

### We hear a lot about the Union. Just what is it?

The IBEW, or International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, is a non-profit labor organization, as defined in the Labor-Management Reporting and Disclosure Act. Basically, the IBEW is an organization of workers with common concerns and aspirations.

One of the goals of the organization is to “cultivate feelings of friendship among those in our industry.” This means the IBEW’s goal is to maintain a friendly but firm relationship with employers employing IBEW members. The process of industrial democracy achieves the goals of the members who make up the IBEW.

### What is Industrial Democracy?

The IBEW believes employees of a company can only realize their workplace goals and aspirations if they institute democracy in the workplace. Without a union, employees effectively work under an industrial dictatorship. Employees have little or no say in their terms and conditions of employment. With a union, employees empower themselves by forming an organization to balance the goals of the employer with the goals of employees. Employees then can speak with one strong voice to address their issues and concerns with management. Therefore, industrial democracy is the right of workers to form or assist labor organizations which can better their working lives.

### Does the IBEW have other goals?

Yes. The IBEW strives to promote community activities by its members. We all know that by working together, we can accomplish what we cannot accomplish alone. The IBEW serves as a vehicle to bring together people of many talents to achieve service to the community and mankind. Together, we all add to the organization.



### **We hear a lot of bad things about unions by management. Is there a bad side to union organization?**

There can be. Just as in any organization, if the members don't participate in the process and direct their organization the way they want it, the organization will fail to represent the interests of the members. Some unions do have these problems. However, all unions are not the same. The IBEW is founded on the principle of local union autonomy. Each local union is independent and functions as a single, independent unit. In this way, the members of the union are responsible for their own successes and destiny. The International Union exists solely to assist the local union when asked. This formula has proven highly successful. IBEW has a proven track record of being an effective advocate for employee interests, because employees direct the efforts of the IBEW.

### **How many members are in the IBEW?**

The IBEW represents nearly 725,000 members in all branches of the electrical industry, including employees of electrical construction, telecommunications, electric, gas, and water utilities, broadcasting, government employees, and manufacturing.

### **What kind of relationship does the IBEW have with these employers?**

In the vast majority of cases, the IBEW has good relationships with its employers. The IBEW knows progress can be achieved by working together with management, and this can only occur if the power between management and the workers is relatively balanced.

The IBEW exists solely to represent the interests of workers in the electrical industry. It is an organization of workers for workers.

