

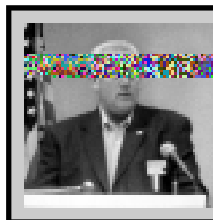


MICHIGAN MESSENGER

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November/December 2002 Issue



PRESIDENT'S REPORT

By Gary Van Hoogstraten
President

Contract Extensions

Rumors were flying all weekend in Seattle at the National Presidents' Conference (NPC). There was word that President Burrus was going to make an announcement. Per the constitution of the NPC, the President shall have a chance to address the delegates at 10:00 a.m. on Monday. The hour came and all the anxiety was there from all in attendance. President Burrus informed us that he was in discussions with the Postal Service about extending the current National Agreement.

As of now, you have already been made aware that the ratification process is underway. President Burrus has sent the extension to the Rank and File committee, and by their approval, it will now be sent to you. By the time you receive this edition of the Michigan Messenger, the ballots should be arriving as well. The highlights of this extension are:

- (1) A two year extension of the

Agreement; (2) 1.3% wage increase in both years and the C.O.L.A. would remain in effect; (3) There would be a moratorium on

excessing in excess of 50 miles for six to seven months along with a Memorandum of Understanding on excessing procedures; (4) Level adjustments for CFS clerks and Level 9 & 10 maintenance. In addition, there will be two more bids allowed within the extension (for a total of seven for the entire contract). Article 30 and the Uniform Allowance program would remain the same. The final highlight to this extension is that the Postal Service would petition the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) for an early Retirement Option.

Back to the local front, I have been talking to many Union officials throughout the State. It seems that management is having difficulty in releasing union officials so they may fulfill their duties. There was one office in particular that the Postmaster would not let anyone off so they could attend the District Meeting in Iron Mountain. We contacted the Coordinator's office and Labor Relations in Grand Rapids

but nothing was done about this. I have a suggestion at our next State Constitutional Convention that may take care of this, but until then, if you have any difficulty in receiving time off to fulfill your state duties, please contact me as soon as possible.

We are now in the final stages for the 1st Central Region Human Relations Conference. Sue Carney and I have been in constant discussion and the dates have now been set for February 19 - 22, 2003 in Midland. In this issue of the Michigan Messenger we have the registration form and details concerning this conference. Also look further in this issue of the paper for the District Meeting to be held in Mount Pleasant and the upcoming State Educational Convention.

That is all the news I have for now. I know that the Christmas season is approaching us and we all know how hectic it gets. We are all in this together and we will survive. I wish all of you a Happy Holiday Season. I hope it all goes well and you enjoy.

Until next time,

Gary



SECRETARY'S WRITINGS

By Harold Juhl
Executive Secretary

President's Conference

I just returned from the President's conference, which was in Seattle, WA. This was one of the best conferences we have had, due to the fact that we had a lot of first timers who attended. We also had good debates on several issues, which are very important to the members right now. Excessing was a big issue, along with the RMD program. Mr. Burrus came in and addressed the conference about his negotiations with the USPS on extending our current contract until November 2005. I am sure that our President has discussed this more in his article, so I won't steal his show.

State Constitution

I have finally finished retyping the State Constitution and now have it on disk. I will be getting new copies printed and out to the State Officers and Local Presidents in the near future. The Constitutional changes were added and I corrected the typos, which the printer made with the last copy. Hopefully they will be out and in your hands before Christmas.

State Office Supplies

If there is any State Officer who needs supplies, such as letterhead, paper, envelopes, vouchers, etc., you can contact me any time by phone or e-mail. I hope that all of the Officers who ordered business cards and jackets received them and everything was okay. Please let me know if not.

Mystery Shopper Program

This issue has been becoming a big problem with management issuing window clerks discipline for not asking the hundreds of questions that they are required to ask each and every customer. There is a Memorandum of Understanding which states that the Mystery Shopper will not be used as a form to discipline employees. Yet management still issues discipline like the MOU doesn't even exist. Window Clerks beware. Ask the questions, no matter how long the lines are or how much the customers complain. Hand out the customer complaint forms as you are asking all of the required questions and ask the customer to fill them out if they have a problem with the way you are instructed to perform your job.

Organizing

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EDUCATION AT WORK

By Lynn Pallas-Barber
Director of Education

TWO MORE YEARS???

This will be the most important question before the membership in a few weeks. It has been unanimously approved by the Rank and File Committee to extend our contract for two more years. Now the final decision will be up to us. Once again it is extremely important that every member of the APWU exercise his or her right to vote. It is your constitutional right and your voice in this great union.

I believe based on the information provided to us by our national union, ratification is the best decision. Based on the "Sick Industry" that the USPS is today, keeping our current contract places us in a better position than it would by opening negotiations in August 2003.

Some of our worst days are to face us yet. Management has not yet announced the plant consolidations. The moratorium on excessing is a vehicle to prepare for the possibility for employee reassignment. This moratorium limits management to excessing only within the 50-mile radius. We have been dealing with up to a 500-mile radius until now. It is hoped that the task force created by this contract extension agreement will resolve the complex issues involved in excessing. It is hoped that this task force will develop a procedure to uniformly apply the provisions of Article 12. Hopefully the early retirement opportunity with this contract extension may resolve this burden for some our membership. It may be easier to retire than to move.

NATIONAL ELECTIONS

Our recent national elections will also have a bearing on our future. With a Republican Congress and President, we for sure could be facing privatization more than we have in the past. The Republicans have plans to restart the economy- their agenda is the agenda of special interest in Washington, not the interests of postal workers and other working families. The Republican sweep is a threat to our very existence as postal workers. We will continue to see less support for workplace safety and less compassion for workers. Remember what happened to our ergonomic standards.

Our Republican President will make appointments to the Board of Governors that will favor privatization of the Postal Service. The future of the USPS as we know it could be doom and gloom.

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THE LONG AND THE SHORT OF IT

By Michael Long
Editor

As I sit down and write this article for this edition of the newsletter, I am reminded of how hectic it is this time of the year. Massive hours at work, getting all the Christmas shopping done, and above all, making sure management follows the contract. I can't believe the holiday season is already upon us. By the time you receive this newsletter, Thanksgiving will be in the past, and Christmas and New Years will be quickly upon us. I would like to start off this article by wishing you and yours a Very Merry Christmas and a Prosperous New Year.

Web Site

While I was seeking election to the position of Editor, one of my goals was to establish a Web site for the Michigan Postal Workers Union. During the Executive Board meeting back in April, this motion was approved, and now we are seeing it become a reality. While I must admit the web site is still in its infancy and with me learning how to use Front Page and HTML, I can assure you that more information will be placed on the site and it will become more user friendly. You can view the site yourself @ <http://www.mpwu.com>. Please, if you check out the site, click on the link and let me know what you think of it, and what you would like to see added.

Contract Extension

Well, I guess I should say something about this, now that the Contract Extension is being sent out to the field for ratification. Even though some people say something is better than nothing, I am a strong believer that we deserve better than something. If the NAPS can get a 5 – 6% increase in their agreement and the NALC and NPMHU can do just as good, there is no reason that we can't get even better. Remember the old adage, in numbers there is strength. Since the APWU is the largest union in the Postal Service, we should, correction, demand, better!

New Printer

Well, if you see a new look with this edition of the newsletter, it is because we have switched printers. The new printer has assured me that the paper will now have that fresh and crisp look to live up to the standards of the Michigan Messenger.

Mike



INJURY COMP. REPORT

By Ron Krumrie
Human Relations/Injury Compensation Director

THE BATTLE CONTINUES

Management is increasing its attacks on employees who are suffering from work related injuries. Management is in the process of developing a task force to further attack employees who are considered to have a need for long term medical restrictions.

Why would the USPS develop a task force to attack these employees? I can think of two reasons right away, the first is that they want to force these employees out the door. These employees have restrictions as far as what work they can do and management doesn't like that. Many of these employees have worked many years for the USPS and all the repetitive work over all the years has taken its toll, and management just wants to kick them out the door.

The second reason that appears right away is this is just another way for management to create more jobs for themselves. They must come up with some kind of function to show a continued need for jobs in management. Revert craft jobs and invent management jobs, I guess that is all part of the transformation plan.

MEDICAL REPORTS

I have stated on many occasions how important a good medical report is in getting your claim approved. In the last few weeks, I have had eight hearings for employees who have had their claims denied. Out of those eight cases, six needed better medical reports. We will hopefully get medical reports that will satisfy all requirements for OWCP to approve these claims.

Both hearing officers stated they understood how difficult it is at times to get some doctors to provide a good medical report. They were very understanding of the problem, but they are still required by law to uphold the denial unless we could furnish adequate medical reports.

It is very important that you ensure that the doctor you choose is aware that this is a work-related injury and that you are a federal employee. As a union we will battle management with whatever they try to do to ensure your claim is denied, but without a good medical report we can never win.

Management played an important role in seven out of my
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LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

By Cynthia D. Hardison
Legislative Director

Committee on Political Action

APWU COPA was created to raise voluntary political campaign contributions from our union's active, retired and auxiliary members to support the campaigns of candidates for public office.

Campaign contributions from members of organizations who give through a fund such as a political action committee often have a major influence on the outcome of federal and state elections, thereby influencing votes on many important issues. The APWU must have a strong voice in political affairs to support the elected officials who represent our interests and defeat those who oppose them. If we sit on the sidelines, big business and anti-labor organizations will go unchecked in achieving their anti-working family political agendas. Simply put, our union has too much at stake to turn a blind eye.

Over the last 16 years, COPA has become a major priority for the APWU. As a result, our voice on Capitol Hill – which in the past was just a whisper – can now be heard. We have raised COPA awareness in our membership, and we will continue to make our presence felt in political activities.

Thanks to the generous contributions of many, many understanding members – and even larger percentage of our retirees – legislators are now aware that the American Postal Workers Union, AFL-CIO, is a political force to be reckoned with.

Significant Victory

Recently, the union won a significant victory regarding COPA contributions. After several years of negotiations, we won an agreement with management permitting active-duty APWU members to contribute to COPA through payroll deduction. The new agreement will help us become a greater force in the political process by making it easier for members to make voluntary contributions. It will help APWU COPA raise funds throughout the election cycle and plan ahead.

What We Do With Your Contributions

Every APWU or Auxiliary member or retiree who contributes to COPA is vitally important – no matter the size of his or her contribution. Every contribution is recorded in our

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AREA 1 REPORT

By Larry Moyer
Area 1 Director

Transformation Plan

I have read an article that the postal service plans to announce a "re-structuring" in February 2003. This will change the network of how mail is transported across our country. I expect we will hear of processing plant closings and SMALL RURAL POST OFFICE CLOSINGS. I hope I am wrong but if this is what is announced, we need to write Congress. Even though the House and Senate have Republican majorities, I cannot believe that if the APWU, along with the other Postal Unions, start a public relations effort, these Republicans will not want their constituencies upset that their local post office will close.

Excessing

Two weeks ago, the local presidents of the APWU in the Royal Oak and Detroit Districts met with management in both Districts and APWU Central Region Coordinator Sharyn Stone and Great Lakes Area Management Representative Phyllis Lingenfeltser. The meeting occurred in part because I and Area 3 Director Richard Blake objected to the fact that management in Ann Arbor, MI refused to "offer" residual vacancies for those who are being excessed or for a Senior Clerk to Option into. The meeting made it real clear to all our objections as to how management is implementing excessing under Article 12. Management in both Districts took the position that they withhold positions for excess employees to go into, only in a 50-mile radius within the respective Districts. Article 12 provides for withholding within a 100-mile radius without regard to District boundaries. I also objected to the fact that in my home office of Troy (as is in many post offices) light and limited duty carriers are assigned clerk craft duties while the "able bodied" clerks are excessed out of the office. I have every sympathy to any employee who is injured on the job. Article 13 is clear. Assign these employees within their craft (carrier), if no work is available they can do and they are transferred in to the clerk craft, they go to the bottom of the regular clerk seniority list (if they are a Full Time Regular carrier). If no work exists, then they go home collecting Workmen's Compensation Benefits. Sharyn Stone stated that the excessing in Troy is improper if these carriers are still there doing clerk work. Phyllis Lingenfeltser asked me to send her what information I had about these carriers. She also claimed that Area Vice President Danny Jackson is concerned about this. I have sent the information to both Lingenfeltser and Jackson (as well as Coordinator

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AREA 2 REPORT

By Tony Friday
Area 2 Director

I'm getting out of the UNION!!!! These words are sweet music to the ears of management. Unfortunately when things get tough as they are now, (excessing,hiring freeze, RMD, harassment, etc.), some members albeit a, minority will sing this sweet music, as if by getting out the union they will make conditions better. Who are they hurting? Who are the non-members hurting who are not in the union? I think the better question is who are they helping? MANAGEMENT !!!!

Brothers and Sisters we are at war. At war, you do not help the enemy cause, by not paying Union dues. Dues go to help continue the fight against these attacks by management. What these music singers should be saying is "I am going to help the union prevail in these unprecedented attacks by encouraging every non-member to join this Union. If I don't like the way things are going, then I am going to get involved and attend the union meetings so I can find out how to help the struggle".

We have some tough fights to face, and my dream is that we face these challenges 100% organized. The reasons and excuses I have heard from non-members on why they won't sign up are to be blunt sickening to me. (ex: I need the money, 12 years ago a steward lost my case, they have to represent me anyway, etc:)

The good news is that there has been a few people joining in my area, however, this is not enough. We need to convince those non-members that are hell bent on helping management in this war. This is a cause that every union member should be active in finding out who the non-members are and convincing them to join the fight.

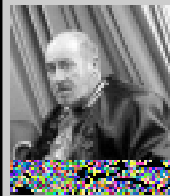
As of now I am sure everyone is aware that the Republicans will very soon take control of the Senate, and maintain their control of the House. It has not been 30 days since the election and what does President Bush say? Well for those who missed it, Here is a news headline on Nov 15, 2002.

"Bush moves to privatize thousands of federal jobs

WASHINGTON -- Nearly half of the nation's 1.8 million federal workers eventually could find they have a new boss or, worse, no job. 11/15/02"

There is nothing more to say. This great Union through COPA and other means has been fighting off the threat of

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RETIREE INVOLVEMENT

By Al LaBrecque
MPWU State Retiree Chapter President

Appreciated are the many "Get Well" messages I have received due to recent lumbar surgery. Actually, I wasn't sick, just "broken." Far more serious was the vascular surgery State Chapter Sec.Treas. Jerrold "Jerry" Clairmont recently underwent. Brother Clairmont says he is well on the mend and feeling much better. I am sure all Jerry's friends join me in wishing him a speedy and full recovery.

Retirees received a letter dated October 16, 2002 from APWU President Burrus urging our vote in November 5th elections, with an appeal for COPA contributions along with COPA allotment deductions form and a pre-paid postage return envelope. Retirees are acknowledged as contributing over 70% of all COPA monies. This, coming on the heels of having the door to the APWU house slammed in our faces by the National Convention.

The following is my response on the reverse side of Burrus COPA letter, returned in the pre-paid postage envelope.

"President Burrus: Not One Damn Dime to COPA until Retirees Department members have taxation WITH representation! Until, and unless APWU retiree members are afforded a voice and a vote in this Union, I am resolved to making political contributions directly to candidates of my choice.

It has been evident since the 1996 National Convention, emphasized by the actions of the 2002 Convention, our only value to the APWU Leadership is as COPA's 'cash cows,' nothing more! You should know that this is a sentiment widely shared by Retirees Department members.

You may, however, be assured that I, as secretary of my county Democratic Party, faithfully vote for friends of labor and retirees." "Very Sincerely,"

Retired members in the field expressed similar reactions and responses to the COPA letter. Western Region Retiree Delegate, Byron Denton, responded by advising President Burrus that he was "donating" the two (2) days pay he was denied as a National Retiree Delegate to the convention. The five (5) National Retiree Delegates were directed to report August 10 – 16, seven (7) working days, but were only reimbursed for five! A long-time generous COPA supporter, Brother Denton lets it be known there will be no more until retirees achieve a voice and vote.

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16th Biennial National Convention

Legislative Update Continued

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computer system, and deposited directly in COPA's bank account. By law, COPA funds may not be co-mingled with other APWU funds. The Secretary-Treasurer's Department is responsible for administering the COPA account. Employees in APWU's accounting office make sure that individual and group contributors received acknowledgement from President Burrus.

COPA committee members meet regularly to survey the political landscape and to determine the best possible use of COPA's funds. We consult with headquarters staff and other APWU national, state, and local officers about supporting incumbents and challengers. The COPA committee also consults the APWU Auxiliary, the Retirees Department, and retiree chapters to get their input.

Criteria for COPA's support

The COPA Committee uses many criteria to determine if, or how much financial support will be given to candidates. Some criteria are:

For Incumbents:

- ⇒ Does an incumbent candidate serve on a congressional committee that has legislative or budget authority on vital issues for APWU membership?
- ⇒ Does an incumbent support APWU/Labor goals? The COPA committee uses APWU voting records to determine an incumbent's record on Important Issues.

For Challengers:

- ⇒ Has the candidate responded to an APWU questionnaire in which we ask about his/her position on issues that are important to APWU members? If so, how did he/she answer?
- ⇒ Is the candidate running for an "open seat" or is he/she challenging an established incumbent?

For All candidates – Incumbents and Challengers:

- ⇒ Has the AFL-CIO endorsed a candidate?
- ⇒ Is the race expected to be close or winnable? During election years, members of the COPA Committee meet regularly with representative of other AFL-CIO union to decide which races are expected to be close, winnable, and/or crucial to labor's interests. We take into account such factors as candidate's fundraising ability, partisan voting patterns in their congressional districts, and current polling results.

COPA Fund-Raising

Members' contributions to COPA continue to be strong, particularly in response to direct legislative threats to postal jobs and postal "reform." Membership activism and COPA contributions are always needed. We must constantly keep the COPA war chest full so that we can remain strong and prepared.

Across the county, locals have set up COPA fundraising programs. Locals have developed innovative and effective ways to raise COPA funds through special events, such as golf tournaments, dinners, 50-50 drawings, and raffles. Many locals advertise COPA in their local publications, and they often compete with other locals to see which local can top the other.

On the state level, competitions at state conventions have proven to be very successful. State organization also request COPA funds in their publications.

IMPORTANT REMINDER: Federal law and Department of Labor regulations bar national statewide, and local unions from co-mingling any kind of political contributions with any other union funds.

Thanks to Retirees and Auxiliary

APWU COPA's most loyal contributors have always been APWU retirees and that trend continues. Proportionally, retirees are our most frequent and regular contributors.

We cannot overlook the involvement of our APWU Auxiliary members in COPA fund-raising. In addition to running their own fund-raising campaigns, Auxiliary members continue to lend their support and assistance in local and state fund-raising efforts.

Thanks to All Contributors

The COPA committee also recognizes the significant contributions of many of APWU's active members. We appreciate every contribution the fund receives, and we hope that all members who can afford it will join the COPA PRESIDENT'S CLUB by contributing \$5 per week (a total of \$260 per year). Members who wish to give at lower levels are encouraged to become GOLD EAGLES by donating \$3 per week (a total of \$158 per year), or SILVER EAGLES, by donating \$2 per week (a total of \$104 per year).

We hope that active APWU members keep in mind that giving to COPA should be a regular habit – something that is done automatically or sent in on a regular basis. A dollar a week for COPA is a reasonable price to pay for job security and protection of benefits – or, you may wish to consider a \$2 or \$3 per week contributions, which is also very reasonable. Your dollars will give APWU the strength to make a major difference in critical elections.

In addition to automatic payroll deduction or annuity deduction, members, retirees, and auxiliary members may send COPA donations at any time.

Cynthia

Secretary's Writings Continued

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The membership of this Union has decline recently and we need to concentrate on the non-members within this organization and get them to become union members. These people work right along side of you and they receive every benefit that you do and do not pay dime for dues. The percent of Union members is down to around 75% for the APWU. This needs to be brought up drastically and it is the job of all union members to go out and try to recruit these non-members into paying their share for everything they receive. It is time to strengthen this Union and our strength is in numbers! Let's get out there and organize today!

In Solidarity,

Harold

Education at Work Continued

(Continued from page 2)

FUTURE EDUCATION

Mark your calendars for the following dates:

- ⇒ February 7-9, 2003 MPWU District Meeting in Mt. Pleasant, Michigan
- ⇒ February 19-22, 2003 Central Region Retirement Counseling, Injury Compensation Specialist and Building the Local Union in Midland, Michigan
- ⇒ May 1-4, MPWU Educational Convention, Mackinac Island, Michigan.

HAPPY THANKSGIVING!

November is the month where we give "Thanks". Despite the bleak picture of the USPS, we as APWU members have allot to be thankful for. It is a time to look at everything that we have and give thanks for our families and friends.

Until Next time,

In Solidarity,

Lynn



OWCP Report Continued

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eight cases being denied. We must all remember that management wins when our claim is denied; therefore we would be foolish to believe that management will do everything in their power to help us get our claim approved. It is not in their budget. They are trying to reduce their costs associated with work related injuries and illnesses. The only way to do this is to complicate as many claims as possible in hopes that they will be denied.

We must continue to educate ourselves about our rights and benefits under the Federal Employees' Compensation Act. We must also be aware of our obligations under the law. The law states that the claimant is responsible for the submission of a medical report to support the claimed injury. Management will not ensure that you know what is required in a medical report, so now we must rely on our union officials to help us.

THE LAW AND THE CONTRACT

As a union we have a contract, and in that contract our rights and benefits under the Federal Employees' Compensation Act (the law) are addressed. This is done in Articles 19 and 21. Article 19 addresses handbooks and manuals. ELM 17 Section 540 and EL-505 both pertain to ill and injured employees. Article 21 addresses benefit plans, Section 4 refers to how management must comply with the Federal Employees' Compensation Act. When management is in violation of these articles we need to file grievances.

To accomplish this we must ensure that union officials have a good idea of what is required for a claim to be approved. We had a very good class for injury compensation in Iron Mountain, with many more to follow. I would hope to continue to see stewards attending these classes.

We, as a union, can not leave our wounded behind. We can not allow our ill and injured to be kicked out the door because they can no longer do all the duties required of postal workers.

This should be a very important to all of us. We never know who could suffer a work-related injury next. You could be the next employee who is left behind. You could be the next employee who is kicked out the door. You could be the next employee who calls me needing help.

I will end on a happier note and wish all my union brothers and sisters a safe and happy holiday season. We all have many things to be thankful for. So enjoy your holidays and remember to be safe.

Ron

Area 1 Report Continued

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Stone); if you have this problem in your office, have your union steward request a copy of the job offers provided to these carriers, and have him/her grieve it and sent a copy to the above mentioned people. Time will tell as to what will happen.

APWU NATIONAL CONVENTION

The delegates from every state in the Union attended the National APWU Convention in Minneapolis, Minnesota in August. It was the first convention that William Burrus presided over as APWU National President. As usual we had numerous resolutions to improve our contract. I was very disappointed that a resolution that the Troy Local submitted to reduce Part Time Flexible union dues to a "scale" based on the number of hours worked was defeated. With excessing occurring, as the junior Full time regulars get sent out of their office, the PTF gets their work hours reduced, or in the small office the hours are reduced as more mail is automated. Consequently, if our National Union cannot get management to keep excessing to a minimum, then the people who can least afford to pay full dues should get a break on the dues. My fellow delegates however disagreed with this resolution.

WOS SURVEY

For those of you that have not had one, you will! WOS surveys are WINDOW OPERATION SURVEYS. The intent of management in the Royal Oak District is to have the windows staffed properly! Translation: expect to lose hours on your window and have CUSTOMER SERVICE affected. When this happens ask to see a steward to grieve it.

ELECTION RESULTS

As everyone knows, the Republicans now control both houses of Congress and the White House. Does this mean Privatization of the Post Office is around the corner? I think major changes will occur, but I still believe that the postal service has a role to play in this new millennium. How that will play out remains to be seen. Over the years the Democrats in my opinion could have done much, much more for the postal employees and organized labor during the 40 years they controlled Congress. Now that the Republicans are in, do they want to alienate their constituencies by allowing Post Offices in their Districts to close? Maybe I am naïve but I don't think so. I don't expect the Republicans to be our close friends either.

Until Next Time
Solidarity

Larry

Area 2 Report Continued

(Continued from page 5)

privatization, and fighting all sort of attacks. If you want to help those who would rather see you without a union, and or without a job then keep singing, but it is my sincere hope that we are get the message out and UNITE AND FIGHT!

THANKS FOR YOUR TIME

Tony

Retiree Invovlement Continued

(Continued from page 5)

Elections 2002 – Bittersweet...mostly bitter for postal/federal employees and retirees. Michigan voters elected the first-ever woman Governor, and first Democrat Governor in 12 long years. Senator Carl Levin (D) was easily reelected, as were friendly Congressmen like Bart Stupak (D) and Dale E. Kildee (D). Beyond that, state government, and worse yet, the US Senate are in the firm clutches of the GOP. Where was the vaunted labor vote? What are working people and retirees thinking when considering bread and butter issues? Less than 50% of registered voters turned out. Facing a decidedly hostile Congress and White House the next two years, we cannot despair. Postal labor must redouble legislative and political efforts at all levels just to hold the fort. Locals concerned over prospects of plant, facility, and small office closing, more likely now with the GOP sweep, have to realize their best hope lies in congressional intervention. Locals, State and our Legislative Department must establish regular contact with elected officials as we did prior to 1970. When the going gets tough, the tough gets going! When was the last time APWU conducted a good ole' fashioned Legislative Rally in D.C.? This generation, particularly at the Local level, is in dire need of a crash course in legislative activity! What better way to kick start political awareness than a massive APWU march on "The Hill," to pound the halls of Congress, and to bring the Union agenda to our elected Members of Congress, one on one? This Union needs to get back to basics as a matter of survival. Retirees know how to do that!

FEHBP OPEN SEASON is upon us with choices to be made. Expected premium spikes will more than wipe out the anemic projected 1.4% COLA increase in retiree annuity and Social Security checks. I was

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Retiree Involvement Continued

(Continued from page 10)

somewhat taken aback by NARFE's usual middle-of-the-road nature with its harsh assessment of the APWU Health Plan's new "customer driven" option for 2003. The November issue of "Retirement Life" charges that the new APWU option is nothing more than a "Medical Savings Account" (MSA) wrapped in an attractive package. NARFE and postal labor have generally been cool to MSAs designed to attract the younger, healthier enrollee. But it makes sense APWU would offer such an option to shore up an enrollment in the Plan, which consists of more than 70% retirees. This of which brings me to this important notice:

RETIRES ENROLLED IN THE APWU HEALTH PLAN – Did you receive a letter advising you that as a \$3. (or, \$6.) dues-paying member that you **MUST** convert to a \$24. per annum (\$2. per mo) member of the APWU Retirees Department to retain your Health Plan eligibility? **DO NOT IGNORE!** The \$3./\$6. retired member program was eliminated in 1994 with the establishment of the Retirees Department. Repeated notices were sent out then, and in 1995, but apparently some retirees slipped through the cracks. That is being corrected now. If you are an affected retiree, protect your eligibility by completing and signing the enclosed Form 1187 and return it in the envelope provided to the APWU Retirees Department. Retirees who have questions, or need assistance, are advised to **IMMEDIATELY** contact your Local, Local Retiree Chapter, APWU Retirees Department, or call/write me.

THANK MICHELLE ARNTZ – Traverse City Area Local Secretary! If you are an "interim" retiree who received retroactive pay for the negotiated wage increase for all hours paid during the interim period, from the expiration of the last contract and the arbitrated wage settlement, and OPM has adjusted your monthly annuity to reflect the wage increase, you probably have Sister Arntz to thank! Michelle alerted me in September 2001 on behalf of a TCAL member contemplating retirement before the arbitrated contract settlement. The question was; would employees who retired in the interim period be eligible for retro pay for any wage increase that may result? Traverse City management said "No." The previous contract had left out those interim period retirees. Michelle's alert inquiry prompted me to contact then Exec. V.P. Burrus, Retirees Department Director J.R. Smith, and finally Exec. V.P. Cliff Guffey, who finalized the details with USPS. While there **MAY** have been other APWU sources advocating consideration for interim retiree retro pay and OPM annuity adjustment, Sister Arntz can take a great measure of satisfaction and credit for this significant accomplishment on behalf of "interim" retirees throughout

the APWU. Be it nickels and dimes, or substantial dollars, affected retirees annuities are adjusted upward for life.

RETIREE RESOLUTIONS REVISTED. In the wake of our two paramount retiree resolutions rejection by the 2002 Convention, many heartening, supportive comments have been appearing in APWU publications, including Director J.R. Smith's (last page) column in the September-October American Postal Worker slick pages.

Members of the Constitution Committee who led the opposition, and those vocal, self-righteous full dues-paying retirees who set themselves above and apart from the misnomer "partial dues" \$24. Retirees Department members should be having second thoughts if they have a Union conscience at all. Lets set the record straight! APWU Retiree Department member's **FULL** membership dues are \$24. per year. Okay? The misguided angst expressed by a few elitist full dues-paying (national per capita) retiree delegates that: Retirees Department members were asking for the same voting and voice rights they pay full dues for is simply **NOT TRUE!** If they examine Resolutions #13; "Members of the APWU Retirees Department Eligible to Vote for APWU National General Officers", the "Resolved" limits voting eligibility to electing five (5) delegates to the National Convention, the **ONLY** vote we now "enjoy"! Additional voting is restricted to seven (7) national officers in total: President, Executive Vice-President, and Secretary-Treasurer. It also includes two Legislative Department officers, Director of Human Relations and Director, APWU Hospital Plan.

It is so complicated or unreasonable to understand that those are the officers having a direct impact upon retired members? Resolution #13 specifically excludes \$24. retiree eligibility to vote for Local, State, or any other national or craft officers. It further excludes voting privileges in any matter pertained to contract ratification, LMOU's or proposed work stoppages. Further, \$24. retirees would not be eligible to be a candidate for **ANY** APWU office at the Local, State, or National Union levels beyond what we already have for Local and State Retiree Chapter office, or APWU retirees Department Director (if ever adopted as an elected office). So, what is the problem?

Lets take a converse look at the per capita, full dues-paying retirees' "rights." Let's see; they can run for **ANY** Local, State or national Union office and as delegates to State and National Conventions. They enjoy the 1-25 delegate to member ration, while the ratio for \$24 retired members is one (1) delegate for over 6,000 members! Do the math! Five (5) National Retiree Delegates for over 31,000 \$24. retired members. Watch out! Someone just might decide to submit a resolution proposing proportionate retiree member

(Continued on page 12)

Retiree Involvement Continued

(Continued from page 11)

representation; like one (1) delegate for 25 members! The full dues-paying retiree can vote in the election of ALL Local, State, and up to 14 national officers, plus NBA's in the craft they retired from. Fine, they pay for that.

But should they really be permitted to a voice or vote on national contracts and LMOU's, the outcome of which the active membership has to live with, and the retirees don't? I am not even so sure it is kosher that ANY retirees should be voting for craft officers who have no representational value to retirees. UAW retirees, after which the APWU Retirees Department is patterned, have no vote on International or Local contracts, Shop Committee (stewards), or strike votes.

With somewhere around 400 full-dues paying APWU retired members, any are either Local or State (and lets not forget National) elected officers or appointees on the Union payroll with perks to offset the expense of paying full dues. Methinks they doth protesteth too loudly out of fear of being squeezed out of their cushy feather nests.

The opposition to Resolution #13, particularly full dues-paying retiree delegates who spoke on the convention mikes, swayed the vote. The estimated 60% first-time delegates and up to 80% only experience their second convention, can't be faulted for being easily influenced by the surface arguments of the (much wiser?) retiree opposition, or direction of their leadership (or lack thereof). One first-time delegate posted on 21cpw.com website that she was for Resolution #13 until she was told \$24 retirees would all vote for Burrus. Others influenced by so-called retiree opponents of Resolution #13 reasoned; "After all, if retirees themselves are against this resolution, I am voting it down!"

This isn't meant as an indictment of all our full dues-paying retired members. Many pay full dues so as to preserve their national election voting rights at considerable personal expense. Many also are full dues-paying members of the Retirees Department and active in their Retiree Chapters. And, just as many are in support of Resolution #13. But, the damage done by a handful did the trick. Then, with Burrus chiming in from the Chair by telling delegates the 2000 Convention adopted a resolution allowing retirees to reinstate to full dues-paying member status; the argument that retirees couldn't reinstate lapsed membership got squelched. What Burrus didn't say is that reinstatement is contingent upon verified "extenuating circumstances," subject

to appeal to the APWU Sec.-Treas, reviewed by the Retirees Department Director for a recommendation to the Sec-Treas, who THEN presents the appeal, finding, and recommendation to the National Executive Board for final determination. Check it out: Article 3, Section 4(c)...I was the author. Not quite as automatic or simple as Bill made it sound!

I have just gotta vent this! Getting the short end of the stick on an issue is nothing new to me. I can live with it and come back another day. But, to have such a fundamental Union membership right to a voice and vote denied on the strength of flawed reasoning, put forth by full dues-paying retirees who purport to represent their Local or State Retiree Chapter \$24. dues-paying members, is absolutely shameful! Chapter members need to ASK Local and State delegates where they stood on Resolution #13, particularly those who are full dues-paying retirees claiming to represent Local or State Retiree Chapter \$24. retirees. As a \$24. Retiree Chapter member, I sure as hell would want to know how my Local and State Union leadership, and especially any retiree delegate representing my Chapter, spoke or voted regarding MY RIGHT to voice and vote!

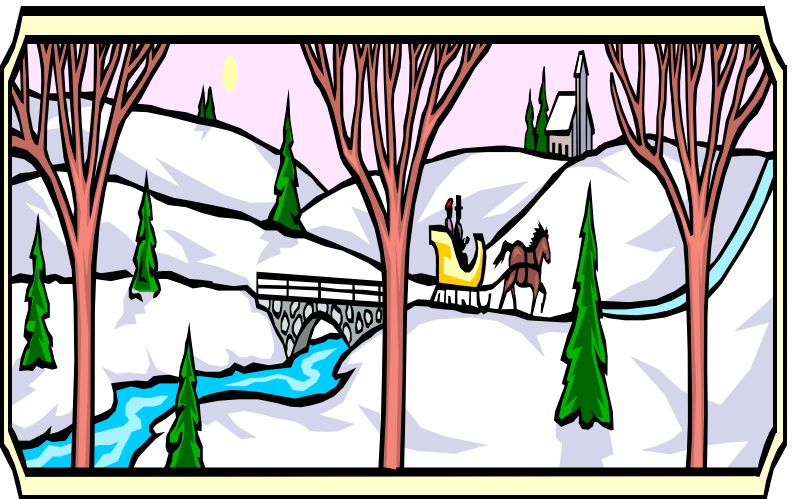
The next "R.I." column will feature the fallacies in the equally disturbing defeat of Resolution #21; "establishing Position of Director, APWU Retirees Department as an Elected Office."

It's said; "Whatever Doesn't Kill You, Only Makes You Stronger." So....Be Strong!

For now, the holiday season demands a warmer wish for all of Michelle and my dear Friends, Sisters & Brothers....A Holy and Merry Christmas, and Healthy and Happy 2003!

In Brotherhood,

Al



Area 6 & 8 District Meeting

FEBRUARY 7TH & 8TH, 2003

COMFORT INN
2424 SOUTH MISSION
MT. PLEASANT, MI 48858
(989) 772-4000

ROOM RATES - \$85.00 STANDARD
\$95.00 WHIRLPOOL
\$125.00 EXECUTIVE SUITE

MENTION THE MPWU WHEN RESERVING YOUR ROOM

\$50.00 REGISTRATION

FRIDAY 7TH, 2003 -
1:00 – 3:00 P.M. – REGISTRATION
3:00 – 5:30 P.M. – ROUNDTABLE WITH NBA
6:00 P.M. – MIDNIGHT – HOSPITALITY

SATURDAY 8TH, 2003 –
8:00 – 9:00 A.M. – REGISTRATION
9:00 A.M. – NOON – RMD TRAINING
9:00 A.M. – NOON – BASIC STEWARD TRAINING
9:00 A.M. – NOON – MAINTENANCE TRAINING
NOON – 1:00 P.M. – LUNCH
1:00 – 5:00 P.M. – ADVANCED STEWARD TRAINING
1:00 – 5:00 P.M. – FMLA TRAINING
6:00 – 7:00 P.M. – COCKTAIL HOUR
7:00 – 10:00 P.M. – DINNER & SPEAKERS
10:00 – MIDNIGHT - HOSPITALITY

Contact Mary Stephenson - Area 6 Director if you have any questions or would like more information.

**American Postal Workers Union, AFL-CIO
2003 Central Region
Retirement Counseling, Injury Compensation Specialist and
Building the Local Union Seminars
February 19-22, 2003**

The Michigan Postal Workers Union will be co-hosting these seminars with the National APWU Retirees and Human Relations Departments. Each department will be offering an extensive 3-day training seminar **plus** a full-day joint seminar on building the local union.

The Retirement Counseling Seminar will include the role of the counselor, retirement systems, the process, employee contributions, civilian, military and leave credits, life and health insurance, computation of annuities, resources and much more.

The Injury Compensation Specialist Seminar is modeled after the training offered to the federal agencies by the Dept. of Labor, Office of Workers' Compensation Program but has been curtailed to address more specific issues that are relative to postal workers and union representatives. The agenda will include the role of the representative, definitions, types of claims, claim forms, claimant and agency responsibilities, claimant rights, benefits, continuation of pay, compensation, controversies, scheduled awards, physicians, medical narrative, second and referee opinions, limited duty, ELM 540, record keeping, hearings, reconsideration and appeals, claims examiner's role and perspective in claim review, the Agency Query System, special issues and more.

Building the Local Union will be a joint full day workshop on February 22nd for all the participants. This class focuses on regenerating interests and participation among the membership.

Registration Information: Deadline is January 15th. Registration fee is \$70.00 (includes dinner Saturday evening, February 22nd). Late registration will be accepted on a space available basis only. No walk-ins.

Hotel Information: Rooms have been blocked at the **Holiday Inn & Convention Center, Midland Michigan** at a special APWU rate of \$66.30 (inc. tax). Reservations should be made directly with the hotel by calling **(800)-622-4220**. The hotel is approx. 15 mins. from MBS (Midland/Bay City/Saginaw) Airport.

**APWU 2003 Central Region
Retirement Counseling, Injury Compensation Specialist & Building the Local Union Seminars
Registration Form**

Name _____ **SSN** _____ - _____ - _____

[illegible]

Local	Title
-------	-------

Seminar Selection (Select Only One): _____ Retirement or Injury Compensation Specialist _____

*** Note all participants will attend Building Your Local Union no selection necessary**

Send your completed registration form and payment payable to:

**Michigan Postal Workers Union
P.O. Box 664
Iron Mountain, MI 49801-0664
Attention: Lynn Pallas - Barber**

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State Retiree Chapter President, Al LaBrecque

H: 989-736-8173

MPWU Auxiliary Liaison,

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H: 269-729-9374

The MICHIGAN MESSENGER is published six times yearly, and is the official publication of the Michigan Postal Workers Union, American Postal Workers Union, AFL-CIO, also affiliated with the APWU Postal Press Association.

The opinions expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of the Editor, the MPWU, or anyone in particular. Any correspondence to the Editor may be sent to: Michael Long, Editor, PO Box 280, Sheridan, MI 48884-0280; Ph: 616-776-1489 (Union Hall), 616-776-1485 (work), or 616-302-1409 (cell).

Your articles are welcome! They must be signed to be printed, but your name will be withheld upon request. Be aware that articles may be edited to fit the confines of this publication.

In addition, this paper is designed with everyone in mind, please be aware that all mistakes are intentional for the express purpose of keeping those happy that are most happy when finding errors in others.

**NEXT DEADLINE
FOR THE
Michigan Messenger,
November/December
Issue
is
January 15, 2003
Happy New Year!**

Upcoming Events to Plan For:

February 7 & 8, 2003 - Mt. Pleasant Comfort Inn - Area 6 & 8 District Meeting

February 19 -22, 2003 - Midland Holiday Inn - 1st Annual Central Region Human Relations Conference

May 1 - 3, 2003 - Mackinac Island's Mission Point Resort - MPWU Educational Conference

July 30 - August 2, 2003 - Milwaukee, WI, National PPA Convention

Michigan Delegates to the 2002 APWU National Convention Minneapolis, Minnesota - August 12 - 16, 2002

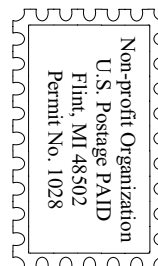


On Behalf of the entire Executive Board of the Michigan Postal Workers Union, I would like to wish a full and speedy recovery to Clerk Craft Director Bob Maloney who recently suffered a stroke around Thanksgiving. Our thoughts and prayers are with him and his family during this crisis. Jerry Clairmont and Al LaBrecque, our thoughts and prayers are with you and your family also due to having surgery since the last edition of the Messenger.



Return to MPWU
P.O. Box 280
Sheridan, MI 48884

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