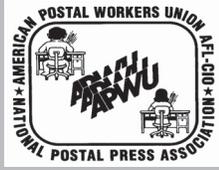
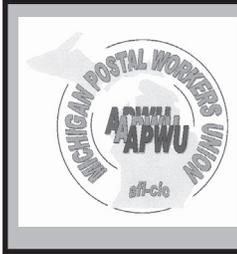


MICHIGAN MESSENGER



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President's Report

Gary VanHoogstraten
President



As I sit here, the first week of the new year, many thoughts are running through my mind on how to begin this article. Having just completed a dismal year in 2005, we should look at the next 12 months and the possibility that 2006 will be a better year. The auto industry will likely continue to pare jobs, and demands more concessions from the Union workers leading up to their 2007 contract talks. We then have to ask ourselves, where does this leave us? Are we ready for contract talks? I would sure hope so. We have been ready since the last time we negotiated a contract and that was when Moe Biller was still the President. As postal workers, we have already been feeling the cuts. The National was notified in the middle of last year and they decided in October to let the cat out of the bag as far as plant consolidations. As of this article, there are only two offices that this will be affected in Michigan; that is of mail processing operations in Gaylord will be transferred to Traverse City. I know that the Congressional leaders in both Areas have been notified and are working on this issue. As news comes about, I will try and put something out the best I can. What the people in Michigan

need to do this year is along with their political leaders, make the commitment to doing whatever is necessary to turn this State around. Michigan State AFL-CIO. President Mark Gaffney has appointed me to the Steering Committee to get the minimum wage initiative on the November ballot. We need to get 320,000 signatures to get this placed on the ballot. I am asking every union member, friends, and families to make this a reality. If you are asked to sign a petition, or if you are in a local store and see a petition, please do not hesitate to sign this. Can you imagine having to go to work for \$5.15 per hour? Do you think you could afford a new car, a house, or try and raise a family? Minimum wage has been \$5.15 since 1997. Keep in mind that Congress has had seven (7) pay raises since 1997. All of us know it is hard for working families stagnant income to keep up with the high cost of living. As of today, we have the highest inflation rate since 1980. This is an injustice and should raise concern to every working person regardless of their salary. Per a recent study, \$5.15 per hour equates to only \$10,712 a year. This is \$5,000 less than the poverty level for a family of three. As

your State President, I plan on making this ballot issue a priority and get it on the November ballot. I know we can do this with your assistance. A year from now, America will still have over 100,000 troops in Iraq. Osama Bin Laden will more than likely be one of most wanted men in the world, and Michigan's economy, will still lag the nations. I would like to be proven wrong on any and all of these issues.

The State Convention is coming up in April. I know Executive Secretary Harold Juhl is getting his mailing ready for all locals. I will be sending out a letter to all local presidents shortly after his. The Detroit Local is ready and waiting to ensure that everything will run smoothly and everyone will have a productive time while there. There are many things to do in downtown Detroit and I know the local is working with the hotel and downtown businesses to make it a huge success.

The Michigan Postal Workers Union has stepped up and brought another first as far as training. The APWU National offices of OWCP/Human Relations and Retiree Department have made the final preparations for a semi-

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The Long and Short of It

Michael A. Long
Editor



Legislative Report

Regina Favors
Legislative Director

Happy New Year! 2006 is now upon us, and what we do with this year is up to each of us; however, we need to ensure that we use each day to benefit each other and everyone. I said in my last column that you need to make your voices heard. It is more true today than it was in the past. Many changes are forthcoming with the Postal Service. Consolidations, Contract Negotiations, Postal Reform, etc are all being considered. Make your voice heard. Contact your respective representative and let them know what you think.

As you will see in this edition of the Messenger, the MPWU is proud to host the upcoming Human Relations Conference and Retirement Training Seminar on March 1-3, 2006 in Bay City. I would strongly urge each local to send as many people as you can to this training. On Wednesday, we will be learning about the changes due to the consolidations of Personnel Offices. Our membership deserves a knowledgeable steward/officer when this occurs. Make sure you are there to learn what you can do to assist your members when they have problems. Because you definitely know, management won't know.

The 2006 Constitutional Convention is fast approaching in April. Make sure you have your resolutions to Harold by March 24th so that we may include them in the Resolutions Book. It is VERY expensive to make copies at the convention for late submitted ones. By getting them to him on time, it will avoid an unnecessary cost and make the convention run smoother and neater without having the Sergeant at Arms continually handing out paper. Make sure you get your list of delegates to Harold too by the deadline so the delegates can be assigned to a committee.

I would like to talk this opportunity to congratulate Regina on her Retirement from the Postal Service. Hope you will still keep active and let your voice be heard here locally as well as in every political arena as you have always done.

In closing,

Until next time,

Mike

VOTER'S BEWARE or should I just say people beware because each and everyone of us has a stake in what is currently happening in our Government (and I use the word **OUR**, very loosely) as it seems to me that this is not OUR Government anymore. It use to be that the constitution was said to be *BY THE PEOPLE, FOR THE PEOPLE AND OF THE PEOPLE*. Yet we seem to be stuck with something that is by the big corporations (wealthy at that) or G.W. Bush, for the big corporations (and/or Bush Administration) and of the corporations, because it appears that they are the only ones benefiting from the policies of this Country today. I mean just look at how well the pharmaceutical companies are doing these days and then stop and take a good and serious look and how the people who need these medicines (and cannot afford them) are doing. Take a moment the next time you are in a CVS, Rite-Aid or Walgreen's and listen to some of the seniors as they try to pick and choose which of their medicines they are going to get this month, or some of the young moms who do not have good or for that matter even adequate insurance because they work at Wal-Mart or some other non-unionized workplace that does not even give them decent or any medical insurance to cover prescriptions. I have been in stores where this is happening. Then what about the workers (some with serious medical problems such as diabetes, hypertension, chronic asthma just to name a few, who have lost their jobs (some unjustly) or for any reason whatever and their benefits if they had any has run out. And just in case you do not know, some of the medications they need are not covered by Medicare or any other "care". This is very real people and I can not even begin to think where it may end up if we are not willing to stand up and **DO SOMETHING !!!!!** We need to take some type of action. We need to support John Conyers, Martha Scott, Hansen Clark and all of the other Representatives and Senators who are sponsoring the bill for Universal Healthcare. Just think, it could one day be you or someone very close to you.

Here we are in a situation where our paychecks even with raises are shrinking, companies are complaining about having to pay benefits and asking that the Government step in and say they don't have to pay them or they can pay a reduced amount. How about the companies com-

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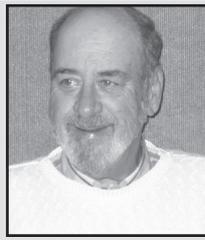
Area 1 Report

Larry Moyer
Area 1 Director

It has been some time since I have written a report for the *Michigan Messenger*. For the most part, things have been relatively quiet in the offices I represent as Area 1 Director. I hope everyone had a most enjoyable holiday season and Happy New Year.

FOLLOW UP TO POSTMASTERS NOT PRESENT DURING WINDOW HOURS- in my last article I wrote about in many offices the postmaster desires to work 6 am to 2:30 pm or 7 am to 3:30 pm and leave to office staffed only by a clerk for the rest of the day. I feel this is wrong on two points. One point being Safety and Health. What if the post office is robbed or the clerk working alone suffers an injury? The other point is from a Customer Service standpoint. Some customers, no matter what a window clerk (such as myself tells them), do not want to talk to a window clerk they want to talk to a **MANAGER**. You are then dealing with an irate customer who wants to talk to a manger with no manager present. I brought this item up in a recent District Labor Management meeting. Our District Manager David Barthel stated that in his past experience as a POOM and as well as in the Southeast Michigan District he **expects his postmasters to be working during the hours the window is open for that office, unless otherwise approved by the POOM**. Since then I received many phone calls from many members around the state wondering how to apply this to there office. **Not so fast!** Despite the comments of District Manager Barthel as stated above, in one of the offices I represent, I grieved this issue and the step 2 designee disagreed and denied the grievance. I appealed to step 3 of the procedure, and the grievances have been certified for arbitration. They are back up cases on the arbitration schedule in February 2006. So if these grievances are moved up on the schedule, at least in one office a last minute settlement or an arbitration award will resolve this issue. If your postmaster leaves the office before your window closes and you are in one of the Southeast Michigan District offices I represent, give me a call. If you work in another district, your Area Director should attempt to get a similar policy for your District. In the meantime, I am pursing a grievance for higher-level pay for the clerks working alone with out the postmaster present.

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Retiree Involvement

Al LaBrecque
MPWU Retirees President

Flag Issue Resolved! I am pleased to report that the U.S. Postal Service Greater Michigan District's managers have been directed to lower the U.S. flag on all Post Offices, as requested by Governor Granholm, to honor Michigan military personnel killed in the line of duty.

On December 28, 2005, Greater Michigan District manager, Robert A. Hart, issued an e-mail directive as follows:

"Effective immediately I am requiring all Post Offices to honor requests from Governor Granholm's office to lower flags to half mast in honor of Michigan servicemen and servicewomen killed in the line of duty. After much research and discussion with the Area and our corporate lawyers, I believe this is the 'right' thing to do. Our ASM, Administrative Support Manual does not mandate that we honor local/state requests, but does permit us to follow the lead of our Governor and other Federal Agencies."

"We owe it to the families of those men and women who died protecting our country, to lower our flags in remembrance on the dates requested."

"Your offices will receive notifications as the orders are provided by the Governor."

"Thanks for your cooperation."

Bob Hart

This news was a great way to end 2005 after 4 1/2 months of pursuing this issue, and a great way to begin 2006! Thanks to the outstanding efforts and persistence by U.S. Senator Debbie Stabenow, 1st District Congressman Bart Stupak and their staff personnel, and in a very large part due to the involvement of Brother Larry Moyer, Pres. Troy MI Local #6723, this issue has been satisfactorily resolved.

Credit goes to Senator Stabenow's Traverse City northern Michigan office Regional Mgr., Brandon Fewins, and Rep. Stupak's Alpena District office Aide, John Pines, for their inquiries at the Greater Michigan District and Wash., D.C. levels. But, I believe that Brother Larry Moyer's unsolic-

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NBA Report

Lynn Pallas-Barber
NBA - Clerk Div. - Chicago

WOMEN IN THE LABOR MOVEMENT

Ellen Gates Starr

Ellen Gates Starr was one of the co-founders of Hull House. In my last article I wrote about Mary McDowell. She was inspired by Ellen Gates Starr and Jane Addams the founders of Hull House.

Ellen Gates Starr was born in Laona, IL in 1859. She was a student at the Rockford Female Seminary from 1877-78. She met Jane Addams at this seminary. Ellen Starr taught school for ten years in Chicago before joining Jane Addams in 1888 for a tour of Europe. While in London, England they visited Toynbee Hall. They were so inspired by the success of this project that they became determined to establish a similar settlement in Chicago.

In 1889, they purchased Hull House. Hull House was opened as a kindergarten but expanded to include a number of social activities. They formed an infant day care center and provided the newly arrived immigrants with education classes. Ellen Starr and Jane Addams were later joined by a number of social reforming women in the running and success of Hull House.

Ellen Gates Starr was one of the teachers at Hull House. She also became active in the struggle to reform child labor laws and working conditions in Chicago. She was also a member of the Women's Trade Union League and she assisted in the organization of striking garment workers in 1896, 1910 and 1915.

For the last ten years of her life she retired to a Roman Catholic convent in Suffern, New York County, where she died on February 10, 1940.

Research for this article was taken from www.spartacus.school.co.uk/USAWstarr.htm

THE LABOR MOVEMENT TODAY

As the year 2005 ended, we saw a three-day walkout by city transit workers in New York. It is predicted that this strike will be a boost for unions in this country. Every

where management is attempting to cut benefits of working people. They are/were calling for health care and pension givebacks. The 33,000 members of TWU Local 100 rejected the proposal that would give future employees reduced pension benefits. The agreement reached after the strike removed that provision out of their contract. It was impressive how the Union took a stand despite fines of \$1 million a day and two days pay for each day on strike for its members. I was impressed with their solidarity.

What I found troubling was all the negative comments from the angry New Yorkers, who had no concept or understanding of the labor movement. Their inconvenience was most important and nothing else.

What is even more troubling and actually a horror is the death of the 12 miners in Tallmansville, WV. I listened to the interview of one of the adult children of the lost miners. He spoke out against the company and the number of safety violations. He also commented on how the workers did not have a union to back them up.

Despite a long record of violations the mine's owners only paid \$24,000 in fines over the past two years. Some of the serious violations carried a penalty of only \$247.00. The Bush administration has staffed important posts in the Department of the Interior with biased operatives from the coal, oil and gas industry. Mr. Bush has also done the same thing with the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA). This agency merely promoted 'cooperation' versus enforcement. The Bush administration and Congress also cut inspectors and workers safety programs from MSHA.

The lack of Union representation, the lack of agency enforcement, the minor fines placed on the employer, and repeated safety violations all contributed to the tragedy at the Sago Mine. What happened to these 12 miners is a horror and a travesty.

In 1890 Mary Harris "Mother" Jones became involved in the struggles of the coal miners. She was an organizer for the United Mine Workers (UMWA). She told us over a 100 years ago, "pray for the dead, and fight like hell for the living." She was also quoted as saying, "There are no limits to which powers of privilege will not go to keep the workers in slavery." The struggle continues for coal miners and union workers alike.

In solidarity until next time,

Lynn

CONVENTION CALL

The 20th Biennial Convention of the Michigan Postal Workers Union will convene on April 27, 2006 at 9:30 a.m. at the Marriott Hotel in Detroit, Michigan and will adjourn at the conclusion of business on April 29, 2006



Costs:

Hotel: 97.00 (plus 15% taxes (total price includes self-parking)

Registration: \$50.00 per delegate

- ⇒ Resolutions need to be submitted to and received by Executive Secretary Harold Juhl by March 24, 2006.
- ⇒ A list of all delegates attending the convention need to be submitted to the Executive Secretary by March 31, 2006.

Article 7 of the MPWU Constitution states: "Time of the Convention and Election of Officers"

Section 1: The Michigan Postal Workers Union, AFL-CIO, shall convene the same year as the National Convention of the American Postal Workers Union, AFL-CIO, on any Thursday, Friday, and Saturday in April or May. In any week except that which precedes Good Friday, Easter Sunday, Mothers Day, or Memorial Day.

Section 2: It shall be the sole responsibility for the State Union to plan and expedite the proceedings of the Convention, including suitable and ample accommodations for delegates. It shall further be the responsibility of the State President to appoint two (2) members of the Michigan Postal Workers Union, AFL-CIO, and the President of the State Convention Committee to work with any Local who represents the Convention location as voted under Article 7, Section 5. The financial responsibility of the State Convention shall be solely that of the Michigan Postal Workers Union, AFL-CIO.

Section 3: The Convention shall convene at 9:30 a.m. on the first day and recess at 11:30 a.m., immediately after the committee assignments and reconvene at 3:00 p.m. This time is to be utilized for official use by the committees. The Convention shall remain in session until completed.

Section 4: Nominators for, all candidates for Executive Board positions shall be the last order of business, Friday of the Convention. No candidate shall be allowed to run for more than one (1) office. Any nominee must accept or decline a nomination for office prior to the closing of nominations. Convention Delegates as well as the Convention City shall be the first order of business on Saturday, 10:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m. shall be reserved exclusively for purpose of caucus.

Section 5: The election of Officers will take place at 1:00 p.m. on Saturday of the Convention. A President, Secretary Treasurer, Executive Secretary, Director of Education, Human Relations/Compensation Director, Legislative Director, Editor, (3) Craft Directors, Area directors, Convention Delegates, plus Convention City, will be elected at this time, by secret ballot.

Section 6: [A] The three (3) Craft Directors shall be elected by secret ballot in accordance with Section 5 above, but Craft Directors shall be elected from delegates from their Craft only. [B] Area Directors shall be elected by secret ballot from delegates, present from their Area only. If a Craft or Area Director is not represented by at least one delegate to the Convention, or if there are no candidates from a specific Craft or Area, for the position of Craft or area Director, then the President shall appoint a member of that Craft or Area to that position, with the advise and consent of a majority of the Executive Board. [C] If after three (3) ballots have been cast, a tie exists, a toss of a coin will break the tie.

Section 7: All terms of office shall be from the date of the certification by Election Committee, until the conclusions of the elections, at the next scheduled MPWU State Convention.

Section 8: Any retired member, who is paying full dues to their Local Union, may hold office in this Union. Any retired member who retires from State Office, can at the discretion of the Present, be used in an advisory capacity.

In addition, **Article 10 (Representation), Section 1**, states: Each Local Union or Area local affiliated with the MPWU shall be entitled to representation in the State Convention on the following basis: All locals shall receive one delegate for each twenty (20) members or any portion thereof. To be computed on the basis of the previous twenty-four (24) month's average paid membership. In addition, no Local may pay more than three (3) months back dues at one time, prior to the State Convention.

Your Future/Our Country's Future

By: George Hendricks (MPWU Retiree Chapter Vice-President)

This is the year to change the future in America, maybe FOREVER, an election year. ONLY YOU, the voter can change things from what they are now, to change things not only in America but in world affairs as well because of the leadership role the US plays in our world and therefore controlled by the leaders WE elect here in OUR country. Please remember that millions of soldiers in the history of our great land fought for our freedoms and many gave their lives in doing so. FREEDOM IS NOR EVER WAS-FREE! One freedom that was protected was the right to vote for those who would lead us but sometime in the future that right could very well be lost IF MORE of US voters DON'T VOTE! A basic fact, the "mess" our country is in due in large part because our leaders are elected by the majority, *the majority, the voters who stay home* and DON'T VOTE! Also note, because of the relatively small percentage of US citizens that DO vote in ALL our elections, local, state, and national, across our nation, if just LABOR union members had voted, even though union membership nationwide has fallen drastically, we would NOT have GW in the White House today since 2001!! And possibly we would not have "wealthy" Republicans in control of Congress as well since 1994 when Newt Gingrich's "Contract ON America" had occurred. Going back further still, in the beginning of "Ronnie" Reagan's presidency in 1981, he TOOK AWAY the jobs of 11,000 Air Traffic Controllers who went on strike to make the American public aware of the deplorable SAFETY conditions in airport control towers nationwide. That was the actual beginning in recent times, of the onslaught of Corporate America on organized labor with the "blessing" of Presidents and

many leaders in Congress. WE HAVE NEVER RECOVERED! We all know Reagan's "trickle down" economics only resulted in tax cuts for the very rich, making them more wealthy still--they didn't need it! Many of them put their tax cuts in "Swiss" banks (paying NO taxes at all), whereas tax cuts or tax relief given to the average American results in those moneys being spent in our own nation's economy where it is needed and TAXES ARE PAID on to support our nation. The MIDDLE class of our country which was created in the 1930s and 1940s, much of it through better-paid union labor wages and the buying power which that produced, created the GREATEST economy the world has ever known!

Mr. Reagan also "bailed out" Social Security funds by placing all FEDERAL workers under SS coverage for those hired after 1983 because our federal Civil Service Retirement System has been well funded since its inception in the 1920s. Then he "gave" ALL federal CSRS employees a *gift* right after that, the act of reducing our retirement which we worked for and had EARNED, by instituting the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP), and the resulting monetary loss of not receiving full credit for the years many who had worked under SS coverage (I personally lost 12 years out of 30) because we were called "double-dippers" (both CSRS and SS retirement). Reagan then also gave ALL federal retirees the Government Pension Offset (GPO) as well which reduced DRASTICALLY, the income of surviving spouses for the same reason. FOR THE RECORD, Mr. Reagan was the *BIGGEST* "DOUBLE DIPPER" of them all!! His retirement funds came from the Screen Actors Guild, as a former Governor of California, and as a 2 term President of the United States, just to name a few.

Today, under the leadership of GW, the millionaire mostly Republican controlled Congress, and with their Corporate friends, we are watching the rapid disappearance of America's MIDDLE class. The "insane" (needless) continual mergers in Corporate America result in the loss of thousands of jobs for workers, never to return, while a few already wealthy Corporate leaders make millions more, even in their severance packages. Then, many of these same corporate leaders join another company and DO THE SAME THING ALL OVER AGAIN! We are rapidly becoming a nation of HAVES AND HAVE-NOTS! Only the "well" are doing very well! The present generation has jeopardized the legacy we leave and the very FUTURE of our children and grandchildren with the job losses occurring in the US as well as the trillions of dollars of debt which have been allowed to happen which they then will have to pay. Much of our debt is financed by loans from other countries, particularly from Japan and China, along with the huge trade deficits between the US and these countries which could very well allow these countries to control (adversely take over) our own nation's economy as that debt becomes greater (\$ 3,000,000 per day I read recently)! Think not? COMMUNIST China is no "friend" of the United States. It hasn't been since WWII and the Korean War, after which there was never a peace treaty signed--JUST A CEASE FIRE on July 27, 1953!!

Another note, under GWs leadership, many of our rights guaranteed under our nation's Constitution are being eroded or even taken away, by a President who believes he has NO limit to his power to do whatever HE

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wishes under the guise of the excuse that a basically singular war being fought half way around the world (for control of oil there) allows him to do so. With the growing problems and a REAL threat from the new leader in Iran, will HE, Mr. Bush, decide to invade there as well? (perhaps we should send some Bush, Cheney, Rumsfield children there to fight that war and see what might happen)!

Due to GWs alienation of not only unfriendly nations in the world by his *stupid* name-calling of them (he does not "run" other countries), he has also alienated many of our staunchest allies going back to WWII with his actions and HIS invasion of Iraq. His sheltered life growing up until now has never taught him to "get along" with others. He has created a "hate" of Americans around the world that will take generations to heal!

I believe, as "tricky Dick Nixon" tried to do some 30 years ago, that GW would make a *very nice dictator* because, by his actions, he believes he is ABOVE THE LAW!

George



"The only thing traveling this year is my job, heading on a fast track to the lowest wage zone."

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President's Report Continued

nar. Sue Carney and Doug Holbrook will be conducting classes from March 1st through the 3rd 2006 at the Bay City Doubletree. Director of Education, Mark Hart will have mailed to all local presidents and the state presidents of the central region, information about this meeting. Sue Carney, along with Nancy James and the staff from Human Relations Shared Services Center (HRSSC) will be doing a class, similar to the JCIM training. The purpose of this class will be to assist all of us with the recent change that all HR will be going to North Carolina. If you get this paper and additional information is needed, you can contact Mark, myself, and we will get you any and all information we can. Editor, Mike Long, has this seminar on our website <http://www.mpwu.com>. There is a pre-registration form that must be sent in along with the registration fee.

I have touched on a few subjects that we have to work on to help, not only Michigan but workers, family and friends living in Michigan. As Union leaders, we know how to accomplish things, and as members of the Michigan Postal Workers Union, we never back down from a fight. These may not be fights, but they are battles for us.

Until Next Time,

Gary Van Hoogstraten
President

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Legislative Report Continued

plaining about having to pay pensions after you have spent your entire adult life (or even 20 years of it) working for them, (the nerve of them). How dare they even have the audacity to complain and you know that your President will never have to worry about that because he will be paid for life and those Enron folks, and the others don't lose one thin dime of their pensions, stocks, incentives or anything, they just take the money and run. Who is going to stand up for us, the working class regular folk? It has to be us, we have to begin to demand that our government goes back to standing for ALL of us, not just the "big" corporations, or just the wealthy but each and every one of us. Now as if that 'ain't enough they now want to end affirmative action (a.k.a. Michigan's Civil Rights Initiative). Let me please state this just for the record, affirmative action is **not** just a **SO BLACK KIDS CAN GO TO COLLEGE OR GET A JOB THING**. There is so much more to it than that. There are a lot of programs that will be eliminated such as programs that aid battered women shelters, breast care programs (even for men with breast cancer), and many other healthcare programs, need I go on? Please pay close attention to this so called initiative as the wording I am sure will be very tricky. Don't let Ward Connerly who is not even a Michiganian get away with this. Don't turn the clock backwards and above all DO NOT LET MARTIN LUTHER KING'S DREAM DIE. Stay tuned for more on this one folks as well as the minimum wage issue and the ongoing Social Security Privatization fight. Oh, by the way since I forgot to say it in the beginning HAPPY NEW YEAR!!!!

Until next time,

Regina

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Retiree Involvement Continued

ited involvement was the catalyst which convinced District Manager Hart that; "...this is the right thing to do". That was my contention from the very beginning!

Brother Moyer originally forwarded me an e-mail issued by the Southeast Michigan District directing their P.O.'s to lower the flag per the Governor's request, alerting me that if they complied, why not the Greater Michigan District?! That information was forwarded to Sen. Stabenow's and Rep. Stupak's staffs. District management continued to stand by their position that as a federal agency they were not obligated to comply with a state Governor's order. My point being that there was nothing that prohibited the Postal Service from complying either! The District only conceded that they would notify the local Post Office where funerals are held in that community.

Ultimately, Brother Moyer contacted the manager of Labor Relations in the Great Lakes Area with whom he obviously has a good rapport. In a series of back-and-forth e-mails, Larry very skillfully argued that the Postal Service didn't need the adverse press this issue was going to get, especially in light of the impending postage rate increase, or the further involvement of Senator Stabenow and Rep. Stupak.

Larry's persuasion was a virtual work of art! Finally, the Great Lakes Area L.R. manager told Larry he would see what he could do. I can only surmise the Great Lakes Area consulted with the Greater Michigan District and determined that it would be in the best interests of the Postal Service to comply.

Additionally, I wish to recognize Brothers; Mike Wekwert, Pres. Al-

pena APWU Local, and John Jarebski, Jackson APWU Local, for their caring and support when it seemed no one else cared. I've also seen the rare 'good side' of postal management in District manager, Robert Hart, and the Great Lakes Area labor relations manager for being reasonable men in bringing this issue to a successful conclusion. For that, I'm grateful. Perhaps I should be 'thanking' the Lincoln postmaster for his particularly crude response to my initial complaint that his flag was not at half-mast back on August 18th, which launched my pursuit to 'make his day'. Maybe it's true that; 'Publicity is the soft underbelly of the opposition.'

Hopefully the day will soon come when our troops are out of harm's way, and that it will no longer be necessary to lower the flag for our returned war dead. Until that day arrives, U.S. Postal Service flags in Michigan will be flown at half-staff to respect their supreme sacrifice. I sincerely hope that all our Union Brothers and Sisters who fly Old Glory will pay particular attention to the Governor's orders and lower their flags as well.

What Do We Want? That's what Retirees Dept. Director, Doug Holbrook, asked me in a recent phone discussion. Full INCLUSION in our Union is my short answer. However, I believe Brother Holbrook is asking for our input from the field for direction as to how the Department can better serve the retired membership. Doug will be in Bay City March 1-3 to conduct the Retirement Seminar. I plan to have a list of items for him to consider. Some of those items will be issues we have proposed over the last 13+ years since the Department was created, and have fallen on deaf ears.

I'm asking for YOUR thoughts as an APWU Retirees Dept. member of

your expectations. Nothing is 'pie in the sky'. It's better to shoot for the moon and miss, than to aim for the basement and hit! Write, phone, or e-mail your suggestions to me. It's way past time that we retirees and our Department progress beyond being the APWU's COPA 'cash cows'. That statement may not sit well with some in leadership, but that is a real perception among many of our retiree members. Greater inclusion in our Union, and service to the retired membership will go a long way to dispel that perception.

Okay, let's tell it like it is. When I first got involved with the newly created APWU Retirees Dept. in early 1994, I saw it as APWU retiree's salvation. Finally--A Department of the Union we helped build, and which serves us so well during our work lives. I naively believed APWU retirees would be welcomed by the active leadership with open arms. After all, we fought the battles of the '70's, negotiated the first contracts, developed the grievance-discipline procedures, Local Memos,...you name it, we did it! Maybe that's the problem. Retirees just might know too much! Maybe we're a threat to the active leadership, particularly at the national level. Why else over the past 12 years have we had to fight tooth and nail for every scrap of progress for the Retirees Dept.?

I'm having some serious misgivings about the fact that in my zeal to promote the Retirees Dept., believing retired members would continue to receive the same quality Union representation for our retiree issues as we did when we were active members, that I have sold the ideal to my Michigan Sisters and Brothers in organizing Local Retiree Chapters and this State Chapter. For that, I sincerely apologize. But, now that I've gotten all of us into the soup, it's time that we let

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Retiree Involvement Continued

our national leadership know in no uncertain terms that **enough is enough!** Bring us into the fold, or dissolve this pretense.

We are not content just to pay our \$24 per year and get the magazine and a nickel and dime accidental death and dismemberment policy! 40,000 dues paying retiree members are providing a pretty healthy cash flow, a good deal of it going directly into the general fund. That's okay, but just what are the retired members getting in return? The Jan./Feb. national magazine reports retirees have contributed \$190,715. to COPA. Actually, I've been informed that at the end of the '05 accounting period, retirees had contributed \$216,000., \$16 Grand over the so-called 'goal'. And, what does this money for political clout get for retirees? When has our Legislative Dept. gone to the Hill to testify in our behalf on priority retiree legislation...Premium Conversion or the Windfall Elimination Provision/Government Pension Offset? We don't even have a voice in how those COPA funds are distributed!

Scuttlebutt has it that our **elected** Retiree Delegates to the National Convention are getting short-changed for the Philly National Convention by eliminating the Level 5, Step 0 salary for their participation for a \$55. per day per diem. Is not their time worth L5-S0?! Some leave part-time jobs which supplement their meager annuities to serve. Just how many of the legion of Committee appointees who are retired full-dues paying members receive fair compensation? They all do! Is their time and service more valuable? Let's be frank, the **elected** Retiree Delegates to the National Convention are merely window dressing for the national leadership. Worse yet, some are content just to go for the joy ride! As I see it, the

revenue generated by the Retirees Dept. is subsidizing Union and related activities that have no relation to the welfare of the retiree membership.

You want to talk about "The Struggle Continues"? There would be no Local or State Retiree Chapters or dues rebates had we not written those resolutions and got them adopted by the MPWU in State Convention to get them to the National Convention. And then, Retiree Delegates like Byron Denton from the Western Region, along with past delegates like myself, had to fight like hell to get them adopted at the National Convention. The same applies to nearly every APWU Constitutional amendment to progress the Retirees Dept. What little we have accomplished was because this great State Union supported our retiree agenda with resolutions that we had to battle for; national convention, after national convention, including the right to elect our own Department Director.

So, why do I bring down the expected wrath of our Union leadership on my head with this rant? Hell, I'm already persona non-grata at 1300 L Street, Wash., D.C. anyway. So, what difference does it make? We're about 7 months out from the National Convention in Philadelphia where there will be retiree issue resolutions presented. Maybe this is the convention that the active Local and State leaderships will either open their arms and include the retiree membership, or fold our tent. Either way, I can't pretend all's well anymore. I'll give this a wrap by asking this simple question; What does the national Union do for the retired membership? We are a vast untapped resource for the APWU beyond our \$24. dues and COPA contributions. Retirees offer far more than the leadership is willing to give in return. That's got to change!

If this offends anyone, tough! Are they

going to 'punish' me? Fire me? The worst is that the leadership will ignore this, but that's been S.O.P. for years! I invite the leadership to join us in debate if they've got the courage to hash out these grievances face-to-face.

There! I've said it, and I'm stickin' by it!

Stay Strong,

Al LaBrecque



"Looks like management is taking a two tier attitude again in contract negotiations."

Submissions for the Next Edition of the Michigan Messenger (March / April 2006) is due to the Editor Not Later Than March 15, 2006.

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Area 1 Report Continued

CONTRABAND IN THE POST OFFICE- Next month I will have 27 years of service in the USPS. Back when I was hired in it was stressed by management (more so than today) that you do not bring illegal items to work with you. This means on your person, or in your vehicle. Recently in my office of Troy a clerk found this out in a bad way. He was arrested by the Troy Police for smoking marijuana on the side of the building after a joint investigation by the agents of the OIG (Office of Inspector General) which took over from the inspection service the investigation of criminal matters committed by postal employees amongst other things. I as well as another steward attempted to get involved to observe the locker room search but were told to leave. This will be challenged in the grievance procedure. The rights of employees were clearly spelled out dealing with the Inspection Service, less so with the new OIG agents. At the National level the APWU is trying to get the Postal Service to agree to what they agreed in the past would be employees rights when dealing Inspection Service would apply to the OIG. Just to remind every one, **leave the illegal drugs, alcohol and weapons at home!** You would think this would be common sense, but who wants to work next to someone drunk or stoned? As for weapons, rural carriers have gotten into trouble during hunting season in thinking it is ok to bring the old shotgun to work and then go out to the hunting blind after work. Save your self a lot of grief leave these items at home!

Another issue that gets employees caught up is the free samples that occasionally come in the mail or the excess pizza coupons from the excess flyers that we process. These items along with undeliverable as addressed magazines or music CD's in

the UBBM mail belong to the postal service. **YOU CAN BE REMOVED FROM YOUR JOB** for tacking these items. Is the loss of your job worth a sample of toothpaste or a pizza coupon?

PTF CONVESION: It never ceases to amaze me that in some offices you have to fight tooth and nail to get a resolution to an issue. In Capac, MI the FTR clerk retired, the senior PTF has about 15 years of service there and should be converted. The postmaster wanted to run the office with 3 PTFs and no Full Time. I contacted the POOM Sid Thompson and made the point that how could the postmaster maintain that there were not enough hours in the budget for a FTR clerk when he had one 2 weeks prior? Mr. Thompson agreed that a WOS survey should be done. I volunteered my immediate Supervisor Chris Bird-sall to conduct the survey. Ms. Bird-sall came out to Capac, observed the window traffic, plugged the numbers into the computer program and recommended the conversion of the senior PTF Clerk. POOM Thompson agreed and directed the postmaster to convert Yvonne Palamateer to Full Time Regular. The amazing point to me is this issue was resolved without a grievance being filed. (I did have a grievance extension to protect time limits). My **thanks to POOM Thompson** for not fighting us on this and to **Supervisor Birdsall for being honest** in her WOS survey. **Congratulations to Yvonne Palamateer on your conversion to Full Time!** You worked as a PTF for many years waiting to become Full Time. In a neighboring office we wait for the grievances to go to arbitration because of the stubbornness of the postmaster.

FLAG LOWERING ISSUE IN THE GREATER MICHIGAN DISTRICT- In the last issue of the *Michigan Messenger* you read the

struggle of Retired Flint Area Local President Al Labrecque to get the post offices to lower the flag to half staff when a service person dies from Michigan dies in action per Governor Granholm's order. Brother LaBrecque contacted us local presidents a few months back to find out what is done in our areas. I sent him a copy of an e-mail that our District Communications Specialist receives from the governor's office and in turn sends out to the plant mangers, all associate offices and union officials such as myself. I was shocked that this was an issue in the Greater Michigan District. I assumed every office in Michigan lowered the flag to half-staff to **HONOR THE SERVICEPERSON WHO DIES IN ACTION.** I decided to contact Michael Mlkar Great Lakes Area Manager of Labor Relations by e-mail. I told him what was going on, suggested that this could become a **PUBLIC RELATIONS NIGHTMARE** for the Postal Service, and how I felt that **Dave Barthel, our District Manager and Kelly Sigmon our District Plant Manager showed much class and respect for those who died defending our country, including Pfc. Mark Barbret who lost his life while serving with the U.S. Army in Iraq.** His mother Angela is a clerk at the Royal Oak Processing plant. Yet these folks led by District Manager Robert Hart refused to lower the Flag? I suggested Mr. Mlkar that despite the postal service attorney's "read" of Title 4 of the US Code (that refers to flying the flag) that as Federal Facilities the Postal service **DOES NOT have to lower the flag** to half staff on the Governor's order, my "read" of the US Code suggests that Governor Granholm's order would apply to Federal Facilities as many of the troops serving are National Guard troops from Michigan of which the Governor is the commander in chief in peacetime. I suggested to Mr. Mlkar that you could see the Michigan Postal Workers Union mem-

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Area 1 Report Continued

bers as well as veterans groups such as the American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars **picketing the Greater Michigan District offices in Grand Rapids**. Also the media, Radio TV and newspapers would be contacted. Mr. Mlkar on my suggestion that **“COMMON SENSE”** should prevail and that all the District Manager needs to do is sign up for the e mail messages at the Michigan.gov website, then as the orders to lower the flag come in from the Governors web site have the Communications Specialist in each district e mail (or fax the information to those offices without a computer connection) and the **District Manager ORDER each post office to lower the flag** to honor the memory of the service person who dies.

On New Years Eve, I received from Brother Labreque an email message that included a message from **GREATER MICHIGAN DISTRICT Manager Robert Hart** ordering the flags lowered to half-staff in all offices in the District. I never severed in the Armed Forces but am so proud that I in my own small way was able to convince Mr. Mlkar and by extension District Manager Hart to do the right thing by these young men and women serving our country from Michigan. In another time it could have been my older brother Brian who as a **US MARINE** helped evacuate South Vietnamese from the US Embassy in Saigon during the fall of Vietnam in 1975. Luckily my brother came home and is active today in the VFW. Had he not, the acknowledgement of his sacrifice would be the least we could do. My thanks to Michael Mlkar for his efforts and to District Manager Robert Hart for honoring these servicepersons.

Until next time, if what is happening in your office doesn't seem right call me (if I am your Area Director) or your Area Director or Local Union Steward and file a grievance to get a just settlement to your issue or problem.

Yours in Union Solidarity;

Larry

Black History Month

"Freedom is never given; it is won."

-A. Philip Randolph



Americans have recognized black history annually since 1926, first as "Negro History Week" and later as "Black History Month." What you might not know is that black history had barely begun to be studied—or even documented—when the tradition originated. Although blacks have been in America at least as far back as colonial times, it was not until the 20th century that they gained a respectable presence in the history books.

Blacks Absent from History Books

We owe the celebration of Black History Month, and more importantly, the study of black history, to Dr. Carter G. Woodson. Born to parents who were former slaves, he spent his childhood working in the Kentucky coal mines and enrolled in high school at age twenty. He graduated within two years and later went on to earn a Ph.D. from Harvard. The scholar was disturbed to find in his studies that history books largely ignored the black American population—and when blacks did figure into the picture, it was generally in ways that reflected the inferior social position they were assigned at the time.

Established Journal of Negro History

Woodson, always one to act on his ambitions, decided to take on the challenge of writing black Americans into the nation's history. He established the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (now called the Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History) in 1915, and a year later founded the widely respected Journal of Negro History. In 1926, he launched Negro History Week as an initiative to bring national attention to the contributions of black people throughout American history. Woodson chose the second week of February for Negro History Week because it marks the birthdays of two men who greatly influenced the black American population, Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln. However, February has much more than Douglass and Lincoln to show for its significance in black American history. For example:

February 23, 1868: W. E. B. DuBois, important civil rights leader and co-founder of the NAACP, was born.

February 3, 1870: The 15th Amendment was passed, granting blacks the right to vote.

February 25, 1870: The first black U.S. senator, Hiram R. Revels (1822-1901), took his oath of office.

February 12, 1909: The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was founded by a group of concerned black and white citizens in New York City.

February 1, 1960: In what would become a civil-rights movement milestone, a group of black Greensboro, N.C., college students began a sit-in at a segregated Woolworth's lunch counter.

February 21, 1965: Malcolm X, the militant leader who promoted Black Nationalism, was shot to death by three Black Muslims.

Getting Continuation of Pay Started Off Right

By Brad Harris, Attorney at Law

Most federal employees know that if they are injured on the job they are entitled to workers compensation, some mistakenly think that all is well with their workers compensation claim due to the quick start of disability compensation called the Continuation of Pay (COP) program. The source of this confusion is that, to some extent, the process of applying for COP overlaps with the process of applying for workers compensation.

Initially it should be noted that COP is paid by the employer only in connection with a traumatic work injury. Employees with occupational disease claims are not eligible to receive COP. They use a different form (CA-2) to apply for workers compensation.

COP is the continuation of an employee's regular pay for up to 45 calendar days of wage loss due to disability. COP is paid as salary, not compensation. It is therefore subject to the usual payroll deductions such as income taxes and retirement contributions. The pay rate includes missing night differential, hazard, premium, and holiday pay - but neither Sunday pay nor lost overtime is included.

In order to receive COP benefits the employee must file form (CA-1) Federal Employee's Notice of Traumatic Injury and Claim for Continuation of Pay/Compensation." It must be filed within 30 days of the injury. If the employing agency (EA) does not have a signed CA-1 they cannot authorize medical care or COP benefits. The employee cannot be required to use his accumulated leave time when he or she suffers a traumatic injury, but if his COP is controverted and terminated, due to financial circumstances he has no choice but to use Form CA-7 to apply for his accumulated leave time, leave with-

out pay, and regular workers compensation (which pays a non-taxable percentage of pay rate - 66% if no minor dependents, 75% if minor dependents).

The employee has the right to select a physician of his choice. Because the willingness of the physician to connect the injury to work activity is critical with regard to entitlement to benefits, this selection may be one of the most important decisions an injured employee can make. I suggest that the employee contact local plaintiff attorneys to find out which doctors are likely to be more responsive to the employee as opposed to the employer. If the medical evidence on its face supports disability due to a work-related injury the employee is entitled to COP when absent from work due to the disability. The attending physician reports the employee's condition on a Form CA 20.

Generally speaking, once COP has begun the employer must continue paying. Exceptions to this general rule exist when (1) the employee fails to provide the employer with medical evidence of a disabling traumatic injury within 10 calendar days of claiming COP (2) the employee's physician has found the employee to be partially disabled and the employee refuses suitable work or fails to respond to the job offer or (3) the employee's scheduled period of employment ends, or employment otherwise ends, provided the period of employment or date of termination is set before the injury occurs.

The employer does not have the right to interrupt COP if a disciplinary action has been taken against an employee unless preliminary written notice of termination or other action was issued before the injury occurred and the termination or other action became final during the COP period.

The Employing Agency

(EA) rightfully has an obligation to controvert the claim where there is a dispute as to the stated facts. They are to assign all claims to an individual that I will refer to in this article as the EA's workers compensation (wc) specialist. That person has a responsibility to gather all facts and circumstance about the claim and to conduct a thorough investigation whenever circumstances are suspicious.

His or her file typically contains witness statements that are closely checked to see if the various statements are consistent. The specialist may choose to inquire as to if the employee was previously expressing any fear of job security or opinion that he was not being permitted to work in a particular job or environment. He collects pictures, time sheets, and creates a report of the circumstances surrounding the injury incident which includes the employee's then existing leave balance, his prior injury claims, performance problems, grievances or EEO complaints.

The EA's wc specialist is trained to watch for some obvious concerns:

(a) was the employee terminated from his job and then claimed he was injured at work? (b) was the claimed injury really caused by a work related activity? (e.g.):

1. if the injury occurred off the employing agency's premises, was he engaged in official "off-premises" duties?
2. was the injury caused by the employee's willful misconduct, intent to bring about injury or death to self or another person, or intoxication?

(c) what amount of time transpired between the time the injury was allegedly caused and the employee's report of injury (a delay in reporting is suspicious).

The EA has a responsibility to monitor the worker's medical progress and duty status by obtaining periodic

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Getting COP Started Off Right Continued

medical reports (CA-17). The EA's wc specialist typically obtains the employee's authorization to obtain medical records. If the employee refuses to supply the medical records authorization he can typically get the OWCP to get one because the EA's wc specialist has a legitimate interest in making sure that the injury wasn't really a pre-existing condition. He then checks over the medical records very carefully to determine if there was any pre-existing condition. He also checks to see if physical complaints during subsequent medical care are consistent with the initial complaints or simply relate back to employee's condition prior to the claimed injury date.

The EA's wc specialist is not to have telephone conversations with the employee's physician. He is allowed to correspond in writing with the employee's physician concerning the work limitations and restrictions imposed. He is required to send copy of such letters and answers to the OWCP. In order to stay advised, the employee should ask the doctor to be sure to provide him with copies of any correspondence of this nature.

If the EA's wc specialist believes the disability claim will extend beyond the 45 day COP period or if surgery is suggested he or she will seek the assistance of an RN to assist

in the evaluation of the claim. This nurse is often used to interpret medical jargon and verify medical necessity. For example, he or she typically communicates directly with the employee's primary treating physician, seeking to know when the employee can return to work or if the injured employee has returned to the condition he was in (although it may have been poor) prior to the work incident.

The EA has the legal right to require the employee to submit to a medical examination conducted by a doctor selected by the EA to obtain an opinion regarding the employee's condition 5 CFR 339.301(c). This report often serves as material to controvert the employee's claims. The subject of competing medical examinations is too extensive to cover in this article.

If the EA's wc specialist believes that the claim is improper he or she can file an objection to pay with the OWCP. COP generally continues unless the OWCP claim examiner agrees that the evidence is clear. Under 5 U.S.C. 5584, if the OWCP later agrees that the COP shouldn't have been paid, the payments, at the employee's option, are charged back to annual sick leave or LWOP (overpayment of pay) and reimbursement is required.

Part of the EA's wc specialist job is to assist the employee in returning to work as soon as possible 5 U.S.C. 8106. He should work with the employee's supervisor to see if any accommodation work is available. In those situations where an agency has advised the employee of its willingness to accommodate the employee's work limitations and restrictions, the employee is required to advise his attending physician and request the physician to specify the limitations and

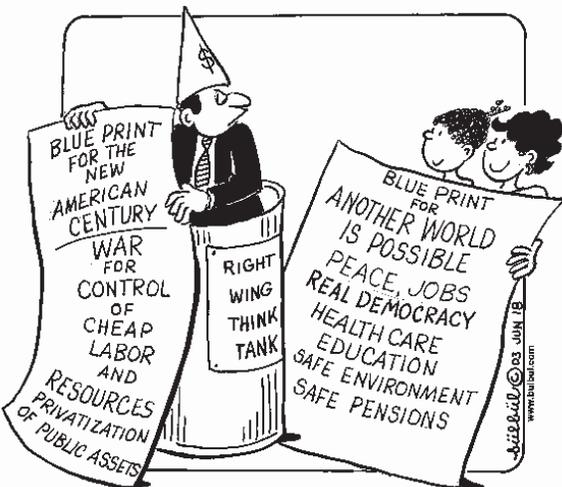
restrictions imposed by the injury. The employee has the responsibility to advise the employing agency immediately of the limitations and restrictions imposed.

Whenever the medical report "Duty Status Report," Form CA-17 indicates that the employee can return to work (either in an accommodated basis or not) the agency advises the employee in writing of his or her obligation to return to work as soon as possible. If an employee refuses an offer of suitable work, his entitlement to COP (as well as his right to regular workers compensation benefits) ceases as of the effective date of availability of such work.

The employee can file grievances with regard to mistakes or misconduct by the EA and its wc specialist but no grievances are allowed for decisions made by the OWCP (such as acceptance of the claim as work-related or medical suitability of a limited-duty job offer).

Disputes regarding the employee's return to work and reasonable accommodation are controlled by the OWCP. These disputes are often mistakenly thought by employees to be the basis for asserting an EEO claim. The topic is too large to address here.

Finally, if the employee believes that his disability will last more than 45 days he should be entitled to regular workers compensation and be sure to complete and have the employer submit a Form CA-7 to the OWCP as soon as possible before the 40th day of COP.



Dispute over Postal Reform

Editor's Note: As you may know, the United States Senate has for the past two years been trying to pass Postal Reform legislation.. The following are some articles that I have come across which gives you information on this subject and how it pertains to our jobs. The first is the Postal Response to the Legislation. The second is the Senator's response to the Postal Service. I would strongly urge you to read the National tabloid when it comes out to view the APWU opinion.

LinkExtra REFORM: USPS shares facts with media

The Postal Service has one guiding principle when it comes to postal reform — it should support our 225-year tradition of delivering affordable, universal service to the American people. That's what Tom Day, Senior VP of Government Relations, told the press today at a media briefing about pending reform legislation. "We've done an excellent job of doing that, and we want to continue, but we are at a critical crossroads right now," he said.

He was joined by Chief Financial Officer Richard Strasser, who said our only motivation in opposing pending legislation is one of concern and we have tried to work this over many years.

That was a subject on the mind of one reporter, who asked if it was true that this was an eleventh hour effort on the part of USPS to derail the legislation. Day explained that the Postal Service has been upfront for years with specific concerns about current and previous reform bills, going as far back as 1996, and including letters sent to key members of Congress in April and October 2005.

One reporter wanted to know how USPS can suggest that rates could go up as much as 20 percent — one of the largest increases ever — if reform legislation contains a price cap. The answer? There would be one final rate case under current law. That case would address the inflationary costs we've experienced since rates went up in 2002, any required pre-funding of retiree health benefits, and the cost

of a \$27 billion military retirement funding obligation if it is contained in final reform legislation.

Tom Day also said that there is misinformation circulating on Capitol Hill, indicating that all Postal Service unions fully support reform legislation. "Not true," he said. "That ignores the position of our largest union, the American Postal Workers, which has said that the current reform legislation is not in the best interests of the people it represents."

Although there are significant problems with our current business model, there is no immediate emergency, said Strasser. "It makes sense to take a step back and take another look." The Postal Service has done a great job of shedding costs and we don't want to risk cutting service, he added.

Postal reform: A busy day

It's been a busy 24 hours in the world of postal reform. Press releases. News reports. Statements from Senators. And wide reaction to the Postal Service's position on pending legislation.

Following the Board of Governors' letter to every U.S. Senator expressing its opposition to the Senate reform bill, the Postal Service issued a press release. It explained that if final legislation requires USPS to pre-fund retiree health benefits and retain a \$27 billion obligation to fund military retirement benefits for its employees, postage rates could increase by up to 20 percent in the near future. That's on top of this month's 5.4 per-

cent increase to fund a \$3.1 billion escrow requirement.

The Associated Press story about the issue was picked up by hundreds of newspapers, websites, and television stations across the nation. Tom Day, USPS Senior VP for Government Relations, was quoted. "We've worked long and hard with House and Senate staff . . . to try to get corrections to the legislation and we just have literally reached the end of that rope," he said.

"We need meaningful reform, and this is not it," said Day in another story that ran this morning in the Washington Post's Federal Diary.

Congress Daily, widely circulated on Capitol Hill, made it clear that the Postal Service was opposed, citing a USPS spokesman who said the legislation, "would severely limit the Postal Service's ability to manage itself."

In an update on the APWU website, President William Burrus reiterated his organization's position that "postal reform will not achieve the stated objectives and will be more harmful than continuing operations under the current law."

He also said, "While the APWU has continual problems with the decisions of postal management, including the consolidation plan, we at least have a forum to resolve our disputes. Transferring those decisions to a politically appointed board with a politically dominated agenda would be bad for postal workers and bad for the American public."

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Many observers were predicting a vote by the full Senate yesterday. By the end of day, no action was taken, although Senators Susan Collins (R-ME) and Tom Carper (D-DE), coauthors of the Senate postal reform bill, issued a statement expressing their disappointment that "at the very last minute, the Postal Service is attempting to block action on our bill." They also disagreed with the Postal Service's concerns about the possible effects of reform legislation.

While some members of the mailing community were pleased at yesterday's prospect of action on the Senate bill, the Postal Service's opposition was considered a "complication." One organization said that USPS "apparently pulled out all stops to prevent S. 662 from passage by telling its employees why the Board of Governors was opposing the bill."

Tom Day and USPS Chief Financial Officer Richard Strasser are scheduled to hold a media briefing this afternoon to explain the Postal Service's opposition to pending reform legislation.

At this time, there is no clear indication on when the full Senate may act on the reform bill.

SENATORS COLLINS AND CARPER: THE POSTAL SERVICE HAS SUNK TO A NEW LOW

WASHINGTON, DC-Senators Susan Collins (R-ME) and Thomas Carper (D-DE), are disputing false, misleading, and inaccurate claims made today by the US Postal Service regarding S. 662, the Collins-Carper postal reform legislation. In addition, the Sena-

tors today said that recent comments made by the postal service are confusing and troubling given the fact that Postmaster General, John Potter testified before the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee in support of the bill.

On April 14, 2005, Potter said, "The escrow requirement established by Public Law 108-18 should be eliminated and the military service retirement payment obligation returned to the Dept. of Treasury. In its place, we support the creation of a payment stream to pre-fund retiree health benefits. The Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act, S. 662, addresses both of these concerns." Senators Collins and Carper also pointed out the following inaccuracies about the Postal Services claims:

* With their latest release, the Postal Service appears to have sunk to a new low.

* The Postal Service claims that S. 662 could lead to a 20 percent increase in stamps. In reality, there is nothing in this bill that would lead to rate increases. In fact, S. 662 includes a strong rate cap that would prevent the Postal Service from raising rates each year by more than the Consumer Price Index. It also requires that the Postal Service maintain "predictability and stability" in rates. Finally, it includes language that would shore up the Postal Service's finances and keep rates stable for years to come by permanently fixing its flawed pension formula. The Postal Service at one time was saying repeatedly that they needed the reform in our bill to head off rate increases. Without the reforms in our bill, postal rates will skyrocket as the Postal Service is forced to make higher pension payments. The lack of a rate cap and strong oversight

will allow the Postal Service to push all of these costs onto the customers.

* The Postal Service claims that S. 662 would force it to absorb retirement benefit obligations for former military personnel who now work for USPS but did not incur those benefits under the Postal Service's employment." This is completely false. We've fought side by side with the Postal Service for years to return the obligation for military pensions back to the U.S. Treasury. Our bill includes language ensuring the postal ratepayers will not be saddled with these costs. It's disappointing that the Postal Service is now distorting our position and blatantly misleading our colleagues and the public on this issue.

* They complain that S. 662 would make them pre-fund its retiree health obligations. We do this because the Postal Service currently owes its employees and retirees upwards of \$45 billion in health care benefits. They are largely ignoring these costs, knowing that future ratepayers or even the taxpayers will pick up the tab when the bills come due. The reforms in our bill are hardly an unfair burden. Rather, they force the Postal Service to be more financially responsible.

* They suggested that unions do not support this legislation. This is false. S 662 had been endorsed by the National Assoc of Letter Carriers, the Rural Letter Carriers Association, both postmaster associations, and the supervisor associations.

In addition, the Senators released this statement last night:

"We are extremely troubled and

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disappointed that at the very last minute, the Postal Service is attempting to block action on our bill - the first attempt at modernizing our postal system in more than three decades. While no legislative product is perfect, we believe this bill, which is the product of years of debate and compromise among a number of interested parties, gives the Postal Service the tools necessary to survive and thrive in the 21st Century.

"We're also outraged that the Postal Service would mislead Senators about what's in S. 662 in an effort to block it. Nothing in the bill would lead to rate increases. In fact, S. 662 includes a strong rate cap that would prevent the Postal Service from raising rates each year by more than the Consumer Price Index. It also requires that the Postal Service maintain "predictability and stability" in rates. Finally, it includes language that would shore up the Postal Service's finances and keep rates stable for years to come by permanently fixing its flawed pension formula. It's ironic that the Postal Service - which has been forced to raise rates 4 times in 5 years because of its inability to control its costs and respond to the new economic landscape - is accusing us of putting the health of the postal system at risk.

"The Postal Service is the only entity out there right now standing in the way of progress on this issue. We join the dozens of groups who've endorsed S. 662 in urging the Senate to move this process along and to put us on the path toward reforming the Postal Service for the 21st century."

Two Little Words

By: Gene A. Del Polito

THE MATHEMATICIAN AND general semanticist Alfred Korzybski once wrote, "The map is not the territory." Anyone who's ever used a road map can tell you that all those little lines and dots don't adequately describe the sights you'll see along your journey.

But when Korzybski wrote his famous line, a road map wasn't what he had in mind. He was referring to the very words we use to communicate with one another, words that can have many meanings and easily could convey a message through a quick reading that's quite the opposite of what's intended.

If Korzybski were alive, he would've felt at home with the semantic intricacies of last year's postal reform debate. A reform bill failed to pass before time ran out in the first session of the 109th Congress. Ironically, one of the key measures (S. 662) died not because of anything done by the Bush administration, the U.S. Postal Service or the USPS' competitors. It died due to irreconcilable differences between two groups that ostensibly supported reform. The problem centered on a disagreement over the meaning of two key words — *fairness* and *equity*.

At first blush it's hard to believe anyone would object to the inclusion of these words in any reform bill. That is, until it was revealed that in this case "fairness" and "equity" had nothing to do with one another.

The proponents of the fairness-and-equity dogma were a group of mailers who didn't want to end the subsidies they received from other, more efficient mailers. They wanted to bind forever more-costly with less-costly mail. This would allow them

to reap the benefits of others' hard work, even though it also could hasten the end of our postal system.

This time, those who opposed fairness and equity were on the side of the angels. They wanted a postal system that was open to innovation and a finer tuning of products and services to better meet changing postal needs.

Indeed, as Korzybski could tell you, when it came to the language that made up this year's postal debate, the map most definitely was not the territory.

Gene A. Del Polito is President of the Association for Postal Commerce in Arlington, VA

APWU Scholarships Available

The APWU has two scholarship programs for High School seniors who are children or grandchildren of APWU Members.

E.C. Hallbeck Memorial Scholarship: Provides \$1,000 for four consecutive years to students pursuing a bachelor's degree at an accredited college or university.

Vocational Scholarship: Awards \$1,000 annually to students in a vocational program, such as culinary, medical or dental assistant, electrician, real estate, auto mechanic, certified I/T—computer education, cosmetology, message therapy.

There will be five winners nationally, one in each region. The **deadline to apply is March 15th**. Applications must be **received** in Washington DC by that date.

You can get an application and more information by going to apwu.org and clicking on the following: Department and Divisions, Secretary-Treasurer, Benefit Program, Scholarships.

Postal Shorts and News and Information

Nigerian identity thieves targeting USPS employees

There's a new identity theft scam on the rise — and this one directly targets USPS employees.

Nigerians posing as representatives of the Office of Federal Employees Group Life Insurance (OFEGLI) have been asking employees for their Social Security numbers, Employee IDs and USPS PINs. This group surfaced in Pittsburgh under the name **Employee Services Division, UAF**, and is distributing business cards claiming to represent FEGLI and are based in Silver Springs, MD. If anyone matching this description contacts you, call your local Inspection Service office immediately.

Anyone claiming to represent OFEGLI and asking for access to a USPS facility should not be allowed on the premises — OFEGLI doesn't solicit employees! Never divulge your USPS PIN to anyone and only provide your Social Security number and Employee ID when you're using it for an official purpose, such as on PostalEASE or filing a health benefits claim.

If you believe your USPS PIN has been compromised, you can establish a new one by calling the employee service line at 877-477-3273 (877-4PS-EASE) and pressing 3. You'll be prompted for your Social Security number, your current USPS PIN and then be

APWU, Serco Open Talks In Detroit Over New MTESC Agreement

The APWU's Detroit District Area Local and the privately-owned Serco Corporation have begun negotiations over a successor contract, which covers above 160 APWU-represented workers at its MTESC site in suburban Detroit

During negotiations Jan. 10 and Jan. 11, the APWU indicated it was seeking wage increases, changes to the disciplinary system, better leave provisions, and improved contract language on issues such as using seniority for holiday and overtime scheduling.

The union also submitted a 32-item information request. "We need this information to develop our proposals," said Bill Manley, the National Business Agent for APWU's Support Services Division. "The company has responded to our request in good faith."

The company also submitted several proposals, and the parties reached tentative agreement on several issues in the first two bargaining sessions. "The most significant," Manley said, "is an agreement that discipline will be active only for 12 months maximum rather than for as much as two years."

Serco and the union next meet on Jan. 31. There are five other bargaining sessions scheduled for the first 15 days of February.

The APWU bargaining committee consists of Manley as lead negotiator, and Serco employees Dana Brown, Larry Bailey, Donna Davies, Sue Humphreys, and Moe West. Also on the committee are Detroit APWU President Pat Chornoby and Vice President Gwen Glover.

[USPS On-Rolls and Paid Employee Stats for December '05](#) - prc.gov – The Postal Rate Commission has issued the latest On-Rolls and Paid Employee Statistics National Summary, for the month of December 2005. Total career workforce was 702,575, down 3,561 employees from the same period in 2004 (SPLY). Also compared to the SPLY, Mail Distribution employees decreased by 1,895, City Delivery decreased by 1,202, and Customer Services decreased by 1,179, while Rural Delivery increased by 1,910 and Office of Inspector General increased by 87.

Pay Increase!!! Also means a dues increase.

Effective Pay Period 07-06 (March 18, 2006), there will be an automatic dues increase of .70 cent per member per pay period for career employees, and .50 cent per member per pay period for transitional employees. This is in compliance with Article 16, Section 2a, of the National Constitution and Bylaws. The increase is based on the 1.6% base salary increase. Dues for career employees will be increased by .79 cents, which breaks down to .50 cent increase for Locals, a .24 cent increase in the National Per Capita Tax, and a .05 cent increase for Organizing Fund. The new National Per Capita Tax for career employees will be \$7.60, per member, per pay period, plus an additional .47 cent for the Organizing Fund. Therefore, a total of \$8.07 will be withheld for National Per Capita Tax and Organizing Fund.

The Last Word, More or Less

By: Mike Singer

Editor, Salt City Post, Central New York Area Local
Reprinted from PPA Affiliate Newspaper

We must learn to do more with less. That's the current battle cry of the new and improved, stream-lined Postal Service. We have to increase productivity. More work with less people equals higher productivity. Higher productivity is an essential factor in your boss bonus.

Don't get me wrong, we are not only concerned with productivity simply because it affects your boss's bonus. No, that would be shallow justification for a large government agency like the United States Postal Service. No there's much more to it than that. Your boss's boss's boss's boss' bonus is also riding on you doing more with less. But there is still more, much more. Our numbers are also essential to the heft of your boss's boss's boss's boss's bonus. You get the drift? Productivity numbers are everything!

Service....well, not so important anymore.

You may ask how this has happened. It may have something to do with the inmates now somehow being in charge of the institution. And how could that have happened? Could have something to do with the warped promotional practices of the USPS. But, space and good taste prohibits me from addressing that sticky issue here.

No, now we must concern ourselves with increasing productivity at all costs. So you may ask, what can a lowly bargaining unit employee do to help ensure nothing but miles of smiling faces along that management bonus train? Nothing worse than a disappointed kid this time of year.

But there are things we can do. Simply put, we need to remember our own version of the "Don't ask, don't

tell" rules. No, it has nothing to do with gays in the military, that is another issue we dare not discuss here. No, this is an easy to remember set of rules to keep us out of trouble and keep management's brilliant thinkers on their A game.

1. Don't ask for help....ever!
2. Don't ask why we no longer need to get out the mail that we always used to get processed.
3. Don't ask who your boss is, where he is, or what he may be doing?
4. Don't ask for gloves, tissues, or a pen. They cost money, you know. You have any idea how much a 50 cent pen cuts into the budget that could go toward bonuses? Well, about 50 cents, I guess...but it adds up.
5. Don't tell the newer employees about the good ole' days when the boss actually knew a little bit about the section he was supervising. Or really date yourself by mentioning a supervisor that had actually worked at one time in the area he was in charge of.
6. Don't tell anyone on the outside how things are really done here (they won't believe you anyway).
7. Don't tell your supervisor the way you used to do things and how much better things were before he/she was hired. You will expose yourself as resistant to change and be given a stern lecture on your inability to see the big picture and the vast improvements brought on by the new, automated, robotic, tray management, dispatch-less, there's always another truck, speed not accuracy, employee-less, lights out processing model, regardless of its current di-

minished returns.

8. Don't tell management anything. They aren't listening anyway.

Stick to these simple rules and the success of the Postal Service is all but guaranteed. You become a more efficient cog in the mechanism. Your boss has money for that new set of Ping irons at bonus time. And your boss's boss gets a shiny gold star for his well-traveled 991. Our productivity numbers soar to near the top statewide. And when plant consolidations decisions are made, it all means nothing.

On the surface, you might think all this downsizing is a bad thing. But think about it. Shorter lines in the Swing Room. More open spaces in the parking lot. Less congestion at the punch clock. And most important, a near one-to-one ratio of supervisor to craft employee.

So, get out there and work a little faster, work a little harder and try to forget what that second S in USPS used to stand for. Remember, your boss's matching pitching wedge may hang in the balance.



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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 - Human Relations/OWCP/Retirement Seminar; Bay City, MI

April 27 - 29, 2006 - MPWU Biennial Convention, Detroit, MI

August 11 - 20, 2006 - APWU National Convention, Philadelphia, PA

Fall 2006 - Area 7, 8 & 9 District Meeting. More Information forthcoming

June 2007 - MPWU Educational Conference; Sault Ste Marie, MI



