who were having second thoughts in coming to SA. His, and Owen Bothwell’s attendance at AWCI’s Anaheim convention also contributed greatly to there being a convention here at all.

From this background you will realize that the plans were on then off, then on again and so on—until Joe finally called from Washington and said “there are so and so many of us coming—come hell or high water”—we said OK, in that case let’s get on with it—regardless.

So we called up our members (all 70 of them) and very nearly half of them are here tonight!

Unexpected and most welcome support came from Lou Davis who offered BIFSA’s media, SA Builder as a vehicle for advertising the convention. Laurie Wale of Architect and Builder did inserts at minimal cost and our own members came up trumps.

Here too a special thanks to my colleague Tom Cunningham for organizing our local speakers and an equally genuine appreciation for the member firms who took the trouble to mount displays.

Folks, times are tough out there and given the extraordinarily difficult and uncertain circumstances under which this convention had to be planned I am deeply touched and very proud of the support of both AWCI members and the SABISA delegates who could make it here. Some of them as far away as Durban, Port Elizabeth and even Cape Town.

I trust that you will all benefit from the speaking sessions and above all that you will have a happy, useful and enjoyable convention.

It is therefore my pleasure and privilege to welcome you all most heartily to this convention.

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**The BIFSA Training Program**

Other than the wildlife in the bush, North American participants on the AWCI trip to South Africa were perhaps most impressed by the BIFSA apprentice training program.

While trade unions are rapidly gaining stature in South Africa, apprentice training is still the responsibility of contractors.

BIFSA, the Building Industries Federation of South Africa, is a national umbrella construction trade association, incorporating all subcontracting associations as well as the general building contractors’ association. It is managed by Lou Davis, a former construction executive, and occupies the entire floor of one of Johannesburg’s larger skyscrapers.

BIFSA operates a total of three training “colleges” in South Africa. AWCI participants visited one located just outside Johannesburg (an even larger program is based in Cape Town). Annually, the three programs together train over 30,000 apprentices and “helpers” for a variety of crafts. For the most part, these students are formerly unemployable blacks—in many cases straight from the bush. They arrive at the “colleges” with little, if any, formal education—and leave—a few months later—not only with construction skills—but a working command of English, and some reading and mathematical skills.

John Addis, who supervises the three colleges for
BIFSA, told us that some students walk as many as 5 miles to the program each morning, while many others are housed in modern, comfortable dormitories operated by BIFSA.

The unfortunate part of the program is that demand for participation exceeds the number of openings for training and literally thousands of men are turned away each year.

**A unique school . . .**

While enrolled in the training program, students receive a mix of both classroom, shop and field training, all under the watchful eye of experienced tradesmen. Instructors are also both black and white. One classroom we visited was basic mathematics with a black instructor teaching elementary construction geometry to a small class of about 8 black students. It was encouraging to watch these men who had little or no earlier training in this field eagerly call out “one hundred eighty!” when asked the number of degrees in a half circle.

Wages for the students are paid entirely by BIFSA from contributions from contractors and owners, similar to a degree to the manner in which apprentice training is financed in North America. In addition to wages, students are also provided with a nourishing lunch (although many of the men not housed in the dorms take part of their lunches home for their family each day).

During AWCI’s visit last August, in addition to those students at the training college itself, we saw hundreds of apprentices working on a new headquarters building for BIFSA, and dozens more working on several community projects in the Johannesburg area.

Upon graduation, the trainees are placed on construction jobs where — contrary to American media reports — pay is commensurate with skill and is not based on color or race. Many of the graduates go on to start their own construction firms in the townships where they employ additional blacks.

Apprentice training in South Africa is truly an equal partnership in several aspects: Blacks and whites working side by side, and contractors and owners jointly financing the education and instruction of new workers. In South Africa, BIFSA’s unique training program is one of the better examples of change and progress . . . an area not well covered by the media.

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**Minimum Temperatures in the Workplace**

*Your Input is Important on This Reader Survey*

**By J.L. Houser**
Genstar Gypsum Products Company
Gypsum Association Technical Committee Chairman

In an effort to update and improve industry recommended specifications, the Gypsum Association has undertaken a program to evaluate current requirements governing the minimum ambient temperature necessary when installing (hanging) gypsum board. Both the ASTM Standard Specification for the Application and Finishing of Gypsum Board C-840 and the Gypsum Association GA-216435 covering the same operations, call for minimum temperature when installing gypsum boards of 50°F (10°C).

The issue is extremely important. Production can be affected if the working conditions are not reasonable. The addition of temporary heat on a job can be a costly item and must be included in a bid where it is required either by a standard reference or as a separate item in the specifications.

Gypsum panels have been known to freeze together and face paper damaged when moisture and cold temperatures were found at the job site. Very cold temperatures also affect the workability of the gypsum board and its relationship to the framing. Cold conditions have been known to cause bond failures, nailing and other problems.

AWCI’s contractor membership is being asked to address this topic by answering and submitting the accompanying questionnaire. This gives every contractor member the opportunity to make his voice heard in the preparations of the standards by which he must work. A few minutes of your time is earnestly requested.