

# The Local Line

"A PPA Award Winning Publication"

The Official Voice of the  
Northwest Illinois Area Local

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Update by: Jackie Engelhart 600 CCD

## Obama Wins!

The historic victory of our first African-American President is a victory for postal workers who supported him. All postal unions knew the stakes were high for union members in this election. The Obama campaign used our union hall for phone banks for four days ending on election day. We were happy to help elect a president who cares about the 98% who are not millionaires. Union members need a government that will stand up for the rights of workers. The Postal Service is the only federal agency required to pay pension liabilities for employee military time, a 5 billion dollar cost to the USPS. We were told that Postmaster Potter will again seek relief from congress for this unfair burden which would substantially reduce the current deficit. The method of choice for reducing the red ink is to cut clerk jobs and get the clerks to work faster to make up the difference.

## Palatine -175 Clerks?

We met with Senior Plant Manager Ron Woodall and his staff on 11-4-08. to discuss the "tour 2 compression" and were presented with data showing a reduction of clerks on each tour for a total reduction of 175 clerks. Their data showed a "required complement of 552 and a current complement of 727. In July of 2008 we had 801 clerks at Palatine so we have lost 74 in 3 months but we're not leaving fast enough. Their data shows a reduction of clerks on tour 2 from 111 to 90, on tour 3 from 261 to 184, and tour 1 from 355 to 278. They want to reduce tour 1 automation by 20 clerks! The data also showed major changes in off days and seems to be the result of some updated labor scheduler program. Our election euphoria was short-lived as we return to the ugly realities facing us due to these draconian proposed changes that only affect the clerk craft. We are told these numbers are not final.

## To the Carrier Craft...

We requested a meeting with District Manager Robert Hart and Senior Plant Manager Ron Woodall to discuss the shocking information received on 11-4-08. We asked Mr. Hart where he would put 175 clerks: (There is only one residual mail handler vacancy at Palatine.) Without the slightest hesitation he said he would take them all into the carrier craft and get rid of the TE Carriers. Earlier in his Information Meeting an NALC representative asked Mr. Hart how he was going to replace carriers who are leaving as they're at their quota for TE's. At this point I figured out where the 175 clerks would be going. Clerks are again being sacrificed for the good of "the company". Clerk work has been given to the mail handlers and clerks excessed to the mail handler craft to perform what was clerk work. The reason we have TE Carriers in the first place is FSS will eliminate 400 Carriers in 2010. What will happen to the Clerk - Carriers in 2010 Mr. Hart?

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## Special points of interest:

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Palatine -175 Clerks  
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Function 4 in Function 1  
"The NRP Interviews"  
Labor -Management at  
Busse

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### Carol Stream is Next...

During the course of our meeting Ron Woodall said there will be less excessing at Carol Stream but the time changes will be worse. The Carol Stream meeting is scheduled for 11-12-08 at 7 am. Ron also said he is not out to get the clerks and that he was once a clerk and an APWU steward. I told him we expect fairness and we have not been treated fairly at Palatine. (We agreed this is not personal and we are not holding a grudge) The issue is that the clerks have not and are not being treated fairly. Both Ron and Mr. Hart stressed the dire financial situation of the company and we do not doubt that the Postal Service is in trouble. As billions are being spent on the FSS for which they have no mail, the only way they can cut costs is to cut clerks.

### Function 4 in Function 1

In the Associate Offices management has been cutting clerk staffing by imposing illegal work and time standards using "earned complement" software. They continue to cut Associate Office staffing to the bone and are now applying "earned complement" staffing programs to Function 1 mail processing in the plants. The Postmasters must staff their offices with constant cuts and ever-decreasing complement and now the plan is to do the same in the plants. They are reducing the clerk complement by 30% from 801 in July 2008 to a proposed 552. They are cutting to the bone and expecting the remaining clerks to bust their butts and work faster. Management counts on employees working faster when they are understaffed. Always work at a **safe pace** so you do not become an injured employee.

### "The NRP Interviews"

We have been attending many of the interviews and we usually have a steward and an officer present with each injured employee. The management "team" of three has a "leader" who must read the "script and initial each line read for the file. In some interviews the reader has raced through the script as if they were on their way to a fire. In one interview I asked the leader two questions pertaining to the ELM 546 pecking order for reassignment and she jumped up and asked me to step outside. Recently, POOM Don Nichols informed a group of union representatives gathered for Bob Hart's meeting that Stewards cannot ask questions but are there strictly as observers. We checked with APWU Human Relations Director Sue Carney who stated we are allowed to actively participate in the interactive interview and can ask questions. Our national officer gets her information from Ron Henderson and Kevin McGovern at the USPS Headquarters level. Sue Carney also said that the Postal Service has not seen the savings they were hoping for from the NRP as most of the employees referred (outsourced) to OWCP have not been placed with private employers, but instead were designated as totally disabled, and are able to continue to collect compensation from OWCP for which the Postal Service must pay a charge-back. The goal of the NRP appears to be to either scare injured employees back to full duty or to separate them from the Postal Service. Very few of the employees who were told "no work available" in the pilot sites have actually been placed in outside employment.

### Labor-Management at Busse

We met with Plant Manager Ruby Branch and her staff for part II of our Labor-Management meeting on 11-5-05 and we pushed her on the SPBS retreat right bids. They are currently canvassing the list with these bids. Once these bids are filled we will need to add SPBS Operator as a section on the ODL and no one other than a qualified SPBS operator should be working on the SPBS. We hope to get more bids posted after the initial 10 are filled. We pointed out that the three 1300 bids are all non-scheduled on Thursday, which Ruby said is a heavy day. She said she may have to post more SPBS bids and we hope to get more weekends. Any additional SPBS bids posted must be offered to the 10 clerks in the SPBS section before being offered to more retreat-right eligible clerks. We told Ruby the clerks are understaffed because there have been a few instances of mail handlers working in the racks, which was termed an emergency. The most recent complement information we have is that Busse has only 80 clerks out of an authorized complement of 130. Ruby still says Busse is not understaffed and just needs to change some off-days. Busse is chronically understaffed in maintenance. Once or twice Ruby brought maintenance employees in from AMC O'Hare to fix machines at Busse without exhausting the facility ODL. On the custodial side the Maintenance Manager says Busse has eight residual custodial vacancies and management says these vacancies are being withheld for possible excessing out of Chicago due to the nationally mandated "compression of tour 2".

JK