



WALTER WISE
General Treasurer

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The Conditions are Right for Gaining Market Share and Growing Our Union

During your years as a member, you have constantly heard the refrain from your International leadership that we need to grow. Often it was greeted with, “They just want more dues money” or “It can’t be us, we’ve got everybody working.” The bottom line is we did not grow. The charts pictured in the January *Ironworker* show the harsh reality of where we stand today and the enormous challenges we will be facing over the next ten years. It is not a pretty picture, but before you can build a bridge, you have to look into the ravine.

The numbers speak for themselves and you can draw your own conclusions from them, so I will not rehash their explanations. As bleak of a picture as it presents, it is in the past and not indicative of every local union in the United States or Canada. All recoveries begin with recognizing the problem and it is up to us to write our own future.

The good news is conditions are right for changing our destiny. The long-predicted shortage of skilled manpower coupled with the tremendous volume of projects necessary to provide for the energy, transportation and population needs of North America will give us unprecedented opportunities to make significant gains in market share and membership. The future will belong to whoever can recruit, train and provide the skilled workforce for these projects, whether they be the nonunion, the Carpenters, or the Iron Workers. Our

organizing must be relentless and universal in targeting the nonunion sector for its skilled ironworkers and contractors.

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This boom cycle presents us with the opportunity to grab the gold ring. If we fail, and our market share continues to shrink, we will approach a critical mass where, outside of a dozen major cities, we will cease to be a viable influence in the construction industry. The delegates at the 41st Convention understood this when they voted to increase funding for organizing. Your leadership understands this and the rank and file must understand this. For success can only come with your commitment and help. Each of us must be a recruiter, each of us must be an organizer, each of us must be involved, and each of us must stand up for the quality and pride of being a union ironworker.

In the coming months you will learn more about your union, the initiatives and programs to help secure our future and your part to make it a success. This is no time to hide in the shanty. It will take a union to get this job done.

Fraternally,

Walter W Wise