

The Local Line

"A PPA Award Winning Publication"

The Official Voice of the
Northwest Illinois Area Local

Local Update by Jackie Engelhart

Floor Edition

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Thanks John Clark!

On April 17, 2006 our National Business Agent, John Clark settled two major Palatine leave class actions grievances that were scheduled for arbitration the following day. John had been in regular communication with us and he had his witnesses lined up. The day before the hearing John was contacted by his management counterpart with a settlement offer.

Two Major Leave Issues Settled for Palatine P&DC

The first issue resolved concerns what we refer to as the "Tovey-Coleman Agreement". This agreement was signed at Palatine P&DC on November 30, 1992 by Plant Manager Mark Tovey and Tour 2 Chief Steward Gwen Coleman (Riley). This agreement states "It is mutually agreed that if an employee calls in for leave of 16 hours or more, the first eight (8) shall be unscheduled and the remainder shall be considered as scheduled leave."

Thanks to Gwen Riley!

Gwen Coleman-Riley was the author of this agreement, and she deserves credit for being able to negotiate this leave policy in 1992.

Faxed Medicals

The second issue settled by John Clark concerns faxed medicals. The settlement states "Furthermore, consistent with past practice, in those instances where an employee provides acceptable medical documentation for an absence at least one (1) hour prior to the employee's scheduled starting time, the absence will be recorded as scheduled leave. Consistent with past practice and the national level decisions in Case #H1C=3T-C 40742 and case H4C-3A-C-6934, faxed medicals are acceptable subject to verification on a case-by-case basis."

Plant Manager Woodall Refused to Honor these Agreements.

When Ron Woodall became Plant Manager at Palatine he informed the Union management would no longer honor

either of these agreements. The Union did not accept this unilateral action, and we continued to file individual grievances for each affected employee. Most of these grievances were sustained at either step 2 or step 3 of the grievance procedure. In spite of this, management continued to unschedule leave when employees faxed in medicals prior to the start of their tour for a sick leave call in, and continued to take the position that the agreements were no longer in effect.

Thanks Al Czerwinski!

When John Clark called me with the good news, I thanked him and stated management is aware of his excellent reputation as an arbitration advocate. He responded that Al Czerwinski deserves a lot of credit because he managed to include both issues in his class action grievance. "AL Z" filed a well-written and well-documented grievance that covered both issues. The combined Union experience of John, Al, and Gwen will benefit employees at the Palatine P&DC for years to come.

Special points of interest:

Thanks John Clark!

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Arbitrator Rules Against Upgrade of Registry Clerk

Carol Stream Bids Posted

Zero Tolerance!

Why is this Happening?

Roundtable at CMSH

Arbitrator Rules Against Upgrade of Registry Clerk+

On April 16, 2006 Arbitrator John Fletcher ruled in favor of management in a grievance filed at the Palatine P&DC for upgrade of the Registry Clerk position from level 5 to level 6. The hearing was held on March 29, 2006. The award summary states "The grievance filed in this matter is denied. The Union has not established that any Distribution Clerk assigned to the Registry Unit in the Palatine, Illinois Processing and Distribution Center has charge of a mail processing activity and works without regular administrative and functional supervision - key ingredients for the classification of a Special Postal Clerk, Level 6." Our own National Advocate Doreene Motley made an excellent presentation at the hearing (which lasted most of the day) but the arbitrator did not agree with the Union's grievance. Thanks to Doreene for her hard work as a National Arbitration Advocate.

Carol Stream Bids Posted

A large group of bids was posted at Carol Stream on April 18th, to create bids where needed, and to create bids for abolished SPBS and CFS clerks. Once all bids are filled there should be no more clerk casuals at Carol Stream. We will continue discussions with management in regards to posting bids where needed, including on-tour 2. There remain six custodial vacancies, three on tour 2. Anyone interested should send a letter to the plant manager, or these positions will be filled by clerks excessed from other offices.

These custodial vacancies will be filled soon, and this will eliminate the use of casuals in the custodial maintenance craft at Carol Stream.

Zero Tolerance!

For whatever reason, there have been several "incidents" at Palatine P&DC recently, resulting in both involved employees being placed in an off duty status without pay. In most of these incidents, the only evidence management has are the statements of the involved employees. Quite often there are either no witnesses, or the witnesses do not want to write a statement for management because they do not want to see a co-worker get fired as a result of their statement. We all agree that violence should not be tolerated and that all employees have a right to a safe work place. The Union has written about this subject many times, in hopes that employees will think before they act, and not allow themselves to become involved in an altercation at work. For whatever reasons, this message has not gotten through to everyone, as we have employees out right now, who are awaiting management's decision on whether they will be coming back to work or not. In most of these cases, it is the word of one employee against another. Management conducts an investigation, but in most cases this is all they have, the statements of the involved employees. Once an employee reports an "incident" to management, chances are very good that both employees will be called into the MDO's office and shortly thereafter walked out of the building. After that they will be out of work without pay until management conducts their investigation. Once an employee is put out, management is not too concerned with how long these employees are out. **Do not put yourself in this position! Think before you act & if provoked, walk away!**

Why is this Happening?

No one reason can explain the rash of incidents at Palatine recently, but the Union contends that management's ever-escalating and unrelenting focus on numbers and the resulting pressure to obtain them, has played a part in the increasing stress in the USPS work environment. This fact is not exclusive to Palatine but it may be more severe there. I firmly believe that management needs to sit down with the Unions to discuss some of the problems on the work room floor that may be contributing to these incidents. The Unions are constantly coming to management with complaints in regards to the conduct of certain supervisors. We continue to complain about the same things over and over, because management continues to allow it. Management is caught between two contradictory goals, first and foremost is to move the mail and continue to improve productivity, and second is to maintain a work place of "dignity and respect". These two have a hard time co-existing, and usually the pressure to "get the mail out" and "get numbers" wins out. The concept of "a fair day's work for a fair day's pay" has become a continual expectation to increase the amount of work performed by each employee, with no end in sight. This pressure to increase productivity falls most heavily on the unit supervisor. It is interesting to note that two of the recent incidents involved disagreements between 204-B supervisors.

"Roundtable at CMSH"

On 4-14-06 a "Roundtable" was held at Chicago Metro Surface Hub to discuss ongoing complaints from employees of both crafts in regards to treatment by MDO's and supervisors. Both Unions will meet with Plant Manager Anderson again. *JZ*