

MICHIGAN MESSENGER



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President's Report

By Gary Van Hoogstraten
President

Official Publication of the Michigan Postal Workers Union

While sitting here enjoying my morning cup of coffee on this Independence Day, I am reminded of all we have a lot to be thankful for. As I read this morning's paper, in the editorial page was a partial segment of the Declaration of Independence; adopted in Congress on July 4, 1776. This segment read: "When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bonds which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation."

I, for one, have been neglectful in the reading of this most important document. I am glad that the paper printed it for all to read and feel its importance and what it has meant to our lives. Let's take time to reflect on this and what effect it has had on the world.

By the time you receive this article and paper, the President's Commission on the United States Postal Service will have submitted their report and recommendations to the President. Their assignment and the results should come out shortly after the 31st of July. I do not expect their recommendations to be APWU friendly. I believe that the APWU had all their ducks lined up and presented a well-prepared case for us all. President Burrus testified to the Com-

mission by saying that the Postal Service serves all Americans. It serves individuals, small businesses, and large mailers alike. It binds our nation to-

gether by providing service to every American regardless of age, economic status, or place of residence. He also was quoted as saying that Postal employees' wages are being injected into the issue of work sharing. Any analyses of postal wages and productivity, when compared to the discounts afforded, reveals that avoided postal costs are but a small fraction of the value embedded in the discounts. He said he would compare postal employees' productivity and costs any day on any playing field. I for one, totally disagree with any type work-sharing program. This is plain and simple a way of pitting one employee against another. We can only sit back and wait until the Commission's results are published. I am sure that the APWU web site and President Burrus will get the information out to us as soon as possible. I hope all of the members/non-members did their homework and notified their representatives and voiced their opinion as to how much this meant to protect our jobs. Believe it or not, and many of you don't think it will affect you, it could cost many jobs.

It has been a busy summer so far. After I returned from the State Convention on Mackinac Island, I have been contacted by many places concerning upcoming meetings. I have

been making site inspections on some of the new contacts for these meetings. We have confirmed the September meeting in Gaylord and I went to Grand Rapids to begin preparations for their meeting in February. I am planning on visiting Kalamazoo soon to view some hotels in the area for the 2005 Educational Convention. As usual, I like to have these Conventions booked a year in advance for better rates and to have this time to make plans and be able to full the program with Director of Education, Lynn Pallas-Barber. I hope that all of you enjoy the summer. Make it a safe one and I will close for now with a little humor I read in the Flash from Madison Wisconsin.

HOT AIR

Realizing he was lost, a man in a hot air balloon spotted a woman below and descended. "Excuse me" he shouted from above, "Can you help me? I promised a friend I would meet him an hour ago, but I do not know where I am. The woman replied" Well...you are in a hot air balloon hovering approximately 30 feet above the ground, You are between 40 and 41 degrees north latitude and approximately 59 degrees west longitude" The balloonist sighed and said "You must be an engineer." "I am," she said, "but how did you know that" "Well frankly, you haven't been much help." he answered. "Everything you told me is technically correct, but the information isn't very useful, I am still lost" She thought for a moment and said, "You must be in management". "Yes, I am," he replied, "but how did you know that?" "Well," said the

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Education at Work

By Lynn Pallas-Barber
Director of Education and Research

JULY 31, 2003 - DOOMS DAY ?????

The end of this month could be our demise as postal workers. On July 31, 2003 the nine-person Postal Commission will make its' report. The purpose of this commission is to eradicate our interests by representing private business interests. It is anticipated that the Commission will recommend work sharing with the private sector for mail processing and retail operations. The USPS has already taken steps on its own to accomplish some of these tasks.

USPS has signed an agreement with Hallmark stores to sell stamps, certified, insured mail, and priority packages. The USPS has contracted out our retail window clerk jobs. They have already begun to shift our work to private sector, non-union employees. We are facing strong efforts to push the USPS into the hands of the private sector. Postmaster General Jack Potter is seeking to have the delivery of mail as the only work performed by postal workers. He is advocating the sortation of mail to be contracted out even more than the current presort discounting has promoted. He has also suggested that retail operations could be set up in Wal-Mart Supersavers.

Are we ready for Wal-Mart to take over our jobs? The giant retailer is already in most communities large and small. In fact, we have one super center here in the UP of Michigan with two more under construction. This giant retailer is infamous for its anti-union policies. Wal-Mart's ability to offer such low prices has been achieved off the backs of its workers. The "sales associates" are paid low wages, unaffordable health coverage and no retirement benefits. Wal-Mart imports most of its products from underdeveloped countries, some of which use child and prison labor. Wal-Mart is positioning itself to provide every service a consumer will need. Should it include postal service and products? Full time employment at Wal-Mart is 28 hours a week.

Are you shopping at Wal-Mart? We as postal workers earn a livable wage, therefore we can afford to buy our monthly needs at Wal-Mart. The average Wal-Mart employee earns about \$15,000 a year. They cannot afford to shop at Wal-Mart. How will you feel when these non-union, underpaid "sales associates" take over our postal jobs? It is a real possibility!!

COPA CONTRIBUTIONS

COPA, COPA, and COPA you are probably tired of hearing it. Our very existence depends on our now COPA contributions. Even after the report of the Presidential Commission the fate of the Postal Service will lay in the hands our congressional lead-

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Long and Short of It

By Michael Long
Editor

You probably are getting tired of hearing it, but July 31st is just around the corner. Judgment day to some, but to others, it will show the union in a totally different light. With the Presidential Commission's report due out, most are fearing the worse. Unfortunately, this report may be unfavorable for the Postal community (to include ourselves); however, it will be a monumental demonstration of solidarity in the way the American Postal Workers Union, as a whole, from the highest to the rank-and-file, will stand together and fight back.

I personally am looking forward to the fight ahead of us. With each union brother and sister and their families standing together, we can accomplish this and overcome anything. If history has shown us anything, management and the current "President" continue to underestimate the strength and intelligence of the workforce and the union. This is proven daily with the number of monetary grievances that are awarded and the amount of discipline overturned.

Remember, you have the ability to make a difference in this. Use your voice. Stand up, be counted, and let your legislator know where you stand and what you want done. If you don't do anything, then nothing will get done.

On the lighter side, I thought I would tell everyone congratulations. The fiscal crisis for the Postal Service is over. If it weren't...how would the Postal Service be able to pay a 204b, out-of-schedule premium in addition to higher level on a constant basis? Remember, this is only a 204B. The person who actually made this "deal" is probably in line for a promotion for as much money as they just wasted. Makes you wonder how bad of shape is the Postal Service really in?

Website

We have had over 1,000 hits to the website since it was unveiled in December. Your input has been invaluable. Please continue!

In closing, I look forward to seeing as many of you at the upcoming District Meetings in Gaylord and Grand Rapids. If you have any comments or questions, please feel free to write and ask.

In Solidarity,

Mike



Legislative Update

By Cynthia D. Hardison
Legislative Director

Affirmative Action Victory

Civil rights and union leaders applauded the recent US Supreme Court decision, on a 5-4 vote, upholding the University of Michigan affirmative action admission programs.

The National AFL-CIO filed an amicus brief with the Supreme Court in support of the University of Michigan's affirmative actions plans. We strongly agree with Justice O'Conors' holding that a diverse student body promotes good learning outcomes, and that education among diverse peers is of "overriding importance for preparing students for work and citizenship." Studies have constantly show that white, African American and Hispanic students who have enjoyed the opportunity of diverse peers are more likely to succeed in integrated workplaces.

Legislative Update

State Budget

The leaders of the legislature and Governor Granholm were in negotiations to reach an agreement on budget targets for each department that would allow the legislature to complete work on the 2003-2004 budget. It appears unlikely that they will be able to complete the budget by the 4th of July, as originally planned. If agreements are reached this week, then the legislature could come back later in July to finish their work. We will have more details on the final budget agreement in the next edition of the newsletter.

"Payday" Loan Bill Put on Hold until fall

The Senate has decided to wait until fall before taking up SB 474, introduced by Sen. Valde Garcia R-Howell, which would legitimize the "payday" loan industry in Michigan. This bill would allow these payday lenders to charge an 18% fee on each transaction. These fees far exceed the maximum interest rate allowed for any loan. On an annual basis, these fees would equal an interest rate of 400-500%!

The payday loan industry is trying to adopt this legislation because the state's Financial Institutions Bureau made a declaratory ruling in 10995 that the payday loan industry should be subject to the Regulatory Loan Act and the Credit Reform Act which would require these lenders to be licensed like other financial institutions, and would cap the annual interest rate that they could charge for a small loan at 25%. The "payday" lenders say that would put them out of business.

The Michigan State AFL-CIO and Governor Granholm is opposed to the bill in its current form.

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Maintenance Memo

By Jane Duggan
Maintenance Director

THE MAINTENANCE CRAFT CONFERENCE PHILADELPHIA - MAY 18-20,2003

Our 2003 Craft Conference, under a huge banner reading BOBBY DONELSON MAINTENANCE DIVISION CONFERENCE, began with Director Steve Raymer making a series of appointments. When Brother Donelson vacates the Assistant "A" position on June 30th, Gary Kloepfer will replace him. Gary is our former Central Region NBA who was elected Representative at Large in the last elections. Western Region NBA, Idowu Balogun, will fill Gary's spot. Charles "Chuck" Sunngaard, from the Phoenix Area Local will replace Brother Balogun.

The speeches began with Philadelphia's Mayor Street addressing the conference followed by President Burrus. Both the clerk and MVS division directors addressed the conference. This was a first. Never before had the other Division Directors been invited to attend or address the maintenance conference.

In the afternoon, we had our regional breakouts. In the Central Region gathering, our 3 NBAs updated us on the administrative review and the status of our grievance backlog. Most of the afternoon centered on discussing a proposed resolution regarding the pay of arbitration advocates. President Burrus recently cut the number of hours an advocate will be paid to prepare a case to 4 hours (local) and 6 hours (away). Central Region delegates voted unanimously to back the resolution when it comes to the conference floor in the Tuesday General Session.

Monday was devoted to classes. I attended Article 38 and Excessing in the morning taught by Brothers Raymer and Donelson. There was a lot of discussion and our class ran over a half hour. In the afternoon, I took the Advanced Steward Training taught by Brothers Balogun and Wilcox. This class provided a CD with a number of cases being presented in the kind of detail that will help us build better cases locally.

On Tuesday, the conference met in another plenary session for the Division Director, Steve Raymer to give the division report. Over 500 attended the conference. Newly appointed NBA Chuck Sunngaard offered a tribute to Bobby Donelson and Idowu Balogun.

Voting was conducted on over two-dozen resolutions presented to the body. Good information was provided...some on CDs which I will be able to share with our members throughout the coming year.

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Clerk Craft Report

By Bob Maloney
Clerk Craft Director

I am not sure how many of you are aware that about six months ago, I had a stroke while at work. Not something I would wish on anyone. I won't go into all the details of what happened, but since I have been at home recuperating, I have done a lot of research and reading on strokes. There is a whole network of stroke support groups as well as tons of information, from various sources on the subject. There are lobbyist currently working on getting legislation passed at both the National and State levels dealing with rehabilitation and insurance caps when it comes to the cost of therapy. In short, they are trying to see that stroke survivors that fall in to the Medicare program have adequate access to needed rehabilitative services. One of the things I want to touch on is how sudden a stroke hits you. In my case, it was a loss of feeling in my right foot and leg followed by a loss of feeling in my right arm. While the signs of a stroke are many, some can be as little as: problems seeing, or not being able to speak or understand what others are saying, or a sharp headache for no reason or dizziness. But one thing they all have in common is that it will be SUDDEN. You need to seek medical help as soon as possible. The first hour is the most critical.

Another thing I want to talk about is insurance and sick leave. I know we all earn sick leave as a benefit, and I know that some of us use it as fast as we earn it for whatever the reason. I can almost hear the snickers out there as you read this, but without my banked sick leave, I would be in real trouble. Fortunately, I have always been relatively healthy during my twenty year Postal career, and didn't use much sick leave. I say fortunately, because while being off for the past six months, I have still collected a paycheck every two weeks. No one plans for something like this to happen in their lifetime, but if it does, you better have something to cover yourself financially or it could ruin your savings, or more. If you do not have many sick leave hours saved up, then you may want to look in to some type of insurance policy to be able to help you out. The APWU's Voluntary Benefit Plan offers both a long-term and short-term disability plans. Take my word for it, no matter how sick or injured you are, and no matter how bad people feel for you, everyone still wants his or her money on time. Whether it is the phone company, or new bills such as the hospital or doctors, they ALL want their money, and now!

Finally, there are a few things I have a new respect for, such as: handicap parking and old people with canes. A lesson learned the other day was my son I was going to our favorite restaurant for lunch. We pulled up to the handicap spot in front of the main door. As I was getting my cane out, this bear of a man was walking in from the parking lot. He hollered out to my son that this was a handicapped-only parking spot. My son told him the old man (me) was handicapped. The guy then hollered, in that case, we were supposed to have a handicapped sticker. My son,

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Retiree Involvement

By Al LaBrecque
State Retirees Chapter President

Let me get right to the point! I shouldn't have to 'preach to the choir' regarding the drastic recommendations of the appointed Presidential Commission on the Postal Service due in a report by July 31. This stacked deck Commission's anticipated recommendations, to be ultimately considered by the GOP dominated Congress when they debate postal "reform" legislation, represents the most serious threats to the membership, the APWU, the American mailing public, and the Postal Service in my 44 years of involvement in the postal labor movement!

The National APWU furnished every Local and State Union president an "action kit" containing facts sheets, sample letters to Congresspersons and Senators, media Letters to the Editor, and resolutions opposing the devastating changes to be adopted by community organizations. Locals have been directed to form local "coalitions" to support opposition to the recommended changes of the Bush Commission.

In Local Retiree Chapters and retired members, active Local leaderships have the most ready resource with the knowledge and experience to form formidable coalitions. I've attempted to convey that through this column, in correspondence and verbally to APWU Retirees Dept. and national officers, but I've neither seen nor heard anything to indicate mobilizing retired members in this effort. It's pretty obvious that I'm *"persona non grata"* with national APWU leadership due to my stances on retiree inclusion. However, that should not stand in the way of this effort, just because I've proposed it. IF that's the case, it's pretty damned small. I would hope we could rise above internal differences in the face of this external threat to our very existence. But, I don't need anyone's approval to propose the mobilization of APWU retired members in Michigan!

Active Locals with retiree chapters have the advantage of coordinating this effort with local chapter officers. Locals who maintain address mailing lists of their retired members have a contact resource. Will it work? We won't know unless we give it a try, and I hope Local leaderships agree it's worth the attempt. Consider targeting retired past officers, stewards, and retired active members. Consider calling a special meeting for the purpose of a letter writing campaign to your Congressperson and Senators Carl Levin and Debbie Stabenow. Furnish postage, envelopes and sample letters reproduced from the action kit, as well as facts sheets, sample Letters to the Editor, and resolutions. Or, Locals may want to mail these items to your retired members with an appeal to write, phone, e-mail or visit their legislators District offices. Be creative! But, for crying out loud.... UTILIZE THE RETIRED MEMBERSHIP!

Why should APWU retirees get involved? From my perspective

(Continued on page 8)



NBA Report

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

The Long and Winding Road

The Michigan State Convention was on *beautiful* Mackinac Island this year. The Illinois State Convention was held a week later on the banks of the almighty Mississippi in Quincy, IL, only about 800 miles apart. The long trip was worth it. State Presidents Gary Van and Linda Turney did a fantastic job, as always. Stan Burke and his local provided a terrific catfish fry, fresh from the Mississippi. Now that was good eating. I've got to get their recipe.

Old Timers

I recently had the pleasure of attending the Installation dinner at Bloomington, IL. A very dear friend came up from Arizona to visit. Orrin Bradshaw, a Bloomington member and former Secretary – Treasurer of the APWU-ABA received his 60-year membership award from the local at this event. Thanks, Orrin, for your great service to this union.

I also attended the Kalamazoo "Old Timer's Dinner." This annual event hosted by the Kalamazoo NALC Branch with retired APWU members as invited guests, was also a great time. There was a large group of retired APWU members in attendance this year, especially with all of the recent retirees jumping the ship. We all must thank those members who led the way. It was their support with their union membership that got us all that we enjoy today in wages and Benefits. A special guest was retired Rural Carrier Harry Larson, who currently resides in Portage, MI. Back in the 60s, Harry was a clerk, Member-at-Large from Pullman that always came to Michigan Federation Conventions, before he lucked out and got a rural job. As always, it was great to see all those that paid their dues.

The APWU and NALC in Kalamazoo have always worked well together. It's just too bad that relationship didn't occur at the Washington, D.C. level. Former Branch President Jimmy Muelman announced he was retiring, from everything. Thanks Jimmy! The retired APWU members are too numerous to mention except for a few really "senior" stalwarts, Lyle Blakely; Chris Armenis; Ed Waterhouse; Larry Clemens; Jim Will; Don Lockwood; Jerry Brown; Becky Swinhart; Don Jones; Joe Foy, and so many more.

I appreciate those retired Southwest Michigan Area Local members Orrin Bradshaw, Harry Larson, and everyone else who had 35/40 years (60 for Orrin) of Union membership. Thanks SISTERS AND BROTHERS.

Excessing! Life Goes On!

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LifeCare

** A Benefit for APWU members**

Do you need help finding home health care for an aging parent or financial assistance for your college-bound son or daughter? LifeCare, a resource and referral program can help – from prenatal information to adult care...from summer camps to child care services...from pet care to health and wellness...and much more. This program is a negotiated benefit offered through the Collective Bargaining Agreement between the APWU and USPS and is available 24-hours a day, seven days a week to help you manage your life. Information, education, and referral service are available on my subjects, including:

- ⇒ Family – Prenatal care, childcare, adoption, parenting, adjust care, grand parenting.
- ⇒ Health & Wellness – Diet, nutrition, fitness programs, general health.
- ⇒ Education – Pre-K, elementary, secondary, special education, colleges, financial aid.
- ⇒ Financial/Legal – Credit, debit, insurance, retirement, estate planning, wills.
- ⇒ Life – Automotive, home improvement, moving, pet care, event planning, travel.

Also available are LifeCare "kits" containing free comprehensive educational materials and practical products that address the health and safety concerns of parents and caregivers.

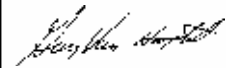
- ⇒ Prenatal Kit – Available to expectant members, this free kit offers valuable information and products (including a diaper bag, infant undergarments, books from the "What to Expect Series."
- ⇒ Child Safety Kit – This kit is designed for parents of children aged three and younger and provides lifesaving information and products to keep children safe.
- ⇒ Adjust Care Kit – Containing free products and information for caregivers (including medication organizers, record keepers, flashlights, etc.) it provides the tools needed to handle adult care responsibilities and provide peace of mind.

Whenever assistance is needed, LifeCare is available, by either visiting the private web site at: www.lifecare.com or by calling toll free: 1-800-873-4636 (or TTY 1-800-873-1322). To enter the web site, click "Member Login." New users, click "New User" to register and follow the on-screen instructions for the one-time registration process. When prompted for a company code, enter "postal."

President's Report Continued
(Continued from page 1)

woman, "you don't know where you are or where you are going. You have risen to where you are due to a large quantity of hot air. You made a promise, which you have no idea how to keep, and you expect people below you to solve your problems. The fact is you are in exactly the same position you were in before we met, but now, somehow, it's my fault."

Until Next Time,



Legislative Update Continued
(Continued from page 2)

ers. The APWU with its vast amount of members has contributed the least in comparison to other organizations that have fewer members. It is the voice of the almighty dollar, which speaks the loudest. We have to make our voice heard. How much is your job worth?

MPWU EDUCATION

Area 10, 11, and 12 District Meeting will be held September 12-14, 2003 in Gaylord, Michigan at the Best Western. Classes held on Saturday, September 13 will include Advanced Steward Training – documenting grievances at Step 2 and direct appeal to arbitration. I am working with Maintenance Craft Director Jane Duggan on classes for the Maintenance Craft. Phil Solom, Legislative Dir. for the 498-499 Area Local will be providing invaluable information concerning the rights of veterans.

Area 7 and 9 District Meeting is tentatively scheduled for February 20 and 21, 2004 in Grand Rapids, Michigan. The tentative topics for education will assist our MPWU Area directors and associate office stewards. Plan to participate in our education. Education and communication is what helps to keep us strong.

I hope that everyone is having a safe and enjoyable summer, until nest time.

Yours in Union Solidarity



Legislative Update Continued
(Continued from page 3)

House Republicans Study Privatization of State Human Resources

State Representative Phil LaJoy, R-Canton, will chair a three-member subcommittee of the House Employment Relations Committee to look into the consolidation of all the state's human resources divisions for 18 state department into one division within the Department of Management and Budget.

The subcommittee will also look at privatizing such human resource operations as recruitment, procedures, administration, and payroll. We will closely follow the activities of this subcommittee over the course of the summer and will oppose any effort to privatize state services.

Stop the Free Trade Area of the Americas

It has been 10 years since the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) began eroding workers' rights, jobs, and the environment. President George W. Bush is pushing to expand NAFTA through the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), which would eliminate tariffs in every country in the Western Hemisphere, except Cuba. Since NAFTA went into effect, skyrocketing trade deficits with Mexico and Canada have caused the loss of more than 750,000 actual, and potential jobs in the United States. The FTAA, covering 34 nations, with a population of 800 million, would trade away even more US jobs.

FTAA is NAFTA all over again, but 10 times bigger and on steroids.

The FTAA negotiations have been carried out in excessive secrecy by the Bush administration, and the negotiators have granted privileged access and consideration to corporate representative while excluding labor. While labor unions, environmentalist, and other activists have made repeated efforts to communicate their concerns and views to the negotiators and to their own governments, there is no evidence that any of these concerns have been addressed in the negotiations to date. That is why working families and other activists are coming together to Stop FTAA – is the wrong choice for working families both in America and South America.

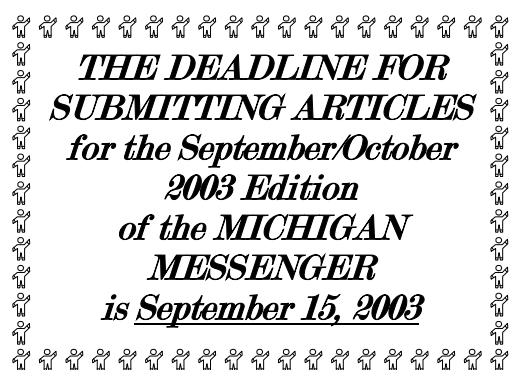
Trade ministers from 34 nations in the Western Hemisphere will meet the either FTAA Ministerial Meeting in Miami, November 20th and 21st of this year. To ensure they won't just hear from big business – which will be lobbying hard for FTAA passage, behind closed doors – working families will send tens of thousands of ballots opposing passage of FTAA to the Miami meeting. By signing a ballot, you can tell trade ministers and our elected officials that FTAA is the wrong choice for jobs, workers' rights, and the environment.

To get your ballot and more information about FTAA, go to www.aflcio.org/stopftaa.

Until next time,

Yours in Solidarity

Cynthia


**THE DEADLINE FOR
SUBMITTING ARTICLES
for the September/October
2003 Edition
of the MICHIGAN
MESSENGER
is September 15, 2003**

Maintenance Memo Continued
(Continued from page 3)

BMC CONFERENCE
JUNE 29-30, 2003 * DETROIT

I attended my "first ever" BMC conference in Detroit at the end of June. I was amazed to find out that these conferences which serve the 21 BMCs are so much smaller. This particular conference was the largest ever with over 60 in attendance. Eighteen of the twenty-one BMCs were represented.

Brother Gary Kloepfer chaired the conference and then turned over the baton to Brother Balogun who as the newly appointed Representative at Large for Maintenance will be responsible for the BMCs.

Central Region Coordinator, Sharyn Stone, addressed the body. She reported there is excessing throughout the Central Region. However, it is limited at this time to within a 50-mile radius. Things have slowed down a little waiting on the consolidation plan to be issued. Brother McCarthy of the Clerk Craft also addressed us. He said the list of plant consolidations would come out after the Presidential Commission Report – probably this fall. RUMOR has it that 25-100 plants may be involved. At this point, the APWU does not know which plants will be affected. Our Division Director, Steve Raymer, is also involved in the meetings with management regarding Article 12/Excessing, even though the clerk craft will be the primary target.

Brother Raymer reported that there is no MMO yet on the skill level for the APPS (Automated Package Parcel Sorter). At this time, no Michigan office is slated to get an APPS. These new machines are extremely large –double the size of a SPBS.

Starting a new trend, each of the Division Directors was invited to speak. Brother Michael Foster from the Detroit local attended representing MVS Director Bob Pritchard. Foster distributed a very nice package with seven sections of information including job descriptions and arbitration awards.

PRESIDENT BURRUS SPEAKS

On Monday, President Burrus addressed the conference. He gave a brief introduction and fielded questions first. He gave an update on the early out issue. (You have much more information since the conference.) He did assure the members that the APWU would provide counseling through the retirees department in addition to the counseling members can get through Personnel.

Of special concern to maintenance members is the issue of whether or not management will try to block our departures during the early out. When I asked about this, President Burrus said that management has implied they won't let technical maintenance members go. He said the union will immediately challenge this if it is true. The union's position is that the early out offer must include ALL APWU represented crafts/members.

President Burrus' main topic that day is the one he speaks on at

every occasion nowadays...raising money for COPA. He indicated that he will ask for the right to assess the membership to do "whatever is necessary" to fight the President's Commission on the USPS and/or the Congress. (On July 8, the NEB of the APWU voted to authorize an \$8 per member assessment to be paid in four installments of \$2 each. The effective date of the assessment will be announced after the Commission Report is issued.)

The Commission's report is due by July 31. We know that lobbyists are suggesting the Commission modify collective bargaining by abolishing arbitration and placing our wages and working conditions at the mercy of postal management.

To counter these attacks, when the report is issued, Burrus will call for a nationwide media campaign both to respond and to gain "access to decision makers". He will be calling for letter writing and other grass roots campaigns in addition to raising money from the members.

CAUSE FOR CONCERN

Although we are all anxious about the Commission Report, I found two additional points that were brought up at the conference particularly disconcerting. I think all of you will agree that they are cause for concern.

In your Contract book on page 257 have a look at Article 43 (SEPERABILITY AND DURATION). In a nutshell, what it says is that if any part of the contract is nullified by new legislation or by a court of competent jurisdiction, the rest of the contract remains in effect. The scary part is that congress or the court could alter our Collective Bargaining Agreement.

The second alarming item is on page 281 – the Memo regarding "LAYOFF PROTECTION". I think this is worth quoting verbatim:

"It is the intent of this Memorandum of Understanding to provide job security to each such employee during the term of the Agreement; however, in the event Congress repeals or significantly relaxes the Private Express Statutes, this Memorandum shall expire up on the enactment of such legislation".

It seems that the writers of our Contract could see the future. That future is now. Brothers and Sisters, we are facing the most difficult time since our union was founded. We will have to stand together and stand tall. We will have to do more than most of us had planned on to protect our jobs and to safeguard jobs for those who will follow us.

These times will test our union and the membership. We need to go and talk with the non-members in our locals and try to get them to join. We will need to be 100% organized to face the difficult times ahead. Be prepared to act.

Jane

Retiree Involvement Continued
(Continued from page 4)

as an APWU retired member; I can't just sit idly by and allow the gains we achieved as "the builders of this Union", taken away without a fight! It makes me mad as hell! Furthermore, retirees are postal customers too. As a rural postal customer, I look forward to going to the mailbox every delivery day, whether it be for a check, mail order prescriptions, or a greeting card from my grandkids. Don't mess with **MY** postal **SERVICE!** But, most of all: I care about the job security and contractual rights of my active Sisters and Brothers. If Congress and the White House can decimate the Postal Service through privatization and wipe out collective bargaining for wages, working conditions and benefits with the stroke of a pen; retiree CSRS/FERS annuities, FEHBP health insurance, FEGLI life insurance, and COLA are just as vulnerable.

When engaged in our struggles as postal workers, especially in the pre-1970 era, we sought the support of the public and wherever else we could find it. Should anything less be expected of retired members? Just because we're retired, like it or not, as long as we depend upon our CSRS/FERS annuities for our livelihood, **WE ARE NEVER OUT OF THE ARENA!**

These are some of the thoughts which motivated me to write my Congressman and Senators: a Letter to the Editor in our local press, resolutions adopted by both my county Democratic Party and the Michigan 1st Congressional District Democratic Committee, and furnishing sample letters to my NARFE Chapter (Alpena Thunder Bay Chapter #1487) requesting their support.

It is especially important that Locals in areas with Republican legislators bombard them with letters opposing the Commission's recommendations, and to inform the public of the threats to their postal services. The "action kit" has all the ammo needed to get the job done. USE IT! And, don't take our Democratic Members of Congress for granted either! I just received a letter from Senator Carl Levin(D) in response to my letter to him requesting his support when the Commission's recommendations are debated in Congress. His response was disappointing to say the least! Probably researched and composed by a staffer in Levin's office; it very much sounded like Levin has bought in to PMG Potter's 'Transformation Plan and the recommendations forthcoming from the Commission. Nary a word of support for the APWU positions, or the fact that the primary reason for the USPS's huge debt is due to the huge discounts given to business mailers and advertisers, which I stressed in my letter to Levin.

Nearly every APWU local and state publication I receive has sounded the alarm to their members on the seriousness of the Presidential Commission on the Postal Service. The emphasis, however, has been on the importance of contributing generously to COPA to finance the coming battle to win the support of our elected Members of Congress. I agree, it's time the ACTIVE MEMBERSHIP making the negotiated big bucks dig deep for COPA.. As for retired members, by national APWU's own estimates, retirees already account for the biggest share

of COPA contributions received! It's my considered opinion that the more immediate effective action by the retiree membership is an all-out legislative contact and American mailing public awareness campaign by involving our 34,000 APWU Retirees Dept. members and 30+ Local and State Retiree Chapters.

Maybe I'm too optimistic in believing our retired members can represent a strong coalition in our active Locals. All I can do as your State Retiree Chapter president is make this appeal for active Local leaderships to REACH OUT to your Local Retiree Chapters and retired members. And, retired members can make the effort to contact their Locals offering your support. If we lose any part of this battle, don't let it be because we didn't exploit all our available options...like our retired membership!

Be Strong!

Al LaBrecque

NBA Report Continued
(Continued from page 5)

While the National moratorium for excessing beyond 50 miles is still in effect, there are still withholdings in process, in both Illinois and Michigan. Many employees have received their 60-day notices, but gaining offices have not been offered in most instances. The agreed moratorium, until consolidations, if any, are announced in just one more re-nig by the USPS on our newly negotiated contract. Please contact my office for any updated excessing questions or queries.

COPA - \$.37 Get Really Real!

Sorry folks, the National campaign to raise COPA funds is \$.37 late and a dollar short! Our National APWU has been sleeping for years. Eighty (80%) percent of COPA donations came in, and probably still come in from our retired APWU members (Old Timers Again). Active members don't give a damn! Recently a mailing to over 250,000 APWU members requesting COPA participation resulted in great numbers. Only 67 members responded by signing a checking account COPA authorization. Yes, 67 out of over 250,000. So when the Presidential Commission reports at the end of July, and your job is slated for elimination, don't BITCH then. We had our opportunity to "Buy Off" whatever Congressperson or Senator to block this, but it's too late baby!

Our APWU had a very aggressive Legislative Department at one time, but internal APWU political problems killed our legislative action. So anyway, please give to COPA, a few bucks now may still help. It always helps. \$.37 a PP, \$10.00 a year, think about it.

Other Notes

So much for our "Contract Extension." We do have the extension; there has been no information on projected consolidations. As of this writing, we finally have word that the "Early Outs"

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NBA Report Continued
(Continued from page 8)

may finally be coming forth. So, other than extending the Contract, which does extend the No-Lay-Off Clause (N.L.O.), we've got nothing. The extension for the "N.L.O." is also a no win, since we haven't had anyone hired since 1998. So the current 6-year rule really wouldn't come into effect anyway, it gives our newer employees an extra year. But those are the A.E. or S.T.B.E.E.* employees anyway. *(Already Excessed or Soon-To-Be-Excessed Employees.) So far, we have received nothing!

The excessing of junior employees has resulted in placement of the senior employees into jobs they didn't desire. In larger offices, the eliminations of desirable T-2 jobs has resulted in senior employees being placed into T-1/3 positions. So this unrest has PO'd everyone. Just wait till the next real hammer falls, this Fall, in Fiscal Year '04.

Safety and Health

Area Safety Specialist, Virgil Konopinski, recently retired. Our next area Safety and Health meeting should be scheduled sometime in late June or July. Send your agenda items to myself or Bob Miles at Northwest Illinois Area Local, APWU; 194 West Lake Street; Elmhurst, IL 60126.

More Bits and Pieces

Nissan recently opened a new plant in Mississippi (Canton.) 87,000 applied for only 5,700 jobs. With the economy so bad, this gives corporations, big and small, a better chance to weed out troublemakers and union supporters.

When the Homeland Security took over the Airport Screening jobs, Chicago had 34,000 apply for those positions. Which, by the way, are already being reduced in numbers.

Congress Hotel Chicago!

The Congress Hotel in Chicago has a labor problem. The Union members voted 113-1 to strike. The Congress doesn't belong to the Chicago group of 27 hotels who have already agreed to a Contract giving \$10.00 an hour to housekeepers. At the Congress, they get \$8.21 an hour. The Congress wants to cut those wages by 7% and cut benefits as well. So, until further notice, I will not participate in any activities at the Congress Hotel in Chicago.

Knee-jerk

While we still await discovery of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, we have discovered our good old American Knee-jerk reaction. Freedom Fries, Freedom Kiss, Freedom Tickler, come on, get real. This anti-French reaction only mirrors this country's action in World War I. The German Brown Trout was called the "Liberty Trout" since we were so upset with Germany. In Michigan, the village of Berlin, Michigan changed its name to Marne! But, they still have the Berlin Speedway. Dur-

ing World War II, we had Japanese and Italian internment. Now, we have Iraqi and Middle Eastern people being interned. Heck, here in Chicago we have many Middle Eastern people held 3 blocks from our office at the Metro Correctional Center. No charges, no due process, no freedom. Just think, Attorney General John Ashcroft wants more rights to take more rights! I guess we have already set precedence when this country sat by and did nothing when Hitler locked up just about anyone he wanted to, with no challenge from anyone. Ashcroft/Hitler catch the similarity!

DHL Buys Airborne

DHL spent \$1.05 billion to buy a rival. This will give them better opportunities to challenge U.P.S. and FedEx. German postal service Deutsche Post had revenue of \$42.1 billion last year. The USPS had revenue of \$65 billion last year.

Celery Fading Out

Michigan celery farmers are mucking out. The majority of Michigan's celery crop goes to Campbell Soup. Costs keep going up and Campbell can get their celery from elsewhere, i.e. California and Mexico. Martin, MI be aware. I still like celery in my B.M. in the A.M.

Attitude

Currently, I am a dude with an attitude. Someone called me cynical which is correct. I've never been so disgruntled in my entire career. Our National "Headquarter" Union must have all be hit with SARS or Monkeypox! We Field Officers are getting nothing in the form of information, good or bad. We get a crummy video (\$1.29 postage) asking for a crummy \$.37 a pay period for COPA. Too little too late! So maybe we can buy off a few congress people, but Bush has us by the Bush!

We have a P.A.T. sign off which gives us nothing. Everything will be on a case by case basis. We already had that. The FMLA is no better. They violate, we grieve, and then maybe a settlement! But, everyone still has to go through the hoops to get there.

T.A.C.'s is continuing to cause violations, what do we get from Headquarters?

Article 1.6.B ? What are we gaining in Level 20/18/15/13 offices? Nothing, we are losing Clerk hours left and right. The next fiscal year will only be worse.

Your union officers are eliminating hundred of grievances already certified for arbitration, but we are still getting hundreds of grievances appeals to both Step 3 and Arbitration. So what's the use? The intent at Headquarters and Area Levels may be quite sincere but, obviously, that intent still hasn't dribbled down to the local level. Why? Because there is no accountability for any of these "Supervisors and 204 BS!"

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NBA Report Continued
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Anyway, the beat goes on.

Truckers News

New rules are going into effect, which will permit Long-haul truckers to drive 11 hours after 10 consecutive off duty hours. The Teamster's Union opposes this proposal. If anyone has driven on the I-94 lately, you can be assured that all of those trucker's zipping past you at 80+ miles an hour are well rested. Thanks, President Bush.

Airport Screener's Plight

Many people don't realize that, under the Homeland Security regulations, the new "Federal Airport Screeners" are **not** permitted to belong to a union. In some type of convoluted reasoning, the Bush administration believes that if the screeners belonged to a union, our security would be compromised. Go figure. Before becoming Federal Employees, the majority of airport screeners were unionized with the majority belonging to the Service Employees Union, but no more. Thanks, Tom Ridge and President Bush.

Sports and Stuff

Say it ain't Sosa! What are the odds? 77 bats and he grabbed the only one with a cork! Anyway, the Cubs are doing just as good with or without Sammy. Now, on the Southside, things aren't going too well. But, I'm standing by my prediction of a Red Line World Series.

The Bears are looking good and the new Soldier Field will also surprise everyone come this September.

Now For Some Home Cooking

First, how hot is it? For this grilling time of year, everyone wants to know. Here is a method to estimate your grill's heat.

Rick Browne, author of "Grilling America," said grill temperatures can be estimated by holding your hand over the grill surface.

If you can only hold your hand 1 to 2 inches about the grill for 1 second, the temperature of the grill is approximately 600 degrees or higher.

And so on:

- 1 second or less – 600 degrees or more
- 2 seconds – 500 to 650 degrees
- 3 seconds – 450 to 550 degrees
- 4 seconds – 400 to 500 degrees
- 5 seconds – 300 to 400 degrees
- 6 seconds (or more) – 300 degrees

Jerry's Grilled Sweet Onions

Area 10, 11, & 12 District Meeting

When: September 12 & 13, 2003

Where: Best Western Hotel, Gaylord Michigan

Tentative Itinerary

Friday Afternoon, September 12th

- ⇒ Legislative Update/Information - Cynthia Hardison
- ⇒ Veterans Information/Status - Phil Solom

Friday Evening

- ⇒ Elk Sightseeing Tour - Pigeon River State Park

Saturday (All Day)

- ⇒ Direct Appeals to Arbitrations - John Clark
- ⇒ Documenting Grievances @ Step 2 - Jerry Martin
- ⇒ Article 30, Sec 18 - Excessing vs. Abolshiments (Keeping Senior Employees w/Bid Jobs in Section) - Percy Harrison
- ⇒ Maintenance Information/Update - Troy Rorman

Saturday Night

- ⇒ Dinner & Speakers

Registration: \$50.00 (covers Materials & Saturday Evening's Dinner)

- 6 Vandalia or other type of sweet onions
- 1 stick butter

Slice the top and bottom off of onions. Push the center out and fill with 1 ¼ tablespoons of butter. Salt and pepper to taste. Wrap in aluminum foil so that the shape of the foil resembles a Hershey's Kiss. Place on grill and cook for ½ hour.

Jerry's Barbecued Ribs

- 4 bottles of a hearty beer
- 3 to 4 pounds spareribs
- Your favorite barbecue sauce

Put the beer and ribs in a large pan, add water to cover meat. Bring to a boil and then reduce heat, slowly simmering. Cook for 40 to 60 minutes and then remove from heat. Let cool. Cover ribs with barbecue sauce and cook on the grill, approximately 10 minutes on each side.

Jerry

Would you like a Wal-Mart "Super-Center" store to move into your community?

Think of the low prices and the convenience of one-stop shopping! You just park once and get most of the things you need -- groceries, drugs, plants, toys, dog food.

Sounds great, doesn't it? So why have 200 communities refused to allow such big-box stores like Wal-Mart to enter their lives? Do they know something we don't?

To find out, a reporter embedded herself in the Wal-Mart wars that have recently broken out in Contra Costa County, California. What was learned is that Wal-Mart's big-box stores drag down other workers' salaries, destroy downtown businesses, prevent smart-growth development and increase traffic congestion. What really surprised the reporter was, we, the taxpayers, end up subsidizing Wal-Mart stores by paying for the health and retirement needs of its workers.

A study done by the San Diego County Taxpayers Association, a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization found that an influx of big-box stores into San Diego would result in an annual decline in wages and benefits between \$105 million and \$221 million, and an increase of \$9 million in public health costs. They also estimated that the region would lose pensions and retirement benefits valued between \$89 million and \$170 million per year and that even increased sales and property tax revenues would not cover the extra costs of necessary public services. "Good jobs, good pay, and good benefits should be the goal of an economy," it was concluded, "and (Wal-Mart) super-centers are not consistent with that objective."

The giant retailer is infamous for its take-no-prisoners, anti-union policies. Wal-Mart's ability to offer such low prices has been achieved by paying its workers -- or "sales associates" -- low wages, offering unaffordable health coverage and no retirement benefits and importing most of its products from developing countries, some of which use child and prison labor. Wal-Mart lowers wages among working families and destroys family businesses. "It not only pays workers less than many of its retail competitors, two-thirds of workers don't have health-care coverage -- a cost taxpayers are picking up across the country."

Did you say taxpayers? That's right. We, the customers, get low prices and convenient shopping because we, the taxpayers, subsidize Wal-Mart profits by paying for county public health services, food stamps, and social services for its retired employees.

So should you shop at Wal-Mart? To make up your mind, consider this: If you earn a livable wage or have an employee contract, you can probably buy your monthly needs at Wal-Mart. But that's because the average Wal-Mart employee, who earns about \$15,000 a year, cannot do the same.

Wake Up! Lower prices, come with hidden costs!

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