



R. Thomas Buffenbarger
International President

Commentary

Decisions

When the 37th Grand Lodge Convention convenes in Orlando on September 7, 2008, delegates will be faced with a series of critical decisions. Right now, those delegates are being nominated and elected in a transparent and *democratic* process.

I emphasize the word democratic because very few unions actually give their members a chance to set the direction of their union for decades to come. But the IAM does. Always has, always will.

The IAM Constitution guides us. It guarantees that our members' voices will be heard. Loud or soft, aggressive or passive, thought-provoking or pragmatic – those voices will be heard at the Convention as delegates decide what kind of union our members want.

In the three decades since we altered our dues structure, much has changed. Recognizing the depth of those changes is critical to our survival. We are one-half the size we were then; we negotiate 5,000 fewer contracts now than in 1976; and yet, the challenges we face seem even greater.

How will we battle more sophisticated, globally-based adversaries across the negotiating table? How will we fight more powerful foes with their aggressively anti-union tactics in organizing drives? How will we dominate the political and policy arenas with fewer members? How will we protect our members from the ravages of government and corporate indifference, if not antipathy?

This issue of the *IAM Journal* frames the critical decisions those delegates will face. But those are decisions you, too, face.

In the weeks and months ahead, you will decide what kind of union you want to belong to. And that is your right and obligation as a member of a democratic union.

Tom

IAM JOURNAL



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