

RENEW 2015 Conference Chicago

From the dates of March 22nd to March 26th I have been in Chicago attending the Renew conference and representing New Brunswick and Local 37. This conference was incredibly information rich, covering topics from how to get younger members involved in union meetings and volunteer work, how to bring in new members to our local IBEW's to how our unions and labor movements have come under attack by government and big business employers.

The speakers they had at each preliminary were insightful, experienced, able to keep their audiences interested and excellent at answering questions in an understandable way. I will be bringing lots back from this experience, thanks to the Renew convention I now know that our brothers and sisters in the U.S. are losing members and that the Right to Work Movement is gaining ground. I know that here in Canada they have introduced Bills 525 and C-377 which will make our own labor unions harder to operate or retain new members. These are issues that I had no former knowledge of before the conference.

While at the Renew conference there were many well done workshops, they ranged from the history of unions all the way to the politics and how to join committees or councils so that a voice could be heard from the Labor force. I learned how the IBEW came into existence thanks to our founder Henry Miller; currently we have about 750,000 members, and that the average age of a new member is about 35.

Another helpful workshop for younger members was the Roberts rules and regulations of running a union meeting. There were many rules and laws that I was unaware of, such as being gavelled out of order, or swearing in new members. We also discussed to great length how to attempt to bring in bigger numbers at the meetings, ideas like a happy hour with special priced food or drink were thrown out. Along with possible satellite meetings using a closed caption internet streaming software so that members don't have to drive too far to get to a union hall.

All in all the conference was a big success driving home the point that young members are hard to come by, and harder still to motivate into the labor movement. However with the workshops put on, the speaker's success, and failure, stories along with the help of our current members this challenge shouldn't be too hard to overcome. With the amount of people who attended the conference that are motivated, excited and ready to take this on it's going to be almost impossible for the younger generations not to catch the bug and want to go along with it as well. It was an honor to be given this opportunity and I look forward to putting the things I learned into action. Thank you and all of IBEW for allowing me to go and for putting on the Renew conference of 2015.

-Jacob Monaghan

