

IATSE Local 63

Introduction and History

The International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees, Moving Picture Technicians, Artists and Allied Crafts of the United States, Its Territories and Canada has so expanded down through the years that its name has become largely symbolic rather than descriptive of the full scope of its far-flung activities. Gradually, the stage employees and movie operators have been joined by a great variety of other crafts persons in the numerous branches of the entertainment industry, including television, all banding together to achieve the maximum of unified strength.

The organization is best known as the I.A.T.S.E.. Often the members speak of it as just the I.A.. It can best be described, however, as the union of people behind the scenes in the manifold media of show business.

The I.A.T.S.E. began in 1893, when show business was confined almost entirely to the stage. During the next twenty years, the stage carpenters, propertymen and electricians pioneered a drive for union recognition in the theatre - and finally established their craft as one of the highest paid and most respected in America. Then, beginning in 1908, soon after the birth of the film industry, projectionists throughout the continent were brought into the I.A. fold. Again a battle for recognition and top-flight wages was fought and won. Later in the 20's, union benefits were extended to the Hollywood studios and the vast network of film exchanges throughout the United States and Canada. And finally, as soon as commercial television got a start, the I.A.T.S.E. took its natural place in this newest field of visual entertainment.

In legitimate theatres, including specifically some 35 of them in the Broadway area in New York City, and in concert halls, art and cultural centres, auditoriums, arenas and other like facilities, as well as on industrial and other types of road shows that travel from one city to another, I.A. members play an essential role, serving as stagehands, ticket sellers, wardrobe personnel, make-up artists and hairstylists, ushers, ticket-takers and doormen and maintenance employees.

In television the combined crafts of stage and screen are utilized in ever-growing abundance. Many carpenters, electricians and propertymen who served their apprenticeship in the theatres, help put on live TV productions. And the work of many motion picture technicians goes into the making of shows for TV. Masters of numerous additional techniques are needed to bring live, taped and filmed programs to the public. Thus, the traditional I.A. projectionists, sound service engineers and recording engineers now are supplemented by I.A. video engineers, audio engineers, transmitter engineers, maintenance engineers and a host of other television technicians.

Today there are well over 800 local unions of the I.A. throughout the United States, its Territories and Canada. The older ones, beginning with Stage Employees, all represent individual crafts. However, a trend toward combination began years ago with the chartering of mixed locals (Stage Employees and Moving Picture Machine Operators) in the smaller cities and mixed studio locals in smaller production centres. Local 63 - Winnipeg was chartered on March 30, 1899 as a stage local and includes motion picture projectionists who merged into Local 63 on April 1, 1999. In 1937 the combination idea reached a new phase with the creation of a Special Department. Although this consists of separate locals of Film Exchange Employees and Theatre Employees (front of the house), jobs of numerous types are covered by each local.

Organized by the I.A. in the TV field began with the establishment of several locals of Television Broadcasting Studio Employees. These offered the advantages of combining all crafts within a single organization, but their scope was limited to individual cities. In 1951, with the creation of the Radio and Television Department, a system was established of providing direct membership in the I.A. without the local union set-up.

I.A. members who help produce film and video production for theatres, television and other purposes work in a wide variety of classifications. Among them are art directors, story analysts, cartoonists, set designers and set decorators, scenic artists, arts craftpersons, graphic artists, set painters, grips, electricians, propertypersons, teachers, costumers, make-up artists, hair-stylists, motion picture and still camera-persons, sound technicians, editors, script supervisors, laboratory technicians, projectionists, utility workers, first aid employees, inspection, shipping, booking and other distribution employees. A Motion Picture Salesmen Department was established in 1957.

Members of the I.A. have long been proud of their complete coverage of the crafts of stage, screen and television. From the moment a theatrical picture is first conceived until its last-run house, I.A. technicians are on the job. That principle of complete coverage and singleness of purpose has been applied by the I.A. with ever-increasing success to each new form of the visual-entertainment industry. First, it was the stage, then the moving-picture screen and more recently television. This is the factor which makes the I.A.T.S.E. stand head and shoulders above the rest. It is the keynote of the organizations' know-how and effectiveness in building the highest wages and best working conditions to be found among skilled craftsperson's anywhere. *In union there is strength, and when every branch of an industry is united, that strength becomes invincible.*

The Supreme governing body of the I.A.T.S.E. is its triennial convention, an assembly of delegates from all locals and from the various departments. Here, every three years the progress of the organization is reviewed; its policies are affirmed or altered; plans for the future are formulated; and its laws are kept up to date. And here are elected the officers who will serve for the next three years.

Between conventions, the IA government is entrusted to its General Executive Board - consisting of the International President, General Secretary-Treasurer and eleven Vice-Presidents one of whom is Canadian, elected by the Canadian delegates. The Board meets at least twice a year but usually four times during the year.

Day-to-day administration of I.A.T.S.E. affairs is in the hands of the International President, whose staff includes an Assistant to the President and a corps of International Representatives working throughout the United States and Canada.

Under the democratic laws of the I.A., any action taken on the local level may be appealed to the International President. His decision may be appealed to the General Executive Board. And its decision may be appealed to the International Convention.

Keeping watch over the finances of the organization is a board of three International Trustees, who conduct semi-annual audits.

While most contracts are negotiated locally or by region, the General Office signs nation-wide agreements in cases where they are warranted by the nature of the work involved. Such agreements are in effect covering road persons with travelling attractions, sound service engineers who cover regional areas to look after projection booth equipment, film exchange employees, handlers of projection and video equipment, used on airlines and a number of specialized TV functions including live shows that move from station to station, closed-circuit reception and projections, rental Teleprompter service and the making and taking of pictures by the networks.

The I.A.T.S.E. National Pension Plan, originally established to cover all film exchange employees, has been expanded to include members of every type of local in the I.A. able to negotiate the necessary pension contributions. Many thousands of members now enjoy this protection, and the number is increasing. In addition, there are in existence a National Health and Welfare Fund, a National Annuity Fund and a National Vacation Fund available to all those whose employees are under contract calling for contributions. These benefit funds comprise a package offering security and protection to I.A. members. Also, some 20,000 to 25,000 members in Hollywood are covered by a separate pension plan and a health and welfare plan negotiated with the studios, and many I.A. locals have negotiated their own pension and health and welfare plans to cover their respective memberships. I.A.T.S.E., Local 63 has individual RSPs, in each member's name, where pension contributions are deposited.

The I.A.T.S.E. publishes a quarterly magazine, the OFFICIAL BULLETIN, which helps draw together the members of its far-flung organization and keeps the abreast of the latest developments.

Particular problems to the various areas of the United States, its Territories and Canada are examined at periodic gatherings of the fourteen district groups. Each triennial convention is immediately preceded by conventions of the districts. I.A.T.S.E. Local 63 is part of District Twelve - Western Canada and meets in convention once a year for two days. These Off-Year Conventions, held jointly with District Eleven -Eastern Canada, are held simultaneously with the two Districts meeting and the Canadian Caucus on the third day. In addition, twice a year the locals of Western Canada conduct two-day meetings.

The I.A. has designed an exhibit which is displayed each year at the Union Industries Show under the auspices of the AFL-CIO Union Label and Services Trades Department. This exhibit allows the general public, as well as other International and National unions, to view the skills and achievements of our members in the work they perform.

In addition, the I.A.T.S.E. conducts "Educational Seminars" which have been successful in helping our local unions throughout the United States and Canada to keep informed of the various labour laws and legal matters that could affect them.

The I.A.T.S.E. is represented on the Board of Directors of the Will Rogers Institute, where any member of the entertainment industry - or any member of his/her family - can go free of charge for treatment of a variety of chest diseases.

There we have a birds-eye view of the I.A.T.S.E. and the long, long way it has come since its founding over a century ago, toward accomplishing the purposes set forth in its International Constitution. These are: "To achieve, by organization and mutual endeavour, the improvement of the social and economic conditions of employees identified with the theatrical, television, moving picture, entertainment, amusement, and commercial or industrial show industries of the United States and Canada, working in any of the crafts, classifications or categories referred to in Article Eighteen, Section 10, of this Constitution or in any other craft, classification or category over which this Alliance exercises or may exercise jurisdiction or with respect to whom this Alliance holds or may acquire bargaining rights; to insure the maintenance of a fair rate of wages for services competently rendered; to assure the employment of all members in these industries; and to secure to ourselves by unity of action such benefits as are rightly ours, pledging ourselves in all difficulties to accept wise, honourable and conservative mediation, that equity may be maintained."

The accomplishments of that purpose sometimes have been made very difficult by the vast technological changes which have occurred in the entertainment industry down through the years. Through it all, however, the I.A.T.S.E. has moved steadily forward with a firm determination to bring under one banner the multitude of different crafts active in every technical phase of the legitimate theatre, motion picture theatres, film and video production, film distribution, television, the opera, etc. For many workers in this industry, I.A. membership is today one of the most valuable and proudest possessions of their lifetime. And they are convinced that this value and this source of pride will continue to grow mightily in the years ahead.

For further information please contact:

I.A.T.S.E., Local 63

Theatrical Stage Employees and Motion Picture Projectionists

359 McDermot Ave,

Winnipeg, Manitoba

R3A 0A6

Telephone: [204] 944-0511