



*District 751 President Mark Blondin, left, thanked IAM delegates at the Aerospace Conference for their support during the historic 28-day strike at Boeing. Also pictured are Headquarters GVP Bob Thayer, center, and Western Territory GVP Lee Pearson, right.*

## The Crossroads of Opportunity

While the IAM strike at Boeing grabbed national headlines, nearly 100 delegates to the 2005 Aerospace Conference in Tucson, AZ, looked beyond the high-profile work stoppage and got down to work crafting strategies to grow IAM membership in the turbulent aerospace industry.

"More than ever before, we need to employ long range planning," said Headquarters Vice President Bob Thayer. "That includes our efforts at the bargaining tables, in legislative halls and organizing."

Delegates heard speaker after speaker echo the conference theme: *"At the Crossroads of Opportunity, Where Do We*

*Take Our Future."*

"We've seen this industry falter, recover and remake itself repeatedly over the past 50 years," said IAM President Tom Buffenbarger. "But the shift to outsourcing and systems integration means we must think 'outside the box' to find new opportunities to service our members, expand our union and protect our industry."

Industry-specific workshops examined the state of affairs at dozens of companies where IAM members work. Also taking part were local IAM representatives from jet engine companies, light aircraft manufacturers and U.S. government contractors.

Outsourcing provided an

example of how opportunities can be found in the midst of crisis. "As large firms like Boeing move fabrication and parts work to small companies and vendors, many of these companies are employing former IAM members who would welcome the chance to become members again," said IAM Organizing Director Larry Washam.

While protecting jobs, pensions and healthcare benefits in the U.S. and Canada was a big concern for delegates, organizing new members was no less important.

IAM Organizer Ray Moffat described the Service Contract Act as a golden opportunity to grow union clout by organizing new members in the rapidly growing field of government subcontracting.

IAM negotiators from Boeing thanked delegates for their rock-solid support and solidarity during their 28-day strike.

"We'll do you proud," declared District 751 President Mark Blondin. "And that's a promise."