

The Local Line

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Local Update by Jackie Engelhart

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Ron Woodall to APWU: All 3 Low Costs to Mailhandlers!

On 2-24-06 newly appointed Carol Stream Senior Plant Manager Ron Woodall called me to inform APWU that he was assigning all work in the three new Low Cost Tray Sorters to the Mailhandlers (MH's). This was the call I expected but hoped against. When we were informed Carol Stream would be getting more Low Costs and we realized Ron Woodall would be making the decision, we expected that he would give all work to the MH, just as he did at Palatine. As Yogi Berra would say "It's déjà vu all over again." I am reminded of the old "Nixon to New York City-Drop Dead!" headline.

When Ron called me to give me his decision, he stated "you are familiar with the dispute process". The Palatine Low Cost #2 has been appealed to National Jurisdiction Arbitration and we are waiting for the arbitration date.

E. Lynn Smith

In advance of receiving the bad news, we decided to appeal to E. Lynn Smith, Manager of the Northern Illinois District. Dave Baskin and I met with him on 11-30-05, and one of the issues discussed was the Low Cost. We showed him the tripartite agreement signed for the first Low Cost Tray Sorter and we asked that he honor it. He looked at it and said that management would honor it. A few days later he called back to say he did not know if he would be able to do that. We were very disappointed to hear this from Mr. Smith, as we believed he would do the right thing and honor the agreement. We believed by speaking to him we could stop Ron Woodall from giving more clerk work to the MH's. At this point Ron Woodall is making the decisions and for whatever reasons, he has decided to continue to take manual distribution work from clerks. His action at Palatine resulted in clerks being excessed to MH.

Carol Stream Low Cost to be appealed to LDRC

LDRC is the Local Dispute Resolution Committee, and this committee includes the USPS and the two Unions. We realize that locally, the deck is stacked against us and is just a formality. Ron Woodall has made the decision for management. Even though all three parties agreed on the jurisdiction for the Low Cost when the first one came to Carol Stream, all but APWU now claim the agreement signed only applied to the first one. This is exactly what happened at Palatine. The parties signed an agreement and did not like what they signed, so they said it only applied to one. The Carol Stream agreement was signed by both Union Presidents and the Plant Manager in June of 2003, and it stated "Clerk Craft employees shall be assigned to perform all duties on the LCTS except dumping mail. Mailhandler craft employees shall be utilized to dump mail." This agreement was signed by all three parties and it should be honored.

Special points of interest:

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Clerk Craft Under Attack

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New Organizing Director is Laura LeGal & 50-50 Starts on 3-1-06.

Clerk Craft Under Attack

It is no secret that clerks are under attack by the Postal Service at both the local and national levels. Ron Woodall is just following the national lead in this. Level 4 mailhandlers make less per hour than level 5 clerks. Mailhandlers do not get penalty pay for working past 10 hours or working a second NS day. That is the main reason management is taking distribution work from clerks and giving it to mailhandlers. The other reason is that APWU has consistently filed more grievances than other unions & this is a way to reduce our membership & weaken the union.

At the National Level

USPS sat on the information until the last possible minute, and then informed the unions that they were assigning all work on the APPS to the mailhandlers. The APPS operation is a distribution operation and as such should be a clerk operation. In this case management decided to take work away from the craft that had been performing most of this work. President Burrus was informed by USPS on 2-8-06 that the new Automatic Induction (AI) retrofit of the ASM flatsorter will result in a change of jurisdiction on AI machines. All work in the AFSM-100 is now assigned to clerks, but when the AI retrofit eliminates the need for a separate prepping unit, USPS has decided to assign most of the work to MH's on the machine. Again, this is a distribution operation which has always been assigned to clerks. Clerks historically prepped mail as they processed it on the old 881's. The AFSM 100 and FSM 1000 are clerk units. For the last few years MH were assigned to prep flats in the prep unit for the AFSM-100.

Now that prepping is again (as it was historically) performed on the FSM machine, management has decided to give all but one position on AFSM's with Auto Induction to the MH's. Neither Carol Stream or Palatine are on the current deployment schedule for AI, so the AFSM-100 remains clerk work. We will continue to monitor any new deployment information on AI.

Distribution is Clerk Work

At the national level the USPS is taking distribution operations historically assigned to clerks and giving the work to MH. Whether the distribution is performed manually, mechanically, or on automated equipment, distribution is clerk work. The functional purpose of a Mail Processing Clerk per USPS Handbook EL-201, states "Performs a variety of clerk duties required to process mail using automated mail processing equipment or manual methods of sortation and distribution." The functional purpose for the MH position states "Loads, unloads, and moves bulk mail and performs other duties incidental to the movement and processing of mail." Automating a distribution operation historically performed by clerks does not justify changing craft jurisdiction. As distribution is clerk work, when USPS gives it to MH's they won't call it distribution, they will call it containerization. In his letter Ron Woodall calls the work to be performed "containerization" that had previously been performed by the Sack Sorter and Saw Tooth operation. The Robots were assigned to MH at the national level and that was not challenged by APWU. Non-Robot distribution of tubs and trays is clerk work, and calling it containerization does not change that.

USPS Pits Union Vs. Union

USPS pits union vs. union when they take work from one craft and assign it to another. The fact that the USPS continues to manipulate RI-399 against the APWU is a fact of life. We don't have to take each others work as long as we protect work that has historically been ours. We know there is enough work for all of us in our own craft. Our fight is not with MH employees but with management. Locally, we have managers that don't honor agreements and use RI-399 to take work away from us. When the leaders of this district talk about "doing what is right for the employees" they continue to prove that these are empty words.

APWU is Prepared for the Fight

As Ron Woodall noted, I have experience in dispute (and RI-399). I will be appealing this case to dispute & it will be sent up quickly. As the Union under attack we are prepared for the long fight. If we prevail management will have bet wrong. We will be grieving for overtime pay to clerks for every pay period that MH perform distribution in the LCTS's. This work was given to the MH's based on a lower pay scale and not for any other reason.

RI-399 at Busse

We are filing grievances at Busse for MH performing distribution of Priority mail and for Non-Robot distribution of tubs and trays at Busse.

APWU and VOE

We advise you to decline any participation in VOE when called to the MDO office. There is no benefit to any APWU member in participating. **New Organizing Director is Laura LeGal & 50-50 Starts on 3-1-06.** Laura has shown her commitment to the Local by serving on other committees. She will lead the effort to make the 2006 50-50 Organizing Drive a success.

Jez