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Bay State Postal Worker

AMERICAN POSTAL WORKERS UNION OF MASSACHUSETTS

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THE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

— Only In America —

by Art MacNeil, President

Dear APWU Sisters and Brothers,

This being a holiday issue of the B.S.P.W., it was my intention to keep it light and positive. So I will begin by wishing you a Merry Christmas. If you celebrate some other holiday, I wish you a happy holiday and I hope you all have a Great New Year.

As is way too obvious, the management at the USPS continues to strive for failure. It was certainly a lot better a few years ago when their goal was mediocrity. Now, they have proven beyond all doubt that they won't be satisfied until they facilitate our complete demise. The rush to close stations and branches is unconscionable. The places they are trying to close are often very profitable enterprises that serve the elderly, the poor and the disabled — people who find it a genuine hardship and in many cases nearly impossible to travel several blocks to the next postal facility. There are many folks who purchase our money orders to pay their bills at a still fairly reasonable cost. These folks will have to purchase bank checks at several times the cost of money orders. These are people living on fixed incomes with minimal resources.

A mile away, in an affluent neighborhood where the residents would be inconvenienced, a couple of phone calls to influential friends can halt plans for closure in a heartbeat. Oh well, that's the world we live in and many times in the last couple of months, our union brothers and sisters have done the necessary work to stop closures. We have alerted the media and the local authorities.

We have told our friends, neighbors and customers about the service they were about to lose and joined forces with our allies to try to keep the service honest. As I've said so often, we could be profitable or at least break even if the service would stop giving away the store. President Burrus has challenged the service to give us back our work and let us do it for the money they are giving away for in the form of outrageously deep discounts.

I know folks are tired of hearing this song and quite frankly, I'm tired of singing it but I have to take a couple of minutes to discuss health care reform. The spin on this is the worst I've seen in my adult life. WE all know we need reform. Reasonable people can see that the cost of health care is burying this country faster than any war is. Unfortunately, those who seek to derail reform seek only to see our president fail, so we will be vulnerable in the next election cycle. They have publicly called health reform his Achilles heel and that trumps doing the right thing by the constituents they represent. They want to retake the house and senate and don't care about the price.

They have sold their souls to the FOX party that parades itself as a fair and balanced news agency. When our president sees them for what they are, they cry foul. Let me tell you my good brothers and sisters, when you are the leader of a political party and you have to march in lock step with Limbaugh the junkie, Beck the idiot, and O'Reilly the molester, you are not representing your peers. You are representing FOX. These morons have called our president a racist and a bigot. The big boss, Rupert Murdoch has publicly agreed with

them. An idiot screams in the house chamber that the president is a liar and he becomes the darling of the FOX political party. There was a time when they would temper their behavior in congress with a little decorum but unfortunately, that time is gone. Thank God they live in America because it's the only place in the world you can treat the leader of the free world with such disdain and just shrug it off as though you did nothing wrong.

★ On a brighter note, 2010 marks a great year for our great organization. We will have a joint convention with the other New England states in Newport Rhode Island. This is a goal we have had for many years and it is starting to become a reality. It won't be perfect but it will happen.

While Connecticut, Rhode Island, New Hampshire and Massachusetts are fully committed to a New England convention, Maine and Vermont are expected to have some representation at this first joint convention. This too, could only happen in America. We are hoping this works well and it will be a catalyst for Solidarity. I promise it will be well attended by national officers as it provides them an opportunity to communicate with many members from several state and local organizations at one time. It's an event whose time has come and I hope to see many of you there.

In the meantime please stay engaged, help us keep our service alive and fight like hell when you hear about a branch or station on the postal chopping block. We can't save them all, but we must try. Together we have a much better chance to succeed than we do alone.

In Union Solidarity.

*The Officers and Staff of the Bay State Local
extends its Best Wishes to all its Members
for a Happy Holiday Season
and a Prosperous New Year!*



EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

— Keeping Up The Fight —

by Lorraine Sawyer,
Executive Vice President

Since Veteran's Day had just passed, I would like to say "Thank you!" to all the Veterans who fought for our freedom as well as the current members of America's Armed Service who are out there 24 hours a day preserving our freedom.

As most of you have already heard, we are going forward with our 1st (hopefully) Annual New England States Convention in Newport, Rhode Island. I know that some are skeptical but I feel that it is time for all of us in New England to join together since we fight for a common cause. This is not in any way an attempt to take away any State's autonomy; it is an effort to form a united front to our National Officers and the Postal Service, to show that we are united on issues and are willing to stand together in the fight for the rights of workers. The details are still being worked out but as I see it but are open to suggestions, we would have a day of training on Friday with our State E-Board meeting following. On Saturday, each State would meet separately to conduct their own business and then we would all meet as "New England" to discuss issues that arise in our individual State Conventions that

are pertinent to all of us, as well as to listen to our guest speakers. As a larger body we would possibly draw more National Officers since they would then only have to pick one instead of deciding which of the six (6) New England States to visit and we do share the same NBA's.

Stations and Branch closing, plant consolidations and excessing are still a major issue and they will be for a long time to come. We have many struggles ahead of us and we will be stronger if we fight together instead of alone. These issues are causing a lot of anguish and stress among our members at a time when the economy is struggling and the holidays are fast approaching. That fact that they have a good job in these trying times is not comforting our members who may be looking at traveling a great distance farther to get to work every day or to a 25-30 year employee who is forced to go back to Tour 3 or Tour 1 after years on Tour 2. Function 4's are becoming a way of life in an effort to cut employees that are really needed and to get postmaster to do more bargaining unit work. We ask the members to keep us informed when this happens

but I am sure just like in my own local, those calls very seldom come. I hate to be preaching to the choir because most of you who will read this are already officers and stewards who are facing these challenges every day. So in closing, I would like to say

thank you to all of the officers and stewards of the APWU who give of your time and your life to protect the rights of union members all over this great country. Keep up the fight!

I wish everyone a "Safe and Happy Holiday Season!"

SECRETARY-TREASURER'S REPORT

Worthwhile Benefits

by Ken Fitzpatrick,
Secretary-Treasurer

I have written in the past about the following benefits that go unused by most of our membership. They may not seem like much on the surface but they are both worthwhile to all of our members and we should remind them to use them.

FLEXIBLE SPENDING ACCOUNTS

Flexible Spending Account open season comes up every fall about the same time as Health Plan open season. This benefit allows us to deposit medical, dental, eyeglass, childcare, and prescription expenses in pre tax dollars by depositing bi weekly amounts into this account. The deposit is made prior to taxes being taken out of your pay. When you use any of the allowable expenses you can immediately file a claim to receive reimbursement from your account. A good example would be a need for eyeglasses early in the year, let's say February. You can claim reimbursement for the cost right away without having to wait until that amount has been deposited into the account.

So as you can see you save in two ways. First the money deposited is not taxed and second the money can be received prior to the amount be fully

funded into your account as long as your yearly FSA funds will cover it. Don't fail to sign up. You're saving money using it.

APWU HEALTH PLAN

To me there is no other choice. We are fortunate at this time of a national health care crisis to have the ability to choose what would be considered a Cadillac health plan. In my 29 years of postal employment I've had a number of different plans and most had their good points. None had the comprehensive coverage that we now have in the APWU plan. I've been enrolled myself now for three years and couldn't ask for better coverage. If you are not a member as yet, please give serious consideration to our own union sponsored health plan. You won't be sorry.

FEP BLUE VISION

It seems to me a lot of members don't know about the vision plan. Open season is upon us. There is a low and a high option as well as member only and family coverage. High option family costs \$10.00 per pay period and gets you and your family an annual eye exam as well as a pair of glasses. You do the math. You can't get a better deal when it comes to caring for your family's eye care needs.

Happy Holidays

by Mike McDonald,
Director Motor Vehicle Division

On behalf of the Officers of the Massachusetts State APWU, I would like to wish you and your families a safe and happy holiday season.

MVS OUTSOURCING:

The Motor Vehicle Craft remains a prime target in the Postal Service's campaign to privatize its operations. During the MVS portion of the last All-Craft Conference in Las Vegas, NV, delegates had the opportunity to engage President Burrus in a discussion about the recent MVS Memorandum of Understanding

(MOU) he signed.

Briefly, this MOU allows local unions to enter into a "Pilot Program" with the Postal Service to change the "Hours of Work" for MVS employees in an effort to avoid a Mode Conversion. A Mode Conversion occurs when the Service decides to shut down an entire MVS operation and replace it with contractors. The agreement would allow (or force) the expansion of the workday for MVS employees from eight within nine to eight within twelve.

President Burrus continually emphasized that the MOU provided local un-

continued on page 4

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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

The Year Of Involvement

by Bob Dempsey,
Editor

First of all, I'd like to wish everybody the best this Holiday Season. The New Year will be a busy one for the APWU with a National Convention, National Elections and contract negotiations all falling in the same year. With all the gloom and doom in the newspapers lately concerning the Post Office, I'm sure it will be a challenging one for us. There are many opinions being expressed to our detriment. Recently, the OIG was again in the news and they were once again recommending the Postal Service could save money by subcontracting out custodial jobs.

In this OIG report they made reference to some concerns expressed by President Burrus that the OIG inappropriately interfered with the collective bargaining agreement. They went on to say; "While we respect differences in opinion, the OIG has a mandate to

promote economy and efficiency in the Postal Service. Thus, recommendations made to management to lower the cost of custodial service remains within our statutory responsibilities".

When we (Boston Metro & company) were at Arlington National Cemetery in the visitor's center the Postal Service had a display which we went over to check out. As we were looking over the display Bob Keough (Boston Metro Clerk Craft President) made a comment about the OIG report which got us talking about the fact these custodial jobs were originally intended for our veterans. Since the OIG claims they respect differences in opinion, I'll share mine; I believe the Postal Service and the OIG are disrespecting our veterans by not allowing them to have these jobs. What is wrong with our veterans being allowed to have a "Federal" job with a decent wage and benefits? Where is the outrage with what is going on within

the Postal Service these days from our elected officials? Maybe subcontracting those jobs and suggestions such as that should be addressed by these elected officials including Obama. Speaking of outrage, these consolidations being proposed by the Postal Service to our stations and branches is a farce and just another attack on our jobs. This Postal Company (they removed service with the passage of the 2006 postal "reform" law) doesn't think twice about inconveniencing the customers these days.

The APWU is doing everything we can to stop this insanity but we need member involvement when asked. We need you to contact your representative in Congress and our Senators to reinforce our arguments. Tell them closing these profitable offices doesn't make sense. Tell them our veterans deserve decent jobs. Tell them you want them to stop this postal implosion by CEO Potter. Tell them they need to find out

the truth because the Postal Service is spewing all kinds of garbage, mistruths, and misleading statistics about what is really going within the Postal Company. Tell them you would like to see a Postal Service in the future for your children. What is wrong with a so called federal agency being expected to offer jobs that provide a decent wage and benefits?

This attack on our custodians, truck drivers and clerks needs to stop before it's too late. We need our elected official's involvement and your help, in order to get theirs. It's all about numbers and if no one calls, writes or signs petitions these arguments just fall on deaf ears. The Postal Service woes are not our fault and we shouldn't be allowed to be the scapegoat. We need our elected officials to put a stop to this destruction by CEO Potter. Our careers are now under this capitalism driven attack on decent jobs and we need you to get more involved for our survival.

Summa This & Summa That

by Don Sheehan,
Legislative Director

THE PATIENT SAFETY ACT

We have a disturbing crisis in Massachusetts hospitals. Registered nurses are being forced to care for too many patients at once, and patients are suffering the consequences in the form of preventable errors, avoidable complications, increased lengths of stay and readmissions.

The Patient Safety Act calls upon DPH to set a safe limit on the number of hospital patients a nurse is assigned at one time. In addition, the bill calls for staffing limits to be adjusted based on patient needs. It also bans mandatory overtime and includes initiatives to increase nursing faculty and nurse recruitment.

In both 2006 and 2008, the Massachusetts House of Representatives passed the Patient Safety Act by overwhelming margins. The Massachusetts Nurses Association (MNA) is continuing to fight to get this important legislation passed in the Senate, but they need our help.

To get more information & contact your legislator to support this "patient focused" legislation;

Visit: www.massnurses.org AND/OR www.protectmasspatients.org

JOBLESS RECOVERY

On Thursday, October 1st many members of APWU locals from throughout the state took to the streets of Boston with over 1000 other people to protest the country's jobless recovery. Dozens of area unions and allied community organizations - participated

in this "Rally for Jobs". The goal of the public action was to fight against a jobless recovery and demand an economy that works for everyone.

The event started with a rally on Boston Common followed by a march to another rally in front of Verizon headquarters in Post Office Square and concluded with yet another march to the Hyatt Regency hotel near Chinatown where the marchers met up with over 200 members of the UNITEHERE hotel workers union for a raucous protest against Hyatt Corporation's recent firing of 100 longtime employees who were immediately replaced with contract workers.

My hats off to those APWU members who took part in the rally, some marching in an event of this nature for the first time. It was a great demonstration of labor and community untidy and shows what can be accomplished when people work together. To kind of paraphrase what one extremely captivating speaker said about the jobless recovery, "It's about cheap labor, it's as old as time. Do you know what motivates us is pain. We're in pain now. In any key situation you either get bitter or you get better, now we better get bitter or it's not going to get better ". I couldn't agree more.

FUEL TO THE FIRE

To add fuel to the jobless recovery fire, more bad news on the nation's jobless rate was announced on November 6th. Unemployment worsened in October to 10.2 percent, a huge jump from 9.8 percent in September. That's 15.7

million jobless workers, according to the U.S. Labor Statistics. Worse, the unemployment and underemployment rate combined is a jaw dropping 17.5 percent—that's more than 27 million American workers without full-time jobs.

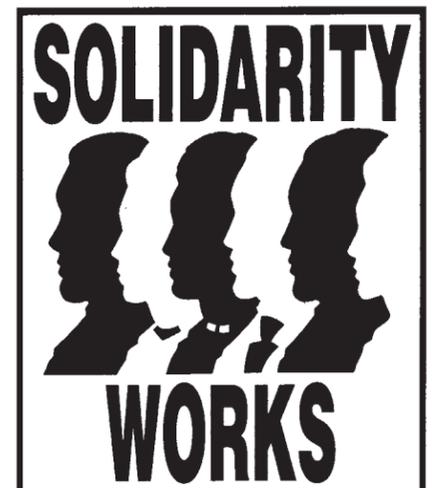
The construction, manufacturing and retail industries had the biggest losses, with 62,000 construction jobs lost in October, 61,000 in manufacturing and 40,000 in retail. Health care and temporary employment were the only bright spots, with health care jobs increasing by 29,000 and temp jobs by 44,000. Temp jobs...is that the future "bright spot" for Americans to look forward to?

As the September into October numbers show, the overall jobs situation doesn't appear to be improving any time soon. Long-term unemployment is the worst in 24 years, and there now are more than six workers for every available job. Some economists predict that one-third of the U.S. workforce will be unemployed or underemployed in 2010. You are probably saying, yeah, why should I care, I have a job. Care? It should tick you off! It is way beyond time that we ALL started to care about our fellow Americans that are in pain, union and non-union, or we are eventually going to live in a country where there are two classes of people, rich and poor. No joke.

It really doesn't take a lot. Get involved occasionally, take part in public actions like the one outlined above in this article, instead of playing poker on your computer, search the web for working family issues, contact legisla-

tors on behalf of working family legislation, be it postal or not, elect working family candidates and hold them accountable, get rid of the politicians that work for Corporate America, they are dirty and only have allegiance to the almighty dollar. Oh yeah, there is one other really simple thing I'd like to add...pay attention and give a crap about the world outside of your own front door.

Failure for ALL of us to do so will see the hard fought gains made by working people reverse back fifty years. Apathy of the working class (us) over the last few decades has allowed the reversing trend to be set in motion. I really hope it's not too late. No one is safe, not even us. It's about cheap labor, it's as old as time. We better get bitter or it's not going to get better. Until next issue, embrace your families and have a great Holiday Season. Stay strong, stay united! (FUEL TO THE FIRE INFO SOURCE: U.S. Labor Dept)



Out Of Their Freakin' Minds

by John Flattery,
Director Clerk Division

Well, it's official now, the people running the USPS are out of their freakin' minds. On October 26, 2009 it was announced that the Mystery Shopper Program will become the Retail Customer Experience. According to USPS news link the name change is a result of feedback received from area and district customer relations managers.

So let me see if I've got this right. The Postal Service is in crisis, volumes are historically low, employees are being involuntarily re-assigned at an alarming rate, plants are being consolidated, stations and branches are being closed, the Postmaster General is pushing for five day delivery, we are losing billions of dollars this year and the imbeciles that run the USPS have the gall to actually pay someone to review feedback from other managers in order to find a new name for the asinine Mystery Shopper Program!

If they were truly interested in feedback they should have talked to the window clerks, supervisors or postmasters who overwhelmingly hate this program. Perhaps they could have talked to the majority of customers who seem genuinely annoyed by the endless list of

questions they must answer before they are allowed to buy a book of stamps. If they wanted suggestions for a new name they could have called me, I've got plenty of 'em.

When we were first introduced to the Mystery Shopper Program we were told it was implemented to "improve the level of customer service and generate revenue by ensuring that customers are aware of the numerous postal services available." We were also told that "... discipline should not be the focus of these programs and they should not be used as a method of intimidation." Now we are being told they are trying to "improve desired employee behavior" and "influence customer loyalty and brand recognition." Which of course means screw the customer or we'll fire your ass.

Those management type nitwits that still defend this nonsense claim it is simply "upselling" and it is good for the bottom line. However I have yet to see any evidence that the Postal Service has increased their profit margin at all because of "upselling" and I don't think we ever will see any evidence of it. Any monies made will be offset by the amount of cash paid to Mystery Shop-

pers plus the time and money spent on processing grievances for clerks who receive poor Mystery Shopper scores as well as the money spent on renaming the program.

According to Wikipedia "a common technique for successful upsellers is becoming aware of a customer's background and budget, allowing them to better understand what that particular purchaser might need" using that technique as a barometer I would say we ain't selling up we're shaking down the customers and I don't see how that is good for business.

As I see it we are creating the impression that the only way to make sure your mail gets delivered is to send it express which means our other options are not reliable, I don't think that's a positive image to put forward. When a customer discovers that he could have sent something parcel post or media mail for a few dollars but instead spent \$28.00 because that's all he was offered

that will not be a happy customer. Then there are the customers who don't want to hear all these stupid questions, how is it helpful for the Postal Service to aggravate customers and increase the time others wait in line?

Last year the Postal Service and the APWU agreed at the national level that Mystery Shopper evaluations will not be used as a basis for issuing discipline. However discipline is being issued based on Mystery Shopper evaluations and each day more clerks are threatened that they will be next. It is time for our APWU leadership to do something to help improve the working conditions for window clerks everywhere and stop this insanity, but it's up to all of us to let them know how much of a problem this is and they won't know unless we all tell them so I urge you to contact our leaders in Washington D.C. and demand that something be done, and maybe after we solve this problem we can worry about diversity at USPS Headquarters.

Happy Holidays

continued from page 2

an option," and that the Service could not unilaterally decide to put a local into the program. In other words, if the Service approached a local union and told them that they were interested in entering into the Pilot Program, the local union could opt out and inform the Service that they were not interested. While this may be technically correct, in my opinion, it's really a false option. Local leaders do not want to sign off on a memo that lengthens their members work day, they understand that many of their members need to work an additional job to make ends meet (especially with little or no overtime). But, more importantly they cannot justify gambling with their members' jobs by facing a Mode Conversion. It sounds like the dirty work is left for the local.

Another question focused on whether the craft received anything in return for the expansion of hours. Specifically, members wanted to know why we didn't get any outsourced work returned to the craft. President Burrus provided a candid response stating that there was no quid pro quo. He explained that in this negotiation he did not believe we were in a position to negotiate, rather, he was simply trying to preserve MVS jobs. I can appreciate his seemingly deliberative concern.

However, his next comment made me question whether there exists a

huge disconnect between the Executive Floor on L Street and the workroom floor. He told the delegates that if we want some kind of guarantee to bring outsourced back to the craft, it should be negotiated when the local negotiates the pilot program.

Why the term disconnect you may ask? Well, I've been in the Postal Service for 25 years. When I first started local management had the authority to make decisions within their areas of responsibility. For instance, the Postmaster in Boston was akin to royalty. His word was the authority in his jurisdiction. That all changed with the 1992 reorganization. Absent disciplinary issues local managers lost most of their authority. It's worse today. Nothing is decided at the local level. Managers run everything up through the chain of command. Let's face it—the Postal Service operates as a top-down organization. President Burrus should recognize this fact. To insinuate that local leaders should be able to negotiate protections at the local level that could were not dealt with at the decision-making level is disingenuous.

Nevertheless, let's remember that while we are experiencing a lot of angst over the uncertainty of the Postal Service, our "no-layoff" protection puts us in a better place than many our neighbors. In that regard we have a lot to be grateful for and plenty of reason to enjoy this holiday season!

Happy Holidays!



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