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President's Report

By Gary Van Hoogstraten
President

such a backlog of grievances in the procedure, then why not change it. I stated before the last negotiations, that we made a mistake and never should have

management says is a fringe benefit. In the end of the letter, they request Union involvement and support to be crucial to the continued success of the program and the Postal Service. I will assure you that this State President will NEVER buy into any program that deals with the future discipline of any member of the Michigan Postal Workers Union.

In closing, I would like to remind all Union Members that we have a lot of work to do. Our Executive Board is constantly working on programs to assist you and give you the information that you need to stand up and fight for your rights. Mike Long, the Editor of the Michigan Messenger, has started a Web Site for the MPWU. While it is still in the beginning stages, there are links on the site to direct you to your directors, state presidents, and information. I know that Mike is going to make this an interesting Web Site for all and I hope all of you check it out. Until Next Time.

Henry Van Dusen

APWU

Official Publication of the Michigan Postal Workers Union

Another Holiday Season has come and gone as fast as your Supervisor's denial of your 3971. As we begin a New Year, we unfortunately still have much uncertainty ruling our lives. The Postal Service is slowly getting rid of jobs in all stations and branches and the major concerns of all Union members are excessing and consolidations. When will the axe fall? The Postal Service has a theory that they call the Transformation Plan. In the union's perspective, it simply means reducing the craft work force by any means available. In many offices, we are seeing a reduction in craft complement, however, management numbers continue to grow. Go figure. While I do understand that the Postal Service might be struggling a bit financially, why are only the craft workers feeling the heat? You do not see Managers getting letters saying because of the budget problems and decrease mail volume, we have to send/excess you to another office that might be up to 50 miles away or more. Now that we have an extension to the Collective Bargaining Agreement, it will be interesting to see how management interprets this "new" language to their advantage.

Another major concern I have is the problem with the grievance procedure. I have heard rumblings about some memo signed not to arbitrate some cases for six months and have cases sent back to the Locals for yet another Shakeout. If it is true, it is plain and simple BS. If there is

changed Article XV. They should hold managers/supervisors accountable for what they do. When a craft employee is charged with so-called breaking the rules, they are held accountable, why aren't managers. Forget the shakeouts and get these grievances arbitrated and make the managers/supervisors accountable.

As the State President, I recently received a letter from Human Resources in Grand Rapids. The subject of the letter had to do with attendance. We all have heard the horror stories that deal with the RMD program. In the beginning of the letter it tells of management's expectations and responsibilities. It goes on to say the Postal Service leave program is a valuable fringe benefit, when properly used. It continues to state that all employees have to be Regular in Attendance. I would like to take this opportunity to clarify something; the leave program is NOT the Postal Service's Leave Program, it is a negotiated item that management continues to use every time they can during contract negotiations. Maybe they should just change the program's name to that the Brother from SWMAL (Dan Sullivan) and other union members are so against - P.A.T (Postal Attendance Terrorism). If you could look at the majority of the discipline issued by management, Attendance rates at the top. The same thing that



Secretary's Writings

By Harold Juhl
Executive Secretary

This New Year brings new challenges to the APWU and all of its members. There is still a lot of talk by the Postal Service of plant closings and consolidation. I recently saw that now the Postal Service intends to close Annexes also. This would not only cause a reduction of jobs, but would also cause over crowding in the plants as well. As representatives of the Union, it is our job to protect employees rights and make sure Management abides by the National Agreement during these trying times.

Another issue that has become a big problem is the Mystery Shopper Program. I know in the Lansing area it has become apparent to the Union that Management is using this program to issue discipline to our window clerks. Even though Management contends they are not, they use the "failure to follow instructions" angle to issue discipline, for not asking specific questions of the customer. The Lansing Local held an informational picket at our Delta Store to inform the public of the issue and to let them know why the lines are so long and why it takes them so long to get through them. Approximately two weeks after that picket, two employees from that office, received Letter of Warnings due to not asking specific questions. (Coincidence, I think not) Management is going to go after the window clerks, so I would watch your backside if you perform window clerk duties.

The time this article comes out in the paper, the Area 6 & 8 District Meeting in Mt. Pleasant may have taken place, and there is also the first H.R./Retiree Training Conference, which is being held in Midland. I believe the training at both will be very essential for our Stewards and Officers to help them represent our membership more effectively. John R is going to be doing the training for retirees, and Sue Carney will be doing the training on injury compensation seminar. There is also a day of training about "Building Your Local Union". I hope our Union is well represented at both training conferences.

There have been a lot of rumors and speculations about the retirement offer that is supposed to be offered soon. The rumor about receiving an incentive to retire early is just that. OPM is still looking at the package submitted by the Postal Service. Hopefully there will be something put out to the employees in the near future.

I would like to wish everyone a happy New Year and may it be a prosperous one too. Enjoy your families every moment that you can, because they are the most important thing in your life.

In Solidarity,

Harold



Education at Work

By Lynn Pallas-Barber
Director of Education

THE DOOM AND GLOOM OF PRIVATIZATION

The Postal Service as we know it today is on a direct collision course with privatization. Postal Management is hell bent in its efforts to outsource, consolidate and eliminate our service. Do more with less!! We work for a management that is budget driven and could care less about employees or the American public. They certainly don't give a damn about upholding the contract and they have done everything they can to ruin the service.

The biggest threat to our quality of life comes from the postal commission appointed by President George W. Bush. This commission, comprised of men who share Bush's philosophy of big business, is mandated to prepare a report for the President and Congress by 7/31/03. It is anticipated that this commission could look at ending the postal monopoly, take back our collective bargaining rights, end Saturday delivery and close some of our facilities.

CONTRACT EXTENSION APPROVED

The tentative agreement to extend out contract by two years was ratified by APWU members. Our National Agreement now expires on November 20, 2005. It is unfortunate that we didn't have a crystal ball to consult with prior to making this important decision. What is even more distressing to me is the lack of votes by our membership. Our membership complains and criticizes, they don't attend meetings, and they don't get involved. A ballot was mailed to their house and they couldn't even mark it either way. SAD!!

The next year we could be facing many changes to the Postal Service. The impact of these changes could reach each and every one of us. It's time to take some action. It's time to speak out and protect your future in the Postal Service. The choices you make will have a direct affect on your future. Get involved!

MORATORIUM ON ARBITRATION

It is my understanding that we are also facing a moratorium on arbitration. Not having many of the details at this point in time I am not able to expound on the facts of the situation. I do have to wonder if this is the solution to the overloaded, broken down grievance/arbitration procedure we now have. We have seen shake-outs in the past and did they resolve anything? We saw negotiated changes to Article 15, did that resolve anything? We are dealing with management, which has no respect for the contract. There has been no effort to try

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The Long and the Short of It

By Michael Long
Editor

As I sit down and write this article, I am reminded just how brutal Michigan winters can be. The temperature outside is a -15 degrees, too cold to snow (thank goodness), but cold enough to make me fret the upcoming gas bill. Michigan winters do remind me of another thing - Postal Management. In Grand Rapids and in other offices throughout the state, management is continuing its brutal attack on the craft workers. All the while, management continues to receive incentive awards, make more mistakes, receive more promotions, and to top it all off, they don't care what it is doing to the morale, welfare, and service to not only the craft employees, but to the entire American public.

I was recently told that the new Associate Supervisors that have yet to bid on any position would now be assigned to vacant positions throughout the entire United States. That is all good, and my first response is: "What has taken them so long?". But after some reflection on this, my only thought is: "Who are they going to put in their place?" You know management will never reduce their number of supervisors on the workroom floor.

At the Grand Rapids Office, we have just received, tested, and accepted the new DBCS machine. It is suppose to be able to run mail up to 1/2 - 3/4 inch thick; thus doing the same thing the bulky-mod now accomplishes. In keeping with my past assumptions of what management purchases, this time, there is no exception that they wasted monies. Something they know how to do quite well. If you are on the list to get one at your office, make sure you run "real" mail through this machine, not the perfect mail that they want to run.

State Website

The Website is up and running. Check it out @ MPWU.COM. If you would like to see anything added or have any comments on how to make it better, please let me know.

Central Region Human Relations Conference

I have re-run the information concerning the upcoming conference in this edition of the Messenger. If you would still like to attend, please contact Lynn immediately and via phone, e-Mail, or fax to see if space is still available.

Address Changes

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Flint Area Local for sending me their mailing list updates on a regular basis. It saves the MPWU time and money when the mailing list is up-to-date. For all other locals, please send me any changes, additions, or deletions. I update the records with the National

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Injury Comp Report

By Ron Krumrie
Human Relations/Injury Compensation Director

More Changes in OWCP

We have had many changes in regards to injury compensation lately. These changes involve the Department of Labor along with the Postal Service. I will share these changes with you in the next couple issues of the Michigan Messenger.

Retroactive Adjustments to OWCP Compensation Payments

After lengthy discussions with OWCP at the national level, they have concurred with our position that a specific group of OWCP recipients who are members of the APWU bargaining unit and received OWCP wage loss compensation during a specific time period are entitled to a review of their compensation entitlement. The necessity for such a review is a result of the retroactive pay raises that were part of the interest arbitration award and which would have been in effect when OWCP originally accepted a disability as compensable and computed an individual's wage loss compensation. The effective dates for these retroactive basic salary increases are:

November 18, 2000 (1.2% increase)
November 17, 2001 (1.8% increase)

As of March 23, 2002, these increases were fully incorporated into the Postal Service's payroll database.

Therefore, any APWU bargaining unit employee with an accepted compensable injury who received OWCP wage loss compensation, or who has a pending claim for such payment (Form CA 7), and whose **date of injury (DOI)**, **date disability began (DBB)**, or **date of recurrence (DOR)**, occurred between **November 18, 2000 and March 23, 2002** should write to OWCP and request compensation adjustment. This would not apply to employees who only received continuation of pay (COP) since COP is paid by the Postal Service and not by OWCP. Any retroactive pay entitlement for COP hours would have been included in the retroactive check received from the Postal Service.

Requests for wage loss compensation adjustment should be submitted to the appropriate Postal Service Injury Compensation Control Office. A standardized form was developed jointly with OWCP to be used for the purpose of requesting an adjustment, however, the use of this particular form is not mandatory. If the form is not used, the same information should be included in any request. Most local presidents should have received a copy of this form from Sue Carney, our National Human Relations Director for the APWU. I have a copy of this form for anyone who needs it also.

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By Richard Blake
Area 3 Director

Excessing - I'm happy to report that the excessing which was originally planned for some of the "M.A.L." offices in the 48 Area will not be happening. It's rather unfortunate, though, that it has somehow become the *Union's* responsibility to meet with District management and inform them of the attrition in these offices. For instance; one would think that *just maybe* someone in management (i.e., Human Resources) might be willing to go to the trouble of keeping track of who actually works in various offices, but that's certainly not the case, particularly in the Detroit District.

"Mystery shopper" discipline - it has become extremely important that we differentiate between an actual (i.e., national) "mystery shopper" and what is referred to as the "Sales Skills and Product Knowledge Observations" performed, for the most part, by management. While the former *does not* identify individual clerks and is not to be used in discipline, the latter is an entirely different story. Managers will usually spend an entire day travelling to offices where they're not known, performing these "observations" - and in these cases, they *do* identify the individual clerk, and discipline (for "Failure to Follow Instructions") *is the whole purpose*. They *deliberately* attempt to trip up the clerk by doing such things as putting both Priority Mail and Express Mail designations on the same piece of mail, or purchasing *a single stamp* (and then faulting the clerk for not asking the whole litany of irrelevant questions). I've seen discipline for things as ridiculous as the clerk handing the "customer" their receipt while saying "here's your receipt", instead of first *asking* "would you like a receipt?" I've also seen discipline given because the clerk "offered" the "customer" the rates for the various classes of mail, rather than "explaining" the classes of mail (the manager who denied that grievance at Step 1 *couldn't even explain to me what the difference was*, but she still insisted that the employee somehow "failed to follow instructions"). Does this all sound like management thinks that they "got over" on us when they assured us that "mystery shoppers" wouldn't be used for discipline? You bet!! So much for "bargaining in good faith"!!

"We need the help..." - with the unprecedented attacks on the clerk workforce that we're seeing now - excessings, abolishments, arbitrary and capricious reversions, etc. - we must be *more vigilant than ever* about protecting clerk craft work, and seeing to it that such work *is performed by clerks*. Unfortunately, in offices which are already understaffed, it's becoming increasingly difficult to get the clerks to report such things as RCA's "helping" spread presorts in the morning, or Postmasters "helping" in the box section every day. Because the clerks feel that if such "helping" isn't allowed, they'll be expected to do that much more work, or they'll have a harder time getting annual leave, etc. While such reservations are

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P.O.W.E.R. Report

By Patricia Johnson
P.O.W.E.R. Representative

A Little History about C.L.U.W. (Coalition of Labor Union Women)

The APWU/P.O.W.E.R. structure states in its by-laws that we should participate in C.L.U.W. In Detroit, a lot of the P.O.W.E.R. Committee sisters are card-toting members of C.L.U.W. Unfortunately, other unions do not have a Women's Committee like the American Postal Worker's Union. Therefore, women from across the country participate in C.L.U.W. Some of the unions that don't have an independent women's committee are the UAW, AFSME, Consumer Power, etc. It makes sense that C.L.U.W. is the largest women's union organization in the country.

Did you know that Judy Beard is the newly elected National Vice-President of C.L.U.W.? Judy Beard works at the National APWU Office as the Assistant to Secretary-Treasurer Robert Tunstall. In addition, Judy Beard is from Michigan and is a member of the Detroit District Area Local.

The National President of C.L.U.W. is Gloria Johnson. Sister Johnson is a dynamic motivational speaker. I've heard her speak twice. The most recent speech was during the APWU/P.O.W.E.R. Convention held in Albany, New York. Did you also know that C.L.U.W. had seats for the APWU on the executive board? When we found out, thanks to Judy Beard, Barbara Brown and I filled the positions. You see only the Sisters from that company/employer pick who represents them on the board.

The President of the Detroit Chapter of C.L.U.W. is Millie Hall. Sister Hall has always been there for the APWU and especially for the Detroit District Area Local. She has an abundance of information regarding Women's History Month, breast cancer information, current congressional information, walk-a-thons, etc.

To find out more about C.L.U.W., you can contact Sister Millie Hall at work (313)926-5407 or home (313)592-6542. Feel free to inform her that I gave you her telephone number. Find out if there is a local chapter of the C.L.U.W. in your area also.

After being invited to an honorary ceremony of the CLUW, I became aware of a historical sister entitled the Olga Madar. I took upon myself to investigate this woman's history and discovered a woman with a union history that is unsurpassed. I was truly impressed with this woman and decided to share my research. If it had not been for C.L.U.W., I never would have known of this woman's contributions to the labor movement at

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Retiree Involvement

By Al La Brecque
MPWU State Retiree Chapter President

A CALL TO ARMS! Retirees and organized Local Retiree Chapters have a full agenda. Legislation addressing Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP), Government Pension Offset (GPO), and Premium Conversion is being introduced before a decidedly hostile Congress. These are our own unresolved internal "retiree inclusion" issues. These remain paramount retiree goals.

However, retired members and Retiree Chapters have a far more urgent calling. Our Sister and Brother active postal workers and APWU Locals face the most chilling crisis in the history of our Union, including Unions we belonged to before the merger. Job security, the primary reason many of us chose a career as postal workers, is in jeopardy. The demons that bedeviled us over the years, and which we were able to repeatedly stave off, have reared their ugly heads again and are more powerful than ever! The sinister USPS "Transformation Plan." The White House appointment of a Commission on the U.S. Postal Service whose stated mission is: "The Commission's objective is to advise the President on the state of the United States Postal Service, prepare a report for articulating a vision for the future of the United States Postal Service, and recommend the legislative and administrative steps necessary to enact reform needed to ensure the viability of postal services." That mission statement alone should set off fire bells! Then, considering the loaded makeup of the Commission of corporate executive sharks with one "labor rep" who heads a company union, it spells trouble in River City!

As if that isn't enough, you have a well-financed private mailing lobby waiting in the wings to advocate privatization, plant consolidations, eliminate small Associate Offices, excess employees, etc. If you care, and we all should, consider this "A Call To Arms" for all retirees and chapters.

We can concentrate on retiree issues a little later. The multi-front attack on postal services and targeted postal jobs requires that we retirees step up to the plate by offering our committed services to the active Local leadership. Where there are chapters, officers can offer their active support to their parent locals. Where there are no Local Retiree Chapters, individual retired members need to consider taking the bull by the horns, offering to assist their Local's efforts in this struggle. Better yet, how about Local Union leadership inviting Chapters and individual retirees to join this battle for survival?

What can chapters and individual retirees do? LOTS! Retirees can man informational pickets. Retirees can write, phone, and e-mail Members of Congress and visit their District offices regularly. One letter from a constituent equates to 35 votes. With over 31,000 potential retiree congressional contacts, that

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Michigan Temperature Conversion Chart

70 and above: Texans turn on the heat and unpack the thermal underwear. People in Michigan go swimming in the Lakes.

60 above: North Carolinians try to turn on the heat. People in Michigan plant gardens.

50 above: Californians shiver uncontrollably. People in Michigan sunbathe.

40 above: Italian and English cars won't start. People in Michigan drive with the windows down.

32 above: Distilled water freezes. Lake Superior's water gets thicker.

20 above: People in Florida don coats, thermal underwear, gloves and wooly hats. People in Michigan throw on a flannel shirt.

15 above: Philadelphia landlords finally turn up the heat. People in Michigan have the last cookout before it gets cold.

0: People in Miami all die. People in Michigan lick the flagpole.

20 below: Californians fly away to Mexico. People in Michigan get out their winter coats.

40 below: Hollywood disintegrates. The Girl Scouts in Michigan are selling cookies door-to-door.

60 below: Polar bears evacuate the Arctic. Michigan Boy Scouts postpone "Winter Survival" classes until it gets cold enough.

80 below: Mt. St. Helen Freezes. People in Michigan rent some videos.

100 below: Santa Claus abandons the North Pole. Michiganders get frustrated because they can't thaw the keg.

297 below: Microbial life no longer survives on dairy products. Cows in Michigan complain about farmers with cold hands.

460 below: All atomic motion stops (absolute 0 in the Kelvin scale). People in Michigan start saying "Cold 'nuff for ya?"

500 below: Hell freezes over. The Lions win the Super Bowl.

Editor's Note: This was lying on a table in our breakroom, thought you would enjoy it. Author is unknown.

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It seems difficult these days to maintain a positive attitude. It is through education and communication that we will survive. It is imperative more than ever to stay informed, make informed choices and represent our membership to the best of our ability.

Probably by the time that this article is printed we will have attended the MPWU District Meeting in Mt. Pleasant and the Central Region Retirement Counseling, Injury Compensation Training and the Building the Local Union in Midland, MI. For those of you who attended, "Thank You", without you our program could not have been a success. Once again remember the MPWU Educational Convention, May 1-4, 2003 on beautiful Mackinac Island. Hope to see you there!

Until next time,

In Solidarity,

Lynn

Long & Short of It Continued

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list once a year, but between those times, our membership might be missing out on important information.

In closing, I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible in the upcoming months. By the time you receive this edition of the Messenger, the Area 6 & 7 District meeting will probably have concluded, however, do make plans to attend the upcoming Human Relations Conference and Education Conference in May.

Until next time.

Yours in Solidarity,

Mike



OWCP Report Continued

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Leave Buy Back: Postal Service Policy Change

In the middle of last year the Postal Service issued new instructions to the field regarding leave buy-back which the APWU believes changed a long-standing practice. They informed the union that "the field has been instructed to inform employees that if leave is used after a claim is accepted by the Department of Labor, OWCP, that leave may not be bought back."

The APWU believes that the Postal Service policy is a unilateral modification of a binding past practice, and a national level grievance has been filed challenging this current position. Any Postal Service refusal to process a leave buy back request based on the new policy should be grieved at the local level.

Federal law or regulation does not require leave repurchase programs. Therefore, this is not an issue in which the Department of Labor has any legal standing.

What is an American?

I would like to share with you a poem I came across in the APWU Auxiliary news letter called News & Views, the author is unknown.

Proud to be an American

You probably missed it in the rash of news last week, but there was actually a report that someone in Pakistan had published in a newspaper an offer of a reward to anyone who killed an American, any American. So I just thought I would write to let them know what an American is, so they would know when they found one.

An American is English, or French, or Italian, Irish, German, Spanish, Polish, Russian or Greek. An American may also be Mexican, African, Indian, Chinese, Japanese, Australian, Iranian, Asian, or Arab, or Pakistani, or Afghan. An American may also be a Cherokee, Osage, Blackfoot, Navaho, Apache, or one of the many other tribes known as Native Americans.

An American is Christian, or he could be Jewish, or Buddhist, or Muslim. In fact, there are more Muslims in America than in Afghanistan. The only difference is that in America they are free to worship as each of them chooses.

An American is also free to believe in no religion. For that he will answer only to God, not the government, or to armed thugs claiming to speak for the government and for God.

An American is from the most prosperous land in the history of the world. The root of that prosperity can be found in the Declaration of Independence, which recognizes the God given right of each man and women to the pursuit of happiness.

An American is generous. Americans have helped out just about
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Area 3 Report Continued

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more or less legitimate - in the *short run* - it's incumbent upon us to get our members to think about the *long term* effects of allowing this erosion of clerk hours, such as *hundreds or even thousands* of jobs disappearing over the next few years. I recently had a PTF clerk in a small office *insist* that I withdraw an Article 7.1.B.2 grievance I had filed on her behalf (the dual-appointment RCA/casual was performing clerk duties on almost a daily basis *when she was available, at the straight-time rate, to perform such work*) because she "didn't want to work any more hours" (must be nice!!). I reluctantly withdrew the grievance (after insuring that she put her "demand" *in writing*), but I can't help but be stunned by this employee's inability to see the bigger picture.

FMLA designation - I'm consistently amazed by the complete lack of knowledge of the Family and Medical Leave Act of most small office managers. They continue to insist that employees must *specifically request the protection of the Act* when calling in, if applicable, despite the fact that it is *not* incumbent upon the employee to do so, only to give the manager sufficient information for them to determine that the leave *might* be covered under the FMLA. They continue to refuse to accept the APWU FMLA forms, despite the written assurance from Headquarters that such forms *are* acceptable. Some of them continue to insist that FMLA is *only for the employee's serious health condition*, not for family members; others insist that the FMLA "doesn't apply to unscheduled absences". While such ignorance of a 10-year-old Federal law can be infuriating at times, it can also be very helpful to the steward or officer handling an attendance discipline case; once the manager is informed that they have quite likely violated the employee's rights under Federal law (and a little bit of "bluffing" on this issue can be helpful), I've found that they'll take back or at least modify the discipline in 99% of the cases. Remember that as a steward you probably know a hell of a lot more about the FMLA than the small-town manager you're dealing with, so *use that knowledge to your advantage!*

Richard

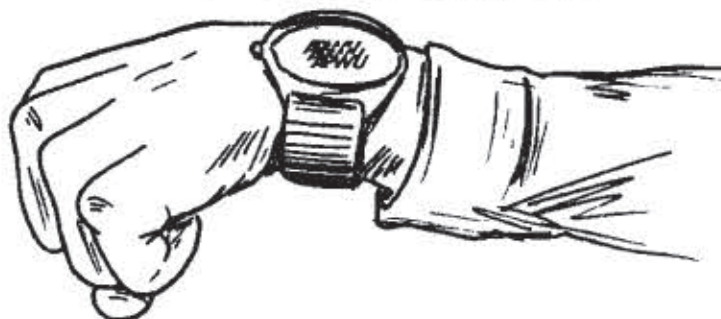
May all your grievances be winners and your claims be approved.

In Union Solidarity,

Rose

***NEXT DEADLINE
FOR THE
Michigan Messenger
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Issue
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March 15, 2003***

***Now is the time to sign up
that non-member!***



Retiree Involvement Continued

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adds up to a bunch of votes! Retirees can write Letters to the Editor in the local press to create public awareness. All our National APWU, State and Local Unions have to do is utilize this untapped resource is to provide direction. Give us the ammo! Provide "fact sheets" upon which retirees can write informed letters. Furnish us with sample letters for writing our U.S. Senators and Representatives. Organize informational pickets, inviting Chapters and individual retirees to participate (walking, handing out info leaflets, refreshments brigade, etc.). Given the opportunity, it is then up to Retiree Chapters to do whatever we can to marshal our retired numbers with "A Call to Arms."

Consider all the retired former officers, stewards and active members in the field who have invaluable experience to offer in all the aforementioned activities gained while building this union. It is as grassroots as it gets! Retirees have an opportunity to demonstrate our value to the APWU and enhance "retiree inclusion" goals. Let's just DO IT!

"ALL THAT GLITTERS AIN'T NECESSARILY GOLD." The recently ratified fast-track 2-year "contract extension" contained an as yet unfulfilled lure dangled in front of eligible senior APWU employees offering "early retirement" options contingent upon OPM approval. Whew! Lot's of "ifs" there! I have a sneaking suspicion that the baited hook of early retirement influenced the 7-1 approval to ratify. I am not so sure the 7-1 margin denotes approval as much as it does a "fear factor." About that 7-1 ratification vote: it hardly indicates a ringing endorsement of the terms of the extension (a band-aid at best) when you consider that a minority of affected APWU employees even bothered to vote. Not exactly what I would call a vote of confidence.

That begin said; if you are an active employee who may be eligible for an "early retirement" option, and, if it does come to pass, I strongly recommend you approach it with extreme caution. Retirement is permanent! Just ask those who leaped at the first-ever USPS "early out" in 1992. Remember how they danced out the door clutching a six-month pay incentive bonus! Many retirees who go out with full age and service requirements still try to get rehired or are now working minimum wage jobs to supplement their monthly annuities. Just think about those who won't even have the full age benefit if an early retirement is taken. Figure any spousal benefit deduction, health and life insurance and taxes. Then, take a real hard look at the next bottom line. Retirees Department Director John R. Smith's column in the Jan/Feb American Postal Worker Magazine provides most of the facts to consider when, and if this option happens. Frankly I think (sadly) it stands a good chance with OPM. After all, aren't federal agencies all in cahoots anyway, with marching orders issued from the Bush White House? Offering early retirements fits right into USPS plans to downsize the workforce, with a "trailer hook" that early outs might lessen possible excessing impacts upon junior employees...maybe.

As one who knows, and I retired at age 55 with 35 years, three (3) months service, it is a damned long ways between paydays if your annuity is your sole source of income. Again, my best advice is to approach any "early retirement" option offers that may result with extreme caution! There are a lot of us out here that would tell you; the only thing "golden" about retirement is what you put in the cup for the doctor.

Where did CSRS/FERS COLA go? I am not just referring to the anemic 1.4% COLA just wiped out by increased income tax and health insurance deduction. No, but has anyone else noticed that APWU News Service Bulletins no longer features CSRS/FERS quarterly CPI-W based COLA increases. This had been a longstanding-featured NSB item. What's up with that?

OMMISON. Speaking of missing items; the altogether way overdue response to the question of Why 2000 National Convention Constitution Committee Report Resolution #68, amending the APWU Constitution & By-Laws did not appear in the 2000 amended version of the constitution. The new language allows members of the Retirees Department residing outside the zip code jurisdiction of the home Local they retired from, the option to assigning their membership and dues rebate to their home Local Retiree Chapter. Written and verbal attempts to correct this omission have been ongoing for over a year.

The 2002 amended version of the Constitution is due to be available in January. I have again spoken to, as well as written to Tunstall, J.R. Smith, and Gary Parrish, but to no avail. Both Tunstall and Parrish acknowledged verbally that such a resolution was adopted. Both have now confirmed that it can and will be implemented. However, both claimed not understanding that it was a constitutional amendment. Balderdash! This retiree didn't fall off the turnip truck yesterday!

When Western Region National Retiree Delegate, Byron Denton, discovered that the amended language did not appear, and I questioned both Smith and Tunstall last March, the explanation was that it was "inadvertently omitted" when transcribed from the Official Proceedings (convention minutes) by an APWU employee. Obviously, APWU officers have no incentive to respond to retired members who have no voice or vote. However, the fact remain that the 2000 National Convention Official Proceedings (pages 171-173) confirms that the Constitution Committee reported this amendment, and it was adopted by the delegates. Furthermore, it was submitted as a constitutional amendment. I know. I was the author.

I am well aware that there were certain national officers who were reluctant to implement or publicize this retired member option. I am just as aware that there were large, influential warm weather Retiree Chapters who raised concerns that they could lose some of the "snowbird" retired members who have migrated from states like Michigan to their jurisdiction. It is easy to see those "concerns" and more about the Money (dues rebates) than it is about remember members' options. So, I wait to see what the 2002 amended version of the APWU Constitution and By-Laws

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Retiree Involvement Continued

(Continued from page 8)

contain. Be assured that I will not stay silent on this one!

Retiree Chapter Dues Rebates – A very serious problem has reportedly been occurring in some Local Retiree Chapters regarding the handling and accounting of chapter retiree membership dues funds. Reportedly, some active locals fiduciary officers are guilty of simply absorbing retiree dues rebate monies without any accounting or access to their local chapters. This is improper and must be addressed by Chapter presidents with their parent local presidents. Remember to make copies of any written correspondence for your records. Hopefully, such delicate situations can be resolved in-house. Retirees Department Director John R. Smith has advised; "Retiree Chapter dues rebates are to be used solely by and Retiree Chapters and their members. Chapters who experience this problem, and cannot resolve it locally, should contact the APWU Retirees Department and/or APWU Secretary-Treasurer." I must emphasize that this has never been a problem for our State Retiree Chapter.

Stuff. I concluded the November/December Retiree Involvement column by stating this issue would feature the fallacies in the disturbing defeat of Resolution #21 by the 2002 Convention. The more urgent issues I have addressed herein precluded revising that hot issues this time around. Time for that later.

Retired MPWU Area Director, Jerry Phelps, joined wife, "Little Bits" Carol, as one of the newest members of the MPWU State Retiree Chapter. I am hoping to be with Carol and Jerry, and as many of you as possible, at the "Leo Persails Testimonial Dinner" in Midland, Michigan on Saturday, February 22nd. I look forward to these reunions" to recharge the old batteries, with this one being even more special because we have the long overdue opportunity to properly Thank our "favorite son" and Leo's partner in life, wife Jeannie (also a State Chapter member) for their nearly four decades of dedication and sacrifice on behalf of a grateful rank and file membership. Pray the weather cooperates!

I know all our Sisters and Brother retirees join us in wishing MPWU Clerk Craft Director, and President of the Pontiac MI Area Local #1766, Bob Maloney, and hearty Get Well and offer our prayers for a complete recovery. Anyone who knows and loves 'The Gremlin' knows he is a battler and will win this fight too!

FEBURARY! Retiree's favorite month! Only 28 days, four weeks between paydays! Be Strong!

In Brotherhood,

Al LaBrecque

P.O.W.E.R. Report Continued

(Continued from page 4)

a time when the odds were more than ever against women.

In the depths of the Depression, Olga Madar got a job at Chrysler Corp.'s Kercheval Avenue plant because she could play softball. That the company would take her on just for athletic skills angered her so much that she spent the rest of her life fighting for unions. She rose through union ranks to become the first woman named international vice president of the United Auto Workers in 1970, Madar used her position to fight for the rights for women and minorities. She worked for 22 years in the UAW's recreation department, 19 years as a director, before she was named to the international executive board. She died in 1996.

(Source: The Detroit Almanac)

The 2003 APWU/P.O.W.E.R Convention is scheduled to be in Las Vegas, Nevada. While there has been no date decided as of yet, more information will be forthcoming. It is never too late to begin working on any resolutions you plan to submit and have them available prior to attending the convention. These resolutions are extremely important. So please write on any issue you'd like to have addressed. Let's be prepared this convention as it regards to our resolutions.

Pat



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Your articles are welcome! They must be signed to be printed, but your name will be withheld upon request. Be aware that articles may be edited to fit the confines of this publication.

In addition, this paper is designed with everyone in mind, please be aware that all mistakes are intentional for the express purpose of keeping those happy that are most happy when finding errors in others.



Upcoming Events to Plan For:

February 19 -22, 2003 - Midland's Holiday Inn - 1st Annual Central Region Human Relations Conference

May 1 - 4, 2003 - Mackinac Island's Mission Point Resort - MPWU Educational Conference

July 30 - August 2, 2003 - Milwaukee, WI, National PPA Convention

FEBRUARY IS BLACK HISTORY MONTH



February 1, 1960 - Four black college students begin historic sit-in at segregated lunch counter in Greensboro, N.C.

February 1, 1865 - National Freedom Day. Anniversary of President Abraham Lincoln's approval of the 13th amendment to the US Constitution which abolished slavery.

February 4, 1913 - Rosa Parks, mother of the civil rights movement, is born.

February 11, 1990 - Nelson Mandela is released from a South African prison after 27 years as a political prisoner.

February 12, 1887 - Birthdate of Frederick Douglass, former slave, abolitionist, writer, and advocate of civil, labor, and trade-union rights for African Americans.

February 21, 1965—Black nationalist leader, Malcolm X, is assassinated in New York

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