFL-CIO convention please support State Building Trades endorsed candidates!

National Building Trades President Announces Win

Robert A. Georgine, President of the National Building Trades, recently announced the anti-union Associated Builders and Contractors ("ABC") has voluntarily dismissed the final two remaining cases where they challenge state prevailing wage laws on the grounds that the laws are pre-

empted by ERISA. ERISA covers federal laws regarding pension and other benefit funds.

And, the AFL-CIO Building and Construction Trades Department has been informed that ABC will no longer fund such challenges to state prevailing wage laws.

"In short," Georgine wrote in a memo to all Secretaries of State and Local Building and Construction Trades Councils,

"In short, it looks like the battle is officially over, and we have won."

-Robert Georgine, National Building and Construction Trades Council President

"it looks like the battle is officially over, and we have won."

Despite recent decisions by

the Supreme Court and two appellate courts in California, Michigan and New York, respectively, two cases remained pending at the district court level, where local ABC chapters challenged prevailing wage laws on the grounds of ERISA preemption.

The two cases that were dropped were in Ohio and

Georgia.

If successful, state prevailing wage laws would have been ruled in conflict with ERISA and had the effect of throwing out all state prevailing wage or "mini Davis-Bacon" laws.

Prevailing wage laws on the state and federal level continue to be attacked by those who want to use tax-funded projects to drive down the living standard of working families.

Vote 'Do Or Die' For Ohio Workers' Comp

The working men and women of Ohio are facing a big challenge in an upcoming special election vote November 4.

Issue 2 concerns reductions in workers comp benefits which would occur due to the passage of Senate Bill 45.

A "No" vote on Issue 2 would void that bill and keep workers' comp at its current level.

The Ohio AFL-CIO circulated petitions and got 414,000 signatures to challenge the implementation of the state law affecting workers comp benefits, according to Kent Darr, Communications Director.

"We collected roughly double the signatures needed with a coalition of injured workers, lawyers who represent them and labor," Darr said.

If Issue 2 is rejected by the voters of Ohio, Darr said, injured workers will continue to receive benefits and medi-

cal payments.

If it passes, and becomes law, it will allow a variety of changes in comp law that will "end up in a reduction or eliminate some benefits," Darr said.

Currently, television commercials on TV urging passage Issue 2 are being paid for by big business -- the Ohio Chamber of Commerce, the Ohio Round Table, and the Ohio Manufacturers Association.

Alan J. Chermak, Business Manager and President of Sheet Metal Workers Local 33 wrote a recent editorial concerning S.B. 45.

"The group whose best interest is served by the present status of Senate Bill 45 -- the Workers' Compensation Bill that was revised last year -- has already started their campaign with the recent ads you probably have seen.

"A 'No' vote is a vote for injured workers and their families."

**-Kent Darr,
Ohio AFL-CIO**

The commercials attack trial lawyers, who charge high fees to process Workers' Comp claims," Chermak wrote, "By attacking the related subject matter, however, it does not allow the voter to focus on the real substance of the issue. This high powered ad campaign is designed to make your mom's apple pie look like a slimy toadstool."

"If it passes it will cut employer costs by roughly 200 million per year," Darr said, "so big business would stand to gain billions of dollars.

"But it has to come from somewhere, and it would come from the benefits that go to injured workers. For example, one big cut they are proposing is reducing wage loss ben-

efits from 200 to 26 weeks," he said.

"Another would be reclassifying repetitive motion injuries, such as Carpel Tunnel Syndrome, that make it virtually impossible to get benefits. Incidence of Carpel Tunnel have increased over 55 percent in the last three years in Ohio, yet they wouldn't be recognized as workplace injuries," he said.

Chermak wrote, "If we allow this to happen, the system will be milked like a cow and then killed like the fattened calf, leaving the workers of Ohio with a dried up cow and the skeleton remains of a system once designed to treat workers fairly."

Darr said he would like to urge all ACT members who live in Ohio to please vote "No" on Issue 2.

"A 'No' vote is a vote for injured workers and their families," he said.

Organizing



The Construction Organizing Membership Education Training (COMET) program is still going strong with meetings all over the state.

The most recent was held by Sheet Metal Workers Local 33 in Parkersburg in early October.

According to Matt Oakes, Local 33 organizer, 10 apprentices attended the meeting, as well as two business agents.

Oakes and Randy Gombos, also a Local 33 organizer, were the COMET instructors.

"I think COMET is very effective," he said, "because educating our members is a necessity for organizing."

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General Pipeline Signs

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Hobet Mining forcing the Laborers to picket there.

The picket was aimed only at General Pipelines employees, who refused to cross the picket line.

However, Hobet Mining claims the Laborers' picket illegally shut down production at the mine and is suing the Laborers, a charge denied by the Labor-

ers.

Operating Engineers Local 132 also signed with General Pipeline, according to business agent Mike Downs.

Downs said the organizing campaign went smoothly because of "the qualifications of the operators -- we got skilled pipeline operators with this signing, and an opportunity to put more of our people to work in the future."