

RAZORBACK SCHEME

Fayetteville APWU Local #667

December 2009

SILENCE IS GOLDEN

But silence could kill your job!

By Andrew Heyd, Steward, Tour 1

As a child we were taught "SILENCE IS GOLDEN." However, today, your SILENCE is management's GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY.

This isn't a new topic. Your local union has repeatedly tried to impress on all employees that your voice must be heard. The threat of job loss has never been much to fear here in Fayetteville, Arkansas – until now. We already have one clerk that was excessed off Tour 3 and given a residual job on Tour 1 (one job lost).

Recently, management was considering changing a job on Tour 1 such that it would have been moved to another tour (Tour 1 could have lost an automation job), and there is no guarantee management won't do this in the future.

On a daily basis, clerks on Tour 1 comment (complain) about having to operate the automation machines alone. These same employees "appreciate" the help of the tour supervisors when they 'help' run the mail, pull the machine down, load out, sort out different city letters that are on the same run. Your SILENCE is creating a GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY to abolish an automation job on Tour 1. No written statement of your dissatisfaction having to operate the automation machine alone implies there is no problem. No written and documented statement? – The incident never happened. Your SILENCE could be a direct result of job loss.

The problem is not solely the automation clerks. Jim Warford's bid job – SCF letters – was facing reversion. However, management is now considering changing the job and dropping SCF letters as the primary job because "there isn't a need for it."

How many clerks wander the floor [or work on adjacent machines] have seen management throwing SCF letters or SCF flats? Your silence has created the GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY for management to revert/change this job.

When management recently pulled this job and mentioned the idea of reversion, your local union filed a grievance, which is still active but could fail due to lack of support.

The solution is simple: In order for your union to fight to save jobs, we need written statements. Your steward is your voice, but it's your statements that give your steward the strength to fight. Your statements are the key to success. However, in order for your statement to carry weight, it must be accurate:

- Who performed the work?
- What work was performed?
- When did this violation occur?

(This is a very important detail. The time frame must be accurate – start time and end time.)

- Where was the work performed?

Your local has witness statement forms that ask these questions. All you must do is fill in the blanks. I must stress again, accuracy is the key to success.

By no means do I single out Tour 1. These problems occur not only plant-wide, but in the satellite offices as well. Clerks run automation machines on Tour 3 alone.

Management throws priority on Tour 3. Management throws box mail at the smaller offices.

And while on this topic, I would like to turn your attention to the mail handler craft. How many have observed a supervisor cut and compile mail? We are not in this alone. The threat applies to all crafts, all employees.

Silence may be GOLDEN for a child, but we're not children anymore.

Something To Consider

Recently, Local President Loren Adams and Postmaster Jeremy Coffey met to discuss the authorized complement for Fayetteville installation. Mr. Coffey came to an understanding that the authorized complement was 74. However, according to Little Rock, [by one measurement] our complement should be only 46.

Take note of the clerk craft seniority list from 47 on down — according to Little Rock, the FTRs from 47 on down aren't needed.

***** Don't write statements. Don't fight to keep your job, and soon you might not have one.



Drew Heyd, National APWU President Bill Burrus & Loren Adams
At National All-Craft Conference, Las Vegas, September 30, 2009, just after President Burrus announced not running for re-election in 2010.

WE WON!

FERS Sick-Leave credit was passed by Congress (House + Senate) and signed by President Obama October 28, 2009, after a long struggle with anti-worker legislators, such as Sen. Tom Coburn of Oklahoma and several more pro-corporate, anti-worker politicians.

The new law allows credit for unused sick leave upon retirement. FERS employees will get a 50% credit until

12/31/13, and beginning 1/1/14, they will then receive FULL credit.

This long-sought achievement corrected the inequity forced upon employees covered under FERS (employed 1984 and thereafter) to lose any accrued sick leave hours upon retirement. Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) employees received credit for their accrued hours.

FERS federal employees now make up the vast majority of government workers.

CHOICE VACATION BIDDING PERIOD

The schedule is posted in the 3 offices listing the date to turn in your 3971s for 2010. The FIRST PHASE starts Monday, December 7. Be sure to submit yours. Not as many will be allowed off. However, the workforce is down quite a bit, which will compensate for the loss somewhat.

SECOND PHASE: Following the "CHOICE VACATION BIDDING PERIOD" (which lands this year Dec. 7—18, 2009), each employee may submit requests for additional unused leave in increments of five days — approved by seniority. This part of the procedure starts the second Monday of January (January 11, 2010) and lasts five days — January 11—15, 2010. The 3971s are to be processed by the third Saturday of January (January 16, 2010) with employees given notice of approval/disapproval by that date (see LMOU). (The Second Phase)

THIRD PHASE: The Third Phase of leave lands usually the day AFTER Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, the Tuesday after the third Saturday of January (January 19, 2010). LMOU Item 4.I states: "Additional leave applied for on Tuesday following the third Saturday of January will be handled as follows: All leave applications received on this one day will be considered as having been received at the same time. Approval will be on seniority basis." This is a special one-day leave application for the calendar year. Clerks may put in for multiple days — but only one-day for each 3971. This year's date lands on Tuesday, January 19, 2010.

REMAINDER OF YEAR: The remainder of the year, after the three (3) phases of the leave bidding process (which is done by seniority), leave applications are granted on a first-come, first-served basis factored on the complement allowed.

NEWLY RETIRED & RESIGNED

Jim Warford, Wayne Tuck, Kathy Marcyniuk, James Hudler, Joe Cempura and Debbie Sonofsky took the plunge, accepting the \$15,000 VERA incentive (except Joe). We wish all of them farewell.

Jim Warford served as Vice-President of the Local for one year and steward for eight (8). Even when not an officer, he was active, participating in Christmas parties, recruiting his lovely daughter to sing, and organizing events from start to finish. His great sense of humor and contagious laugh will long be remembered. Jim is already greatly missed.

IN MEMORY OF RANDALL WOODLEE

Randall passed away last month just a few days short of his 60th birthday. Let us remember him by emulating his Christian character. He carried the torch of the Union for decades, served as our Local Vice-President for at least 10 of them, and loved the Post Office and employees.

Randall leaves behind his precious wife, Shirley, and four wonderful children — who will make a lasting tribute to this great man.

You may wish to continue to write Shirley at:

SHIRLEY WOODLEE
1999 Finger Road
Fayetteville, AR 72701

OPEN SEASON

The window of opportunity for making selections for the 2010 Open Season Federal Employees' Health Benefits is NOW. Flex Spending Accounts, Dental & Vision Insurance Program and Annual Leave Exchange began in November. When logging on, you need your employee ID number and USPS pin to enroll. If you've lost or misplaced your pin, request another ASAP.

Open Season: www/opm.gov/insure/openseason/

Federal Employee Health Benefits: 11/9 — 12/15/09 closes at 5 pm Central. Enroll via PostalEASE: 1-877-477-3273.

Federal Dental & Vision: 11/9 — 12/14/09 closes 11:59 Eastern. Enroll: www.benefeds.com . Premiums withheld on pretax basis, no USPS contribution.

Flexible Spending Accounts: 11/9 — 12/27/09 5 pm Central. Enroll PostalEASE.

For more information, visit www.FSAFEDS.com. Health Care Maximum \$5,000. Dependent Care Maximum \$5,000. Enrollment does NOT carry forward year to year.

PAY RAISE

Your recent pay raise of 1.2% will be reflected in this week's paycheck (12/11/09). There will also be a dues increase of 62¢ — as announced by President Burrus Sept. 30 at All-Craft.

POSTMASTERS NO LONGER SUPPORT VOE SURVEYS

Last month the National League of Postmasters sent out letters to all postmasters encouraging them NOT to fill out VOE surveys. APWU has been a leader in informing employees not to fill them out — since the surveys are used against us when bargaining new contract. Especially in the 1990s, management used the surveys against us in contract negotiations. Do you trust them in the next, the most crucial period since at least 1970?

NEW LOCAL OFFICERS

Thank you for your confidence by electing me for an 11th term as President (plus 4 years as Editor). And thank you to Pam Beck and Sonya Kirsch for their service 2008-2009.

Newly elected Vice-President, Keith Carlton, joins me as we endeavor to face a very critical year when our national contract expires, negotiations for a new one begin, and we face definite uncertainty across-the-board because of a historic economic downturn, erosion of American industry, and the demise of the once-great middle class which fueled our economy for generations. Keith is well-versed in proper Postal procedures and handbooks. But, to me, his greatest strength is his very positive attitude. (Come to think of it, he reminds me of Randall Woodlee.)

We're in search of stewards. Isn't it your time to step up to the plate? Call or see Keith or me.

OUR PURPOSE

The Union is not intended to be a thorn in management's side — unless it's called for. Quite the contraire, the Union is meant to create a better work environment, improve conditions, lobby for better benefits, ensure a safe workplace, inform & communicate with employees, and represent our members in disciplinary matters and issues involving pay, overtime, work-hours, scheduling, etc.

Recall the great quote from one of the founders of the union movement in America, Samuel Gompers (AFL): "Labor should reward its friends and punish its enemies." (1908)

As they say, "Sometimes it's easier to catch flies with honey than vinegar." Demonstrating dignity and respect earns dignity and respect — in most instances (when not dealing with total jerks). Vice-versa, showing a belligerent attitude earns belligerency as a consequence. We reap what we sow.

So, Samuel Gompers hit it right on the head: — REWARD friends; PUNISH enemies." (We have a few union history

books in the office if you'd like to check them out to read. MOTHER JONES was one of the greatest; died at age 100 in 1930 after several decades fighting for working folk.)

Supervisors and managers were ordinary work stiffs like us at one time, and they float back and forth. Some of our most effective union leaders were supervisors or managers in their past. So, the purpose of Union is not a "US vs. THEM" scenario. Rather, it's about creating a better atmosphere overall, improving relations, and then fighting like crazy through documentation and the paralegal system to get what's rightfully ours.

I recall Mother Jones' famous saying, "Pray for the dead and fight like hell for the living." She saw the big picture — that it wasn't the individuals she was combating for the union cause, it was the SYSTEM, a system built on greed, concentration of wealth, and a financial stranglehold that didn't recognize human dignity but only the bottom line.... theirs and theirs alone. And that system, my friends, has nearly bankrupted America and the world in the last few years. Without controls, capitalism dies like any other (Marxism, Fascism, Feudalism, etc.) A strong union workforce is America's redemption, at least in the economic sector, and industry and commerce flourish only when the middle class has purchasing power for goods and services.

Now America must rebuild its middle class, and the only portal to its rebirth is the Union. Let's join that effort, shall we?

On behalf of Local Union officers, stewards and alternates, may you enjoy the merriest of Christmases and a happy New Year.

— Loren Adams, Local President