

**A PARTNERSHIP FOR PROGRESS**

# 100 Years of U.S./

## Part IV Recession, Recovery and Renewal



*This article concludes the IBEW Journal's commemoration of the centennial of Canadian electrical workers in the IBEW.*

**1965**

Canada Pension Plan and Québec Pension Plan introduced, covering 91% of labour force.

**1966**

IBEW Founders' Scholarships established.

**1989**

Canada IBEW-COPE established.

**1990**

Canadian Signal and Communications Union merges with IBEW. First issue of *Canadian Comment* newsletter is published.

Canadians have observed that if something can happen in the United States, eventually it can, and will, happen in Canada. Throughout the 1980s workers in Canada and the United States suffered from high unemployment, creeping inflation, increasing trade deficits, decreasing provision of services and unrelenting assaults on workers' rights. "Reaganomics" in the United States and the "zero-inflation" policies of Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney contributed significantly to these problems. Mulroney's government proposed gutting the Canadian national health insurance program (called Medicare), of which Canadians were justifiably proud. Not only did officials want to cut payment for services, particularly by devolving payment to the provinces, but they wanted to dismantle the system and privatize it.



# Canada IBEW Unionism

## 1st DISTRICT INTERNATIONAL VICE PRESIDENTS



**H. J. Hurd**  
1901-1903



**Ernest Ingles**  
1919-1946



**John Raymond**  
1946-1963



**William  
Ladyman**  
1963-1973



**Ken G. Rose**  
1973-1987



**Ken J. Woods**  
1987-1997



**Donald Lounds**  
1997-Present

Massive “downsizing” and “rightsizing” efforts by company management, and recessions in both countries during the 1980s and early 1990s, forced hundreds of thousands of workers onto the street. And, because of efforts by Canadian officials to “reform” their unemployment insurance system, many of these workers received reduced—or no—ben-

efits to help them cope with expenses until they found work. Many of these workers never found good jobs again, because they could not obtain training or because their jobs had been exported to lower-wage countries.

The economy in Canada has improved since the early 1990s, with some economists predicting growth of about 3 percent for a while longer. However, unemployment remains much higher than in the United States; and continuing deregulation/privatization of public power systems and other public services, combined with “free-trade” policies, will push the rate even higher.

### *Canadian Labour Breaks Apart*

The IBEW and several other international labour unions had bitter disagreements with certain policies and procedures of the Canadian Labour Congress for several years. Three issues caused major concern among these unions. First, the CLC’s allowing the chartered federation in Québec to pursue activities contrary to the CLC’s Con-

stitution. Second, the representation and structure of CLC conventions. Third, allowing construction work to be performed by industrial unions. After all attempts to get the CLC to resolve the issues failed, the IBEW and nine other unions formally separated from the CLC in May 1981 and founded the Canadian Federation of Labour in 1982.

Resolutions to reaffiliate with the CLC were proposed to every IBEW Convention since 1982. Convention delegates consistently rejected these resolutions on the grounds that the Convention should not tell the Canadian locals what they should do. However, many Canadian members realized that reaffiliating would combine union resources in a collective effort to combat unfair trade policies, outsourcing and job losses. Also, opponents of labour benefited by the split between labour groups. So, delegates to the 1995 All-Canada Progress Meeting authorized International Vice President Ken Woods (1987-1997) to decide if and when to reaffiliate. Reaffiliation went into effect February 1, 1997. Vice Presi-

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## U.S./Canada Unionism

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dent Woods believed reaffiliation would better serve the interests of IBEW members since, he said, "Raiding, representation and labour unity could not, and would not, be resolved while labour was fractionalized."

### *IBEW and Canada, United for a New Century*

Despite cultural, political and economic differences, IBEW members in Canada and the United States have said in multiple resolutions that they share common goals: to create jobs and justice for all workers, to create a better life for our members and their families.

To achieve our goals, we must be vigilant against the antilabour forces that would impose restrictions on union support of labour-endorsed political candidates, burden us with regressive "right-to-work-for-less" laws and undermine fair wage legislation, among other attacks on hard-won labour rights. We must oppose misguided legislation and treaties, as we opposed the North American Free Trade Agreement, which has sacrificed 420,000 job opportunities; eroded worker bargaining power; and increased our exposure to unsafe food, illegal drugs and unsafe trucks.

As the IBEW begins a second century of international unionism with a renewed commitment to the goals of the labour movement, remember these words of our International Officers:

*"Even though differences exist among us, we are better off discussing our problems and finding solutions.... If we stay true to our principles as union men and women and to the commitment to training, education, organizing and innovation that has made the IBEW great, we can forge a brighter future."*

**International President J. J. Barry**

*"No matter where we live or what industry we work in, we have a common thread that holds us together—as working people. Our goal of a just society, where working families can enjoy a decent standard of living, remains constant and shapes our values and our plans for the future."*

**International Secretary-Treasurer  
Edwin D. Hill**