

The Local Line

"A PPA Award Winning Publication"

The Official Voice of the
Northwest Illinois Area Local

Convention Report by Jackie Engelhart

Floor Edition

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Burrus Reports

The 18th Biennial APWU National Convention was held during the week of August 14-18, and the theme was "100 Years of Progress". Per convention bulletin #1, "The APWU traces its roots to an August meeting of postal clerks from Chicago, Louisville, Milwaukee, Nashville, Salt Lake City and San Francisco. Representing more than 1000 Post Office workers, they created the National Federation of Post Office Clerks. Five postal unions merged in 1971 to create the American Postal Workers Union. President William Burrus paid tribute to Chester Parish, who was the leader of the MVS Union when the merger occurred, and who is the only surviving member of that group. He also paid tribute to Moe Biller, APWU President from 1980 to 2001, as "the right leader at the right time. Through the force of his personality, Moe made his mark for all time. Wherever you are Moe, we thank you."

Contract Extensions

President Burrus spoke on the benefits of the two contract extensions, including the second highest wage increase in the history of postal collective bargaining, upgrading of several APWU positions and the elimination of all Transitional Employees from mail processing facilities.

"The APWU has purged the terrible decision of Arbitrator Mittenthal, which imposed tens of thousands of non-career employees upon our bargaining unit."

Contract Negotiations

Negotiations with all four major postal unions are scheduled to begin at the end of August. Burrus stated that negotiations are fraught with risk but offer "an opportunity to advance our goals, to improve our lives, and to capture the dreams and hopes of our members." "We intend to move forward to justice, and will use every resource at our disposal to achieve our objectives." From listening to President Burrus, I believe that one of our best resources is him.

Burrus on \$ Resources

"One resource that has been much stronger in recent years is the union's political war chest." With mid-term elections in November of 2006 we will have an opportunity for change. For the second year APWU members have donated a million dollars to COPA. This has enabled Legislative Director Mike Reid and Assistant Director Steve Albanese to establish the presence of our union in the halls of Congress. He thanked all APWU members who have donated to the Committee on Political Action who helped in reaching our COPA goals. All NWIAL stewards and officers are currently giving a minimum of \$7.00 per month, as President Burrus has asked. There is no better investment for postal workers than COPA. For the third consecutive year APWU has experienced surpluses and have put in place processed to make sure that continues. "And if you think the last 100 years have brought miraculous changes, you ain't seen nothing yet!"

Jackie Engelhart
President
Alan J. Czerwinski
News Director

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"Save Our Service"

RI-399 Resolutions Debated

\$812 COLA Increase

Thanks to Dan Mulligan!

The 20% Non-members

"Save Our Service"

This was the theme of the picket and rally conducted by convention delegates on August 17th at the "old" 30th Street Post Office. This old post office has been replaced by a new state of the art facility which requires fewer employees. According to APWU convention bulletin #1, "More than 700 jobs have been cut, many workers have been "excessed", some of them hundreds of miles away, and with only a few weeks notice, and casuals have been hired to replace career employees, in blatant disregard for the CBA. The fact is the new facility is grossly understaffed, and it is unlikely that service problems are only temporary according to local news stories." Burrus stated this is part of a much bigger picture, and all across the country the Postal Service has sacrificed service to individuals and small businesses in its quest to perform more favors for the big mailers. We intend to put a stop to that, and we will encourage the American people to make their voices heard. We will work together to "Save Our Service." A meeting was held after the general session for delegates who wanted to share information on fighting USPS consolidation plans. USPS has recently released its list (generated in 2005) of 135 facilities targeted for possible consolidations. Rockford Local President Greg Voiles and VP Art Haws were in attendance to share with us how they successfully fought what many thought was a doomed battle to save Rockford's outgoing operation. Involvement of employees, the community, and the local congressman was critical but the fight was led by the Rockford Local of the APWU.

RI-399 Resolutions Debated

Two resolutions addressing delegate's frustration with RI-399 generated intense debate at this convention. These resolutions were discussed at an after-hours meeting that packed the meeting room for three hours. Union officials were in agreement that something must be done at the national level to stop the USPS abuse of RI-399. The result was passage of Resolution #5, which called for study of the feasibility of making the Mailhandler Union a department of APWU. Resolution # 89, which called for APWU to withdraw from the RI-399 Dispute Resolution Process was withdrawn in favor of substitute resolution. The substitute called for the national APWU to "pursue all options available, to include but not limited to, the filing of a lawsuit to compel arbitration, and was passed by a wide margin. Withdrawal from RI-399 was viewed as being too risky, as Local Inventories and Agreements would be put at risk, and the consensus was that the USPS would use this against APWU to assign more work to the mailhandlers. While many delegates fully supported "one union", they did not agree with this resolution. Some said APWU should not be raiding another union, but others said that the NPMHU is already raiding our work. President Burrus stated "We must find a way to end the separation of unions in the mail processing environment. The Mail Handlers Union is an integral part of the Laborers International Union, and therefore cannot merge voluntarily. During the debates we learned that a level 4 mailhandler makes less than a level 3 APWU represented employee!

\$812 COLA Increase

The final Cost-Of-Living Adjustment under the National Agreement will give APWU craft employees an annual raise of \$812, effective September 2. It will appear on September 22nd paychecks for pay period 19-06. The 812 amounts to an increase of 39 cents per hour or \$31.20 per pay period. This will be the largest COLA increase under the current National Agreement per President Burrus. "COLA raises have made important contributions to our members' wages, and this further shows the value of a union contract and strengthens our resolve to negotiate a strong new agreement."

Thanks to Dan Mulligan !

Thanks to Dan for putting in hours of hard work to demolish the old and rotted wood frame structure attached to the patio area of the Elmhurst Union Building. Dan volunteered his own time to demolish what has become an eyesore and potential safety hazard. Dan told me that as he began to take it down, parts that were attached to the brick gave way and began to fall on their own. The structure was totally rotted and needed to be removed. Dan's volunteer work corrected a safety hazard and improved the appearance of the building at no cost to the Local. His hard work has saved the Local hundreds of dollars. Not only did he perform the demolition work but he came back to haul the massive pile of wood to the dumpster in the parking lot for haul away. Thanks Dan!

The 20 % Non-Members

Most of us are union members and we don't understand how 20 % among us take the benefits, and take and take, but refuse to pay. Why would a postal employee not belong to their union. You cannot afford it? If union benefits were only for members, all would be members.