

MICHIGAN MESSENGER



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March/April 2003 Issue

President's Report



By Gary Van Hoogstraten
President

Your future as a postal employee and the future of the Postal Service are at stake. To be honest with you, do you really think that the public really cares that

with you. This figure is higher than the total votes that ratified the contract. That is a shame for those who did not care of the future of our Contract.

Lastly, but one that bothers me more is the recent moratorium on arbitration scheduling. The only cases that will be arbitrated for the next three months are removals and those that have a continuance of a case. In the Central Region, we currently have a backlog of over 14,000 cases pending. Now, they want to add to those numbers. What this plan is basically called is a "Shakeout." Someone will come into your office and look at some of these cases that are, in some cases, 10 years old and try and settle them or withdraw them. There will be committees formed to go over these cases and reduce the numbers. But do not let this stop you from filing a grievance if you have to. This is your right as a Union Member. I have said it many times before that a mistake was made when they changed Article 15 and have taken away a piece of the apple when they allowed a direct appeal to arbitration in some cases. Our National Business Agents are well qualified and should have been able to get these cases and try and settle them but instead we lost something we never should have. Use your contractual right to file a grievance and do not let this moratorium scare you.

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Official Publication of the Michigan Postal Workers Union

Sisters and brothers, as I sit down at my computer, there are so many things going on today. It is mind boggling to see where to start. Lets first look at the Presidents Commission on the Postal Service. Lets look at the make up of the Commission and what their agenda may be. The Commission has stated its objectives and they cover four areas: (1) the Business Model - a universal service and rate-maker. (2) Private Sector Partnership - current role of private sector outsourcing, work sharing. (3) Technology Challenges - impact of new technology and what effect it will have on the USPS. (4) and lastly, Workforce - the USPS and Collective Bargaining, dispute resolutions, employee pay and work incentives and health care costs.

What we have to remember is that there is no Labor or consumer representative named to the Commission. Additionally, the Commission has ties to corporate interest that stand to gain millions, if not billions, if they are allowed to open the Postal cookie jar. Do you think there will be a fair and objective report to the President? For the past 30 years, a primary goal of conservative Republicans has been to privatize the Postal Service. And this presidential panel represents their best opportunity.

you have a job or not? We have to reach out to the American public and let them know how much that this will not only affect them, but also make them aware that privatization and outsourcing will have to be something that will come out of their pockets. We have to educate them, just as well as our members.

Another challenge ahead for us, which should begin by this summer, is plant consolidations. What this means is a total shutdown of some mail processing facilities. It has been quoted that Early Retirement opportunities will lessen the impact for many. I, for one, believe that there is no such thing as an Early-Out Retirement without some sort of incentive. President Burrus promised us in Seattle that he would not sign a contract extension without an incentive. Where in the hell is it? As of this date, nothing has been released to let us know if there is one.

These are some of the challenges we must deal with in the near future. We must utilize all our resources and fight this battle. This also includes our non-members (SCABS). What is really shocking is the fact that there are some 90,000 non-members working daily on the workroom floor



Secretary's Writings

By Harold Juhl
Executive Secretary

It's March and time for another article. First thing on the list to talk about is the Early Retirement Option. The Postal Service submitted a package to OPM (Office of Personnel Management) in January. This was done in accordance with the Contract Extension, and the Postal Service is looking to offer early outs to APWU-employees. The Postal Service is looking to eliminate about 16,000 jobs nationwide and this would be an avenue to help achieve this goal. With the talk of consolidating some processing plants, this would help when it comes to excessing employees in these areas. Unfortunately, there was no incentive offer requested by the Postal Service in their package.

The issue of RMD is one of our hot pans in the fire at this time. When you call in to RMD they have Caller ID and it records the number you are calling from. This could be a problem for an employee who might be using a cell phone and not at home, and is calling in for sick leave. There are ways to avoid this from happening, one way might be getting an unlisted phone number, or blocking your number from being recorded. The issue of documentation is another hot topic. Make sure you CYA if they tell you that you need documentation, then you should go ahead and get it, then see your Union Representative and file a grievance. Watch out for yourselves, Management is looking for any way to reduce the work force and this would be a way for them to accomplish that using discipline.

The State Educational Convention is soon approaching and this would be an excellent time to send as many of your stewards and officers for training. Lynn Pallas-Barber has set up a good program with good instructors, so take advantage of the opportunity to get as much training as possible. This will not only benefit the attendees, but also the members back home in our Locals. Training is always a valuable asset, so keep on going to as many training sessions that you are able to attend.

This next issue has been implemented in the Lansing District and maybe it's been brought into your area as well. That is the new Standardization of Mail Program. This program has affected the AO's greatly in our area. The PTF hours in a majority of our smaller offices have been cut down anywhere from 40 hours to 20 – 24 hours per week. The Postmasters have been ordered to perform bargaining unit work to pick those hours that our PTF's lost. If this is happening in your office contact your Local Union Representative and file a grievance on this issue. (Level 15 and 18 Offices especially)

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Education at Work

By Lynn Pallas-Barber
Director of Education

MARCH IS WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

THE HISTORY OF WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

As recently as the 1970's, women's history was virtually an unknown topic in the curriculum in our public schools. In 1978 the Education Task Force of Sonoma County, California initiated a "Women's History Week". March 8, International Women's Day, was selected as the focal point to ensure that the events and celebration would include a multicultural perspective, recognize the connection between and among all women, and celebrate the important role of women in the paid labor force. The activities and events met with an overwhelmingly enthusiastic response, and within a few years, scores of area schools held programs for Women's History Week. Hundreds of women from the community participated by going into the schools as Community Resource Women, and an annual real Women Essay Contest drew hundreds of entries. An annual parade through downtown Santa Rosa, CA was also held.

THE WEEK BECOMES NATIONAL

In March of 1980, President Jimmy Carter issued a Presidential Message to the American public, encouraging the recognition and celebration of women's historic accomplishments during the week of March 8th, Women's History Week. By the end of 1980, then Representative Barbara Mikulski (D-MD) and Senator Orrin Hatch (R-UT) had cosponsored the first Joint Congressional Resolution that declared the week of March 8th in 1981 as National Women's History Week.

MARCH IS NATIONAL WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

In 1987, at the request of women's organizations, museums, libraries, youth leaders, and educators throughout the country, the National Women's History Project successfully petitioned Congress to expand the national celebrations to the entire month of March. A National Women's History Month Resolution was quickly approved with strong bipartisan support in both the House and the Senate. Since 1992, a Presidential Proclamation has carried the directive for what is now a major national and international celebration, and the rest is history.

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The Long and the Short of It

By Michael Long
Editor

Well, it has happened. As I am at the Union Office writing my article, and compiling the others to get this edition of the newsletter to the printer, the United States began its war with Iraq. With this in mind, it is with great sadness that I write this article. As a Gulf War veteran myself, I am reminded of the perils our military is going to face. I would like to take this opportunity to pray for a quick end to this war, and an even faster and safe return of our fighting men and women.

2003 Education Convention

Plans are made, classes are determined, and everything looks good. The 2003 Education Convention will take place from May 1st – May 4th at Mission Point Resort on beautiful Mackinac Island. In this edition of the Michigan Messenger, there is information concerning this convention. However, as I state on the website, there is too much information for me to place here. If you have access to the Internet, I would ask you to check out MPWU.com, and click on the Education Convention Link. Currently, Lodging, Ferry Transportation, Itinerary, and the Pre-Registration form is linked there; along with an interactive map of Mackinac Island, a link to the Mackinac Island Visitor's Bureau, and a list of Entertainment and costs. Check it out!

So Called "Low-Cost, Tray Sorter"

In Grand Rapids, we are now in receipt of the Low Cost Tray Sorter (LCTS), actually two of them (one at the main, and one (coming soon) at our P1 Annex). I can honestly say that the one at the Main has not changed my mind in regards to the machinery that the USPS buys. It is running like most of the equipment that we receive. I have talked to other offices that have the LCTS, and most of them say it runs great. Here though, it personally hasn't been a great experience. We are triple-handling the mail, and we are getting mail to the machines later than we used to. To make matters even worse, management gave the operation of the LCTS to the Mail Handlers at the Main, and supposedly the Clerks will have it at the P1. This way, as they state, whoever wins the grievances and the RI-399 battle, they will only have to pay half the amount of any grievance settlement (per se).

New Computers and Lunches for Managers

I have a question for the managers that read this newsletter. How come, we are told that there aren't any funds in the
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Injury Comp Report

By Ron Krumrie
Human Relations/Injury Compensation Director

To begin this article, I would like to thank Sue Carney and Richard Boutwell for the outstanding job they both did teaching at the recently completed Human Relations Conference in Midland. For those of you that were unable to attend you really missed out on some really good training.

Here are two more new items from the APWU web site in the Human Relations Department.

USPS/FIRST HEALTH PREFERRED PROVIDER PROGRAM

The Postal Service, in coordination with OWCP, has contracted with First Health Corporation to administer a program that is intended to help control the Postal Service's injury compensation medical costs.

We have discussed this program with the National Director of Federal Employee's Compensation, and she informed us that they have reviewed it and that it does not violate federal regulations. She also told us that they have put the Postal Service on notice that this preferred provider program must in no way delay timely payment of medical bills or interfere in any way with a claimant's right to choose his or her own physician.

Briefly, the preferred provider program is designed to work as follows: the injured employee freely selects a treating physician; the medical claim form is sent to a specified P.O. Box in Arizona instead of to the OWCP; First Health reviews the bill; if the physician is a First Health preferred provider, then First Health bills OWCP and receives the payment from them; First Health reimburses the physician at a previously negotiated lower price and takes an administrative fee from the balance. They then credit the USPS with the residual amount. If the freely selected physician is not a First Health preferred provider, then the medical claim form is sent directly to OWCP in the normal manner.

This program is intended to be completely "transparent", i.e. have no impact on the injured employee. Also, there should be absolutely no pressure exerted by the Postal Service in an effort to get injured employees to select a First Health physician as their treating physician. Any complaint of an employee being directed or encouraged by the Postal Service to use a First Health physician should be investigated, fully documented, and grieved. In addition, a copy of the grievance should be sent to the APWU Human Relations Department.

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Legislative Report

By: Cynthia Hardison
Legislative Director

Editor's Note: This is Cynthia's Article for January-February 2003. However, it was never given to me for inclusion in the last edition of the newsletter due to being put in another officers slot at my local. I apologize for the inconvenience.

The State of Michigan made history by electing the first woman as Governor. Governor Jennifer Granholm took her oath of office at 11:30 a.m., January 1, 2003 on the Capitol steps in Lansing, Michigan. For your review, here is a break down of the election by County of the Governor's Race.

Governor 4 Year Term (1) Position

COUNTY	Dick Posthumus	Jennifer Granholm
01 ALCONA	2,387	2,165
02 ALGER	1,623	1,855
03 ALLEGAN	21,695	12,772
04 ALPENA	4,722	6,391
05 ANTRIM	5,576	3,752
06 ARENAC	2,611	2,821
07 BARAGA	1,170	1,263
08 BARRY	11,943	8,136
09 BAY	18,001	21,190
10 BENZIE	3,480	3,036
11 BERRIEN	23,378	17,094
12 BRANCH	6,012	5,001
13 CALHOUN	18,789	21,298
14 CASS	6,845	5,741
15 CHARLEVOIX	5,608	3,836
16 CHEBOYGAN	5,268	4,107
17 CHIPPEWA	5,357	5,428
18 CLARE	4,578	4,719
19 CLINTON	13,711	12,070
20 CRAWFORD	2,566	2,233
21 DELTA	6,590	6,862
22 DICKINSON	4,358	3,882
23 EATON	18,247	20,395
24 EMMET	7,111	4,330
25 GENESEE	51,828	80,687
26 GLADWIN	4,569	4,350
27 GOGEBIC	2,308	3,292
28 GD. TRAVERSE	17,382	12,330
29 GRATIOT	6,252	5,203
30 HILLSDALE	7,498	4,778
31 HOUGHTON	5,119	5,026
32 HURON	7,218	4,783
33 INGHAM	34,414	55,571
34 IONIA	10,232	7,919
35 IOSCO	4,817	5,031

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Legislative Report

By: Cynthia Hardison
Legislative Director

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

The American Association for Affirmative Action is the association of professionals managing affirmative action, equal opportunity, diversity and other human resource programs.

Founded in 1974, the American Association for Affirmative Action (AAAA) is dedicated to the advancement of affirmative action, equal opportunity and the elimination of discrimination on the basis of race, gender, ethnic background or any other criterion that deprives people of opportunities to live and work. The organization's dedication is realized in its many activities designed to help Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action (EEO/AA) professionals be more successful and productive in their careers.

I find it heart breaking that in the year 2003 we are still fighting the same fight that Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. fought and died for decades ago, to abolish Affirmative Action is taking a Giant leap backwards for all, Blacks, Latinos, Native Americans and Poor People.

On April 1, thousands of high school and college students marched through the street of Washington, DC to the U. S. Supreme Court demanding that the high court uphold affirmative action in the University of Michigan cases. These two cases represent a turning point in regard to race relations and for our entire society. This is a struggle for integration and equality in education and throughout American life. Now is the time to stand up.

Affirmative action is a desegregation plan for higher education. Already, integration plans in K-12 Education has been attacked across the country. As a result, segregation in K-12 education increased dramatically.

A VICTORY AT THE SUPREME COURT will open up a struggle for progress towards integration and equality in education and throughout American society. A victory will present a better opportunity than we have had for generations to reconcile the segregated, unequal reality of our educational system with the hope and pride that the overwhelming majority of Americans of all races feel in the prospect of integration and equality.

A DEFEAT would outlaw any and all active integration measures in this society, without which there has never been and can never be any prospect of genuine integration. If

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Area 2 Report

By Tony Friday
Area 2 Director

I write this article, knowing the many challenges we face ahead as a union. Did you know that the Union Steward is your "First Line of Defense? Yes, it's true. They are the first ones there to stand up for your rights. Stewards often take abuse, and ridicule, for standing up for what is right.

Stewards should always be able to answer or find the answer to any of your questions. Though, the Steward cannot do his/her job alone. They need you to do your part. We need to help them in their task, by being active in the Union ourselves. By either attending all Union activities or showing support for your steward and officers.

Please take the time to thank your Stewards for all they do.

I came across this poem some time ago, but I think it still holds as true today, and it did back then.

The Union Steward

Who is this guy of lowly pay
With haggard look and hair of gray?
He gets no rest by day or night.
He's always wrong. He's never right.
He does not have a law degree,
But goes to bat for you and me.
Though seldom has he been to college
he must possess the widest knowledge,
Of labor grades and when to grieve,
Vacation pay and sickness leave.
Of overtime and who's to do it,
Of coffee time and who's to brew it.
The how and which and why and when,
And all the problems known to men.
If, with the foreman he agrees,
Then he's a rat who's got weak knees.
If, to the men he tries to cater,
He's branded as an agitator.
The guy who has to take the slop
is called the STEWARD of your shop.

--Anonymous.

Thanks for your time. See you on Mackinac.

In Solidarity,

Tony



Area 6 Report

By Mary Stephenson
Area 6 Director

I would like to thank everyone who helped make the Mt. Pleasant District Meeting in January such a success.

First, I want to thank Michigan Postal Workers Union President, Gary VanHoogstraten, Area 8 Director, Harold Smith and his wife, and the Jackson Local for their assistance. Central Michigan Area Local President Harold Juhl and the stewards/officers of the CMAL who were very supportive of my efforts. Thanks to Lisa Jackson's daughters, who were entertaining, as always, when they performed after dinner on Saturday night. Finally, I want to give a special thanks to my husband John for always giving freely of his time and energy to assist me when I am performing my duties as the Area 6 Director and Associate Office Advocate for the CMAL.

The instructors for our classes, Lynn Pallas-Barber, Steve Raymer, Troy Rorman, John Clark, and Jerry Martin where informative and gave timely information to help all the attendees in their grievance processing. The attendees gave positive feedback about have a roundtable discussion and appreciated the information that they were able to receive. I also want to thank Region Coordinator Sharyn Stone for authorizing our officers to attend the district meeting.

This was the first direct meeting that I was responsible for co-hosting with Jackson. I learned that it is a lot easier to show up and attend than to have to coordinate everything. Thanks again for your support and I will see you at the Educational Convention on Mackinac Island in May.

Mary

**THE NEXT DEADLINE
FOR ARTICLES FOR THE
Michigan
Messenger
May/June 2003
Issue
is
May 15, 2003**



P.O.W.E.R. Report

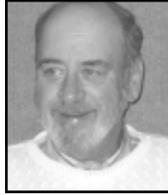
By Patricia Johnson
P.O.W.E.R. Representative

To All the Mothers and Fathers Out There

Here's something cute I found on the Internet that I thought both mothers and fathers would appreciate, and find funny.

1. My mother taught me TO APPRECIATE A JOB WELL DONE: "If you're going to kill each other, do it outside. I just finished cleaning."
2. My mother taught me RELIGION: "You better pray that will come out of the carpet."
3. My mother taught me about TIME TRAVEL: "If you don't straighten up, I'm going to knock you into the middle of next week!"
4. My mother taught me LOGIC: "Because I said so, that's why."
5. My mother taught me MORE LOGIC: "If you fall out of that swing and break your neck, you're not going to the store with me."
6. My mother taught me FORESIGHT: "Make sure you wear clean underwear, in case you're in an accident."
7. My mother taught me IRONY: "Keep crying and I'll give you something to cry about."
8. My mother taught me about the science of OSMOSIS: "Shut your mouth and eat your supper."
9. My mother taught me about CONTORTIONISM: "Will you look at that dirt on the back of your neck?"
10. My mother taught me about STAMINA: "You'll sit there until all that spinach is gone."
11. My mother taught me about WEATHER: "This room of yours looks as if a tornado went through it."
12. My mother taught me about HYPOCRISY: "If I told you once, I've told you a million times. Don't exaggerate!"
13. My mother taught me the CIRCLE OF LIFE: "I brought you into this world, and I can take you out."

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Retiree Involvement

By Al La Brecque
MPWU State Retiree Chapter President

Does Anyone Really Care? This is a question I need answered by active Locals and retiree members. Do you care? After nine years of butting against a stone wall with minimal results, I have to know. I have a pretty hard head, but the time comes when I have to ask whether or not the pursuit of meaningful Retiree Involvement is just the pipe dream of a naïve old fool. You tell me.

Shortly after the APWU Retiree Department was established in 1994, late MPWU President, Clyde Harshorn convinced me to get involved as retiree advisor for the MPWU. His reasoning was that: what better way to represent APWU retirees interests than through the Union that retired members built and which represented us so well during our work lives. I accepted with high hopes and enthusiasm for the opportunity to bring Union representation to retired members much the same as the UAW and our sister Union, the NALC, provided their retirees.

The '96 National Convention provided the first cold water revelation that APWU motives for establishing a Retirees Department were not so pure. It was at this moment when Moe Biller advised delegates that the only reason there were five (5) National Retiree Delegates elected to the convention was so the APWU could take their COPA money, and that retirees are the biggest COPA contributors. Thus was coined the label; "COPA Cash Cows." It has become increasingly evident, after four national conventions and repeated stonewalling by the APWU hierarchy, that Retiree Department membership values to the leadership do not extend beyond the "COPA Cash Cow" status. That same '96 LA Convention referred a resolution, submitted by the MPWU, to the National Executive Board, outlined the objectives the Retirees Department. Subsequently, the NEB adopted this resolution in 1997. The objects are, but not limited to: 1. Legislative and Political Activity. 2. Education. 3. Organizing new and long-time retirees and Chapters. And lastly, 4. Servicing the needs of retired members and their survivors. Those substantive objectives have yet to be put into practice and are a far cry from the condensed, meaningless fluff adopted by the '02 convention as a constitutional amendment designed to appease retiree attempts through resolutions for retiree inclusion by a voiced and vote in the APWU.

Fully aware the national leadership and their appointed minions to the constitution Committee are bent on rejecting retiree inclusion, we forged ahead in the hope of gaining active Locals and delegate support. Michigan delegates: Guy Love-

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NBA Report

By Jerome L. "Jerry" Martin
Clerk Craft NBA - Chicago Region

The non-negotiated contract was extended by an overwhelming majority of voting Union members. Apparently, there are only **10,785** thinking members who bothered to vote, No! Nationwide locals with more than 15 members that voted, only totaled 7. Three of those were from Michigan. Battle Creek voted 8 - yes, 11 - no, Troy voted 17 - yes, 19 - no, Flint Area voted 50 - yes, and 142 no. Only 2 Illinois locals voted no. Marengo voted 1 - yes, 2 - no, and Park Ridge voted 4 - yes, and 6 - no. Park Ridge, Battle Creek and Troy have already suffered from excessing. Well, the majority has spoken. Hopefully, this will work out. But, if we had started a real grass roots campaign against consolidations and got support from surviving Congressman, and got their unyielding support prior to the commission report we may have been okay. But, with the new look Congress, they will want to keep hands off of the USPS. So when the consolidations begin, we can't bitch then it's too late baby! Our workforce will be **repositioned** a real slick management term for long distance excessing. Reposition my ass!

Mystery Shoppers Out of Control

As I mentioned in my last article, Mystery Shoppers are running rampant, We have Level 20 - 22 Postmasters mystery shopping. Donna Krug, Manager of Post Office Operations for Northern Illinois District was shopping, as well. And I don't mean at Wal-Mart. Next, who will be out and about next - District Manager, Lynn Smith, Area Vice President, Danny Jackson, maybe even Vice President for Diversity, Murray Weatherall? Who knows, but discipline is coming out of the wazoo!

Mystery Postal Inspectors Out of Control

When Kalamazoo became the first "store" in the Great Lakes Area, Postal Inspectors told Clerk Joe Foy, that they were opposed to these stores and unit accountability since they considered this a license to steal. Well, maybe the Postal Inspection Service (P.I.S.) was right. We are getting Clerks (Sales Associates, whatever) nabbed by Inspectors for not scanning products resulting in unit shortages. The Inspectors then get alerted and start the scams. One will come in and make a transaction, observe if it was scanned, maybe ask for the receipt, maybe not.

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Michigan Postal Workers Union American Postal Workers Union, AFL-CIO 2003 Education Convention May 1 - 3, 2003

Where: Mission Point
Resort; Mackinac Island



Costs & Accommodations:

Single.....	\$486.62	Triple....	\$306.48
Double.....	\$334.43	Quad....	\$292.53

Above price includes: Three nights accommodations (Thursday, Friday, & Saturday nights) to include tax; Luggage Transfer Fees; Breakfast (Friday, Saturday, & Sunday); Lunch and Dinner (Thursday, Friday, & Saturday).

Spouse/Significant Other/or Child 13 yrs and older: \$182.24 (includes all meals listed above, plus luggage transfer fees).

Agenda: Currently, the following classes have been scheduled:

Basic Stewards Training; Advanced Stewards Training; Arbitration; OWCP; Legislation; Retirement Chapter Issues; Maintenance Issues; Maintenance Complement Info Systems; MVS Issues; P.O.W.E.R.; Retirement Seminar; eResource Management Systems; Dealing with the Inspection Service; RI-399; plus a Child's program.

In addition, many National officers have responded and will be in attendance to provide either training or information to those in attendance.

Transportation:

Arrangements have been made with Sheplers' Ferry Service to provide service during the Convention for \$15.00 Roundtrip Tickets for Adults.



Pre-Registration

All Local Presidents should have received a Pre-Registration Form from the Director of Education, please ensure that this form is returned by April 15th.

Any new and updated information will be provided on the Michigan Postal Workers Website @ <http://www.mpwu.com>

President's Report Continued

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In closing, I believe that the Michigan Postal Workers Union can hold their heads high after the recent Central Region Human Relations/Retirees Department Seminar. This meeting was a huge success. I want to thank all those that attended and also to the Board Members that assisted. Our next function will be the State Educational Convention in Mackinac Island. There will be a full program set up by Director of Education, Lynn Pallas-Barber and I hope to see all of you up there.

Until Next Time.



Secretary's Writings Continued

(Continued from page 2)

To close this article I would like everyone to THINK SPRING, I have had enough snow and cold weather to last me for the next two or three winters. I want to break out the trailer and start getting into camping and enjoying the out of doors with my family.

I would like to wish everyone a Happy Easter, and enjoy the spring weather when it does finally arrive.

In Solidarity,



Education at Work Continued

(Continued from page 2)

HAPPY NATIONAL WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH!

Research for this article was taken from www.nwhp.org

CHILD LABOR ABUSE AWARENESS WEEK, MAY 11-17, 2003

CHILD LABOR AND SWEATSHOPS IN THE FASHION INDUSTRY

Many societies face the much-overlooked problem of child labor and sweatshops in the fashion industry. Not to long ago, Americans were stunned to learn that Kathy Lee Gifford was associated with the exploitation of underage workers in Honduras. Her story began the resurgence of knowledge of the growing problems of sweatshops still in today's society. Contrary to popular belief, sweatshops still exist across the world in both third world countries and super powers such as America. Sweatshops incorporate the inhumane exploitation of workers, many of whom are underage, by providing low wages as well as expecting unrealistic workdays. The workers are not provided any benefits and very few sweatshops abide by required health codes. Sweatshops are a growing problem that will not disappear without change. Although our government has taken steps to alleviate the problem, there must be a continued awareness and legislation. The belief that these prisons known as sweatshops have been abolished, has been proven false. They do, in fact, exist not only in foreign countries but also in our country. The abuse of human rights is demonstrated as more than half the 22,000 garment contractors in the US don't pay workers minimum wage and working conditions are deplorable. More evidence is uprooted daily which proves that the sweatshops that were once thought to be extinct are, in fact, more active than ever. What can we do: Buy Union made, read a book to educate ourselves. Remember to look for the union label! Research for this article

was taken from www.public.asu.edu/~jvanasu/vcai/wong

MPWU EDUCATION CONFERENCE - MAY 1-3, Mackinac Island

This is a reminder concerning the Educational Conference on beautiful Mackinac Island. Local presidents should have received a copy of the proposed itinerary and a return form. Please return the form with the number of your participants NO LATER THAN APRIL 15, 2003. Thanks to the efforts of Editor Mike Long, he will keep the MPWU web site updated. Look for any changes and updates at www.mpwu.com.

Happy Easter and Happy Spring!

Until next time,



OWCP Report Continued

(Continued from page 3)

OWCP CENTRALIZED MAILROOM AND DOCUMENT SCANNING

Every OWCP District Office is now equipped to work directly from a central database and all newly created case file documentation is now being scanned into this database. However, existing paper case files will not be retroactively scanned at this time.

As part of the process of creating a paperless environment, OWCP has established a central Mailroom in London, KY where the scanning will take place. The use of this contractor-run national Mailroom was implemented on a staggered basis across the country. When an OWCP District Office went on line, they notified by mail every claimant with an active claim. Any claim documentation inadvertently sent to an OWCP District Office will be forwarded by OWCP to (P.O. Box 8300, London, KY 40742-8300) the Kentucky Mailroom.

Please be aware that mail for OWCP administrative staff (Regional Directors, District Directors, etc.) should still be sent to the existing street address for that particular OWCP District Office. Also, OWCP case creation functions and performance tracking require that all CA-1s, CA-2s, CA-2As, CA-5s, CA-6s, CA-7s and CA-16s continue to be mailed to the appropriate OWCP District Office.

The contractor who is running the central Mailroom states that they have the capability of scanning every document into the database by the close of business on the day it is received, and their contract with OWCP requires that imaging must be completed within 48 hours of receipt. Also, we are assured that there are elaborate database backup systems in place to prevent the accidental loss of electronic data.

Keeping Good Records

Something often overlooked, yet so important, is maintaining a good file for your work-related injury. A well-organized history of your injury could prove to be very helpful if problems arise in your case.

We should always insist to receive copies of any and all forms, documents, statements, etc. that pertain to our work related injury. While it is important to make copies of all paperwork prior to submitting it to MGMT or sending it to OWCP, it is also our right to receive copies of anything MGMT submits with regards to our claim.

You should also maintain some sort of log in which entries can be made each time something happens. Examples include but not limited to, doctor visits, phone calls, and letters to name just a few. Each entry should include the date, who was involved, and area for comment and remarks. This quick reference to events that are in chronological order can really come in handy whenever you are discussing your case with someone.

Upcoming Education Conference

May 1 – 3, 2003, the MPWU will have having their biennial Education Conference on Mackinac Island. I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at this event. There will be an OWCP class this year also. Hopefully, I will be able to cover all the information that was presented at the Human Relations Class, along with some other information that is pertinent to Michigan.

May all your grievances be winners and your claims accepted.

In Union Solidarity

Ron

Retiree Involvement Continued

(Continued from page 6)

less, Steve Austin, and Patty Miller did their level best on the convention floor to garner sufficient support, as did National Retiree Delegates: Byron Denton and Elizabeth Cramer. It just wasn't enough to overcome the rubber stamp non-concurrence recommendation of the Constitution Committee and so-called "full dues-paying" retiree delegates successfully torpedoing two resolutions proposing to grant Retirees Department members the right to vote for APWU general officers or our own Department Director. I don't fault the delegates swayed by the opposition, respecting the decision of the convention. I have a problem with the tactic of the opposition and the indifference of Local leadership for their lack of direction.

On the heels of that particularly hostile rejection of retiree inclusion, President Burrus sent Retirees Department members a generic letter, along with a payroll deduction authorization form, soliciting COPA contributions. As I reported in an earlier column, my response to Burrus was "Not One Damned Dime to COPA" as long as our only value to APWU is a "COPA Cash Cow," and until Retiree Department members are afforded the voice and a vote. Burrus responded by admonishing my lack of respect for the decision of the Union's highest governing body, and a school boy lesson as to how the democratic convention process works...as if I am a first-time rookie. That was okay, that stuff kind of rolls off. It was his third paragraph that cut to the quick, demonstrating APWU leadership disdain for Retiree Depart-

(Continued on page 10)

Retiree Involvement Continued

(Continued from page 9)

ment membership. And I quote: “Your reference to the retirees being used as a ‘cash cow’ is not an accurate description. The costs associated with the Retiree Department, including the Director and two secretaries, as well as the issues of the magazine and other communications and seminars assumes the same percentage of revenues from the retiree dues as consumed from the regular dues paying members. In addition, the associate members pay dues in excess of the retirees with few union benefits. Applying the ‘cash cow’ argument, the associate members have an equal right to vote.”

Huh? My reference was COPA cash cows, Bill! It had nothing to do with dues. But, to equate retired Union members with non-union associate members ineligible to belong to the APWU who only pay a \$35.00 fee so as to be eligible to enroll in the APWU Health Plan, is in insult of the highest degree not befitting the top officer of this Union.

I rehash some of the roadblocks here to demonstrate what we have been up against. While resistance by APWU leadership these past nine years is enough to make any say: “to hell with it” and quit, I have been willing to stay the course because of the great support of this State Union and the faith of our four local Retiree Chapters and their officers. Their encouragement, and that of Byron Denton (Western Region Retiree Delegate) and select other retiree members have kept the batteries recharged when they get low. I don’t think any of us who committed to Retirement Involvement expected to have to battle anyone to gain Retiree Inclusion.

After nine years, realism sets in. Consider that only about 30 Local Retiree Chapters and three State Chapters have been organized through the country. Why? It is indifference on the part of active Local and State Unions? Indifference among retired members, or a combination of both? Michigan has the potential for eleven or more Local Chapters. Lord knows we have tried! Active locals have been ap-

proached offering assistance in organizing chapters. Classes have been conducted at state conventions and district meetings, and materials have been developed to organize retired members. Officers of our chapters report very little interest among their retired members for meeting activities, including offers of free breakfast or luncheon meetings. So, I have to ask: “Do our retired members care?” I am at the point where I want to know. It is discouraging enough facing the obstacles thrown in the path of retiree inclusion by the National APWU, but futility sets in if the very members you seek to represent don’t care.

The first Michigan Local Chapter to organize was the Detroit District Area Local, followed by the Western Michigan Area Local (by George Hendricks), the Flint Michigan Area Local (by Patricia Miller), and Saginaw 486-487 Area Local (by Jerry Clairmont and Charles Kolhoff). This has enabled us to organize the MPWU State Retiree Chapter. These dedicated retired unionists have been my strength and inspiration. Now, I have to question, have I led them down the primrose path too?

Retirement Department membership reportedly jumped to 34,000. The 3,000 member gain is largely the result of requiring APWU members who are enrolled in the APWU Health Plan to join the Retiree Department, for a \$24.00 annual due, or lose their Health Plan eligibility. Over 70% of APWU Health Plan enrollees are retired members. That begs the question: “Just how many Retiree Department members who there be if there was no APWU Health Plan incentive? How many of those retirees would belong just to receive the national magazine and a nickel and dime \$5,000 Accidental Death and Dismemberment policy when they have no voice or vote in determining their Union leadership? Although directed by a convention resolution, the APWU Organizing Department has done absolutely NOTHING to organize retired members or

retiree chapters.

Why am I venting on this soapbox? With our MPWU Education Convention just around the corner, MPWU Education Director, Lynn Pallas-Barber asked what I had in mind for a class. I had this flash of brilliance that given the difficult situations being faced by our parent active Locals, that retiree chapters might move beyond the social aspects of activities and be utilized in joining the coming battles to save the USPS. This not only includes privatization, attacks on job security, elimination of small Post Offices and plant consolidations through legislative and political activity, but Letters to the Editor, picket demonstrations, etc. But, before we can mobilize the legions of retired members in the field, we will have to instruct active locals how to organize and build Local Retiree Chapters. Get back to basics with legislative activity impacting parent Locals and retirees. How to contact our legislators, and what Locals can do to provide direction to local retiree chapters and retired members to join in this impending struggle. But, then I was reminded and quite correctly so, that previous attempts to entice active Locals to assign delegate members to attend similar classes at Education Conventions and District Meetings resulted in zero participation. It seems they had more pressing interests. You can lead a horse to water, but you can’t make it drink.

So, what can I contribute? I completely agree with Sister Lynn, why go through another exercise in futility and disappointment, if active Locals do not care enough to assign at least one delegate to the class, and retired members don’t care enough to participate except for the same faithful few chapter officers? It would be another colossal waste of time, space, and funds.

So, I WANT TO KNOW...do active locals and retired members care? It is a serious question I have avoided for fear of already knowing the answer. I

(Continued on page 12)

NBA Report Continued

(Continued from page 7)

Then another P.I.S. will come in and make a transaction, observe, and not want a receipt. Then another P.I.S. will come in and observe and maybe, get a receipt if the merchandise was scanned, maybe not. The video cameras are rolling. Then comes the interviews with the P.I.S. ask for a Steward with “no” I don’t need no stinkin’ Steward, I’ll defend myself. Sure, I took a few bucks, but I always put it back! Hey, I’ll never do it again! These Window Clerk stories all read the same. They write out the admissions, then later that day or the next day they call their Union and request a Steward. It’s too late baby!

Arbitration Moratoriums

As of this writing nothing has been set, but maybe the Agreement will soon be coming, a 90 day or longer arbitration moratorium, except for removals. There are other pre-arbitration reviews. Also in the work with no pre-arb settlements after 30 days prior to the arbitration date. We will all have see how this works out, but soon it will be signed, sealed and delivered. It’s too late baby!

Step 3 Appeals and Arbitration

While all of the Big Honchos in D. C. have all of these up-lifting ideas and “ideals” it hasn’t yet dribbled down to the work room floor. P.A.T. still plagues us more than ever. FMLA violations are a norm. Has our Union taken these issues to court, as promised? The Mystery Shopper fiasco is worse than ever with discipline jamming our arbitration docket. What do we get from our Clerk Craft headquarters officers? Ask the Questions! So, when a boss mystery shopper comes in with a flat for \$.57 postage and the Clerk didn’t ask if she wanted to use a credit or debit card, discipline is issued. **Ask the questions**, is all our people can resolve in D. C., but yet they apparently believe all of the other lies they are being told by Potter’s people. They should have asked more questions. It’s too late baby!

Bits & Pieces

Vacation planning for this year if you aren’t getting an excessng vacation, think about Norman, Oklahoma. You can book a room if available at the USPS Development Center at Norman, with rooms starting at \$89.00 a night. These are very popular on football weekends when everything else is booked. I’m sure everyone except postal employees may want to stay there. Hey, the food is great from what I hear.

Coal Mine Safety

Good news! The Black Thunder mine in Wright, Wyoming had employees who worked 1.24 million hours in 2001 with

no reported injuries. The key word is **REPORTED**. This is a goal the USPS strives for. . . . no reported injuries!

Good California News

California employers who fail to report a fatal injury or serious injury or illness to California/OSHA within 8 hours can be fined a minimum of \$5,000. So, if the employer is still trying to cover up their OSHA violation it will only cost a minimum of \$5,000.

Get Well Friends

Several MPWU friends have found themselves in the hospital for various reasons. Good buddy, Jack Stuart, Kalamazoo P&DC was one of my first Union Stewards in Kalamazoo when I was elected President. Get well, good friend. Bob Malhoney, MPW Clerk Craft Director also had some pre-Christmas misfortune. MPW retirees Al Labreque and Jerry Clairmont also tested their medical insurance. Get well all of you, so we can have a beer together real soon. Go Medicare!

Sports & Stuff

The Super Bowl will be history. The Bears and Lions are both history, as well. Michigan States round ball team - looks like Jeff Smoker is at point guard. With all of the off season trades, this could be the red-line world series. Frank Thomas and Sammy Sosa will each win the Most Valuable Player award in their own minds. Charles Rogers from Michigan State University will be the surprise #1 NFL draft choice.

Now here is some good eating fun:

Pineapple Coleslaw

3/4 Cup mayonnaise
2 tablespoons vinegar
2 tablespoons sugar
1 to 2 tablespoons milk
4 cups shredded cabbage
1 can (8 ounces) pineapple tidbits, drained
Paprika, optional

In a mixing bowl, combine mayonnaise, vinegar, sugar and milk. Place cabbage and pineapple in a large salad bowl; add dressing and toss. Sprinkle with paprika if desired.

Dump Cake

1 large can crushed pineapple
1 large can cherry pie filling
1 box yellow cake mix
½ to 1 cup chopped pecans
2 sticks butter or margarine

(Continued on page 12)

NBA Report Continued

(Continued from page 11)

Grease 9 X 12-inch pan. Layer in order given: pineapple (drain), pie filling and cake mix (dry, right from box), nuts and butter (sliced).

Note: Part of the drained pineapple juice may be sprinkled over the top before baking. Bake for 45 - 60 minutes in a 350 degree oven or until toothpick comes out clean.

Jerry

Milestones in Postal Labor History for March

March 1, 1918 – President Wilson signs into law, a Post Office appropriation increasing entrance salary to \$1,00 a year and the maximum to \$1,500.

March 2, 1913 – Postal workers granted eight-hour day.

March 18, 1970 – Low wages and lack of bargaining rights lead to the first postal strike in US history. Prior to the strike, postal workers did not enjoy full collective bargaining rights, but instead had to rely on “collective begging” of Congress and the White House in order to obtain wage increases. The starting pay in 1970 was only \$6,176 a year and it took 21 years to reach the top rate of \$8,442 – barely subsistence level.

March 21, 1970 – Postal strike reaches peak involving more than 230,000 workers in 200 cities across the US. Back-to-work order rejected.

March 23, 1970 – President Nixon declares national emergency, order 30,000 troops to New York City to sort mail during the postal strike. The troops lacked the knowledge and skills to do the job and as a result the mail went nowhere.

March 25, 1970 – Postal Strike ends. Postal unions achieve victory by obtaining full collective bargaining rights, a large pay increase, and a guarantee there would be no action against the strikers.

Retiree Involvement Continued

(Continued from page 10)

am as serious as a heart attack! Locals and retired members can answer by writing me at: 3550 Wilson St; Spruce, MI 48762; by calling after 5:00 p.m. or weekends at: 989-736-8173, or by e-mail at: allab@deepnet.com. You may not even care enough to answer, but silence in itself will be an answer.

I am not ready to quit the struggle for retiree inclusion just yet, but I do need some direction. There is still the 2004 MPWU State Retiree Chapter Convention and 2004 National Convention, either of which may well determine the degree of future involvement. My Union conscience won't allow me to abandon the faithful retired members should have supported this effort, or the MPWU State Union and E-Board which has been so generous in their backing of retiree inclusion, and especially our Local Retiree Chapter and State Chapter officers who I am responsible for dragging into their effort with such high hopes.

So, active Local leadership, and retired members; TELL ME! DO YOU CARE? I REALLY NEED TO KNOW...because I care.

LEO PERSAILS TESTIMONIAL: A long overdue tribute to honor the peerless Union career of our favorite son, Leo Persails, and his wife Jeannie, was held in Midland on February 22nd. The MPWU State Retiree Chapter had the pleasure of presenting Leo and Jeannie a “Howard-Miller” mantle clock inscribed: *“There is no greater calling than to have served your brother. There is no greater satisfaction than to have done it well.” Walter P. Reuther.* We would have like to have given Leo the 64-½ Mustang convertible his daughter Sheila said he wants. After all, the '98 National Convention witnessed the N.E.B. presenting the keys to a fully loaded, new Lincoln Town Car to a retiring national officer. The highlight of the evening was the motional expressions offered by their four children: Leo Jr., Wayne, Doug, and

Sheila. What a beautiful family. It is obvious Leo and Jeannie's accomplishments extend beyond Leo's Union Involvement. Their genuine pride in their Dad touched every heart in the place. The apple doesn't fall far from the tree; since Sheila, an elementary school teacher, is a Union steward in her building.

There were many expressions of heartfelt gratitude for Leo's leadership and true Union values, and for his family's sacrifices in sharing Leo with us, which stirred so many memories, demonstrating what Leo Persails has meant to countless APWU members the length and breadth of the Union. I doubt there were many among Leo's loyal Brothers and Sisters who were able to maintain dry eyes, or who didn't ponder what might have been.

On a personal level, I consider it a privilege to have been a first-hand witness to this Union's Man's outstanding career in service to the membership from the time he hired in the Flint Post Office. Leo's mousetrap Union mind, fundamental Union values, and philosophies rooted in the “Cradle of Labor” Flint Michigan Area Local never changed. They just became more polished. My deep respect for the man is because Leo never compromised his blue-collar principles for personal gain. It was always about serving the membership, not the other way around. I am proud to be able to say: Leo Persails is my Brother in every sense of the word, and the best friend I have on God's green earth! As the assembled Sisters and Brothers sang in tribute to Leo; he has truly been The Wind Beneath Our Wings!

Be Strong,

Al



Long & Short of It Continued

(Continued from page 3)

budget for things that we need (i.e. Supplies) and have to cut hours at the Associate offices to reduce the budget; but people at the district offices can get brand-new laptop computer with docking stations and have lunches catered in or go to restaurants at postal expense. To make matters worse, I know of associate offices where they were sent CD-Roms to update their systems and install new software. However, someone forgot to tell them where and how to accomplish this fact. The reason...the computers that were sent to these locations in the first place, don't have a CD-Rom Drive, nor a Floppy Disk Drive. There isn't even any ports on the back of the computer to attach an external one to it.

Human Relations Conference

I would like to thank the attendees to the recent Human Relations and Retirement Conference, which was held in Midland. Those in attendance can attest that the training was definitely first-rate. We had attendees that came as far away as California and Washington State (to the west), Florida (to the south) and Connecticut (to the East). Thanks to Sue Carney (Human Relations Director) and John R. Smith (Retiree Director) for putting on some outstanding and informative classes.

Area 6 & 8 District Meeting

Kudos go out to Mary Stephenson (Area 6 Director) and Harold Smith (Area 8 Director) for putting on a great District Meeting in Mt. Pleasant. The Steward training, RMD and FMLA training was second to none. Thanks go out to Steve Raymer (APWU Maintenance Director); John Clark and Jerry Martin for their outstanding training. Mary, as I stated at the District meeting, this was just the prelude to the State Constitutional Convention next year in Lansing. If this is any idea on how that one will be run, everyone can expect to have a wonderful experience.

Website

As the date of this writing, we have had approximately 350 hits on the state website. Since the Human Relations conference, I have changed the format to hopefully allow for easier access and navigation. OWCP Forms have been added; along with information about the locals. If you would like to see anything else added to the site, please let me know.

Mike

Legislative Update Continued (January's Article)

(Continued from page 4)

36 IRON	2,017	2,429
37 ISABELLA	7,428	7,534
38 JACKSON	24,344	22,036
39 KALAMAZOO	34,795	39,090
40 KALKASKA	3,010	2,234
41 KENT	117,755	74,823
42 KEWEENAW	545	482
43 LAKE	1,671	1,904
44 LAPEER	17,040	11,384
45 LEELANAU	5,501	4,241
46 LENAWEE	14,650	13,314
47 LIVINGSTON	36,699	22,006
48 LUCE	889	1,016
49 MACKINAC	2,425	2,206
50 MACOMB	132,583	121,065
51 MANISTEE	4,401	4,389
52 MARQUETTE	8,906	12,779
53 MASON	5,594	4,802
54 MECOSTA	6,197	5,020
55 MENOMINEE	3,576	3,335
56 MIDLAND	17,156	12,342
57 MISSAUKEE	3,462	1,724
58 MONROE	21,266	19,845
59 MONTCALM	9,689	7,763
60 MONTMORENCY	2,231	1,722
61 MUSKEGON	22,600	29,884
62 NEWAYGO	8,910	6,268
63 OAKLAND	210,414	220,082
64 OCEANA	4,637	3,886
65 OGEMAW	3,689	3,727
66 ONTONAGON	1,334	1,301
67 OSCEOLA	4,399	2,973
68 OSCODA	1,669	1,242
69 OTSEGO	4,982	3,346
70 OTTAWA	62,464	24,654
71 PRESQUE ISLE	2,862	2,717
72 ROSCOMMON	5,223	4,909
73 SAGINAW	33,440	38,051
74 ST. CLAIR	27,647	23,813
75 ST. JOSEPH	9,014	6,341
76 SANILAC	8,581	5,265
77 SCHOOLCRAFT	1,468	1,701
78 SHIAWASSEE	12,971	11,843
79 TUSCOLA	10,824	8,097
80 VAN BUREN	10,685	10,518
81 WASHTENAW	39,659	65,995
82 WAYNE	175,899	384,121
83 WEXFORD	5,640	4,230

A Blast from the Past

Former US Rep David Bonior will be teaching classes in the Labor Studies department at WSU. David Bonior is trading an office in Washington D.C. for one in Wayne State University's College of Urban Labor and Metropolitan Affairs, where he will be a professor of Labor Studies he also was elected to the Board of Director for community Central Bank Corp. based in Mount Clemens, Michigan.

Bonior had represented Michigan's 10th Congressional District in Macomb and St. Clair counties since 1976. Bonior retired from congress in January. Bonior was a true friend to labor. He will be missed.

In Solidarity,

Cynthia

Legislative Update Continued
(March's Article)

(Continued from page 4)

positive integration measures are barred, *Brown v. Board of Education* will be a dead letter.

An unprecedented, public divide between President Bush and Secretary of State Colin Powell over the University of Michigan affirmative action policies illustrates the peculiar importance of these cases. The outcome of this struggle teeters on a razor's edge between victory and defeat. Your voice can tip the balance. Only this civil rights march can guarantee victory in these critical cases.

The new civil rights movement must meet either victory or defeat at the Supreme Court with a greatly expanded fight to make real the promise of *Brown v. Board of Education*, the long deferred promise of integration and equality.

Excerpts Reprinted from BAMN.com

Cynthia.

POWER Article Continued

(Continued from page 6)

14. My mother taught me about BEHAVIOR MODIFICATION: "Stop acting like your father!"

15. My mother taught me about ENVY: "There are millions of less fortunate children in this world who don't have wonderful parents like you do."

16. My mother taught me about ANTICIPATION: "Just wait until we get home."

17. My mother taught me about RECEIVING. "You are going to get it when you get home!"

18. My mother taught me MEDICAL SCIENCE. "If you don't stop crossing your eyes, they are going to freeze that way."

19. My mother taught me ESP: "Put your sweater on; don't you think I know when are cold?"

20. My mother taught me HUMOR: "When that lawn mower cuts off your toes, don't come running to me."

21. My mother taught me HOW TO BECOME AN ADULT: "If you don't eat your vegetables, you'll never grow up."

22. My mother taught me GENETICS: "You're just like your father."

23. My mother taught me about my ROOTS: "Shut that door behind you. Do you think you were born in a barn?"

24. My mother taught me WISDOM: "When you get to be my age, you'll understand."

25. And my favorite: my mother taught me about JUSTICE: "One day you'll have kids, and I hope they turn out just like you!"

Pat

Training IS Important!

Editor's Note: With the upcoming Educational Convention, I thought the below excerpt from Walter Reuther was most appropriate at this time. In addition, this is the same person/author that the MPWU Retirees Department used on Leo's Clock.

"...Education is the golden key that unlocks the potential of human growth, that unlocks the genius that lies deep and undiscovered within the average person that education makes possible to discover. And just as education is important in terms of the future of our nation, it is also important in terms of the future of our union. ...Every generation has to fight new fights, conquer new horizons and achieve new opportunities for human fulfillment. But in order to get the inspiration and the idealism, in order to have a sense of historic purpose, you also have to know where you came from because unless you know where you came from, you don't have a sense of direction in where you are trying to go. This is why education is important."

- Walter Reuther



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Position is Currently Vacant

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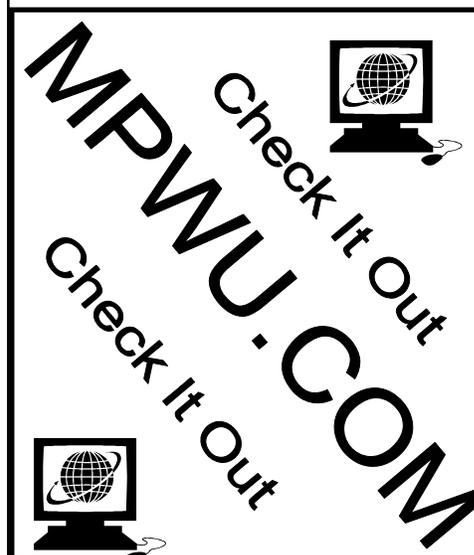
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Your articles are welcome! They must be signed to be printed, but your name will be withheld upon request. Articles sent via electronic media will be treated as being signed. Be aware that articles may be edited to fit the confines of this publication.

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.



Upcoming Events to Plan For:

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

April 24 - 26, 2003 - Philadelphia, PA, Motor Vehicle Conference

May 18 - 20, 2003 - Philadelphia, PA - Maintenance Craft Conference

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

October 27 - 29, 2003 - Rivera Hotel, Las Vegas, NV - Clerk Craft Conference

March 10, 2003
Update # 4-03

Preparing to Implement Voluntary Early Retirements

The union and management are discussing procedures for offering voluntary early retirement to APWU-represented employees, despite the fact that Office of Personnel Management has not yet responded to management's request for authority to do so. A favorable decision from OPM is expected within several weeks.

When approval is confirmed, notice will be provided to employees immediately. In the interim, it would be helpful to have an estimate of the number of employees who are considering voluntary early retirement, and the installations that would be affected.

The Collective Bargaining Agreement between the APWU and the USPS required management to seek authority to offer early retirement to all eligible APWU-represented employees. Management did so in a letter to OPM dated Jan. 23, 2003.

The early-out opportunities are likely to be phased in to coincide with management plans for plant consolidations. If OPM approves the Postal Service request for Voluntary Early Retirement Authority, the opportunities could be staggered over a period of six months or more, depending on where employees work.

Notwithstanding statements made by local or regional postal officials to the contrary, unless OPM disapproves the Postal Service request, the early outs will be offered to *all* APWU-represented employees nationwide.

To be eligible for Voluntary Early Retirement, both CSRS employees and FERS employees must be at least 50 years old and have at least 20 years of federal service (including military service). Employees of any age, however, are eligible if they have at least 25 years of federal service.

The annuity payments for CSRS employees will be reduced by 2 percent for each year that they are younger than 55 at the time they retire. CSRS employees also must have at least five years of creditable service and must have been in a pay status for at least one of the two years immediately preceding their retirement. (This is known as the "one-out-of-two rule.")

For more information about eligibility requirements and the level of benefits available, check with your Human Resources department or click on the **Early Outs Magazine Article** link on the APWU Home Page on the Web.

Thank you.
William Burrus, President

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