

The Local Line

"A PPA Award Winning Publication"

The Official Voice of the
Northwest Illinois Area Local

Local Update by Jackie Engelhart

A-I Excessing Palatine
Vice President Dave Baskin phoned the Region to request the Comparative Work Hours for the period 30 days prior to and 30 days after the excessing of 41 Clerks. This report was received by the Local and reviewed by Dave. The number of work hours during the 30 day period prior to the excessing was 118,074. The number of work hours used for the 30 days following the excessing was 116,550. This amounts to a savings of 1,524 work hours for the 30 day periods compared. Broken down by day the savings was 50.8 hours per day or the equivalent of 6 Clerks. Management's own data supports the excessing of only 6 Clerks and not 41.

Casuals Hired After the Excessing...
Management had 12 Clerk casuals prior to the excessing and separated them for less than a month. After the excessing management hired 19 Clerk casuals and the number is now up to 23.

Excessing Grievance
Not only does the use of casuals offset any savings, but the immediate re-hiring of 19 (now 23) Casuals is more evidence the excessing of 41 Clerks was improper. Based on this data, Dave filed an improper excessing grievance for Palatine. The grievance has been appealed to Step 3, and management has been unable to rebut and/or dispute the Union's grievance at Steps 1 or 2.

A-I Casuals Replace Us
While the productivity of the AFSM declined after the addition of the AI, management is still saving money. They save money when they replace a level 5 Clerk with a level 4 Mail Handler, but they save a lot more money when they staff the AI with Mail Handler casuals. Casual work schedules obtained from management show 17 Mail Handler Casuals assigned to AI on a weekly basis. AFSM Clerks have not only been replaced by Mail Handlers they have been replaced by Mail Handler casuals.

National Problems
Most of the problems we are dealing with locally, are national in scope. We filed our AI disputes and continue to file grievances but all AI issues are pending the outcome of the national level dispute. Potter and Company continue to assign automated mail processing work to level 4 Mail Handlers instead of level 5 Mail Processing Clerks. On 2-16-08 all APWU employees will be upgraded one level, further increasing this wage differential and making the use of Mail Handlers for mail processing more attractive to management. Another benefit of assigning mail processing to Mail Handlers is the ability to increase the use of casuals. As stated, 17 Mail Handler casuals are now assigned to the AFSM-AI on tour 1 at Palatine. The APWU was to arbitrate a national RI-399 case on the SPBS on 12-13-07. The outcome of this case should affect the assignment of other automated mail processing work like the APPS and AFSM-AI.

Floor Edition

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Comparative Work Hours

We were able to request the comparative work hours for the Palatine excessing because one Veteran chose to exercise her right not to be excessed to a lower level job. She opted to go to another facility as a Clerk rather than remain at Palatine as a level 4 Mail Handler with saved grade. Comparative work hour reports must be provided to the Union upon request when employees are excessed outside of an installation. At Carol Stream no one was excessed out of the installation and we cannot request comparative work hours. We filed grievances on the improper excessing when it occurred, and Dave has filed another grievance at Palatine based on the comparative work hours, which show a reduction of six Clerks, or 35 less than the 41.

Chicago Metro Surface Hub

When I walk around at CSMH I wonder if this is the plant of the future. In terms of staffing it is primarily a Mail Handler facility, with approximately 100 Clerks and 60 Maintenance employees. The rest of the employees are Mail Handlers working on the two APPS which was assigned to them at the national level. We have filed local disputes on the APPS at both CSMH and Palatine, but these disputes are pending the national level dispute. APWU must win the automated mail processing work back at the national level and that is why they went forward with the SPBS case. The last few years have seen the USPS continue to assign mail processing (Clerk) work to Mail Handlers, and to excess Clerks to the Mail Handler craft as a result. They have also become adept at manipulating numbers against us.

Complement Manipulation

Approximately two years ago management created the ad hoc position of District Complement Coordinator, and this person is to supervise all complement reductions in the district. Management calls it "right-sizing" and say they are matching to workforce to the workload. What we have seen repeatedly in this process is over-cutting which is based strictly on numbers. When the volume goes down (as it continues to do) the Associate Office Function 4 Clerk staffing is automatically cut. When someone retires that job disappears. When Operations Support's numbers call for a staffing reduction the Postmaster is told what his complement is. Most of them don't agree with this anymore than we do. They know what their office better than the number crunchers at the district but they no longer have control of their staffing. We continue to see Clerks excessed from office to office based on these numbers, with the losing office increasing the use of overtime and PTF hours. We also see an increase of crossing crafts and supervisors performing bargaining unit work.

Carol Stream Post Office

We recently received notice of a complement reduction at the Carol Stream Post Office due to a "Mail Handler Review". (When they want to cut Mail Handler staffing in the AO's they do a Mail Handler Review and when they want to cut Clerks they do a Function 4.) I was a customer at the Carol Stream Post Office on 12-12-07 and was greeted in the lobby by a supervisor directing traffic. Next, I was approached by a young man directing me to the APC, and I asked him if he was a Clerk. He said "no", he was a Mail Handler. **The CS post office is using supervisor and a Mail Handler casual to replace Clerks in the lobby.**

To the Northern IL District:

We are aware of the emphasis on pushing customers away from the window to the Automated Post Center (APC) in the lobby, but we do not agree that you can use anyone to do this work. If it is everybody's job then it is no one's job, and there is no such animal. The Lobby Director is a "knowledgeable Clerk" and you can call it "Customer Service Host" or whatever you want, but the work is Clerk. The Northern IL District continues to cut Clerk staffing in the AO's to the bone, and then use casuals and supervisors to make up for the reduced Clerk staffing. This complement manipulation cuts full-time positions and pushes some full-time Clerks to revert to PTF status to stay in their office and not be excessed miles away. This same Clerk earned their full-time status by working 40 hours or more a week for a minimum of six months, and they will no doubt continue to work a full-time schedule after reverting to part-time status. We know they will be working 40 or more hours to make up for the latest round of excessing in that office. When we file to get the PTF converted (again) based on their working a full-time schedule we are told the office is under 100 man-years and they don't have to convert. If we try to convert based on a residual vacancy we are told the office is in withholding based on the impact at one office. AO Clerks are the front-line of customer service for the USPS but they are being treated like pawns in a game. We continuing to fight this game office by office.

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