

MICHIGAN MESSENGER

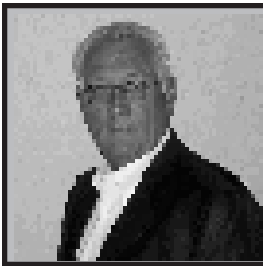
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Volume 31, Issue 121

November / December 2005 Issue

Happy Holidays

From the Michigan Postal Workers Union



President's Report

Gary VanHoogstraten
President

I was recently privileged to attend a joint OWCP training session put on by the Southeast Michigan District in Troy. David Moore (Management) and our own Ron Krumrie, (MPWU Human Relations/OWCP Representative) were the instructors. Their training was very thorough and it seemed as if all the time they had conversed planning this session was well worth it. The feeling I got from those in attendance was that the information shared will help change the attitude of some in management and will assure compliance with proper procedures in the future. From the questions that were posed by management, you could definitely tell where the jest lied and why this training was important for everyone. I am currently working with Sharyn Stone (Central Region Coordinator) and Barb Kiehborth (Human Resources Manager from Greater Michigan) to see if we can get the same training in the Greater Michigan District. I have spoken to Ron and he agrees that it would be an asset for our District as well. We all know that OWCP issues continue to climb and we need to be all on the same page to assure those who are injured are properly cared for; however, we all know that this is not always the case. I have hopes that this training will be in the near future.

In a related issue, I was reading some other publications from across the nation when I came across one that is something that may be happening in the future in regards to OWCP and the Postal Service. The Unions at the National level have been notified that the Postal Service is looking into the OUTSOURCING of INJURED ON-DUTY EMPLOYEES. I am not sure how this will develop down the road but we will need to keep an eye on this program. One section of the article was that before any employee can be moved to the private sector, the Postal Service MUST perform an individual assessment of the employee and if there are postal positions within the employee's commuting area. The Postal Service contends that the program is necessary because there is a declining number of jobs available for injured employees who have substantial medical limitations. If there is no medically-suitable job available, the Postal Service will refer the employee to OWCP for placement in OWCP's vocational rehabilitation program and eventually, reemployment in the private sector. While in this private sector program, if

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Secretary's Writings

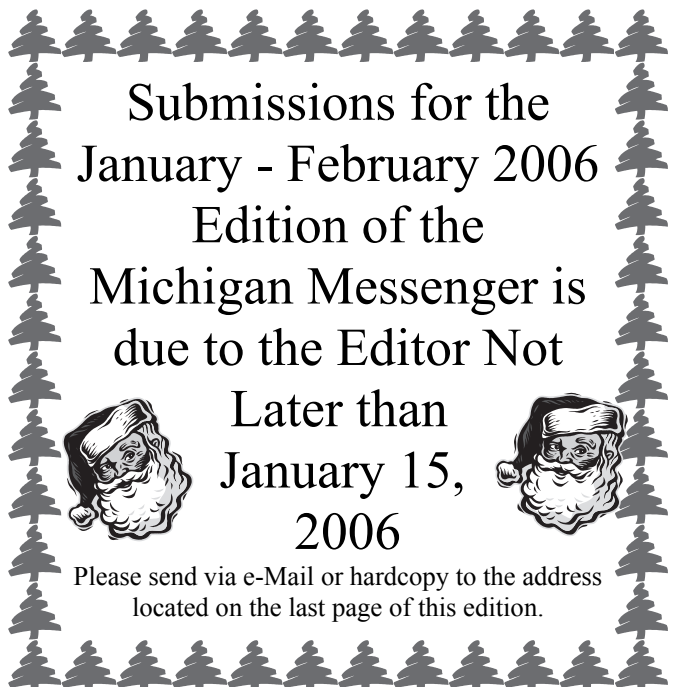
Harold Juhl
Executive Secretary

I cannot believe it is winter already. This is the last article of the year 2005 and I will keep it brief. The State and National Conventions are right around the corner. This means I will be very busy getting everything ready for our State Convention in Detroit in April 2006. I will be sending out letters to all the Local Presidents letting them know when their resolutions need to be in, along with the list of delegates from their Local who will be attending the Convention. I know that everyone would appreciate that as soon as you knowing who will be attending the convention, please let us know. It makes assigning those attendees to various committees easier and allows for more time to review any changes.



As always, if I can be of assistance and any State Officer who may need something don't hesitate to give me a call. I hope everyone had a great Thanksgiving, and I want to wish each of you Happy Holidays.

In Solidarity,

Harold



 Submissions for the
 January - February 2006
 Edition of the
 Michigan Messenger is
 due to the Editor Not
 Later than
 January 15,
 2006

 Please send via e-Mail or hardcopy to the address
 located on the last page of this edition.



The Long and Short of It

Michael A. Long
Editor

Brothers and Sisters, I would like to begin by wishing everyone a very Happy Holiday season. Whichever holiday you celebrate or don't, I, and my family, wish you and your loved ones a joyous time of celebration.

With 2006 fast approaching and this coming year not only being a convention year for the state and national, it is also a contract negotiation year. It is time for you to let your voices be heard locally and nationally. Please contact your steward or Executive Board member and let them know what you would like to see changed in the National agreement and the National and State Constitutions. If you need a copy, please let us know. The union is the voice of all of its members; so raise your voice! Additionally, 2006 is also going to be an important Election Year. Keep reading this publication, along with logging on to the website for information on how you can help your local, union supported candidate get elected.

Dental Plans. At the recent state president's meeting in Bay City, a Statewide Dental Plan was discussed. The Detroit District Area Local, along with the Western Michigan Area Local has offered to allow the membership to join their plans. Information is available on the website for all three plans.

Human Relations/OWCP & Retirement Seminar. Michigan will again be privileged to host the Central Region Human Relations/OWCP & Retirement Seminar on March 1-3, 2006 at the Doubletree Hotel in Bay City, Michigan. Keep looking for more information as it becomes available.

In closing, as we celebrated Thanksgiving with our friends and family I would like to say thank you to each of you for belonging to the union. It is because of you that we are as strong as we are. As stated above, in the new year, make sure we continue to be strong, by: 1. Get any APWU represented employee who is currently not a member to join; 2. Make your voice heard by giving us input and comments on where you want to see the union go and become stronger.

In Solidarity,

Mike



Legislative Report

Regina Favors
Legislative Director

The holiday season is now upon us and while I pray that everyone will have a safe, happy and joyous time, let us not forget those who have suffered great losses and tragedies over the last three months. There are still many folks in need of help, financial and otherwise so let us keep them in our prayers and hearts and by all means continue to do whatever you can to lend a hand, give support, send a toy or whatever you can so that they will not feel forgotten and/or alone.

Let us also send special prayers to those who were cheated, denied and/or otherwise let down by the Government (our current) administration. I do not know about you but I feel if there was ever a time for people to wake up and pay attention, it is now. The state of our country right now is you are either rich or you are poor. There is no middle, there is no in between. In case you still do not get the gist of what I am saying, let me put it another way, money knows no color, no race, no gender, no nationality, no sexual preference, no morals, need I go on?? Yet, when it came time for our presidential election all of these things seemed to get in the way. The big money was the spearhead of it all. There were reasons of gay rights and a woman's right to choose being tossed around (saying I won't vote for Kerry because of his morals). There were reasons of a Government controlled healthcare system being tossed around, but if you are old enough or you can remember your parents (or grandparents, great grandparents) did not have to suffer like they do today, or have to choose between getting their prescriptions filled or having a little food. They did not have to worry about whether they could see a doctor or just lie at home and die because they do not have the right type of healthcare. Those of us who watched their grandfathers (and great-grandfathers) work years and years at the factory, which was once probably the most secure jobs, now have to wonder if they can continue with the same degree of health coverage or security they once had. Then there were those who watched their single moms struggle to keep a roof over their heads and food on the table by doing day work, and a second job of maybe being a waitress, beautician, cashier or part-time seamstress. Who may now have to bear probably most of the brunt of trying to make sure that they, (our mom's, aunts, or whoever raised or even

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Clerk Craft Report

Bob Maloney
Clerk Craft Director



Maintenance Memo

Jane Duggan
Maintenance Director

While I was trying to catch up on my reading recently, I came across a report by Peter Hart Research for the AFL-CIO. This was a National survey done in August of 2005 and released for Labor Day. Now I have always held to the old adage that liars figure and that figures lie and this article dealt with a lot of percentages and a while lot of figures; however, it was very interesting just the same. The people/group surveyed covered a wide spectrum of American society. These included High School graduates, African-Americans, non-college women, non-married women, and small town workers. Out of those interviewed, some of the things that I thought was provoking were that: (1) 53 percent of American workers feel that their income is not keeping up with inflation or the costs of prices. Of those 74 percent felt unhappy about the job market in this country and achieving their financial goals. (2) Only 30 percent said that they are doing as well or better than their parents at this point of their life; and 62 percent of those believe that the country is headed in the wrong direction as far as both good jobs, as well as jobs with benefits. The entire group felt that their income was not keeping up with prices and seems to make them negative in their overall view of their standard of living and the direction it is heading. (3) 65 percent of them said that employers are falling short of providing even adequate retirement benefits. (4) 50 percent who did have retirement benefits felt that their company might not still be around when it comes time to retire; and of those, they may only get a small percent of what they see as full benefits. (5) 28 percent feel that there might not even be Social Security to draw upon once retirement does take place. In other words, most do not buy into GW's plan for changing Social Security and that his proposals are a failure.

There is some good news in this report. One thing is that Americans largely approves of unions and feel that union workers are more likely to receive good benefits in their jobs, compared to non-union workers. In addition, moreover (65 percent), if given the option, non-union workers would be more likely to vote to join a union that they would have been in the past. This is a large approval rating and is the lowest disapproval rating since 1965. The main reasons given were that union members receive more

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GETTING READY FOR OPEN SEASON

November 4-6, I participated in the District meeting in Bay City. We had a dozen or more people in our Maintenance class including several local presidents from the clerk craft who often have to represent maintenance employees. The focus was on the upcoming Open Season and how to police the related contractual issues. I will do my article for the next issue on Open Season to have everyone up to date before the process starts March 1, 2006.

If you are trying to prepare for Open Season, you might want to get some schooling through the Army Correspondence Courses. These are available to you online. There is no cost and you will get a certificate at the end if you successfully complete a course. These courses address many of our KSAs and can be used for update. The website address is: <http://www.atsc.army.mil/accp/aidnew.asp>

KSA 36 FLAWED ON THE 932 EXAM

Since Bay City, I received a very important email from our Assistant Division Director, Brother Gary Kloepfer. It seems that NTAC has been willing to admit there has been a problem in grading KSA 36/Test Equipment on the 932 exam for Electronic Technician (ET). In fact, NTAC is willing to re-rate employees who failed this KSA recently on the new 932 series exam. NTAC has begun the process of re-rating all maintenance craft employees who were previously rated as ineligible on the 932 Exam.

As a result of this information, I am advising anyone and everyone who believes s/he might have been affected to request a re-rate. (Only those who took the new series exam that breaks down the questions by KSA have been affected.) A re-rate is requested by writing a letter to NTAC requesting a re-rate and attaching a copy of your 932 score. Take this to your personnel office and the HR/MSS coordinator will have to send your letter along with a cover letter to NTAC. The results will be mailed directly to your home with a copy sent to your office.

As far as grieving this issue with KSA 36 on the 932, we have been advised by Gary Kloepfer to wait until you re-

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Area 8 Report

Dan McCloskey
Area 8 Director

As I write this article, it is Veteran's Day. We would be remiss if we did not thank our troops for all that they have done; all their sacrifices and all that they will do to protect and serve our great country. Thank You!

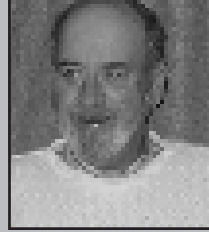
Over the past few months, I have heard from some of our APWU members and their grievances. While most can be handled at Step 1, a few have gone higher. If you have not heard the outcome of your grievance, please feel free to give me a call or your own Area Director. Knowledge is power and knowing if the problem has been settled and to what avail makes it more likely that the situation won't happen again. However, if you feel the contract is being violated but your not quite sure, give me a call and I'll verify whether there is a violation or not and fight for your rights to make sure it doesn't happen again.

You have probably have heard that we have received the largest Cost of Living increase in the past few months; however, the cost of living is much more than what we see our paychecks. Gas is up over forty percent from last year, Consumers just raised my utility bill over seventeen percent. It is just getting more expensive to live every day. I am thankful for my job and I want to keep it.

For those of you who are not full time and those of you who are, if you are losing hours because someone in management is doing your job, call me. With the Article 1.6 award, we now have a reference to ensure that at least the hours you have now, are the hours you will continue to have.

Since you probably will see this paper in December or so, I would like to wish all of you a Merry Christmas and a very Happy New year.

Dan



Retiree Involvement

Al LaBrecque
MPWU Retirees President

Back In The Saddle As a retiree for over 13 years, thanks to Chicago Region Clerk Division NBA, John Clark, and State President, Gary VanHoogstraten; I had the unique opportunity to conduct 1.6.B surveys of small post offices here in N.E. Michigan which included organizing non-members out in the hinterland. Being mindful that I retired as Flint MI Area Local president in 1993, this was an eye-opening experience for me. The situation in small Associate Offices wasn't exactly ideal back in my day when I served for a time as MPWU Area 4 Dir., but the deterioration of clerk craft work in A.O.'s is appalling! I'm not so sure this wasn't more about organizing M.A.L. non-members as it was conducting 1.6.B surveys.

If, indeed, APWU Hq. and the Clerk Division officers are serious about pursuing 1.6.B issues via the surveys, and not just let them collect dust on a shelf, it is my humble opinion that a "follow-up" survey needs to be conducted. For various and legitimate reasons, not all the targeted A.O.'s were surveyed. Surveyors received our packages barely 30 days prior to the Sept. 30th deadline. It's my understanding that our NBA didn't receive the lists of Member-At-Large (M.A.L.) members and non-members and the targeted 1.6.B A.O.'s far enough in advance. Then, the Labor Day holiday cut into our limited time with a lot of miles to cover between P.O.s. At best, I could only get to 3 in one day, and most often only 2.

A.O. postmasters were generally cooperative, if not nervous in some cases. I had to assure most that this was not an adversarial exercise, but just a survey. Some were actually happy to provide everything I asked for due to their budgeted clerk hours being so severely cut, expressing they hoped the APWU would be successful in restoring clerk hours. Only one was a real jerk, but I rather enjoyed sparring with him. Another spent most of our visit telling me what a great guy he was. Other surveyors tell me that they had a difficult time scheduling some offices due to postmasters either not being advised by their POOMs that the surveys were authorized, or dictating when they would, or wouldn't meet. The time element proved to be the most challenging aspect. As a result, numerous targeted 1.6.B A.O.'s didn't get surveyed across the Upper Peninsula and a few in northern Michigan. I've been ad-

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NBA Report

Lynn Pallas-Barber
NBA - Clerk Div. - Chicago

WOMEN IN THE LABOR MOVEMENT - Mary McDowell

Mary was born in 1854 in Cincinnati, Ohio. Her father was very active in the anti-slavery movement and he moved his family to Chicago after the Civil War. As a young woman, Mary joined the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) and was active in women's suffrage. In 1889, she joined several other active women and other social reformers at Hull House.

Hull House was a large, abandoned mansion that had been built by a wealthy businessman, Charles J. Hull in 1856. Hull House was located on Halstead Street in the run-down 19th ward of Chicago. The majority of the people living in the immediate area were recently arrived immigrants from Europe. Hull House was founded by Jane Adams and Ellen Starr. They began inviting the people in the neighborhood to hear readings from books and to look at slides of paintings. Shortly the needs of the neighborhood grew and Hull House began to provide a number of social activities to the people living in the area.

Inspired by the work of Jane Addams at Hull house, Mary McDowell established the University of Chicago Settlement in 1894. She was interested in helping workers in Chicago improve their pay and working conditions. She also helped organize a number of strikes as a member of the American Federation of Labour.

She also helped establish the Women's Trade Union League and helped organize the Amalgamated Meat and Butcher Workmen in the Chicago Stockyards Strike. She earned the name of "Angel of the Stockyards". She became a much loved figure in Chicago. Mary died in 1936. Research for this article was taken from www.afscme.org

MPWU – DISTRICT MEETING

It was once again a privilege to be back in Michigan at the MPWU District meeting November 4 – 5 in Bay City. Congratulations to Gary Van, Mark Hart, Joanna Atkinson and Mary Stephenson for a job well done.

Providing steward training is one of the things I like best

about my job as NBA. I may sound critical at times, but I cannot stress enough how important it is to develop and document grievances. My criticism is meant to be constructive. I look forward to my next trip to Michigan soon!!

APW ACCIDENT BENEFIT ASSOCIATION

I also wear the hat of the Area 5 Director for the ABA. I recently returned from a board meeting. It certainly is a good feeling to sit on a board of directors which is composed of all UNION members. We wear a different hat on this board as we all share in fiduciary responsibilities. I'd like to report that all the members on this board wear two (2) hats, the first being our UNION hat.

There are other disability insurances available to our membership. Our membership should feel comfortable that the APW ABA works for the UNION members of the APWU.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS

I would like to take this opportunity to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. As postal workers and union workers our struggle continues and seems to mound. Attacks on union workers seem never ending in our country, which was built by union workers. Look at what is happening to UAW workers in the Delphi and GM plants. Their Christmas bonus is the layoff of some 30,000 workers. Delphi workers are facing wage cuts comparable to workers at Wal-Mart. Wal-Mart is setting the standards for workers in our country and our neighbors continue to support them by shopping there. I hope that we all did our holiday shopping at some place other than Wal-Mart and that NO APWU union dollar was spent there.

Until next time,

Lynn



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President's Report Continued

the pay is different from what a person was making at the Postal Service, OWCP will make up the difference; however, the employee would lose all postal benefits, (health insurance, life insurance, TSP, etc). The benefits would be that of their new private employer, not the Postal Service. The employees would also cease to accrue creditable time towards their federal retirement plans. This action is being fought currently on the east coast (New York area); however, it is working towards us in a rapid motion. A realistic example of what could happen is: You are currently an Injured employee, and due to being injured on the job due to no fault of your own, management states that there is no work for you to perform in the area. Thus, you have been placed into these private sector jobs, and low and behold, your employer is Wal-Mart. You are trained to be a Wal-Mart greeter and make \$10.00 per hour (OWCP makes up the difference). I can assure you there will be no Union at Wal-Mart and it is hard for me to believe you will be offered any insurance, either health or life. After a year or so, Wal-Mart decides they no longer need your services and terminates your employment. Not only are you terminated from Wal-Mart, but as it looks now, your OWCP stops, and you have no recourse to come back to the Postal Service.

This may seem to be a horrific example, but think about the Postal Service and all other areas in the Private sector where employees are receiving the shaft from their employers. I strongly believe that this program is an absolute way for the Postal Service to weaken, if possible, the whole OWCP program. I suggest you contact your political leaders and voice your opinion on this program. Because, God forbid, you may be one that may be placed into it.

I wish all of you a safe winter and wish all the brothers and sisters and their families a Happy Holiday Season.

Until Next Time



Gary Van Hoogstraten
President

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Legislative Report Continued

assisted in raising us) get medicines, treatment or whatever they need because of the current administration and the policies that they have and are continuing to force us into. It is time people to see the light. It is time whether you are a Democrat or a Republican to wake up. It is time for all of us who are labor oriented to stand together and take back our Government. It is time to tell Bush that he was and he continues to be wrong in his selection of Supreme Court Justice Nominees, in the war in Iraq, the failed healthcare system, the no child left behind scam, HE IS JUST PLAIN WRONG, WRONG, WRONG!!! What I think is ironic, if you Google "Failure", George W Bush comes up as the #1 result. Bush has lied continuously to the American people and just a few years ago people wanted to impeach President Clinton for lying about a sexual indiscretion, why are they not calling for this president's impeachment? I mean as it has been said by many, when Clinton lied at least nobody died!! It is not right and it is not American to send all of our jobs overseas and leave us scrambling for work or taking lower pays. For those of you who are workers in a union, can't you see what is happening? Can you understand that even though you think you have a good, secure job right now that can and probably will be gone tomorrow if you do not unite and take the stand for our country (not Iraq's). Union busting is alive and flourishing under this current administration and if we do not wake up and come together as unions, workers, American people, citizens of a once great and democratic country (Nation) then we will be like (or maybe less than) some of those countries we claim to be trying to liberate.

Come next year we will be voting for Governor and some Senate and House seats. Please I urge you to begin now to take back our Government. We need a higher minimum wage, universal healthcare, and to not lose or have our social security taken away and if the events over the last few months have not shown you then I don't know what will and I would say that the future of our country is bleak at best. Find out how you can become more involved and informed by going to our APWU website, the AFL-CIO website, Governor Stabenow's website and please by all means check out (if you haven't) Tivist Smiley's website and the BLACKAMERICAWEB.COM!! I had intentions of giving you some bills to watch for but while Congress will be taking it's holiday recess I wanted us to have something to think about so that we will be ready to come out fighting next year.!

WISHING YOU THE HAPPIEST AND MERRIEST HOLIDAY SEASON OF ALL. TAKE CARE, BE SAFE

UNTIL NEXT YEAR,

Regina

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Retiree Involvement Continued

vised that these weren't the only P.O.s missed in this first sweep.

Active Local and State officers who are full time employees faced some obstacles which made it next to impossible to survey all the A.O.'s assigned to them. Getting the time off from work approved for Union LWOP or even annual leave was a problem in some instances, and then there were the priorities of performing their own Local's business. Even retiree surveyors, like myself, who have part-time jobs experienced limited days and time to complete their assigned surveys. Speaking as a retiree, the \$15 per hour 'salary' was a bonus. For the active officer/employee it was a pay cut, and not very conducive for getting the job done. As a retiree, I would be most willing to participate in a second 'sweep' to survey 1.6.B A.O.'s missed in the first round of surveys. There is a virtual wealth of retired past APWU Local and State officers that could be utilized.

The member to non-member ratio in the offices I surveyed was about 50-50. Those I met were very receptive and talkative. For most, it was the first time they have seen a Union representative in their P.O. in years, if at all. I furnished each M.A.L. non-member with the organizing materials the APWU provided me, with a partially completed Form 1187. I included my MPWU business card and a stamped, addressed envelope with the 1187. While all were receptive, to date I haven't received one response. The **\$16.13** per pay period dues for a Michigan M.A.L. is not conducive for signing up M.A.L. non-members who are only working 11-13, and at best, 20 hours per week. State and National per capita for PTF M.A.L.'s needs to be addressed at both State and National

conventions. It is better to gain a member at a reduced per capita/dues rate, than no member at all.

The drastic reduction in A.O. budgeted clerk hours due to unrealistic Function 4 results and DBCS sorted mail was shocking! Postmasters readily admitted they use RCA's and PMR's regularly to perform clerk bargaining unit work, with postmasters going well beyond the limits of 1.6.B performing clerk bargaining unit work. I was also contacted by A.O. members whose offices are part of Area Locals who believe their offices should be subject to the 1.6.B survey, and I couldn't agree more.

I have no knowledge as to the agreement between APWU and USPS authorizing the 1.6.B survey/organizing. I strongly suggest that APWU Clerk Division Asst. Dir., Mike Morris, consider seeking further agreement to do a follow-up for those 1.6.B A.O.'s missed in the first round. I firmly believe it's that important!

C.O.L.A News sources (curiously **not** APWU news service or the bi-monthly magazine) indicate that Social Security recipients will receive a **4.1%** Cost-Of-Living-Allowance increase based on the CPI-W Index. That means federal/postal retiree annuitants will also receive a 4.1% COLA increase on the CSRS portion of their annuities. That's the good news. Don't spend it just yet! FEHBP Blue Cross/Blue Shield enrollees' monthly premiums will increase \$15.95 for Standard Self, and \$37.99 for Standard Family. However, the APWU Health Plan will **decrease** for High Self and High Family. I am told the reason for the APWU Health Plan's reduced premiums are due to an excessive surplus in the Plan's reserves which has to be maintained at a certain level. That's good for 2006, at least. Since the vast

majority of APWU Health Plan enrollees are retirees, I surmise that a fair portion are over 65 and on Medicare. Medicare becomes the primary provider, while FEHBP coverage becomes the secondary provider. As stated at the Retiree Dept. Conference in L.A. in 2004, FEHBP health plan providers "love" Medicare enrollees because they make money on us. Unfortunately, many retirees, like myself, reside in areas where health care providers do not participate in the Beechtree services. My experience is that when presenting the APWU Health Plan to those providers, they treat you like you're from another planet. My own efforts to persuade providers in my area to participate in Beechtree proved fruitless, thus many of us are forced into enrolling in BC/BS to get hassle-free coverage.

If you are enrolled in Medicare Part B, you will see your monthly premium increase from \$78.20 per month to \$88.50. It's my guess that this jump is due, in part, to financing the Medicare Prescription Drug program which doesn't do anything for FEHBP enrolled retirees. Seniors who are concerned or confused over whether or not to enroll in the Medicare D drug prescription coverage, and who are enrolled in a FEHBP insurance plan, are advised to **stay with what you have!** You will be far better off remaining in your present FEHBP coverage.

So, poof! Just like that, many retirees will see the 4.1% COLA increase disappear, and then some in most cases! The hurrieder we go, the behinder we get!

Organizing Local Retiree Chapters Or not!! What's your problem, active Locals?? Despite repeated efforts to get Locals and Area Locals in Michigan to organize Local Retiree Chapters, we are stagnant at only

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Retiree Involvement Continued

four! WHY?! At the recent Local Presidents meeting held during the District Meeting in Bay City, I once again asked that Locals seriously consider organizing chapters, and that I would assist in the process. With the exception of one Local president who said they couldn't get retired members interested, I was met with a pregnant silence. What's your problem?! My bald head is getting sore beating against the brick wall. I question as to just how much effort has been given to organizing chapters in our Locals. But, this is not unique to our state. After nearly 14 years since the APWU Retirees Dept. was formed, there are only 36 Local Retiree Chapters and 4 State Chapters organized, and about 40,000 members nationwide.

One widely held theory is that the active APWU leaderships at **all levels**....national, state and local, are "afraid" of Retiree Involvement. We are merely tolerated. That's nuts! What's the reluctance? That we know too much? Or, as I've heard numerous times; "Retirees run the NALC, and we're not going to let that happen in the APWU!" Give me a break! We don't want to "run" the APWU. If that were the case, we wouldn't have retired! Been there, done that! APWU and NALC retiree structures are entirely different. Ours is based on the UAW retiree chapter model, and their retirees certainly don't "run" the UAW. APWU retirees simply seek to remain connected to the Union that represented us during our active work lives, representing our best interests legislatively and politically on the issues affecting retirees. Retiree inclusion in our Union can, and should be, mutually rewarding. Case in point is the utilization of retired members on the 1.6.B survey and organizing effort.

All that being said; I must reiterate that our State MPWU has been, and continues to be totally supportive, cooperative and inclusive where our State Retiree Chapter is concerned, and as far as I can ascertain, so are the active Locals with organized Local Retiree Chapters. On the other side of this coin, there is a significant cadre of retired APWU Local and State past officers and members who could be stepping up to offer their time and talents to organize Local Chapters in their area. Let your Local Union leaderships know you are willing to organize and participate in a chapter in your home Local. Again, I am here to assist in the process. All any of you have to do is ASK!

The American Flag As reported in the last issue of the "Messenger", the controversy over the Greater Michigan District's subordinate postal facilities refusal to lower the flag to half-mast on the day of burial of Michigan military

personnel killed in the line of duty when ordered by the Governor has finally been addressed by the new District manager, Robert A. Hart, through the good offices of Senator Debbie Stabenow. Sadly, and I might add; **shamefully**, it falls far short of what common decency requires. Following, is Hart's "determination":

"Dear Senator Stabenow:

The United States Postal Service makes every effort to work with community leaders. In the State of Michigan, Governor Granholm has issued Proclamation 2003-4 that instructs the flag of the United States of America(n) shall be flown at half-staff throughout the State of Michigan when a member of the Michigan National Guard, the Michigan Air National Guard, or a Michigan resident serving as a member of the United States Armed Forces is killed in the line of duty.

As a Federal agency, the United State Postal Service is directed by the President of the United States when to lower the American flag. There are regulations for the death of prominent local citizens and when funerals of returned war dead are being held locally.

I have asked to be notified by the Governor's office when communication is provided to the public so our office may notify the local Post Office to lower the flag in that community. I too share the concern that flags are lowered in some parts of the state and not in others. While I understand Mr. LaBrecque('s) request to lower flags state wide, the Greater Michigan District will continue to follow our guidelines."

Sincerely,

Robert A. Hart"

That's It?! That's NO RESOLUTION at all! The key words in Hart's determination are 'local', 'locally', and 'in that community'. From what I can decipher from Hart's double speak is that when military personnel killed in the line of duty are being buried, only that local post office will be directed to lower the flag. Now, isn't that pathetic? In my considered opinion, the State of Michigan is 'local' and our 'community'. While the Southeast Michigan District notifies all their post offices to lower the flag when ordered by the Governor, the Greater Michigan District continues to disrespect the Governor's order to honor our war dead. Pretty damned disheartening, but no great surprise. It's patently typical of the USPS closet mentality I'm so very familiar with. Respect begets respect. For the

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Maintenance Report Continued

ceive the results of the re-rate. Once you get the new rating, if you have passed KSA 36 and are eligible for the ET PER, then you have 14 days to file a grievance challenging the application of the new score. You will be asking for higher level and out of schedule if applicable if indeed you have been by-passed for promotion during this time or if there have been unfilled vacancies in your installation during this time. Feel free to email me if you have questions about when and how to grieve this issue. My email address is mpwu-maint@yahoo.com.

HURRICANE VICTIMS SEEKING JOBS IN MAINTENANCE

We received a request to let Gary Kloepfer know of any maintenance vacancies in our offices. He is trying to create a database of available jobs for maintenance employees who have been displaced by Hurricane Katrina. Some of them may want to move to Michigan. Please email this information to labor-chief@aol.com.

If you get hurricane victims in your office, please welcome them. By a national level agreement, they will carry their seniority with them. I have also suggested we arrange a "shower" to see that these employees get the work clothes they need. They will be shocked by our winter weather. Other postal employees including letter carriers who get a work clothes allotment might be willing to share their uniform allowance by buying these new brothers and sisters some of the things they need for work.

BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING

For those of you with government email accounts through the USPS, be careful. My maintenance manager (John Marlatt) was looking for a way to get rid of me. He got permission from the inspection service to have access to my government email account. He was allowed to access/print/read all of my email. In an EEOC hearing, he admitted, "I could not find anything on you". Clearly, his intent was to find grounds for removal. So, use your personal email for union issues. Use your USPS account strictly for work related email.

Happy Holidays to all. I am looking forward to a new year of struggle.

Jane

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Retiree Involvement Continued

Greater Michigan District management, I have none! May God Bless our war dead, their grieving families, and our troops in harm's way.

Stay Strong!

Al LaBrecque

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Clerk Craft Report Continued

benefits, as well as a good retirement program (i.e. 93 percent of union members are covered by some kind of health insurance; 76 percent of union members receive sick leave pay; 80 percent of union members receive overtime pay, etc.)

These are not my figures but a research firm, but I thought it was good food for thought.

Until next time,

Yours in Solidarity,

Bob

Happy Holidays



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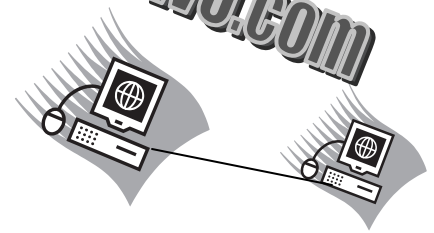
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Your articles are welcome! They must be signed to be printed, but your name will be withheld upon request. Articles sent via electronic media will be treated as being signed. Be aware that articles may be edited to fit the confines of this publication.

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.

Check us out on the web @ MPWU.com



Upcoming Events to Plan For:

- March 1 - 3, 2006 - Central Region Human Relations/OWCP & Retirement Seminar, Bay City, MI
- April 27 - 29, 2006 - MPWU Biennial Convention, Detroit, MI
- August 14 - 18, 2006 - APWU National Convention, Philadelphia, PA
- June 7 - 9, 2007 - MPWU Educational Conference, Sault Ste Marie, MI



Area 4, 5, & 6 District Meeting in Pictures

On November 4, 5, & 6, the Michigan Postal Workers Union held the Area 4, 5, & 6 District Meeting in Bay City. Only the dates were the irony, because once again for those in attendance the information and training was superb, just

as we come to expect from each and every District meeting. This meeting began with a General/Open session between the NBAs and the attendees held in the Planetarium across the street from the hotel. While the flags of many nations flew above are heads (see the website for photos of this), we learned some information about the planned plant consolidations, JCIM revisions, upcoming conventions, etc., not to mention the amount of questions the attendees posed to the "panel." It was a definite learning experience for all. At the same time the General Session was going on, an Article 1.6b training class was being conducted by NBA Percy Harrison. With the attempted cut in hours and shift of work from the craft employees to Postmasters in smaller offices, it is great to see classes like this being offered to combat this travesty and return our work.

On the Saturday, three more classes were taught. NBAs John Clark and Lynn Pallas-Barber instructed a Basic and Advanced Stewards class; while at the same time another

1.6b class was being taught and MPWU Maintenance Director Jane Duggan gave insight into the new MSS Selection process and helped those in attendance know what their members need to know for advancement. Later in the day, the local state presidents met and discussed how to make things better for all our members and what is forthcoming.

Thanks to everyone who attended to make this meeting a resounding success.



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