

IUOE LOCAL 428

HISTORY AND BACKGROUND

The charter was issued by the International Union of Operating Engineers on *August 1, 1936*, upon request of 64 applicants known as “Charter Members”.

Local unions of stationary engineers began to emerge around the country during the 1880s and early 1890s some affiliating with the Knights of Labor and some as federal locals in the AFL. Delegates from six of those local unions met in Chicago on *December 7, 1896*, to found the National Union of Steam Engineers of America. A week later they traveled to Cincinnati to seek a charter from the 1896 AFL Convention, which was granted on *May 7, 1897*. Later in that year the new union’s name was changed to the International Union of Steam Engineers.

In *1927*, the International Union of Steam Shovel Operators and Dredgemen amalgamated with IUS and OE and formed the International Union of Operating Engineers with members throughout North America.

The official crest and motto were registered “Trade Marks”. The crest or Badge signifies a high pressure steam gauge since most engineers at the time were operating equipment powered by steam. The motto “*Labor Omnia Vincit*” is Latin and translates to “Labor Conquers All”.

A frequent motto within the U.S. labor movement, the phrase is a historically significant slogan.

The membership of Local 428 had steady growth from 1936 to 1941, and during the first quarter of 1941 the membership had increased to 275 dues paying members. The union began to gain membership rapidly as the war spread (WW II), and in early 1943 the membership totaled over 2300 dues paying members. Then as the defense building declined, membership also decreased and reached a low figure of 1180 members in June 1945. Later a steady gain of membership began and reached in October 1961 approximately 4500 dues paying members. Which was an all time high for Local 428. This was indeed a record of which the members of Local 428 have to be proud. Considering the phenomenal growth, it is believed that Local 428 had more signed Labor-Management Agreements, for the size of its membership, than any other local union within the International Union of Operating Engineers nationwide.

A year and half after Local 428 was organized the problem arose regarding aid to the families of deceased members. It was voted to establish a fund by assessing each member \$1 per month each time a member past away and pay the proceeds to the beneficiary. It is recalled that the first benefit paid was \$104. As the membership grew, the death rate increased and it appeared evident that a different policy would be necessary. So, in the summer of 1942, the Death Benefit Fund was established by means of \$1 per month assessment for each member, with a set amount of \$750 to be paid to the beneficiary of each deceased member. It was further stipulated that each member coming into the local union (or any of its subdivisions) would pay an entrance fee of \$5 into the Death Benefit Fund. There were many deaths, but the Fund continued to grow. In late 1947, it was voted to increase the benefits to \$1000 and the entrance fee to \$7.50 per member. The monthly assessment was reduced to \$0.50. The Death Benefit Fund had served its purpose well and in June 1953, it was again voted to reinstate the \$1 per month assessment and increase the maximum benefits to \$1500. As the membership grew, the liability to the Fund increased proportionately. It is interesting to note that since the first small payment of \$104 was made, Local 428 has paid out over (October 1961/ \$404,000 to the Beneficiaries of 345 deceased members) a huge amount at that time.

For almost a year after Local 428 was chartered finances prevented the hiring of a representative. In the spring of 1937, Brother William A Gray was persuaded to accept the job, in spite of the fact that he was making more money as a shovel and dragline operator on the Bartlett Dam than the Local Union 428 could offer him. There was barely enough money in the Treasury to pay him two weeks salary of \$50 per week, plus a credit card for gasoline and oil. It was necessary for him to use his own car, as

Local 428 certainly could not afford such luxury. However, Mr. Gray was very progressive, resourceful, and soon had money enough coming in from dues and initiation fees to show a gain above expenses.

In 1936, hourly wage scales for some of our classifications on construction work were:

- Universal Equipment Operator \$1.00 per hour
- Finish Blade Operator \$1.00 per hour
- Rough Blade Operator \$0.73 per hour
- LeTourneau Equipment \$1.00 per hour
- Oilers \$0.50 per hour

The first few wage raises the members received were secured by a vote at a union meeting followed by a strike if the Contractor did not meet the demands. In the early years of Local 428 this happened quite often.

For comparison under a State-Wide Construction Industry Agreement the hourly wage rates effective June 1, 1961:

- Motor Grade Operator \$4.24 per hour
- Crusher, Bulldozer, Mechanic \$3.99 per hour
- Mechanic Helper \$3.23 per hour

The agreement provided many other improvements in working conditions and benefits to all the classifications of workmen within Local 428's jurisdiction. Payments were made to each dispatched worker for initial travel time pay and transportation for jobs more than twenty-five miles from the nearest Union office and return at completion of job. Also, travel time, transportation, expense allowance on remote projects ranged from \$2.00-\$6.00 per day and Health and Welfare Plan which provided payment for Hospital and Medical care for members and their families.

In 1938, International Union of Operating Engineers General President John Possehl, called Brother Gray to Los Angeles and offered the jurisdiction of the State of New Mexico. The membership voted to accept. It was a joint venture between IUOE and Local 428, which almost proved disastrous financially to Local 428. Brother L.L. Dugan, Sr. was appointed to go over there to organize the State. New Mexico did not have collective bargaining agreements covering wages and working conditions. Approximately 60-70 members signed up in the first month. After this initial success, with those who saw the advantages of joining the union, scarcely any progress was shown for the next five months and his assignment was discontinued.

In *April 1940*, Local 428 published the first Monthly News Bulletin, which was the result of an idea advanced by one of the Charter members, Brother Harry Avance. This was a mimeographed Bulletin on one side of one sheet of paper. Several changes have been made in this publication, which is identified as "Engineers New Report", Official Publication of Local 428. It had the second largest circulation of any Labor Newspaper published in Arizona at that time.

It might be of interest to mention that at the outset of World War II, the membership voted to retain in good standing in the Benefit Fund each member who entered the Armed Forces and took a Service Withdrawal Card. A total of 350 members of Local 428 served their country well during the War and by the Grace of God, only four failed to return. Brother Forrest Beeman was the first to lose his life in the defense of Corregidor in the spring of 1942. The others were Brothers Jourdan M. Johnson, Jacob D. Risehoover and Claude Roberts.

In *April 1941*, Brother L.L. Dugan, Sr., was hired as the second Business Representative and in June, Brother A.N. Anderson was hired to organize three days a week in the Stationary field. Many stationary engineers were organized.

For the first few years, Local 428 could not maintain an office, but finally did share office space with the Phoenix Building Trades Council on the second floor of the Labor Temple at 1637 West Jefferson Street, Phoenix. Eventually Local 428 moved into a bird cage of an office in the basement of the Ellis Building at Second Ave. and Monroe, and a part time office man and dispatcher were hired. On November 1, 1941, Local 428 moved from the Ellis Building to rooms on the first floor of the Labor Temple, where the office space was double from previously. Until that time Brother Ellis T. Grier, Financial Secretary, had kept all the books and records in his home. His wife kept the records posted and every two spent a day in the office posting up to date membership cards. With the acquisition of the new office space all records were moved into the office.

The first car purchased at a cost of \$1000 by Local 428 was in 1941. It was a Chevrolet Coupe for Brother Gray. Later in the year a used Chevrolet Coupe was purchased for \$700 for Brother Dugan.

In September 1941, action was taken at a regular meeting to require Foremen to also be members of Local 428. This action stirred up trouble and Local 428 was forced to bring suit against an employer to enforce this demand. A decision and opinion issued by

Superior Court Judge Levi S. Udall restrained the Employers from hiring anyone as Foreman who was not a member in good standing with Local 428. This ruling settled the Foreman question in this jurisdiction.

About the same time a Branch Engineers Charter 428C was secured for the purpose of organizing Engineers in the mining industry. Considerable progress had been made in securing better wages and improving working conditions for these employees under 428's jurisdiction. Also, organizing had progressed in the Stationary Branch of Local 428. The Local had contracts covering Stationary Engineers employed in the Hotel, Hospital, Dairy, Ice Cream, Ice Plant, as well as a contract at the Arizona Brewing Company. In addition to all these contracts, Local 428 had established good wage rates and decent working conditions with some branches of the State Government and Municipalities within the State of Arizona.

In *February 1942*, Brother Lee Renick was hired as another Business Representative and assigned in the western part of the State.

The membership increased and there was more defense work. More Business Representatives were hired to cover the construction, mining, and stationary industries. By this time all Business Representative had cars furnished by Local 428.

The Caterpillar Tractor Company Proving Ground operation, west of Phoenix had been under a collective bargaining agreement with Local 428 since 1946. Local 428 had contracts with several Equipment Dealer Shops in the State.

In 1959 the Construction Industry and Rock, Sand & Ready Mix Concrete Industry Agreements were signed with Local 428. The Local together with participating Employers, established an office for administration of the Arizona Operating Engineers Apprenticeship system with a full time Executive Secretary (Scott Spaw) at 4700 North Central Avenue Phoenix, AZ. It was the first International Union of Operating Engineers Apprenticeship program with Apprenticeship Standards approved by the Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training (BAT) and the Department of Labor (DOL) in the country for Hoisting & Portable Equipment Operators. In addition to the Joint Apprenticeship Committee (JAC) in Phoenix, others had been established in Tucson at 650 North Sixth Avenue with a full time paid coordinator (Chuck Condron) and in Flagstaff. Local 428 had gained international recognition as the pioneer for Apprenticeship Training in the Hoisting and Portable Branch of the International Union of Operating Engineers.

Just to compare between 1961 and those working conditions existing before Local 428 was organized. In 1936 each employee on out-of-town construction projects had to take his own bedroll and live in tents or shacks with dirt floors. There was no air conditioning in the summer and sometimes an oil drum was made into a heating stove in the winter. There were no toilets, bathrooms or other sanitary conditions. Some employers required operators and oilers to do repair work on their own time. Most jobs were scheduled for six hours, work 40 minutes and rest 20 minutes, which meant you were on the job nine hours a day and got paid for six hours. Men flocked to a new job and sometimes were hired on the spot. It was difficult for the fellow on the equipment to hold his job, for there was always someone standing around waiting to take his position, if he displeased the employer in any way. Similar deplorable working conditions prevailed for workmen in all industries, due to lack of union organization and protection of the collective bargaining agreements.

Staff of Local 428 in 1961

October 1961 the local had 14 full-time Business Representatives, including the Business Manager and 12 full-time office employees. Local 428 had operated under the District form of Local Union government, with statewide jurisdiction divided into four districts.

District 1: Brother A.E. Jordan served as District Business Representative and Assistant-Business Manager, L.L. Dugan, Sr., Jeff Harrison, Wallace Godfrey, Glenn Merritt, and Larry Dugan, Jr. as Business Representatives working under the supervision of Brother Jordan.

District 2: Brother Lee Renick served as District Business Representative, with Carl Lind and Lyman Aken as Business Representatives.

District 3: Brother H.E. Gene Vorland, who resided in Yuma was the Business Representative covering that district and was under the supervision of District Business Representative Jordan.

District 4: Charles Slack served as the Business Representative, with Charles K. Featherson serving as Business Representative under his supervision.

There were 8 office personnel in the Phoenix office where all of the permanent records were maintained: The General Office Secretary, a Stenographer, an Accountant-Assistant Office Manager, a Dispatcher, a Cashier, an Addressograph Operator, an Office Clerk, a Receptionist and a Telephone Operator. In the Tucson Office there was one General Office Secretary and one Office Clerk. In Yuma, Local 428 shared an

office with the Laborers Local 383. In the Flagstaff office, there was a General Office Secretary and an Office Clerk.

Local 428 provided every full time Business Representative and Business Manager an automobile including operating costs. All of the activities were under the general supervision of Business Manager William A. Gray, whose actions were subject to approval and ratification by Local 428's Executive Board.

The first twenty five year history of Local 428 and its accomplishments since August 1936 is an interesting one, but in a brief outline it's only possible to touch on a few of the highlights of the growth and progress. With continued determination, help, cooperation of Officers, Business Representatives, Stewards, Members; Local 428 will make progress in the future. The results will be significant contributions toward the building of a higher standard of living for union members and all working people in the State of Arizona.

Interesting Facts

Larry Dugan's father moved from Oklahoma to Arizona in a covered wagon, arriving in Alpine, high up in the White Mountains of Arizona, in 1914. Later the family moved to Phoenix, where Larry was born in 1930. His father was a charter member of IUOE Local 428. When Larry was a boy, he and his family used to follow his father from job to job. "We had a car trailer. My dad would load the whole family in the car and all our supplies, including a tent, in the trailer. We would strike out to look for work and we would live in a one-room tent. Naturally, I would join him on the job and, sometimes, sit up in the cab with him". Larry Jr. joined the union in 1948, starting as an oiler on a truck crane and eventually becoming a bull dozer operator. In 1973 Larry became the Business Manager of Local 428 and in 1985 ascended to the Presidency of the International.

Staff of Local 428/1974

May 1974, Local 428 employed a staff of seventeen fulltime Business Representatives, including the Business Manager, and fourteen fulltime office employees plus one part time office employee. The local operated under the district form of Local Union Government, with statewide jurisdiction, divided into four districts. In 1974 services were provided for the members out of three district offices with representation as follows:

District 1: Brother C.A. Slack served as District Business Representative and Ed Harper as Treasurer; Vern Newell, Bill Rucker, Dave Oakes and Carl Lind as Business Representatives who worked under the supervision of Brother Slack.

District 2: Brother Gerald Croy served as District Business Representative, with William G. Powell and Norman Rudd working as Business Representatives under Croy.

District 3: Brother C.A. Slack with Brother Carl Lind worked as the Business Representatives covering this district under the supervision of Brother Slack.

District 4: William Carnell, Financial Secretary was serving as District Representative with Merle Langfeldt as Business Representative under his supervision.

Office personnel in the Phoenix (headquarters) office, where all permanent records were maintained, totaled eleven in 1974: Administrative Executive Secretary, Executive Secretary, Administrative Secretary, Staff Secretary, Dispatcher, Assistant Dispatcher, Cashier, Bookkeeper, Receptionist and Phone Operator, Addressograph and Reproduction Operator, Office Manager. The Tucson office had one General Office Secretary and one Office Clerk. In District 3, as mentioned above, Carl Lind worked under the supervision of C.A. Slack. The Yuma office was open for four hours a day with one General Office Secretary. In the Flagstaff office there was one General Office Secretary.

Business Managers of Local 428

William A. Gray
Lee Renick
Larry L. Dugan, Jr.
Charles (Cotton) Featherston
Norman Rudd
Charles (Cotton) Featherston
Bill Rucker
Dennis Teel
Mark Mitchell
Frank Cissne
Gary Teel
Raul Garcia, Jr.

Resources:

Information was retrieved from various notes on the union and an article written by Eddie Trejo entitled “Local 428 History”.

Union Resilience in Troubled Times, the Story of Operating Engineers (from 1960-1993) by Garth Mangum and John Walsh

Maggie Brooks reorganized the information in November 2013.

IUOE
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