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by John
Marcotte,
President

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Negotiating In Good Faith Is Critical To Our Future

Hopefully by the time you read this we will either be in the process of ratifying a new contract or our case to present at the arbitration hearing will be in its final stages of preparation. We must balance the old adage that justice delayed is justice denied without appearing weak at the bargaining table. We must explore every avenue of good faith negotiation but not be willing to endlessly wait for mail volume to halt its upward trend as the national economy rebounds as management would dearly love to happen. Knowing how to judge the intentions of your adversary is the art of negotiation. To know when management is not negotiating in good faith is critical to our future and is the subject of my article.

Definition of MORATORIUM

1a : a legally authorized period of delay in the performance of a legal obligation or the payment of a debt b : a waiting period set by an authority

2: a suspension of activity

Examples of MORATORIUM

1. The treaty calls for a nuclear testing moratorium.

2. <the director of the blood bank called for a moratorium in donations until the surplus could be used up>

3. In 2000, Illinois declared a moratorium on executions after 13 death-row inmates were exonerated. —Evan Thomas et al., *Newsweek*, 19 Nov. 2007

4. But one country's moratorium is another country's protectionism, and the U.S. is suspicious of Europe's actions. —Jeffrey Kluger, *Time*, 13 Sept. 1999

5. The striped bass are recovering

strongly after a moratorium on catching them. —John P. Wiley, Jr., *Smithsonian*, November 1993

6. Her office was crammed with ungraded school papers, some of them dating back five years. She was far behind in her work—so far behind that she had declared a moratorium on school work until she could catch up on her grading. —Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., *The Sirens of Titan*, 1959

• The above is courtesy of Merriam-Webster online dictionary website

I just received notification that the Greater Michigan District is going to proceed with all the steps concerning excessing of employees from all the facilities that was halted by the moratorium on excessing agreed to between the APWU and the USPS. Looking at the above definition of moratorium,

1a or 1b don't quite fit as it was not a legal obligation that was suspended and it was not set by an authority but was a negotiated agreement. 2a however is exactly what was agreed to, a suspension of activity. Now District management is proceeding with all activity except the actual excessing including having employees select senior opt and employees select involuntary assignment from a list of withheld positions. When questioned, Greater Michigan District Compliment Coordinator Fuss stated that in the USPS's opinion as long as they don't actually involuntarily excess someone they feel they are in compliance with the moratorium. When I explained that a moratorium is suspension of all activity she stated that this being performed all over the country. So if postal manage-

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Legislative Report

Will Michigan Become A "Right-To-Work" State?



by Paul
Felton,
Legislative
Director

Michigan now has a Republican Governor and a Republican majority in both houses of the State Legislature. Republicans scored this "hat trick" in a number of Midwestern states last November. I expect to see repercussions for the labor movement.

We may see a move to make Michigan a "right-to-work" state. I don't expect the new Governor to lead the charge on this anti-labor initiative, so much as support it behind the scenes. In any event, the state AFL-CIO is bracing for this and other attacks on the labor movement now that the Republicans have total control of our state government.

"Right-to-Work" is a very misleading term. It really should read "Right-of-non-members to get all the benefits members get without paying dues." In private industry, it is not uncommon for a union contract to include language requiring all bargaining unit members to belong to the union. Some states, especially

in the anti-labor southern part of the country, have passed laws making such agreements illegal. Those states tend to have a lower standard of living. "Right-to-Work" laws weaken the labor movement, making it harder for unions to achieve good contracts, which in turn affects the prevailing wages in workplaces without unions.

The APWU is regulated by federal legislation that is the equivalent of a state "Right-to-Work" law. We all know how that works. Union stewards have to represent employees who don't pay a cent in dues. These non-members get all the benefits of a union wage, no-layoff protection, bidding rights by seniority and everything that a member gets. Fortunately, most postal employees are members and the APWU has remained strong over the years. That is not always the case in private industry.

If we witness a "Right-to-Work" initiative in Michigan in the next year or two, we should devote all of our energy to oppose it. I think many of our members understand there is a relationship between the wages at-

tained by private sector unions and what we can expect to get in our contract. I don't know how many times in the past year, as our contract deadline approached, that coworkers asked me whether we would have to take concessions like the auto workers did. If nothing else, defeats suffered by unions in the private sector exert a downward pressure on our contract negotiation process.

I believe there will be a serious attempt to weaken the labor movement in the Midwest. In Michigan, the cradle of the UAW, it will be important for symbolic as well as economic reasons to fight these attacks.

PUBLIC SECTOR WORKERS

We can also expect the Republican Governor and legislature to come after state employees. Actually, the attack on public employees is a national phenomenon. After government at state, local and federal levels run up a significant debt, public employees become the scapegoat. Republicans and some Democrats are leading this charge (after all, it was President Obama who

froze the wages of federal – not including postal – employees recently). The ideology of "smaller government" has become the excuse for privatization and outright wage and benefit cuts for public employees. The truth is, the profit-seeking business community is behind this push. The public sector unions are now the strongest part of the labor movement, as private sector unions have suffered one blow after another. Labor-haters in the business community are now coming after public employee unions. Study after study has shown that privatization is wasteful in most instances. And given the huge bundles of money that government at every level throws at large corporations and banks, to blame the rank-and-file government worker for the debt is nothing but hypocrisy.

So I urge my fellow postal workers in Michigan to pay close attention to developments at the state level. Support the public employees in the state of Michigan, and stop any attempt to turn Michigan into a "Right-to-Work" state. In the birthplace of the UAW, it is time for labor to take a stand.



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Negotiating In Good Faith Is Critical To Our Future

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ment is stealing stamp stock all over the country that makes it right to do so? Obviously I protested to this dishonest interpretation of a clear agreement. I will give you just a few of my objections here.

1. The stress and disruption to the workplace that this will crate is simply not necessary at this time and to extend the period of uncertainty for these effected employees like this is heartless and mean spirited.
2. Both union and management leaders at the national level had to have some reason as to why they chose to put a moratorium on excessing. The obvious conclusion is that they are close to a contractual agreement to either eliminate excessing or changes to the rules governing it. So for management to waste the time and money to go through all the steps necessary to excess only to either abandon excessing or have new rules to follow will make all the effort a complete waste of precious resources.
3. Employees who chose to senior opt or chose an involuntary assignment are stuck not knowing if they will have to move at a moments notice without any warning. This is an impossible situation to place these families in.
4. An agreement is an agreement and

the integrity of the postal service is at stake here. If they will just ignore the common definition of words and invent there own negotiation is impossible at best and management is clearly asking for a bad faith labor charge and the intervention of the NLRB.

This clear issue of duplicity by local management relates directly to how our national leadership are to interpret the seriousness and integrity of the parties they are negotiating with. I seriously doubt that Ms. Rettinghouse took it upon herself to authorize a direct refusal to obey an instruction by her superiors and if she did she should be held responsible for that. If since I have been told by management that it is happening all over it is more likely that this is a national imitative by the same parties that agreed to the moratorium. In that case we are wasting our time negotiating with persona of such low quality and should move on to mediation and arbitration without delay.

As an addendum to this article my bid job is at the Gaylord processing facility where we are under an excessing notice for mail volume and BPI to match a facility in Washington State. The mail volume portion was suspended by Ms. Rettinhouse and rightfully so as mail volume is increasing in our facility. However BPI has not been suspended

even though we have matched the BPI of the Washington facility event though this facility has an excessive amount of hours being transferred to function 4 from function 1 driving up their BPI. Further this facility achieves a high BPI by working lots of overtime and penalty overtime since in BPI an hour = an hour regardless of how much money that hour costs. In short, we process mail over a much larger geographical area with a shorter turn around time at the same BPI and at a much less cost per mail piece and yet the excessing will not be stopped. One can only derive from this information that excessing is busy work for district management that is desperate to prove they are relevant and busy even though the OIG and even now the PMG realize they are relics to a era when communication from town to town and state to state was in weeks not seconds as is now. It is obvious that having to deal with the realities of mechanization and automation is viewed as a Craft only obligation. E-mail, fax and cell phones did not just lower first class mail volume they made district and area offices obsolete. So now district management wants the craft to endure needless excessing to provide the illusion they are productive. I say excess yourselves and do all of us a favor.

Yours in Solidarity and Friendship.



Human Relation's Report MSPB And NRP (Merit System Protection Board and National Reassessment Process)

by Jennifer Amos, Human Relations Director

Appeal to the Merit System Protection Board (MSPB)

The Code of Federal Regulations at 5 CFR 353, "Restoration To Duty From Uniformed Service Or Compensable Injury," permits individuals with accepted compensable injuries to appeal to MSPB the Postal Service's failure to restore, improper restoration, or

failure to return an employee following a leave of absence. You do not have to be a preference eligible veteran to file an appeal. When the USPS separates, grants LWOP, restores or fails to restore an employee because of a compensable injury, they are required to notify the employee of his or her rights and obligations, including any MSPB appeal and/or grievance rights.

However, regardless of notification, an employee should exercise due diligence in ascertaining his or her rights. When an employee has partially recovered from a compensable injury the Postal Service must make every effort to restore the employee and return them to medically suitable work. At a minimum, this would mean treating the employee substantially the same as other handicapped individuals under the Rehabilitation Act. A partially recovered employee may appeal to MSPB for a determination of whether the USPS acted "arbitrarily and capriciously" in denying restoration. Ordinarily, an agency's failure to comply with their own rules and regulations would indicate that they acted in an arbitrary and capricious manner. The Human Relations Department has prepared a guide [PDF] <http://www.apwu.org/dept/humanrel/hr-injurycomp-wdo-fldandrehab-appealguide091209.pdf> that may be useful to an employee who decides to appeal to MSPB. It is not an official form, but may be useful in organizing the relevant documents and arguments to be presented to MSPB. The personnel action being contested

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The Michigan Postal Workers Union proudly represents the Members at Large within the Great State of Michigan. The following locals have also affiliated with the MPWU for training, education and information sharing between their members, stewards and officers of their own local and others throughout the state and nation:

Alpena	Flint	Muskegon	Stevensville
Battle Creek	480-481	Pontiac	Traverse City
Central MI	498-499	Roger City	Troy Local
Cheboygan	Gaylord	486-487	Western MI
Detroit District	Jackson	Sault Ste Marie	
Farmington	Ludington	Southwest MI	

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The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the writer and not necessarily those of the Editor, the MPWU, the APWU or the Postal Press. Any and all correspondence to the Editor may be sent to: Michael Long, Editor, PO Box 280, Sheridan, MI 48884-0280; fax to: 616-776-1536; or e-Mail to: mpwueditor@yahoo.com

Your articles are welcome! They must be signed to be printed, but your name will be withheld upon request. Articles sent via electronic media will be treated as being signed. Be aware that articles may be edited to fit the confines of this publication.

Lastly, 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.



by Michael A.
Long,
Editor

Happy 2011. A new decade has begun (depending on if you believe the decade starts on year one or year zero), but the problems not only seem to continue, but multiply. We have management that has already stated their disdain for craft employees, by not only not adhering to the contract, but going above and beyond by their outright hostile attitude and actions. One can only hope that with the proposed reductions in management ranks,

Editor's Report

A New Decade Has Begun

that they take these incompetent and hostile management with them.

I am going to keep this article short, to ensure enough space in this edition for some of the articles I haven't been able to include this past year. However, I did want to touch on a few items.

1. Educational Convention will be held June 9 – 11, 2011 in Bay City, Michigan. Check the website for updates and classes.

2. Michigan Labor Press Educational Conference will be held April 14 – 17, 2011 in Grayling, Michigan.

If you are an editor or someone who writes for your local or another labor organization, please make plans to attend. Go to milaborpress.org for more information.

3. Postal Press Association National Educational Convention will be held August 10 – 13, 2011 in Orlando, Florida. Check out the PPA website for more info.

4. The Area 1, 2, & 3 District meeting scheduled for February has been canceled. Please make plans to attend the Educational Convention (#1 above) instead.

5. The next District Meeting, Area 4, 5, & 6 is currently being planned. If you would like to see something specific to be taught, please let your Area director know.

In closing, I hope each of you had a great holiday season and I look forward to seeing many of you in the upcoming year. As always, if I can be of any help, please let me know or if you want to submit any article this upcoming year, they are always accepted and are due by the Fifteenth of each odd month (January, March, May, July, September, & November).



by Jason
Rushing,
Maintenance
Craft Director

It has come to a reality that even Maintenance is not immune from the evils of excessing. This year in Detroit we have seen numerous Maintenance employees impacted by an eWHEP package re-figured, an AMP that was done or a Custodial MS 47 package recalculated. The movement of mail or machines does have an impact on us, the Maintenance Craft. Most recently we have an impact that came out stating the Priority Mail Center is going through consolidation. Excessing is by juniority by level and occupation, not by job, but by employee. At this point the Postal Service is calling their actions to the PMC a consolidation. They have not said it was closing. It is the same but different. With consolidation it leaves more options open for the future instead of just closing it. There have been impacts with excessing in Flint, Kalamazoo and Jackson just to name a couple. Keeping informed is key to knowing your rights. You need to know all your rights and options. Ask questions and be active.

If you are an effected employee by excessing, make sure all your options are before you. Do not jump on the first thing that comes along. Maintenance is different when it comes to excessing. If you ever had a valid score for other levels other than what you currently are, that could be very beneficial to you when going through excessing. Say you are an MPE Mechanic and being excessed. If you ever had a BC5 score or Maintenance Mechanic score, that could help you stay closer than only ever being an MPE. Everyone qualifies for a Custodial Laborer, since they have waived the test years ago.

Maintenance Craft Report

Too Many Maintenance Employees ? ? ?

Problem is now some Custodians are being moved around, excessed possibly. Another option is e-reassignment. If there is an area you would like to move to, maybe e-reassign would be beneficial. A thing to remember though is with e-reassign you do not take your seniority with you. Also the area you want to go cannot be under withholding or excessing. If they are e-reassign is not allowed. If you are involuntarily excessed you always take your seniority with you into a Maintenance position. If you change crafts you do not take your seniority with you.

Excessing is not an easy thing to accept. Your employer that hired you for a specific job, in a specific area says they don't need you in that area anymore and possibly that job. That could be a very hard pill to swallow. I have helped many employees from around the state of Michigan deal with that very thing. Not easy. Thing is, you are guaranteed a job somewhere, at your same pay level and if need be with saved grade. Saved grade is forever, as long as you meet minimum criteria. For right now a job is guaranteed when excessing occurs if you can follow it or change jobs. Who knows what the future contract will actually hold. The big 3 would love to have a clause like this in their contract.

So as we go through this excessing together there are a few things to keep in mind. Never be afraid to read the contract and ask questions. Just because I have been through this many times, I do not admit to knowing everything. If you have taken other tests in Maintenance and never had test scores finalized with a rating, do it now. Update. What ever it takes. Request an update for lower level jobs you tested for but don't have scores, say BC5. If you already are a Custodian, take

updates and see which levels you can get scores for. That might help you e-reassign, transfer or promote at an important time.

There is excessing going on like never seen before in the Postal Service. If we stay alert and keep all of our options open we can make it through this.

Don't underestimate yourself or cut yourself short. Stay positive and always try to make good from a seemingly bad situation. Don't take anything on face value from anyone, read, ask questions, stay involved and be involved. Be a Union member and participate.

In Union Solidarity.

MSPB And NRP

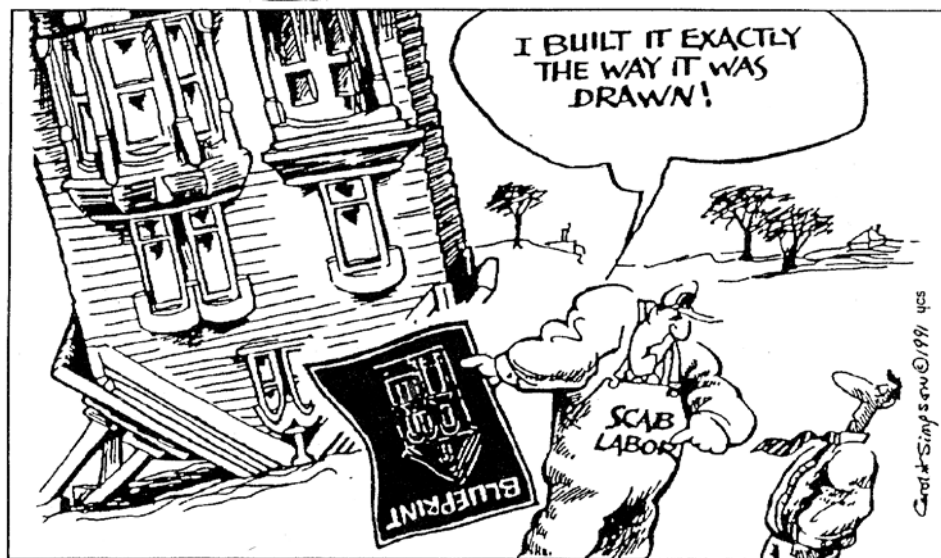
(Merit System Protection Board and National Reassessment Process)

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would be "Failure to restore/reemploy/reinstate." Appeals can be filed on line at their web site, which is indicated below.

Individuals who would like to learn more about MSPB appeals can go to MSPB's web site: www.mspb.gov. Also, the APWU Store has two booklets for sale regarding MSPB: "Merit Systems Protection Board: The Hearing," and "Merit Systems Protection Board: Principles & Procedures." A MSPB Appeal can be initiated by anyone due to adverse action caused by the NRP.

You do not have to be a veteran to file an appeal so please keep track of your time limits. It is my understanding the initial contact must be made within a short time period. Please visit the web site for more information. I am not an expert with MSPB so do your homework: <https://e-appeal.mspb.gov/> See [PDF] <http://www.apwu.org/dept/human-rel/hr-injurycomp-wdofldandrehab-appealguide091209.pdf> to utilize a well written template when filing a MSPB appeal — excellent verbiage composed by the Human Relations Department.





by John Smeekeens, Veterans Director

Veteran's Report

Information For Veterans

TROOP TALK

Here I sit at this thing called a computer, and it really amazes me how great it is, yet it sometimes upsets me beyond the point of frustration. I remember, and I'm sure some of you Veterans' remember, how we looked forward to "Mail Call." Now we have computers and this thing called "Facebook." I'm just touching the tip of the iceberg on this facebook thing. I remember the first time I had a chance to call my wife Donna from Vietnam, when I had to go through a Mars Satellite Station. You had to use the standard radio nomenclature to speak to the person on the other end of the line. Do you remember saying hi "over"? Now computers, facebook, and SKYPE. WOW !!!

DADT

The 17-year-old ban on homosexuals serving openly in the military has been repealed; however, "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" remains in effect until 60 days

after the President, Defense Secretary and Chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff certify that open service will not impact military readiness. When that certification takes place, which may take months because each service must first report back how they will implement the changes, then the DADT may go into effect. Bureaucratic Red Tape ???

DEFENSE BILL

Congress passed the FY 2011 National Defense Bill. The bill (HR 6523) was reintroduced, after the House removed controversial provisions in order to move the bill through. Some of the provisions include; a 1.4 % military pay raise, TRICARE coverage for dependent children to age 26, no TRICARE Standard inpatient co-pay increases in FY2011, prohibition of an administrative discharge of a servicemember for an injury or illness after being considered by a physical evaluation board and deemed fit to return to duty, and renewal of many expiring recruiting and retention bonus

authorities. These are just a few of the provisions!

MILITARY RECRUITING POOL SHRINKS

According to a recent report by the nonprofit Education Trust, almost one in four high school students who try to join the Army fail its entrance exam. The Army requires a minimum score of 31 out of 99 on the first stage of the three-hour ASVAB(armed services vocational aptitude battery). Potential Marine, Navy, Air Force and Coast Guard recruits need higher minimum scores, which are 32, 35, 36 and 40, respectively. The report adds to a growing worry among military recruiting commanders and civilian education leaders that the pool of young people qualified for military service is shrinking. The services are meeting their recruiting goals(primarily due to the economy), but recruiting officials admit that 75 percent of today's pool of 17 to 24-year-olds are ineligible for military service due to aptitude, fitness, health and/or criminal records.

Rivera responded that Reagan's record has now been set straight, and his story would make a great movie.

GOODBYE ROSIE

A Michigan factory worker used as the unwitting model for the wartime Rosie the Riveter poster whose inspirational "We Can Do It!" message became an icon of the feminist movement has died. Geraldine Doyle recently died at the Hospice House of Mid Michigan. She was 86. Ms. Doyle didn't realize she had a famous face until she was flipping through a magazine in 1982 and spotted a reproduction of the poster and recognized her face under the red and white polka dot bandana. That fist and the strong arm, weren't hers though. She was 5-foot-10 and slender. Doyle was just 17 when she took at job at a metal pressing plant near Ann Arbor, Michigan in 1942, but she quit her job about two weeks later after learning that another woman had badly injured her hand on the job, Ms. Doyle was worried she'd lose the ability to play her cello. She was there, however, when a United Press International photographer came to the factory while documenting the contribution of women to the war effort. A picture of Doyle was later used, on a poster, by Westinghouse, aimed at deterring strikes and absenteeism. The poster was not widely seen until the 1980's when it was embraced by the feminist movement as a potent symbol of women's empowerment. The iconic image now graces a US postage stamp, and numerous other things. The term, Rosie the Riveter, stems from a 1942 song that honored the women who took over critical factory jobs when men went off to war.

STOP-LOSS DEADLINE EXTENDED AGAIN

The deadline for eligible service members, veterans and their beneficiaries to apply for retroactive Stop Loss special pay has been extended to March 4, 2011. Congress established the retroactive pay to compensate service members who served involuntary extensions or whose retirement was suspended between Sept. 11, 2001 through Sept. 30, 2009. Eligible members and their beneficiaries are required to submit a claim to their respective military service to receive the benefit of \$500 for each full or partial month served in stop-loss status. For more information, visit the **Department of Defense Retroactive Stop Loss Special Pay webpage**. Please make copies of this and put them on every bulletin board you can find. Hand them out to all your military friends, but please get the word out to as many Veterans' as possible !!!

Your Voluntary Benefits Plan

In addition to above average wages and safe working conditions, great healthcare and significantly better job security than most people have today, the American Postal Workers Union has been a pioneer in employee benefits by making a number of benefit plans available to the membership through the Voluntary Benefits Plan.

Since 1986, the Voluntary Benefits Plan has provided A+ benefits and outstanding service to dues-paying members of the union. And "dues-paying" is the first key to the services provided. You must be a dues-paying member of the APWU to be eligible to apply for any of these benefits. Two other key components to the benefit program are that each plan has been designed specifically for employees of the U.S. Postal Service and that they are payable through very convenient payroll deductions.

The type of work you do is different than most other Americans and the fact that these plans are designed to meet your needs means that the insurance company can better determine the true cost of each benefit and pass the savings back to you in the form of low group premiums. While everything increases in cost each year, especially healthcare, the Voluntary Benefits Plan has managed to keep rate increases infrequent and lower than average. Some of the benefit programs offered today still cost the same as they did in 1986.

Your ability to pay premiums through a dedicated payroll deduction slot (which is not considered one of your optional voluntary allocations) means that the cost to you is further reduced to very affordable amounts.

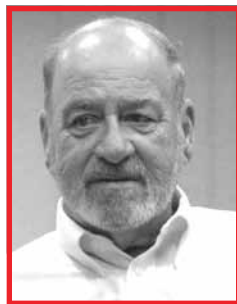
What's more, many Federal or Postal Employees have had difficulty buying coverage such as Disability Insurance privately, at any cost! If you can find other coverage similar to what is offered through this program, it will be very time consuming for you and the rates probably won't be as low. The Voluntary Benefits Plan has made finding just the right coverage for your family very easy.

So what about the benefits? What are they and how much do they cost? Are they available all the time or are there limited enrollment periods? The answers vary according to who is asking. Some benefits may be perfect for your family but not needed by your co-worker. Premiums are based on which benefit you need and what level of coverage you want. Some are priced in age bands and some are the same price for all ages. You can find out all of the specifics about each plan by requesting a benefit plan booklet from the Voluntary Benefits Plan.

You can reach one of the Member Representatives by calling between 8:30 am and 5:00 pm, Eastern Time.

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by Al
LaBrecque,
Retiree's Chapter
President

Retiree Involvement

Report On Conference

WHAT I SHOULD HAVE WRITTEN: Sometimes I get so wrapped up with internal Union and Retirees' Dept. issues that I forget to communicate items important to the welfare of the membership. Much of what follows is after the fact, but in the event retired members and Social Security eligible seniors didn't already know, there will be no COLA in retiree's annuities, or for S.S. recipients in 2011. That's 2 years in a row with predictions that 2012 will likely be a zero calorie "diet COLA".

MEDICARE PART B PREMIUMS: As a result of no COLA increase in S.S. monthly benefits; CSRS/FERS retirees currently receiving S.S. will, by law, be "held harmless" and their Medicare monthly premium will not increase. For instance; CSRS/FERS Social Security eligible retirees whose Medicare premium was \$96.50, or \$110.50, in 2010, it will remain either \$96.50 or \$110.50 in 2011. That's the best news. CSRS annuitants who are not S.S. eligible, or anyone who will become Medicare eligible in 2011, the Medicare monthly premium will increase to \$115.40. For all Medicare recipients; the annual deductible before Medicare kicks in is \$162., increased from \$155. in 2010. The deductible is usually covered, at least in part, by your secondary FEHBP health insurance coverage.

Legislative proposals in the U.S. House to provide a \$250. payment to S.S. recipients due to no COLA was before the lame duck session. Postal/federal retirees not eligible for S.S. benefits would not receive the \$250. payment unless an amendment or separate legislation is offered to include them. With the jam-packed agenda of the 111th lame duck session, neither proposal was enacted. Hopefully, the measure is being reintroduced in the 112th Congress.

BUT! Your FEHBP health insurance premiums shot up! BC/BS Standard Family jumped \$30., a \$431. monthly premium! That's the "non-postal" retiree rate. In my own case, I have been stuck with BC/BS since relocating to a rural county over 17 years ago. My physician provider health care group didn't recognize our APWU Health Plan and repeatedly rejected attempts to contract as a PPO with APWU. Having been a member of the APWU Health Plan since its humble beginnings in the '60's with Jack Love as its Director, and when it paid first dollar benefits, I tried unsuccessfully to have my provider contract with the APWU Health Plan, and in earnest the last 2 1/2 years. Without going into detail, taking

the bull by the horns acting as liaison between the provider administration and the APWU Health Plan (and a lot of hoops), a contract was agreed upon just in time to enroll during Open Season.

The bottom line is MY bottom line . . . a \$161. bottom line! That's the monthly savings difference between BC/BS Standard Family and APWU Health Plan High Option Family premiums. Benefits coverage is comparable or better. It amounts to a nearly \$2K annuity increase annually. Being Medicare eligible, the APWU Health Plan is my secondary health insurer, but my spouse is not Medicare eligible so the APWU Health Plan is primary for her coverage thus necessitating a contract with the provider. Fortunately, our Regional Medical Center (hospital) is an APWU Health Plan PPO.

The point is; \$161. more in my monthly net annuity! Insurance is a very personal choice . . . a necessary evil. As a Local Union officer, I was tasked with conducting new employee Union orientation. I informed new hires that I don't sell insurance, Union or otherwise. I sell unionism. The APWU Health Plan is a benefit of belonging to the Union. For retirees to be eligible to the APWU Health Plan, they must be a \$36. per year member of the APWU Retirees' Dept. Just as I advised new hires, compare personal and family health needs, compare available FEHBP coverage and premiums, then choose accordingly. Changes can be made during annual Open Seasons and under certain other specific circumstances. I'm happy as a clam \$161. worth in my pocket each month that we're back home with the APWU Health Plan.

TO THE VICTORS BELONG THE SPOILS: A lot of uneasy speculation over the makeup of the 112th GOP controlled U.S. House and marginally Dem U.S. Senate, with particular apprehension over key GOP Committee Chairmanships whose stated positions don't bode well for retirees, seniors, veterans, persons with disabilities, and postal/federal workers and annuitants.

Michigan turned "red" from stem to stern. Apart from what that will mean for our state's citizens, the very real specter of "Right To Shirk", and the prospects of redistricting congressional boundaries is most troubling. The 2010 Census will determine the number of U.S. Representatives Michigan will have based on population. In the 2000 Census, Michigan lost one seat. With the GOP in control, redistricting eliminated a Dem held District. It's called "gerrymandering". The Party in power redraws congress-

sional district lines to their advantage, most often to knock off the opposition Party's seats. Again, speculation has it that our good friend, 9th District Rep. Gary Peters-D, will be targeted.

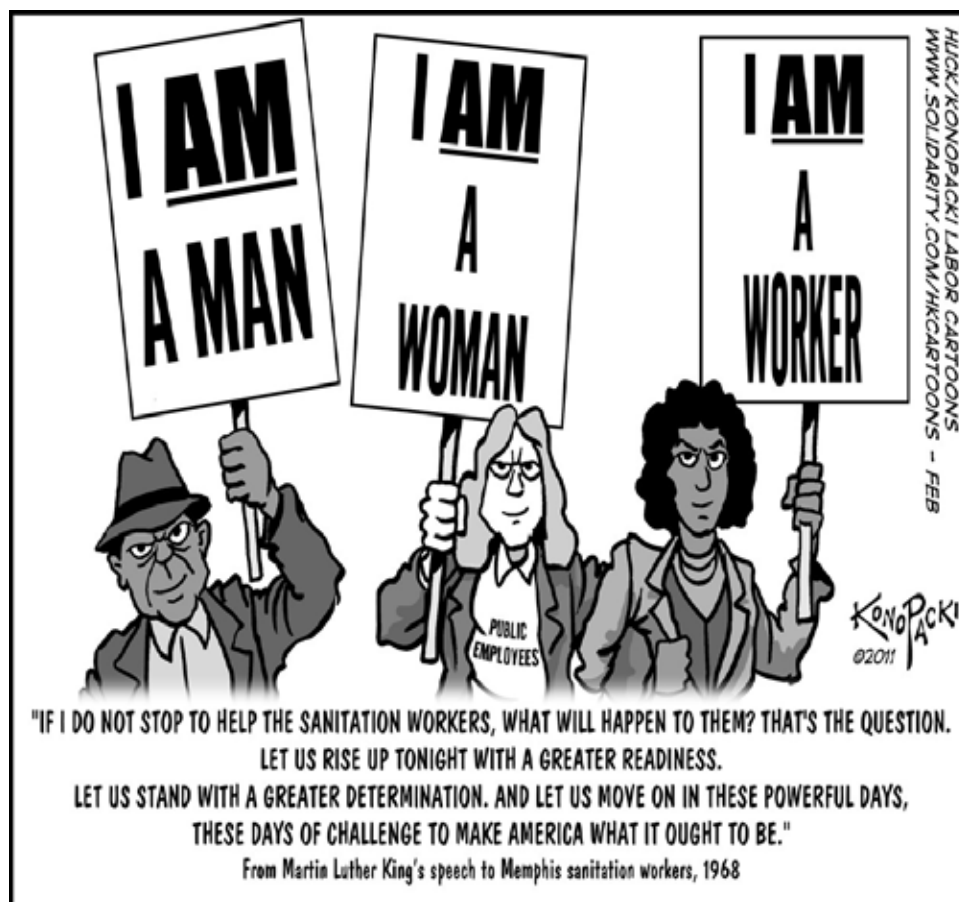
My own 1st Congressional District is the largest land area east of the Mississippi; the entire U.P. and N.E. Lower Peninsula all the way down to Bay City. It was held by our outstanding Congressman, Bart Stupak-D. Had Stupak not retired, it would still be in our column. Further speculation is that gerrymandering would lop off largely Dem Bay County and redrawn to cover the top of the "mitten" to include the conservative Traverse City area to put a GOP lock on it. That's the stark reality of partisan politics, and it ain't nice.

SAGINAW MAIL PROCESSING: Spruce, MI is at the top northern end of the 487 delivery area approximately 140 miles from Saginaw. The Pontiac Metroplex mail processing mega-plant is 70 miles south of Saginaw. And the USPS talking heads wants me as a postal customer to swallow their B.S. that my outgoing and incoming mail will meet delivery standards, which are currently one day. That's only if (and when) those "standards" are reduced from 1 to 2 or more days! Don't pee on my leg and tell me its raining! "Service" is a bad joke! It's a given that USPS management doesn't give one hoot for the upheaval in postal workers lives, with excessing, or for service to the mailing public. This ridiculous overreach to suck up mail volume to justify the giant Metroplex and its questionable technology is their true motive . . . employees and delayed mail be damned! I remember when de-

liberately delaying the mail was cause for removal. The experience of Flint losing its cancellation and processing to the Metroplex and resulting delayed mail is testimony to this monumental boondoggle.

Regardless of the protests of the Union, city, county, or state officials, the resulting dire consequences of consolidation, the USPS has already made up its mind. Town hall meetings to allow venting is simply a strategy to give the appearance management gives a damn. The adverse impact on employees and postal customers is just collateral damage necessary for management to achieve their end. 486-487 Area Local Editor, Bob Atkinson, correctly observes that this can only be remedied through congressional action which exercises a degree of postal operations oversight. The job before us is to convince our own members, their families and friends, and the mailing public to appeal and protest to their U.S. Representatives and Senators. Let us be heard, and Be Strong!

IN MEMORIAM: Kathleen "Kate" Smith passed away in Lansing after a lengthy illness on Friday, January 14, 2011. Kate was the MPWU's first OWPC Director, establishing OWCP training and representing members of her home Local in Lansing and across the state. Kate is the wife of retired former President of the Central MI Area Local, and former MPWU Secretary-Treasurer, William "Bill" Smith. We offer our sincere condolences to Brother Bill Smith and the Smith Family. "Eternal rest grant unto her 'O Lord, and let Perpetual Light shine upon her. Amen."



A Letter To The Editor

Getting It Off My Chest . . . Meet The New Boss . . .

by Roscoe Woods

Welcome to the New Year – same as the old year. Kind of reminds me of a song . . . It starts sort of like this . . . Meet the new boss same as the old boss. Well the new boss is named Representative Darryl Issa and after the Dems lost the House of Representatives in the 2010 election he is now the GOP Oversight and Government Reform Committee chair looking over the USPS Shoulder. As he gloated about his new position he had this little tid bit to say regarding his feelings about the hard working people who move the mail every day...

From www.apwu.org – Rep. Darryl Issa (R-CA) urged the USPS and Congress to demand concessions from the union in this round of negotiations, and called for layoffs and other cuts to resolve the Postal Service's financial problems. He also wrote that if concessions are not made, Congress should step in and revise the labor agreements.

Sounds like the kind of open minded person I would want chairing the Congressional committee that will work up legislation and make decisions that will decide the fate of our company along with 500,000 hard working middle class union workers over the next two years.

But hey – that's what happens when

you lose midterm elections to a group of politicians who somehow think Unions and working people are the problem.. It gets better – in just the last few days potential 2012 Republican Presidential Candidate Newt Gingrich said loud and clear "If the Post Office really wants to solve its fiscal challenges, it needs to engage in the difficult work of reforming its operating procedures, including its suffocating and costly union work rules like "standby time."

Again – Hard working money spending middle class workers are the problem, corporations who have shipped our jobs overseas – all the while raking in over a trillion dollars in profits which they refuse to spend to create jobs here in the USA are not the problem, we are. I am not looking to attack the GOP but I didn't make those quotes up.

Did I ever tell you that I think Unions are the solution?

I recently wrote Senator's Levin and Stabenow and I asked them how it is my District Manager could have so much more power than them when it came to taking postal services away from their constituents?

How someone who has been in this job less than 6 months could push so hard to cut service and while doing so

has to provide no evidence his plans or the plans of his staff are actually saving this company any money? No one can seem to answer that question. Is it any wonder we are carrying so much debt – one decision after another and no one has to show their decisions are actually making a difference?

In fact I went on to write and explain to both Senators that in my opinion the USPS is a public trust it was a promise made and those in charge are violating our Constitutional mandate to provide universal service and ensure the commerce of free speech. I stated to them both that we need them to assist the APWU both at the local and national level in defending this service from both the internal and external forces that are seeking to destroy this company and along with it over 500,000 middle class union families, a large number of those families right here in Michigan.

I reminded the Senators that management here in the SE MI District is proposing to shut the Bloomfield Hills Long Lake Office along with Selfridge Air National Guard Base and now the District Manager has notified the local he was putting the St. Clair Main Post Office up for sale. Pretty soon all you will see is for sale signs in front of every

post office in the thumb. The more they can sell the more they will sell.

I tried to respectfully tell them that this company is imploding, not entirely because of market forces, no there is a concerted effort to tear us apart. I believe we struggle in large part because we are subject to one bad management decision after another. As a Union employee who truly cares about this company I stand horrified watching as no one in Congress seems to have the ability to stop the destruction and now we have someone in Congress who is actively seeking the destruction of the only thing standing between us and unemployment – our right to collectively bargain with our employer.

I submitted to these two long time representatives that we clearly have been let down by the Democrats failure to bring to a vote and enact the Employee Free Choice Act, now all those who aspired to have a voice in their work place are left behind.

I stated my belief that in an effort to appease a nonexistent middle our representatives have allowed us to be cast aside adrift in a sea of anti union anti worker rhetoric while we watch all the hard work of the 2008 election along with decades of hard work building this union dissipate into an abyss of Tea Party rhetoric.

I wondered aloud asking how long could we continue to support Democrats who time and time again tell us they cannot help us stem the tide of service cuts and closures. If the members of Congress in the State of Michigan cannot help my membership or the American citizens we are charged with providing service too then I fear we will slowly lose ground to the Issa's and Gingrich's until there is nothing left to defend.

I reminded both Senators that we got our ass kicked in the 2010 election, and I expressed my opinion that we lost so many positions in Congress not because of our ideals; I believe we lost so many seats in so many states because we were timid in the expression of our ideals. We need to shout from the roof tops that we are Democrats and we support the middle class and we believe in Unions and we believe in those liberal ideals that over the last 50 or 60 years created the largest and most viable middle class in the world.

The Republicans draw a line and right or wrong they defend it.

How is it the GOP can tell this nation that Unions and working people are the problem and no one in the Democratic Party can get the voice or voices up to defend us? When did it become a bad thing to want a pension? When did it become a bad thing to hope that your retirement

continued on page 7

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day January 17, 2011

"In our glorious fight for civil rights, we must guard against being fooled by false slogans, as 'Right-to-Work'. It provides no 'rights' and no 'works'. Its purpose is to destroy labor unions and the freedom of collective bargaining."

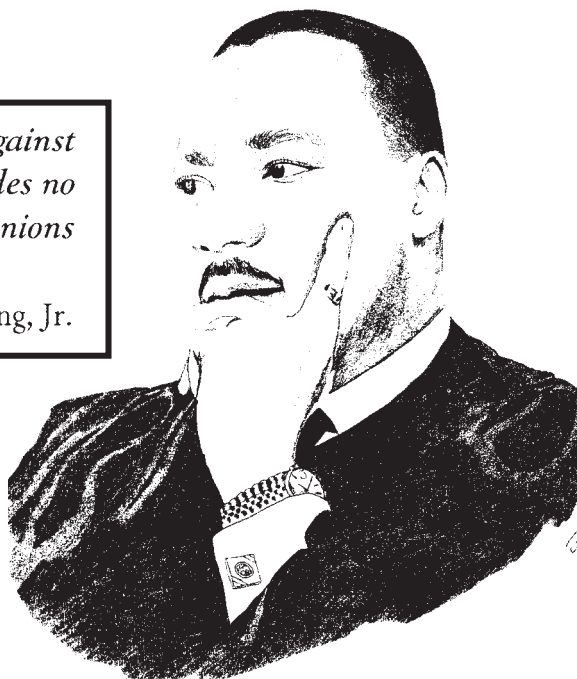
— Martin Luther King, Jr.

"We are prone to judge success by the index of our salaries or the size of our automobiles, rather than by the quality of our service and relationship to humanity."

— Martin Luther King, Jr.

"The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy."

— Martin Luther King, Jr.



"We do not boycott to put anyone out of business. We are boycotting to put justice in business."

— Martin Luther King, Jr.

"The hottest place in Hell is reserved for those who remain neutral in times of great moral conflict."

— Martin Luther King, Jr.

"An individual has not started living until he can rise above the narrow confines of his individualistic concerns to the broader concerns of all humanity."

— Martin Luther King, Jr.

Obama's Department Of Labor Forces Unionization

by Matthew Boyle,
The Daily Caller

Labor unions give more money to the Democratic Party than any other source, and critics have long accused President Barack Obama's administration of doing their bidding. Now there is evidence that the White House has indeed put its thumb on the scale on behalf of unions. After saying that "union jobs are, by and large, good jobs," the Department of Labor's "strategic plan" for the next five years says: "many of the Department's outcome goals are furthered by high rates of union membership."

Don Todd, Americans for Limited Government's head of research and a former DOL agency head under George W. Bush, told The Daily Caller that the Obama administration wants to "shame" companies into unionizing.

"In a worst-case scenario, your union organizer comes to you, offers you a deal to unionize, you say, 'no,' and, the next thing you know, OSHA's (Occupational Safety and Health Administration) at your door," Todd said in a phone interview. "Then, Wage and Hour show up, and they want to publicize it. They always find something wrong – it's like with bed-checks in boot camp in the army."

Todd said some companies will fight the DOL's intimidation tactics, but many will give in to unionizing forces.

"It makes it the path of least resistance," Todd said.

The current Solicitor of Labor, Patricia Smith, specialized in that kind of corporate intimidation when she served in a similar position in New York's Department of Labor. Senate Republicans strongly opposed Smith's appointment to her current

post for that reason. In New York, Smith set up a neighborhood watch-style system for monitoring and investigating wage and hour violations by companies.

While that "sounds good," Sen. Mike Enzi, Wyoming Republican, said during Smith's Senate confirmation hearings, "Neighborhood Watch was set up so that people would notify law enforcement authorities of things they thought were strange and should be looked at. They did not have permission to go into people's homes and investigate unannounced."

Enzi pointed out that Smith's announcement for her Wage and Hour Watch program lists six organizations, two of them unions and four of them "community organizing" groups, to take the lead on investigating violations.

Smith's recommendations as the federal-level solicitor haven't gone as far as Enzi feared, but they get close. Former union executives and confidants are leading almost every agency within the DOL, including, but not limited to, John Lund, who has deep ties to the AFL-CIO, Craig Becker, who has worked with the AFL-CIO and the SEIU, and Joe Main, who had worked for the United Mine Workers of America.

Smith and Labor Secretary Hilda Solis recently released the DOL's "Strategic Plan" for 2011 through 2016, in which they link the recent economic recession and the recently high unemployment numbers with the decline in private sector union membership.

Holis has made the case publicly that unionization is a good thing as it is the only way workers get "higher wages," "good jobs" and "flexibility and benefits like paid leave, childcare and education assistance."

"It's not enough to have fair wages and a safe workplace — workers also need a voice on the job! Some people say that, given the state of the economy, we can't afford unions right now," Holis said in a September 2009 speech to the AFL-CIO. "They've got it backwards. Today unions are more important than ever. Workers are facing unprecedented challenges, and they need the voice on the job that unions provide."

DOL is pushing unionization by turning the fraud investigation arms of the Department of Labor into intimidation tools. Todd said DOL's enforcement arms repeatedly audit and investigate businesses that refuse to unionize. They demand records of everything from Wage and Hour compliance to health and safety regulations, and won't stop until the business they're targeting unionizes.

Another way the Obama administration helps unions is by overloading the arms of the DOL that normally fight union fraud. The Obama administration, for instance, doubled the duties of the Office of Labor and Management Standards (OLMS). OLMS historically has been used primarily for investigating labor union fraud, but since Obama took office, OLMS is also charged with dealing with "whistle-blower" complaints, or complaints from

employees all over the country about companies that aren't following safety requirements. That used to be handled by OSHA.

OLMS is the agency Todd used to lead, and as he put it, pushing companies to unionize is "life and death for these people," meaning that unions need to get more members quickly or they'll face bankruptcy as they've spent much more than they've taken in during recent elections.

Another thing the DOL is doing in what appears to be an effort to weaken union investigations is shifting many career employees out of OLMS and into other, non-investigative agencies that pose no immediate threat to union survival. Todd said that's the only explanation for shifting the employees he and previous administrations spent years training to different jobs.

"They're moving people out of OLMS over to places like Wage and Hour, which is a waste of all the training they received in prosecuting and investigating union misconduct," Todd said in a phone interview. "In the time that I was there, we convicted close to 1,000 union officers and employees. That was not for unfair practices — that was for stealing from members."

Todd said he thinks it's more likely that union leadership would rather "suffer from the thefts than from the bad publicity they'd get from investigations and convictions" of union members and leaders.

"The Obama Department of Labor is being organized to push a pro-union agenda without regard to the welfare of the worker," Rick Manning, a spokesman for Americans for Limited Government, told TheDC.



A Letter To The Editor

continued from page 6

came before you hit 65 years old?

I write all this to our only two Senators hoping they do not take offense and hope against hope that someone will have the courage to give a speech, write a song or better yet write legislation that restores our commitment to providing the best and most efficient service to the American people only those hard working men and women of the postal service can.

I have an even better idea . . . How about we allow Postal workers to run for and hold public office. Then perhaps we can do for ourselves what others seem unable to. Imagine . . . Senator Roscoe Woods . . . Oh yes the dream lives . . . The dream lives and the fight continues . . .

See you all out and about, be safe and have a safe and enjoyable winter.



Statement By Secretary Of Labor On Bureau Of Labor Statistics Report On Union Members In 2010

WASHINGTON – Secretary of Labor Hilda L. Solis issued the following statement regarding the Bureau of Labor Statistics’ annual “Union Members – 2010” report released.

“The Bureau of Labor Statistics announced that, in 2010, the unionization rate of employed wage and salary workers was 11.9 percent, down from 12.3 percent in 2009. Among private sector employees, the rate dropped to

6.9 percent from 7.2 percent in 2009. “The data also shows the median usual weekly earnings of full-time wage and salary union members were \$917 per week, compared to \$717 for workers not represented by unions. For Latinos, the wage disparity is even greater with union members earning an average of \$771 compared to \$512 for workers not represented by unions, a difference of 33.6 percent.

“When coupled with existing data showing that union members have access to better health care, retirement and leave benefits, today’s numbers make it clear that union jobs are not only good jobs, they are central to restoring our middle class.

“As workers across the country continue to face lower wages and difficulty finding work due to the recent recession, these numbers demonstrate the pressing need to provide workers with a voice in the workplace and protect their right to organize and bargain collectively.”



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Union members enjoy up to 25% in savings with rental car discounts from Union Plus and the discount car rental providers: Alamo Rent A Car, Avis Rent A Car, Budget Car Rental, Enterprise Rent-A-Car, Hertz Rental Car and National Car Rental.

Whether it's a car, van, SUV or truck rental, working families can get good rental car deals and drive in style for less. Discount rental car rates and savings vary depending on the type of car or vehicle, time of year, location and length of car rental reservation.

Editor's Note: As we look into the new year, and vacations, the above might be of some value to our members. Go to: <http://www.unionplus.org> to learn more about this and other discounts. For those members with either high school or college students and would like to learn about available scholarships, check out this site. There is a free search feature to learn about all the available scholarships your child might qualify for.

Comments Made In 1955 Only 56 Years Ago!

Comments made in 1955 only 54 years ago!

“I’ll tell you one thing, if things keep going the way they are, it’s going to be impossible to buy a week’s groceries for \$10.00.”

“Have you seen the new cars coming out next year? It won’t be long before \$1,000.00 will only buy a used one.”

“If cigarettes keep going up in price, I’m going to quit. 20 cents a pack is ridiculous.”

“Did you hear the post office is thinking about charging 7 cents just to mail a letter?”

“If they raise the minimum wage to \$1.00, nobody will be able to hire outside help at the store.”

“When I first started driving, who would have thought gas would someday cost 25 cents a gallon. Guess we’d be better off leaving the car in the garage.”

I’m afraid to send my kids to the movies any more ever since they let Clark Gable get by with saying DAMN in GONE WITH THE WIND, it seems every new movie has either HELL or DAMN in it.”

“I read the other day where some scientist thinks it’s possible to put a man on the moon by the end of the century. They even have some fellows they call astronauts preparing for it down in Texas.”

“Did you see where some baseball player just signed a contract for \$50,000 a year just to play ball? It wouldn’t surprise me if someday they’ll be making more than the President.”

“I never thought I’d see the day all our kitchen appliances would be electric.... They are even making electric typewriters now.”

“It’s too bad things are so tough nowadays. I see where a few married women are having to work to make ends meet.”

“It won’t be long before young couples are going to have to hire someone to watch their kids so they can both work.”

“I’m afraid the Volkswagen car is going to open the door to a whole lot of foreign business.”

“Thank goodness I won’t live to see the day when the Government takes half our income in taxes. I sometimes wonder if we are electing the best people to government.”

“The drive-in restaurant is convenient in nice weather, but I seriously doubt they will ever catch on.”

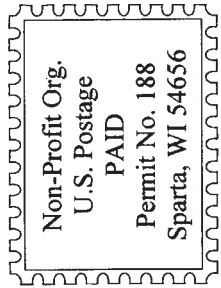
“There is no sense going on short trips anymore for a weekend, it costs nearly \$2.00 a night to stay in a hotel.”

“No one can afford to be sick anymore, at \$15.00 a day in the hospital, it’s too rich for my blood.”

“If they think I’ll pay 30 cents for a hair cut, forget it.”

Know any friends who would get a kick out of these, pass this on! Be sure and send it to your kids . . .and grand kids too!

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