

Razorback Scheme

American Postal Workers Union • Fayetteville Arkansas Local 667

July 2009

Union Meeting — June 2009



LEFT to RIGHT: Chuck Knight, Keith Carlton, Anna Lee, Nancy Sramek, Sonya Kirsch, Pam Beck, Sharon Wilson, Pat Wilson, Loren Adams, and Gini Hickman. (Taking Picture: Gerald Bradley) Local Banner made 1998.

Ask not what your union can do for you...

by Pamela Beck, Local President

Labor unions are based on a very simple principle. As a group, we have power that individuals do not have. The concept of solidarity is **many** people working together for a common goal. So, why have we become an organization where just a few dedicated individuals work to protect the interests of all?

We have around 90 union members in the Fayetteville area local, but typically only 10 to 15 percent show up at union meetings. It would seem that the majority trust those few

to make all the decisions and to represent them appropriately with management.

If so, then why do people drop out? People who have never been to a union meeting, never voted in a union election, never bothered to read their contract. What are their expectations? It has always struck me as rather childish when people drop out because of another individual's behavior, or a particular situation that did not go their way. I think they are missing the point somehow. The union is here for everyone. If you don't like the way things are done, get involved and change it.

I'm sure you've heard that "you get what you pay for." Well, when it comes to your union, you get what you work for. So, the next time you find yourself thinking "What does this union do for me?" stop and ask yourself, "What have I done for my union lately?"

And the next time you think about dropping out, ask yourself, "What will happen when there is not one left to do the work of the union?" What happens when there is a meeting where no one comes?

National Postal News Consolidating Stations

APWU Web News Article #076-09, July 1, 2009

At a meeting at USPS Headquarters on June 23, the Postal Service briefed APWU officers of the Clerk, Maintenance, and Motor Vehicle Crafts about plans to consolidate operations in large stations and branches. Managers also provided the union with an updated list of 3,243 stations and branches in Level-24-and-above installations that are being reviewed.

At the briefing, postal officials said that among the stations under review, 740 already had been identified as candidates for consolidation and/or closing. (The Postal Service has not yet provided the list to the APWU; when it does, the list will be posted at www.apwu.org.)

Managers said they anticipated only a 60-day process for making these decisions, including a 10-day window for input from affected customers.

USPS officials conceded that among the reasons for closing stations and branches is that there are fewer "procedural requirements" for closing stations and branches than for small post offices. They also said that 34 percent of current postal revenue comes through alternative access, and that they are striving to increase that percentage.

The briefing was a follow-up to a May 15 letter from the Postal Service to APWU President William Burrus, which announced the plans. "District Managers will be adding a focus to the discontinuance of operations by reviewing all classified stations and branches in Level 24 and above post offices," the letter said.

"These offices have experienced serious volume, transaction, and revenue declines. ... Many factors including impact on employees, service standards, cost savings, customer access, environmental impact, real estate values, and long-term needs of the service would be taken

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The RAZORBACK SCHEME is the official voice of Fayetteville APWU Local. However, opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the writer and not necessarily those of the APWU, union officials, or the Editor. Articles, artwork, cartoons, and other material are solicited from those readers who wish to share their views with others. Although freedom of the press is recognized, contributors are exhorted not to write derogatorily about any fellow union member or to submit any false allegation concerning management or any other individual inside or out of this union. All letters must be signed and in the hands of the editor ten days prior to next scheduled business meeting. Names will be withheld upon request. Send contributions to P.O. Box 654, Fayetteville, AR 72702, or submit to union officials. Submissions may be returned upon request.

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NEXT UNION MEETING:

Sunday, July 19, 2009

Jim's Razorback Pizza • 1:00 p.m.

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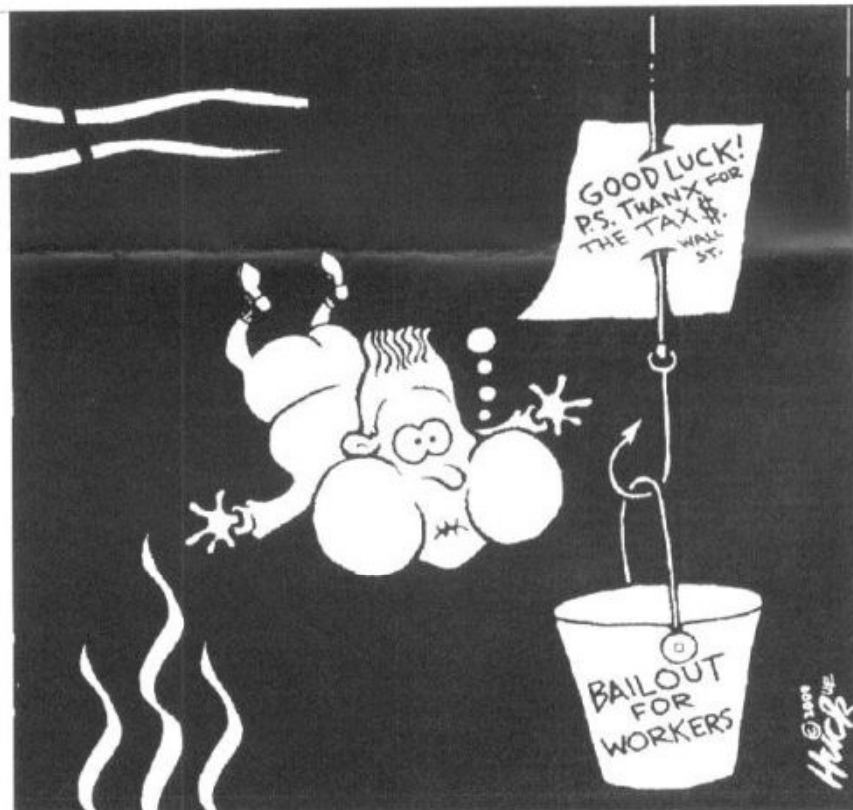
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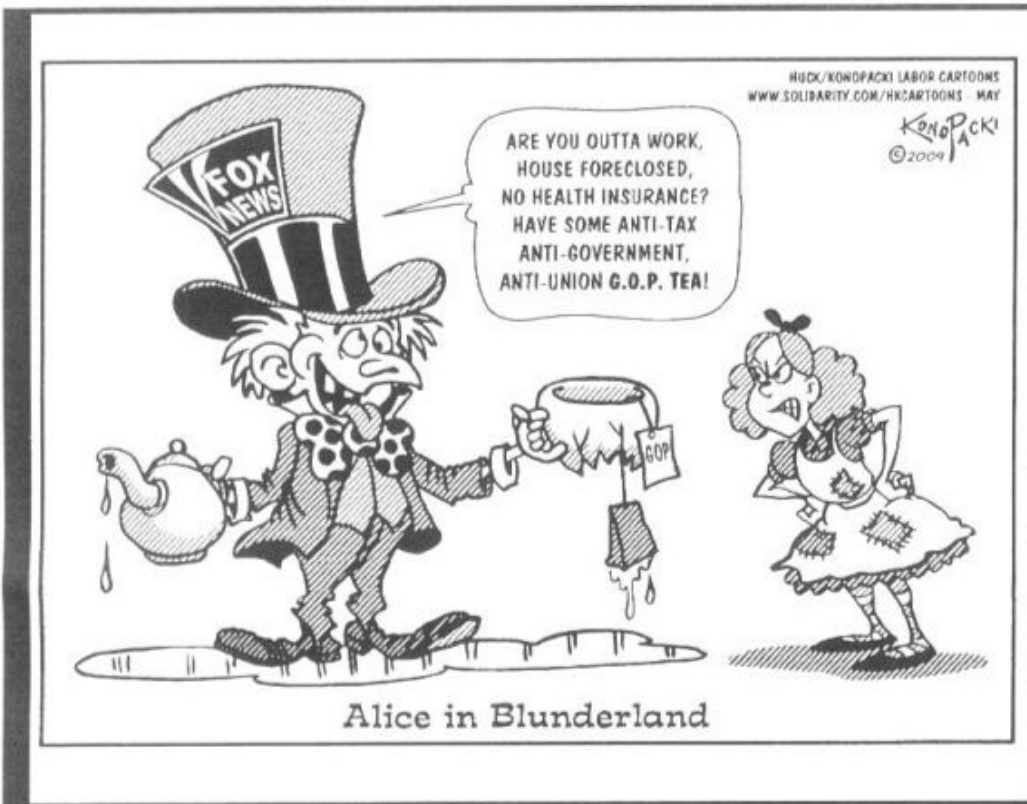
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Alice in Blunderland

into account... We would expect these local manager reviews to result in a significant increase in the number of lease terminations and/or facility disposals." [Emphasis added.]

No Coincidence

APWU Clerk Craft Director Jim McCarthy said, "We do not believe it is a coincidence that three weeks earlier, on April 24, the USPS notified the APWU that it was replacing Handbook AS-707-F, Contracting for Contract Postal Units, with Publication 156, Postal Employee Guide to Contract Postal Units."

The union initiated a Step 4 dispute on May 5, protesting the unilateral changes, and demanding that the USPS rescind them. The modifications clearly relate to wages, hours and working conditions, and therefore violate the contract.

"We also believe that if management backfills the stations and branches it closes with contract postal offices (CPUs), this would violate the procedural requirements on subcontracting in Article 32.1 of the Collective Bargaining Agreement," McCarthy said.

Locals should immediately request a labor-management meeting to discuss the criteria that are being considered in the

determination of whether stations and branches are to be closed or consolidated within their installations, the Clerk Craft director said.

Locals should also make certain that the local community is allowed to provide adequate input before these decisions are made, McCarthy said. Although the APWU Consolidation "Tool Kit" [available to members only at www.apwu.org] was designed to assist locals facing facility consolidation, activists confronted with the possible consolidation of stations and branches may find the tips and guidance in the booklet helpful, he said.

TOP NEWS STORIES

House panel votes relief for Postal Service

"The House Oversight and Government Reform Committee voted Friday to approve HR 22, which would save the U.S. Postal Service \$2.3 billion this year in health care costs. The bill allows the Postal Service to pay health care premiums for its current retirees using a trust fund designated for future retirees. Without the bill, the Postal Service would have to make a \$2.3 billion payment in September for its current retirees; postal officials say they cannot pay that bill." (-eNAPUS: House Committee OKs Emergency Postal Relief Bill for House Vote)

Few postal employees take latest early retirement offer

"Fewer than 2 percent of U.S. Postal Service employees who were offered a chance at early retirement last month accepted the offer - far less than postal management expected. Just 2,505 employees accepted the offer - about 1.7 percent. And it's well below what Postmaster General John Potter expected: In a March interview, Potter said he expected between 10,000 and 15,000 employees to accept the offer."

The Pecking Order

by Loren Adams, Editor & Arkansas State VP 6th Dist

Ever since landing at the Post Office, I've been troubled by one aspect of the atmosphere. One may call it "destructive competition" or just plain "mean spiritedness," but the fact of the matter is we have a long way to go to improve the work environment. And I'm not pointing a finger specifically at management nor the craft. It involves all. It's a form of self-centeredness or self-servingness -- where what the employee focuses on is all-encompassing and what the other employee does is unimportant or irrelevant. There's a sprinkle of self-righteousness in the poor attitude also -- where an employee has the misconception that he or she is "God's gift to work" and everyone else's attempts are futile and substandard. The employee tries to play the role of the hero -- running a machine by oneself just to prove he or she is better than "that lazy slob." Meanwhile, jobs are lost and the "hero" goes on to greener pastures -- or sustains an injury from over-exertion or a personal lack of safety consciousness. The attitude degrades to the point that even losses in others' lives are blocked out while one's personal ambitions/goals occupies all cognizance.

I'll give you some examples: About ten years ago, a clerk died of a sudden heart attack. Of course, most employees mourned the loss, at least on surface. But what troubled me were the statements made two sentences later: "By the way, when is management going to post his job up for bid? Do you think I have a chance of getting it?" I was deeply saddened.

Unfortunately, it wasn't a one-time occurrence. Over the course of 15 years I've heard this repeated several times -- where employees seem more concerned about their own welfare than the tragedy of others.

The "postal culture" deteriorates to the

survival of the fittest, and anyone who suffers an injury or loss is vulnerable, and most postal workers are keenly aware of this unspoken reality. Hence, they must conceal their weaknesses or run the risk of being voted off the island or worse.

Years ago, someone described the phenomena by comparing it to the pecking order in poultry. Chickens can show signs of cannibalism. Usually weak birds are picked on by the stronger ones and they end up injured. Once the bird is bleeding, the other birds keep pecking it until it dies and then the birds see the carcass as a source of food. The old, young, weak and injured are more at risk of being pecked to death by the flock. Yes, it may be the natural order of things, but it's primitive and uncivilized, don't you think? "Inhumane" is the word. Are we not much better than birds or other beasts?

An employee suffers from an accident or disease or some other unforeseen mitigating circumstance. Soon his attendance is "red-flagged" by management and the discipline process commences. Some fellow workers on the workroom floor instantly think, "Thank God, it isn't me!" Actually, they give voice to it, while others take it a step further by making sport or fun of the situation.

Where is that spirit of community ... of solidarity ... of heart-felt compassion? An injury to one is an injury to all. We're all in this boat together. These "slogans" define the true spirit of unionism. Of course there are fakes and con artists who abuse the system and privileges, but they're few among us and easily discerned. So, why not let the better angels prevail?

'For I was hungry, and you gave me



meat: I was thirsty, and you gave me drink: I was a stranger, and you took me in: Naked, and you clothed me: I was sick, and you visited me: I was in prison and you came to me.'

Then shall the righteous answer him, saying 'When did we see you hungry, and feed you? or thirsty, and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger, and took you in? or naked, and clothed you? Or when did we see you sick, or in prison, and came to you?'

And the King shall answer and say unto them, 'Inasmuch as you have done to unto the least of these my brothers and sisters, you have done it unto me.' (-- Matthew 25:35-40)

An indictment will not come against fellow workers and local members for defense of the indefensible; an indictment will come because we haven't cared enough sincerely for those truly needy among us. Abusers may be discovered and discarded, but the truly needy are part of our work family and we must do all we can to serve, not just in lip-service but in deed -- just the same as we would like to be cared for ourselves in our hour of need. Without this element, we are nothing.

That's what union is about.

Mark This DATE!

Union Meeting

Sun., July 19, 2009
 1:00 pm
 Jim's Razorback Pizza, Westgate Bypass (I-540) & U.S. 62

- New Job Postings
- Stewards' Reports
- Soft Drinks & Cheese Bread on the House!
- YOU COULD WIN \$50!

