

Razorback Scheme

American Postal Workers Union • Fayetteville Arkansas Local 667

September 2013

From the President

Ike Mills, Local President

Hello Brothers and Sisters:

At the time we are writing this newsletter, the first and foremost thing on our minds is our Sister Gini Hickman and her family. As you all know by now, Gini had to resign from her position as Financial Secretary of our Local at the end of August. She has been in a fight of her life with cancer and was most recently admitted into the hospice center on September 12th. Please pray for her and her family during this most trying time.

I personally would like to thank Gini and her family for the many years of dedication and work that she willingly gave to our Union, the State APWU, and our Local during the 17 years of service as our Financial Secretary.

Well, onto another fight that we are all in. At our APWU Arkansas Fall Meeting Senator Pryor addressed the body on Friday September 6th, and, folks, we are in a fight for our lives.

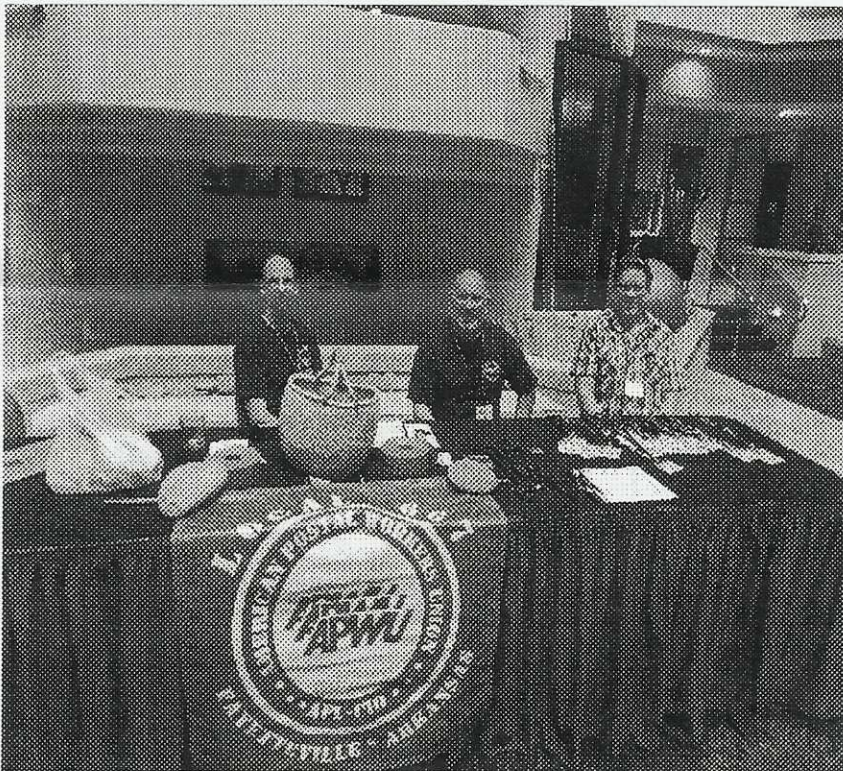
One of the statements that he said during our meeting was: "There are people in Washington that want to do away with us." This may not be the exact quote, but close to it. Your union leaders have been saying it for years, but this is directly from a U.S. Senator that works with some of these adversaries on a daily basis.

Folks, we must be engaged in the political arena or we will lose the fight. And I don't know about you, but I don't like losing at anything. I have lost one job in my life, and I sure in the heck don't plan on losing a second one without a fight. My job is important to me and my family and I sure hope you feel the same way about your job.

There are several ways to be involved and be a part of the solution. The easiest is to give to the APWU COPA fund so we can support the candidates that are friendly to the labor movement and hire the lobbyist that can get our voice heard on Capitol Hill.

If you have any questions of how to get involved, please take a moment to ask me how and I'd be glad to point you in the right direction. A second way is to sign up on the APWU eActivist to get the latest updates about the political arena. The AFL-CIO has a similar website also. If you're real crazy about this fight, then go and support the candidate(s) of your choice and help their political campaigns in your local area. I know they could and would appreciate your help.

Unfortunately President Guffey was unable to attend the meeting because of the death of one of his wife's parents. So, we didn't get to hear an update from the national officers, but our NBAs Dennis Taff and Bob Kessler discussed several



ARKANSAS APWU FALL CONFERENCE, SPRINGDALE

Left to Right: Drew Heyd, Ike Mills and Tony Crowsey

of the issues and gave us updates on them. Folks, it is no exaggeration that we are in a fight for our lives. Management is blatantly violating the contract all over the country and they don't care. They know that the grievance process is overloaded and when the cases are heard they will get by with a small penalty for the violation and pay a lot less through the grievance process than if they would have followed the contract initially in most cases.

We have a fight on our hands and your officers and stewards are committed to this fight, but

we need your help to win it. If you see a violation of the contract, let your steward know. In most cases they are usually unaware of the violation because they didn't even see it happen. If you're not sure if it is a violation, at least ask them and give them a chance to investigate the situation. It is going to take all of us to be successful in this fight.

I would like to thank all of our Locals members that helped to make the Fall Meeting such a success. We hosted the meeting for the State at the Springdale Holiday Inn and several of the APWU members attended the event. We had good training and speakers to listen to. The following members were part of the Committee and I would like to thank them for their help:

Loren Adams, Sonya Kirsch, Vinny Dachille, Andrew Heyd, Jeremiah Muckleroy, Tony Crowsey, Tina Delay (Rogers Local)

All of these individuals helped with registration, the Hospitality Room, COPA gifts and drawing, and Friday Night Banquet. I would also like to thank all the Locals and individuals that donated gifts for the COPA raffle Friday night. The hotel did a fantastic job with the event and I would recommend them for any event in the future. Again THANK YOU all for a job well done!

Let's move onto another subject. Since I have been here, I think I have brought this up a couple of times, but it needs to be said again. Please don't take me wrong; I appreciate every member of our Local, and you are all a vital part of our success.

But there is absolutely no excuse to have such a high number of non-members among our co-workers. We have 100 members and 43 non-members (some are not legitimate) on our rolls at this time, we need to do something to change this. Many of those non-members are career employees which I have never understood how you can work for the Postal Service and see how management treats us and not be a union member.

But now we also have several of our PSEs that are not members which I just don't understand. They use to be casuals making \$11.00 to \$12.00 per hour with no Union protection, no benefits, no chance of promotion, etc., etc. Now they are bargaining unit employees making over \$15.00 an hour with night differential (\$14.85 plus \$1.12 ND, and a 2.5% raise coming in November), health benefits, and contractual protection. Their dues are \$12.85 a pay period (less than 1 hour worth of pay), and most have not joined the union. Why is that?

Folks, I have never understood how a non-member can excuse their self from union membership. I joined the union as soon as I could (even though it took three attempts) and have been a member the whole time. Do I agree with everything the union does? No, but I know my life and my family's life is by far better off because of what the union has done for me. I know that we wouldn't have the things we have if it wasn't for the union and the struggle they have fought for me and all of us.

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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, Oct. 20, 2013
 Jim's Razorback Pizza • 1:00 p.m.

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Union Meeting

Sun, October 20, 2013
 1:00 pm

Jim's Razorback Pizza, Westgate
 Bypass (I-540) & US 62

• In Tribute to Gini Hickman

We as members need to get that word out and we need to add non-members to the members list. When was the last time you talked to a non-member and encouraged them to join the union? Let's all get out and make this happen.

Folks, we have been through some tough and trying times over the last few years, but I hate to say this, but I think we have only seen the beginning of it all. We are going to have to find a way to band together and look out for each other. We are going to have our differences but we must stick together and cover each other's backs. We can't fight this fight separately, it must be a combined effort or we will fail.

That means we must all join the fight and do it together. Not just within the APWU but all unions and all of the labor movement. This is the fight for the middle class in America, and the forces against us are tremendous. The adversaries have power and money that we will never have, but we have the numbers if we can just join forces and let our voices be heard. We must vote and be active in the political arena or we will go away and die, and that is what the 1% wants.

SAFETY

Nancy Sramek, Safety Representative

I would like to discuss a few areas in which I feel we have become lax. The first pertains to the use of cell phones on the workroom floor. Management has been lenient in allowing us to use our cell phones so we should do so in a responsible way. Cell phone usage should be kept to a minimum and no texting should be done while walking between work areas.

Also, the same applies to wearing headphones or ear buds. These are only to be worn in your work area. They are to be removed when walking between work areas. Cell phone and headphone use are privileges not rights.

The last area and maybe the most important is red-tagging (I know they are really orange) defective equipment. Any container or equipment that is a safety threat should be tagged. I know we get busy and I know some equipment is scarce but we still need to take time to be safe and that means tagging defective equipment. Then the equipment needs to be placed outside the ET cage for them to evaluate whether they can repair in house or send it out for

repair. Under no circumstance are you to remove a tag from a defective piece of equipment! Anyone found doing so will be reprimanded. Safety should always be first and it is everyone's responsibility.

Enjoy the the upcoming cooler weather of the fall and keep safe.

TRAINING AND EDUCATION

Vinny Dachille, Local Vice-President

Education is a key component in everyone's life. We are learning every day.

I recently had the opportunity to attend Stewards' College in Ellensburg, Washington. It has taken my grievance writing and fighting skills to a whole new level. This sort of learning opportunity is what those union events and conventions are all about, educating our stewards and leadership and networking with various other officials from around the country. We are then able to bring all this back to you, the member, and our contemporaries. It is one of our duties as a union official to educate our members on the various issues that involve us as a group.

Safety is another issue that's been rearing its ugly head in our plant lately. Just on tour 3 alone we have had two people injured on the workroom floor. Management wants you to work faster and sometimes overlooks people working unsafely because it gets the mail out of the building quicker. We are all guilty of this; myself included. It's something we need to make a conscious effort to change before someone else gets hurt. Nobody wants or needs to get hurt on the job. It's a stress none of us need in our lives.

GROUND ZERO FOR THE STRUGGLE

Loren Adams, Editor

In August I visited Madison, Wisconsin to attend the Postal Press Association (PPA) Conference. It was my second visit since Governor Scott Walker began decertifying unions in that state. Madison is the "Ground Zero" in the war between anti-union forces and folks that strive to make a decent living – between the 1% and the Middle Class.

APWU is in the thick of this battle – because it involves all public sector unions. I realized in February 2011 that

postal workers would be the next targets if Walker got away with killing the unions. Some may think Wisconsin has nothing to do with us, but it has everything to do with us.

Although Scott Walker may be the personification of union-busting, he's just a puppet of the corporate right. The powerful energy magnates, Charles and David Koch, are Walker's principal backers. For without them, Walker could not walk and chew at the same time. The 2011 Koch-Walker hoax call exposed this truth. (Search You-Tube for the video/audio.)

Basically, Walker took millions of dollars in pensions away from teachers and state employees and delivered that money to corporations by way of excessive corporate tax breaks and subsidies – calling this a "jobs creation package." The rightwing [in full control of both House and Senate in Wisconsin] stripped public workers of their bargaining powers, pensions, and benefits. Union rights were smashed by the stroke of a pen.

How'd Walker's plan work out? Wisconsin now ranks 41st in jobs creation since the 2008 Crash. You see, it's never been about jobs but the redistribution of wealth – concentrating capital into the hands of the very few, Robin Hood in reverse.

But Walker was sly. He promised firemen and police their unions would go untouched if they just voted for him in 2010. Divide and conquer. But now that he's been in power for more than three years, he's decided to go after them too – not just teachers, janitors, and state workers. (I wish you could see cops cuffing cops and firemen in the Capitol for demonstrating for their rights. (Search YouTube for videos.) The 400+ arrests for singing, carrying signs, or simply "observing," are incredible.

Public employees are under attack all over this country, not just in Wisconsin, but in over two dozen states controlled by the right. Do you think postal workers are immune? Didn't our Board of Governors propose decertifying postal unions not too long ago?

Imagine you're in a union with a

contract set to expire in 2015 – like the APWU. Now imagine a political figure coming into office and within a month informing you your contract is terminated and your union’s bargaining power is history. What would you do? Smile and say, “Thank you, sir. Do it to me some more”?

Now imagine your big boss giving away your pension and retirement funds to his special rich friends who happen to contribute heavily to his campaigns. Your future is wiped out. You now have no hope of retiring. You’ve been robbed! Would your response be, “Oh, well. Congress means well”? Or would you fight for what’s rightfully yours? You’ve worked hard all your career and built a meager TSP nest egg for your senior years, and now all that’s gone. The question is yours to answer – Are you passive or aggressive?

It’s a real possibility the 2014 mid-terms will deliver majorities to the right in both houses – which means Darrell Issa will then be free to do what he’s promised all along. He [and his rightwing colleagues] will have the power to liquidate our union and cancel our contract. Are you aware of this? Wake up! The questions remain: Are you registered to vote? And – Do you vote?

SOLIDARITY SING-ALONGS

If they go after bargaining rights, chances are they’ll go after others.

Like First and Second Amendment rights.

Such is the case in Walker’s Wisconsin. Union members [joined by farmers and small business owners] formed a choir to perform each weekday at noon at the Capitol as a form of peaceful protest against Walker’s thievery.

At first there were about a dozen, but the chorus grew in time to hundreds plus an orchestra. The Solidarity Singers were born, and tourists flocked to the Capitol to listen, then to sing along. A 52-page chorus booklet was published so others could join in. The song leader would announce, “Number 12,” and the choir would sing the verses [if not committed to memory] along with the new impromptu band and dancers that later enlisted.

It is now a jubilant celebration of freedom – non-violent, and immensely popular. Firemen, teachers, police, farmers, ministers, nuns, business people, clerks, postal workers, custodians, state employees, and tourists join together in song.

Apparently that was the problem. Walker was humiliated by the singers. For good reason. Not coincidentally, he commissioned an “explor-

atory committee” to see about running for President in 2016 (with Koch backing). Speaking engagements were set in Iowa, New Hampshire, South Carolina and Florida – early primary states, and he couldn’t afford to be embarrassed by what was going on at home.

So, Walker coerced his rightwing-controlled state legislature to pass a new law prohibiting singing by four or more on the Capitol grounds without first being granted a permit – which was engineered impossible to obtain, the sole purpose of this red-tape roadblock.

Furthermore, Walker’s party amended the new bill to ban “spectators” to the singers. Violations were set at \$200.50 apiece, and then the Capitol Police were ordered in July 2013 to commence arresting singers and “spectators” – hauling them off like cattle. One would think this was Egypt or Syria, not the good ole US of A.

I had the privilege of attending one of the sing-alongs in August 2013. This I will never forget. (To watch the YouTube videos of the Union Solidarity Singers Sing-Alongs, email me at . You’ll be inspired.)

The Postal Press Association (PPA) was meeting in conference in August and invited the Solidarity Singers to join us at the host hotel. PPA President Tony Carobine first presented a check for \$1,000 to the singers to help defray the costs of the many \$200 fines issued by Capitol Police for singing union tunes. Then National President Cliff Guffey stepped up, handing the choir another \$4,000 from APWU for the bail-out fund. There were about 12 unions represented that night; I think most were in tears.

I’d like to thank the Fayetteville Local for sending me to the PPA Conference in Wisconsin. It was the best meeting I’ve ever attended, and the information and training were excellent. As long as I live, I will be inspired by the Madison meeting. Thank you.

And God bless our beloved sister, Gini Hickman.

SENATOR MARK PRYOR MET WITH ARKANSAS POSTAL WORKERS

To watch the video of Senator Mark Pryor discussing the job situation in the Postal Service with Arkansas delegates on September 6th, do a search in YouTube: Arkansas APWU Sen Mark Pryor. It’s 30 minutes long.

