National Agreements Signed with Four International Unions

The Association of the Wall and Ceiling Industries and four international construction trade unions signed a set of similar national agreements at the AWCI offices on December 20. The multi-craft agreements are the first in the industry’s history.

The four unions are the Laborers’ International Union of North America, the International Brotherhood of Painters and Allied Trades, the Operative Plasterers’ and Cement Masons’ International Association, and the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America.

While not identical, the agreements are very similar in form and substance. Each of the unions has included specific language covering its own membership, but the differences, according to St. Louis contractor Francis Wojehowski, Chairman of AWCI’s Labor Committee, are not remarkable.

Wojehowski said, “We have been negotiating with these four internationals for a new national agreement since July 1987. The signing ceremony on December 20 culminated a long and cooperative effort to bring this to fruition.”

The four agreements include recognition by AWCI of each international union and a reciprocal recognition by the unions of AWCI as the “appropriate party” representing wall and ceiling contractors in the United States and Canada; provisions for improved training of apprentices and journeymen; a grievance settlement provision; and a provision allowing traveling contractors to take with them certain percentages of key men.

Shift work is covered under each agreement, and no restrictions on materials, machines, tools or productivity are to be allowed by any local union. Each agreement also states that the agreement supersedes the local union agreement wherever the two may be in conflict.

A major feature of the four agreements is a clause which requires the local union to meet with employers “where it is shown by the employer or AWCI that... applicable local agreements have resulted or will result in the loss of union construction or financial injury to the employer or his employees” to discuss “modification of area and/or job site conditions.”

A national Multi-Craft Joint Industry Committee is established through the four agreements, composed of representatives from AWCI and from each of the four international unions for the purpose of overseeing and implementing the national agreements.

“Our mutual goal in developing these four agreements has been to give the union contractors in our industry in North America a vehicle to compete on a better field with their open shop competition,” Wojehowski said. “We think these agreements will be a shot in the arm for our union contract members.”

Signing the agreements were Angelo Fosco, Laborers; Robert Holton, Plasterers; William Duval, Painters; and Sigurd Lucassen, Carpenters. AWCI President Steven Watkins signed the agreements on behalf of the association.

Also attending the ceremony were
Above, AWCI President Steve Watkins signs an agreement. Below, U.S. Labor Deputy Undersecretary Michael Wyatt listens to questions during the signing ceremony.

AWCI First Vice President Michael R. Boyd; Executive Vice President Joe M. Baker; and the four labor subcommittee chairmen—Joseph Feldner, Michael Zellner, Al Ricca and Kenneth Navratil. Others in attendance included AWCI liaisons Leo Radionoff, Michael Crimi and Donald Morrice; Art DiGregorio of Plasterers Local #2; John S. Rogers representing Carpenters; Louis Elesie representing Laborers; James J. Boyle and Vincent J. Panepinto representing Plasterers; and Robert C. Welch and Armando Colafranchechi representing Painters.

Also attending, in recognition of the significance of the event, was the Associate Deputy Secretary of Labor, Michael K. Wyatt. Wyatt assists Deputy Secretary Roderick DeArment, who holds the number two post in the United States Department of Labor. Wyatt answered questions and noted the Department was pleased to see the cooperation in evidence at the meeting.