

The Local Line

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Northwest Illinois Area Local

Floor Edition

Update by: Jackie Engelhart

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Palatine Impact Meeting Set for 1-15-09

This is a meeting management is required to hold with the APWU Regional Coordinator (Sharyn Stone) and the Local Union to listen to our arguments against the proposed excessing. Article 12 National Business Agent Lynn Pallas-Barber attends and makes very good arguments, but they ignore our data and our arguments, as this meeting is a formality and management never changes anything as a result. Once the meeting has been held management can proceed with their plan to excess out of the installation, and begin issuing 60 day notice letters. The Palatine impact is for 158 Clerks. I called Ron's boss, District Manager Bob Hart, for assistance with the current situation at Palatine but he has not responded. The last time I talked to Bob Hart about problems at Palatine he sang Ron's praises and said JoAnn Feindt listens to Ron.

The Boiling Point

While Carol Stream is adjusting to the tour compression as carried out by Plant Manager Johnson, the employees are making the adjustment to what they understand is a national plan that Carol Stream management has no control over. They understand that Carol Stream carried out the required compression in a manner that created as little dislocation and inconvenience as possible based on the mandate to move 75 clerks off of tour 2. Palatine Clerks have long suffered under the iron fist of Ron Woodall but this time they are furious. They don't understand why half of them are losing bids in the mad re-shuffling called the "Complement Realignment". Hundreds of Clerks have been thrown out of their bids with many of those same bids posted for someone else. Many 2250 Automation Clerks were moved to 2100, and now management is assigning unassigned to 2250. How does that work.

Tour 1 Meeting

On 1-10-09 Dave Baskin and I met with a room full of tour 1 Clerks who asked to talk to us. These Clerks were off the clock on their own time. Many stayed for two hours because they had questions and concerns. They want to know what they can do as union members about what is happening at Palatine. As we talked it became apparent that Palatine is not working safe, and management does not correct unsafe work practices because they benefit from them. A Safety Captain pointed out that employees are not to pull containers, after one employee complained about a lack of mule drivers. Clerks continue to stack trays three-high because management has not done what they said they would do. Over one year ago Lead MDO Michelle Davis told me she would have the Clerks put the overflow into an APC to avoid the three-high safety issue. This would require some allied help or it would slow down the operators so they save \$\$ by working you unsafely.

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Special points of interest:

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Productivity and the "Overseer"

The only productivity standard for Clerks per the National Agreement is "a fair days work for a fair days pay". When you are told you should be getting 42,000 pieces (as the gap has been wide-opened on the DBCS machines at Palatine) they will stand over you if you are not making production. If they have told you what your goal is and have asked you if "there is something wrong with your machine?", and they continue to stand over you to the point you feel intimidated you should call for a Steward. It is one thing for a Supervisor to tell you what your "goal" is and to ask if there is something wrong with your machine, but if they continue to stand over you in an effort to intimidate you into working faster and faster, this is harassment. If you are giving a fair days work for a fair days pay you are doing your job and meeting your productivity standard. Palatine has already opened up the feed gap on the DBCS to wide-open to try to get 42,000 pieces per hour and they know this setting causes more jams, but they don't care they want you to work as fast as the machine will allow. They are getting ready to get rid of 150 Clerks so the new productivity standard may be 42,000. 100% BPI is 25,000 but they hope they can get their mail out with 150 less Clerks. If you get hurt they will discard you like yesterday's newspaper with the NRP. Ron Woodall has made Palatine a miserable place for Clerks, and they can't help but notice that it's very different if you're a Mail Handler. We have talked to Bob Hart about these problems and his inaction makes him part of the problem.

An Invitation to Mr. Hart

You came to this District saying "Employees should be treated like royalty." I have tried to communicate with you that Clerks are not being treated like royalty, but more like serfs at Palatine. If you don't believe what I am saying I challenge you to set up meetings and find out for yourself. I know you are a very busy man, but at some point senior management needs to come out of their offices and their comfort zones and talk to the serfs. You really need to hear for yourself how these employees feel. I can't remember anyone ever asking me if we can go on strike or picket until now. We are prohibited from striking which would give management a good excuse to fire us like Ronald Reagan did to the Air Traffic Controllers, but we can picket if enough members will participate. I'm sure employees at both plants would be interested in meetings with Mr. Hart and I am asking him to make it a priority. Management says changes have to be made for the survival of the company, but why do changes (national tour compression) only affect Clerks? Ron says Mail Handlers will be next but also says they do different work. In the last few years management has taken Clerk work and given mail processing and distribution work to the Mail Handlers, so why are only Clerks being compressed? This is not shared sacrifice as Clerks have been made the sacrificial lamb. Clerks don't understand why they keep getting attacked, and why things are always so much worse at Palatine. Maybe Mr. Hart can explain that when he comes, and I hope it's soon as we are all tired of Ron's world.

The Other 800 Pound Gorilla

The National Reassessment Process attack on injured postal employees was on a holiday break, but they will be back in January, and this time they will not be smiling and handing out new job offers. I don't know how the script will be performed but I know of at least one person involved in the process who will need a box of tissue. For injured Clerks who do not have an MMI date within one year of the date of your injury date, and who are not working in their bid, you are the target of the NRP. You will most likely be told by there is "No Work Available" for you within your restrictions. They will say they have conducted a thorough job search in the local commuting area but have nothing for you. This is one of the reasons the manual letter operation is being compressed to one tour, so they can say they don't have work in letters for injured Clerks. Management has already assigned a few injured Carriers and one Custodian into the plants so you know they will have job offers for all injured Mail Handlers at the plants. The Clerks and Carriers are the targets of this attack on injured employees. If you are subject to this cruelty, remember you have one year from the date you are put out to return to full duty, and they have to take you back. If you try to return after one year and one day they only have to give you consideration, and you know how much consideration you will be given. If you are put out you will be given OWCP forms so you can collect OWCP after your job offer is withdrawn. You should then file a grievance, an MSPB and an EEO complaint.

JL