

SHEET METAL WORKERS' INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION

1750 NEW YORK AVE., NW,
WASHINGTON, DC 20006



PHONE: (202) 783-5880
FAX: (202) 662-0894
WWW.SMWIA.ORG

MICHAEL J. SULLIVAN
GENERAL PRESIDENT

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OPEN LETTER

IMPORTANT MESSAGE TO: ALL BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION TRADE LOCAL UNIONS PRESIDENTS, BUSINESS MANAGERS, BUSINESS AGENTS, RECORDING SECRETARIES, SECRETARY-TREASURERS AND ORGANIZERS IN THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA

RE: RECRUITMENT OF WELDERS, RESTATEMENT OF THE SMWIA ORGANIZING POLICY

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

Over the last few years there has been extensive discussion regarding the resurgence of construction of both new nuclear and coal fired electrical power generating plants. The U.S. Department of Energy has projected that the demand for electricity in this country will increase by 25% by the year 2030.

Our Nation will need hundreds of new power plants if our Country is to sustain economic growth. It is not a question of "if" but where and when these plants will be built. Currently, some thirty companies are pursuing applications for Construction and Operating Licenses (COL) for the construction of new nuclear reactors; four of which have been approved. Approval on many others is anticipated by the end of this year.

The coal industry is no exception. With approximately 600 existing coal sites around the country and additional sites planned or under construction, all of which will be required to comply with greenhouse emission standards that will undoubtedly be more stringent as we move into the future.

You've heard it before; the reality of the power industry has not changed. **Whoever controls the welders will control the work.** This is simply a statement of fact. Our Nation is facing a shortage of qualified welders that is estimated to be as high as 200,000. The American Welding Society (AWS) has documented that the average certified welder is in his or her mid-fifties and that the number of workers who weld for a living has dropped by 10% in the last five years. Our organization is not immune as our baby boomer members begin to retire.

What we have before us is the greatest opportunity of our lifetime. But make no mistake; if the SMWIA cannot provide the qualified welder, these new and retrofitted plants will be constructed without us. Members of other crafts, non-union or foreign workers will get the job done. Therefore, the securing and training of qualified welders is of vital importance. We must organize, recruit and train qualified welders if we are going to stay alive and prosper in this multi-billion dollar energy market.

As General President, I have taken positive steps in preparing our union for the demands of new nuclear plant construction and new/retrofit coal plant construction. This last year, I created a Power Generation Committee and appointed Business Managers, Business Representatives and International Staff from around the United States to formulate recommendations and strategy that will maximize SMWIA man hours. The Committee has given me an interim report and initial recommendations. These recommendations have been brought before the General Executive Council for their review and approval. Therefore, please be advised that the "SMWIA Organizing Policy" as described in the March 26, 2002 Open Letter to all Building Trades Local Unions, be amended to include the following:

- 1) Any applicant for apprenticeship that has satisfied the minimum requirements and has completed the application process shall be slotted into the apprenticeship program per the following schedule:
 - a) The applicant can produce a current certification for AWS D9.1, WPS# SMW 303-9G/G (Rev 2), GMAW – 10ga. & 18ga. – Galvanized – 4G Overhead Position, shall be given one year credit and start as a second year apprentice. These apprentices, while classified as second year, will begin with first year curriculum.
 - b) The applicant, can produce a current certification for AWS D9.1 as described above, and AWS D1.1, WPS# SMW 203-1S/C, SMWA E7018 – 3/8 Plate Test w/Backing – Carbon Steel – 3G Vertical Up and 4G Overhead Positions, shall be given two years credit and start as a third year apprentice. These apprentices, while classified as third year, will begin with first year curriculum.
- 2) Any applicant for membership who can demonstrate current certification in AWS D9.1, AWS D1.1 and AWS B2.1-1-209-96, Pipe – GTAW Root Pass followed by SMAW E7018 – Carbon Steel – 6G Position or 2G & 5G Positions, shall be accepted into the local union and designated as Provisional Journeyman. The following conditions shall apply:
 - a) Initiation not to exceed \$25.00
 - b) Provisional Journeyman to receive 100% wages as benefits as Building Trades Journeyman.
 - c) Provisional Journeyman will be required to receive 300 hours continuing education at local training center on any industry specific topics. These classes must include OSHA 10 and 30 and Radiological Worker Training (RAD).
 - d) The Provisional Journeyman will have a period of three years to complete the required three hundred hours of continuing education. At the end the three year period, training must be completed. If the three hundred hours of training are completed prior to the end of the three year period, the Provisional Journeyman shall be immediately re-classified as Building Trades Journeyman. In the event that Provisional Journeyman does not complete the required three hundred hours of training in the three year time period, application for extension shall be made to the General President.
- 3) Jobsite local unions utilizing certified welders who are not members of that local but members of another SMWIA local union shall through reciprocity, return contributions designated for training to the members home local union. These monies shall be then forwarded to the local JATC.
Note: The implementation of this policy will began immediately. As the details of the reciprocity agreements are finalized they will be put in place.

As we move forward as a union, we will meet this critical labor shortage. Our mutual success depends upon every local and every training program doing it's' part. As this effort continues and as new nuclear and coal plants are sited and scheduled; we will be updating the local unions and working closely with them to ensure that man hours are maximized for our represented members.

In addition to amending the Organizing Policy as noted above, I have attached the Original Policy as a reference. The items described in the Policy are as relevant today as they were six years ago. I am requesting that every local union review their internal operations and confirm that they are fully compliant with every item listed below:

- 1) All Local Unions shall put in place a COMET training program for all journeymen in the local union. COMET training will now be mandatory for all apprentices in the local union. All local unions shall enact a new member orientation program.**

We have a responsibility to graduate apprentices who know the economics of the industry and the history of the union on which their livelihood depends. We also must educate the newly organized members about the inner workings of the union that they decided to join. Educating these new brothers and sisters will give us a much better chance of keeping them in this union and having them become more active members in our organizing efforts.

- 2) Every JATC program will have open enrollment for apprenticeships. Every JATC shall modify their program to allow for apprentices brought in through an organizing effort to be slotted into the appropriate year of apprenticeship.**

We cannot and will not expect someone who has been fired during an organizing campaign to wait, in some cases, up to a year to be placed into a local JATC program. We also cannot expect to tell someone in an organizing campaign with 4 years of experience that he or she will have to start in the first year of apprenticeship. For those locals who need help with placement, we are currently developing an evaluation process to assist a local union JATC in determining at what level an organized apprentice should be placed.

- 3) There shall not be a test for membership for any applicant who has at least six years experience in related fields.**

One fact has remained constant throughout our history. The contractor has always, and will always, determine who is qualified to do their work Unions have, in the past, used testing to keep people out of the union. Unfortunately, it still goes on today. General President Edward J Carlough stated in a letter to the local unions in 1979, "A great amount of resources and effort have been expended by this union during the recent past to create work opportunities. We don't plan to blow it, and we don't plan to let anyone, or any local, blow it for us by trying to resurrect the "country club mentality" that plagued this union, and so many other construction unions, for so many years

This General President will NOT allow it either.

- 4) Each pre-apprentice, who meets the qualifications, shall enter the apprentice program within one year of original date of hire.**

The Standard Form of Union Agreement states that pre-apprentices "shall be enrolled as applicants for future openings in the apprenticeship program". It also states that "no pre-apprentice shall be retained beyond one (1) year unless "... found to be qualified as an applicant". The meaning is clear: Whoever is hired as a pre-apprentice should meet the entrance requirements of the apprentice program. It also means that after one year they should be placed into the program. Unfortunately, in certain areas, we have allowed ourselves to deviate from the standard form, which calls for one pre-apprentice for every three apprentices on the employer's payroll. Because of contractual restrictions, it will take time in some local unions to implement this policy. However, in those instances, I strongly urge you to move towards the stated goal.

- 5) All Local Unions shall maintain an Organizing Program as mandated by the SMWIA Constitution.**

Every local union shall have an active organizing program. An active organizing program shall consist of a majority of the following: full time organizers, an active youth to youth program, mandatory COMET training for all members and apprentices, an equality or market recovery fund, mandatory picketing, 30% of the local union budget dedicated to organizing, and a stewards training program in for those locals who represent production members. Absent an active organizing program, the following policy will be implemented: the two-man rule privilege will be suspended and the jurisdiction of the surrounding SMWIA local unions will be extended to include the jurisdiction of the local union without an active organizing program. We can no longer allow the non-union problems in the jurisdiction of a local union that refuses to organize to spill over into the jurisdiction of their sister locals.

- 6) Local Union jurisdictional lines will be removed by the General President for those Locals who refuse to organize their area.**

In a local economy where we control significantly less of the market than we should, no shortage of possible organizing targets exists. Any local union, who refuses to organize their area, may have their jurisdictional lines removed for the purpose of organizing, by the General President. We shouldn't expect nor should we allow a non-union problem from one area who refuses to organize, to spill over into the jurisdiction of a sister local union who is doing what's needed to eradicate the non-union threat from their area.

- 7) Initiation fees will be reduced to not more than \$500.00 and re-initiation fees will not exceed one year's monthly dues.**

The initiation fees of this Association are and have been out of line with other trades for some time. They have been a detriment to organizing for almost as long. With union membership on the decline, we cannot expect anyone to want to join this or any other organization that charges \$3,000.00 or more to become a member. Results of the recent organizing survey show that the vast majority of local unions request a waiver or reduction of these fees now. The time has come to realize that it is already hard enough to organize the unorganized without keeping barriers in place that prevent it.

Note: This was incorporated into the Constitution and Ritual in 2004.

8) Amnesty will be used on a one-time basis

There shall be total amnesty for all ex-members. Such action will include all fees and fines. We must recognize the value of offering an incentive to return to union status rather than use the training provided by us to remain in the trade as our competition. This will be a one-time only amnesty.

9) Each local union shall be given a complete market share analysis of their local area to help them assess the current status of their market share and the steps necessary to improve the percentage of the market that they control.

If you have any questions or comments regarding these policies, please do not hesitate to contact Richard McClees, Charles Mulcahy or James White in the General Office.

Fraternally yours,



MICHAEL J. SULLIVAN
General President

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cc: Joseph J. Nigro, GST
International Organizers
International Representatives
Fund Administrators