

The Local Line

"A PPA Award Winning Publication"

The Official Voice of the
Northwest Illinois Area Local

Report from National Craft Conferences

Floor Edition

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President Burrus Addresses the Conference

On the first day of the first All Craft Conference in Las Vegas, President Burrus spoke to the approximately 2500 union officials in attendance.

Burrus' Achievements

President Burrus reported that the national backlog of APWU grievances has been reduced from 100,000 to 25,000. He thanked the Business Agents and credited the Joint Contract Interpretation Manual (JCIM) for clarifying grey areas of the contract. He stated the finalization of the JCIM is good for APWU members.

APWU Court Victory!

President Burrus announced a major FMLA victory by APWU that affects all Postal employees. APWU paid the legal fees for the appeal of a court case filed for APWU member from Illinois. In a unanimous ruling from the Seventh Circuit of U.S. Court of Appeals the court ruled that the USPS cannot require

employees returning from FMLA absences of more than 21 days to provide a detailed medical with a diagnosis and a prognosis. The court ruled that such employees are not required to submit to a medical examination selected by the Postal Service in order to return to work. President Burrus stated "We have fought long and hard to protect our members under the Family and Medical Leave Act and this is a very sweet victory."

He stated this victory is important to thousands of postal workers across the country, but he stated the Postal Service has stated they will only honor this decision in the states covered by the Seventh Circuit. Illinois is covered.

Contract Extension is Approved.

President Burrus reported that the contract extension was approved by the members. Out of 78,000 who voted, 69,000 voted yes and 9,000 voted no. He stated this is approximately the same number of members who voted on the last two contracts. 69,000 voted out of a to-

tal of 280,000 members. He asked why do Postal Workers have a hard time voting?

Extension Highlights

The contract extension continues all current contractual benefits, including a continuation of the no-layoff protection and no increase in employee costs for health benefits. All APWU members will receive a 1.6 percent salary increase effective March 18, 2005 and two COLA's (in March and September of 2006). Salary upgrades of one level were provided for 14 positions. President Burrus states that the Postal Service does not want to upgrade anyone but the more employees in the position the more difficult it becomes. Positions that he will seek upgrade for in the 2006 contract negotiations include Sales and Service Associates (Window Clerks), Bulk Mail Technicians, Data Conversion, and Custodians. He points out that the largest job category is no longer mail processing clerks, but the 80,000 window clerks. He will fight for these upgrades!

Report from Las Vegas All Craft Conference August 8-10, 2005.

President Burrus Reports

Contract Extension Approved.

Last 5 Years of the 2000 Contract a Success!

Challenges Face APWU

Must Break 80% Organized.

Union's Success Benefits All

Whose Job is Organizing?

Legislative Issues Affect Us

Legislative Committee Expands Under Director Horan

Lynn Pallas-Barber Wins OWCP Removal!

APWU Transitional Employees to end in December of 2005

This will be the end of TE.'s for APWU but Mailhandlers and Letter Carriers will still have them. They will most likely demand the same thing. TE.'s were imposed on the Union by an arbitrator in 1985, and it has taken 20 years to end.

Last 5 Years a Success!

In the five years covered by the 2000 contract and extensions, a level 5 step 0 employee's salary has risen from 40,472 to 47,245 dollars per year, without any premium or overtime pay! We have achieved holiday leave in lieu of pay, resolved most work-related travel pay issues, and are now able to move important cases to the top of the arbitration docket. Excessing has been limited to a 50 mile radius and 7,000 APWU members had the opportunity for early retirement. He called the VER a major accomplishment

Challenges Facing APWU

Over the last 5 years APWU has lost 60,000 jobs as the Postal Service continues to downsize. As our bargaining unit continues to shrink the Union must reduce expenses. He stated we must live within our means and we have done what is necessary. He opposed any dues increase in 2004 and will do so again in 2006. By constant budget cutting APWU headquarters has achieved a 4 million dollar surplus!

Must Break 80% Organized!

President Burrus said APWU has never achieved over 75% organized on a national level. He stated "We need to maximize the membership of those that remain." Every non-members who refuses to pay for the benefits paid for by the rest of us weakens the Union.

Union's Success Benefits All

As Burrus stated, we as Postal employees have become complacent. We see our Union brothers and sisters being laid off in other industries; losing their pensions, and or taking wage cuts to save the company. We as Postal Workers continue to prosper and we take it for granted because the Union has been successful. President Burrus is sending back a message to the rank and file, we cannot afford to take what we have for granted.

Whose job is Organizing?

The answer is it's everybody's job. We all should be talking to our coworkers about the importance of Union membership. Reasons I have heard from non-members for not paying their fair share, are I don't like who won, they lost my grievance, or I can't afford it. These are your coworkers who are also making 47,250 dollars per year because most of us are members. We can and must do better. Organizing Director Leonard Morgan has prepared a proposal for a 50/50 Organizing Drive to be held this fall. Sign someone up and you each get 50 dollars. More details soon.

Legislative Issues Affect Us.

In 1970 Congress passed the Postal Reorganization Act which conferred collective bargaining rights to Postal employees. We have come a long way since then because the Union was able to bargain with the Postal Service to improve pay and other working conditions for employees. APWU has a legislative department which contacts congress on issues of importance to us. Dues money cannot be used for political contributions. COPA \$ can. Our Local has not done it's share for COPA.

New Legislative Director Horan Adds New Committee Members

Newly appointed Legislative Director Nancy Horan has generated new enthusiasm for this very important committee. I have received over a dozen letters from members requesting to be added to her committee. She attended the Craft Conferences in Las Vegas at her own expense and attended the Legislative Class taught by National Director Mike Reid. We know the Legislative Committee must be much more active than it has been in the past, and it will be. We urge all APWU members to support COPA through payroll deduction. Payroll allotments allowed have increased from 2 to 3. If we want to continue to enjoy the benefits APWU has negotiated for you we all need to support COPA.

Union Wins OWCP Removal!

Once again, our newest Clerk NBA, Lynn Pallas-Barber has won a major grievance in arbitration for our Local. For the past 18 months management has been on somewhat of a witch-hunt for OWCP fraud. With enthusiasm they expanded their efforts and began firing employees who were unable to work but were able to perform normal functions of daily living. The term "performing activities inconsistent with your claim of total disability" was the charge and they were looking for anything. The grievant is one of the first caught in management's dragnet and is coming back with full back pay. Thank you Lynn! Costco Representative will be at Union meeting Sunday, 8-14-05 with membership information.

Jochie Engelhart