

Keystone Area Local

NEWS & VIEWS *Bulletin*

Publisher: Robert D. Meyers

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2005

Gina Meade - President

The removal of the CSBCS machines in our AO's remains on hold. There have been no meetings held regarding these impacts. As information becomes available we will keep you posted. This is definitely a case of "no news is good news".

Recently, I attended the APWU Presidents' Conference in Virginia. There were several issues discussed that are of importance to all members. The importance of **COPA** donations was discussed. **President Burrus** asked that all employees donate the equivalent of a 37-cent stamp each payday. This would help us reach our goal for 2005.

The **VOE Survey** was discussed at great length. The APWU has asked that all members **decline** to participate in this survey. Contract negotiations will be underway shortly and we cannot afford for these surveys to be used against us in negotiations. Also if you decline to participate, **DO NOT** allow management to take your uncompleted survey. There have been reports of management completing blank surveys in their possession. Management receives credit for all completed surveys they turn in; this is part of their "pay for performance". Some areas of the country have established a CARE program soliciting employee input. This is used in the same manner as the VOE and again the APWU suggests that employees do not participate. There are attempts being made all around the country to circumvent the APWU and bargain directly with employees. Remember, the APWU is the sole negotiating body for employees.

Any attempt by management to negotiate with any employee directly is a violation of the National Labor Relations Act and must be reported to the Union immediately.

Reports from other locals' who have had the APPS machine installed reported major problems with bundle breakage; this then creates additional downstream work. Hearings will begin within the next several months in the National jurisdictional dispute on the assignment of these duties to the MH craft. Harrisburg is on the deployment list for the APPS machine. We are scheduled to receive the machine in September 2005 with final installation completed in November 2005. We will be meeting with management to discuss the impacts related to this deployment. We will keep you updated as more information becomes available.

August 29 is the opening date for the 2006 contract negotiations. Any member with suggestions for bargaining issues can send them to the Union office. President Burrus reported that all APWU represented employees averaged a \$4400 salary increase since Nov 2000. We also lost 20,000 members nationwide through the early-out opportunities.

Vice-President Cliff Guffy addressed concerns from the delegates regarding the use of PMR's (Postmaster Leave Replacements) across the country. He stated there are a total of 14,000 nationwide. The APWU position is that they are not career employees and should be counted in the casual totals.

Locally we are pursuing all PMR cases; please let us know if you know of any upcoming craft retirements so that we may track the hiring process.

Industrial Relations Director Greg Bell informed the delegates that a National dispute has been filed regarding the deletion of clock rings for some employees. I can only stress to all employees keep track of the hours you work and if you are not paid for all hours contact the Union immediately. We have found in some offices that overtime rings were being deleted for PTF employees. We have corrected these problems, but there may be many more we are unaware of. Cases scheduled to be heard at the National level are as follows: Sunday Premium for Personal Schedule Changes, Publication 71, can the USPS require additional documentation outside the provisions of FMLA?; FMLA 1250 requirement regarding Union officials, AMS Specialist position, Attendance Control Supervisor vs. immediate supervisor when issuing discipline, and the MS-47 Handbook revisions.

Clerk Craft Director Jim McCarthy said he is reviewing the AFCS operations to determine if a National level jurisdictional dispute is warranted. Jim also stated that management is still trying to discipline employees based on Mystery Shopper scores. We have settlements to the contrary and if any employee experiences discipline resulting from Mystery Shopper contact the Union immediately. Lobby Observations are the same as mystery shopper, despite what management might say. Any employee who is disciplined for any reason please contact your steward or the Union office immediately. We must file a grievance within 14 days, if not the discipline remains in your record for 2 years, regardless of what management might tell you. If you fail to grieve any discipline issued, you will be looking at a Notice of Removal before you know it.

Support Services National Business Agent Bill Manley, who is from Pennsylvania, spoke about APWU represented truck drivers who work for MCA who were on strike for 3 weeks have concluded their strike, going back to work without a contract. The contract for workers in Jacksonville and Des Moines expired in September 2003. Kansas City drivers are trying to negotiate their first contract. MCA is one of the nations' largest private mail haulers. MCA management engaged in unfair labor practices that reduced pay to some drivers in excess of \$10,000. They also began denying the drivers pay for required rest breaks, breaks that were paid under their expired agreement. They stopped paying a portion of the drivers health benefits forcing the drivers to assume the costs if they wished to maintain their coverage. They also hired replacement drivers to replace striking drivers. The National APWU contributed \$150 per week per driver and has asked locals to adopt a driver; contributing \$450 per driver for the three weeks they were on strike.

Another large private mail hauler, Pat Salmon & Sons has returned to negotiations with APWU represented drivers. Hundreds of drivers and their families had their health insurance terminated March 1, as their collective bargaining agreement lapsed. The drivers had been paying as much as \$11,500 a year to be eligible for the company plan, for which the company pays less than 10% of the premiums. A Federal Mediator has been brought in to the talks. The drivers won their first contract in September 2003 following 3 years of negotiations. The agreement covered Salmon workers in Texas, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Tennessee and Louisiana. I urge every KAL member to go to APWU.org and go to the Support Service page, and read about the struggles that these workers face on a daily basis. I hope it makes all members appreciate the wages and benefits we enjoy. These were the early battles for APWU; we should all be thankful

and appreciative of those who fought the early battles.

In closing, I would ask all members of this local to encourage your fellow co-workers who choose to be SCABS, to join the Union. Stress to them the importance of paying their fair share. National Negotiations are costly; they benefit **ALL** postal employees, not just members. Tell them you're tired of paying while they get a free ride. Maybe shame or guilt will convince them to join. Maybe, just maybe, if they have no one to talk to, no one to eat lunch with, they will get the idea, that we are only as strong as our membership and the KAL membership says **NO** to **SCABS!** As always you can receive a rebate for every SCAB you sign up.

If anyone has any questions or concerns feel free to contact the Union office.

In Solidarity

Gina

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Mike Fealtman, Vice President Keystone Area Local

Over the past years, the Union has informed the membership about the Bush Administration's attempts to push for Postal Reform. Well, it's here once again. Bill HR-22 is in the House and Bill S-662 is in the Senate. While these bills are not perfect, they are better than what the current Administration wanted. Both bills

protect our collective bargaining, health and retirement benefits. These are very important issues. Our health and retirement benefits continue to be guaranteed by law and will not be placed on the bargaining table but, thing about what would happened if we lost our collective bargaining process. Ugly! Enough said.

While one of these two bills looks like it will make it through congress, let's hope Bush will sign it. He is not on our side and proof is his naming James Miller to the Board of Governors. This was done during a congressional recess. (You know. Through the back door while nobody was looking.) Miller has stated that he advocates postal privatization and the postal employees are overpaid. Well, HELLO to you, Mr. Miller.

There are more things that we need to concern ourselves with. Changes to Social Security will affect most of us. Most USPS workers are FERS. Let's not forget about the Bush Administration wanting to reduce benefits to veterans or Medicare and Medicaid. How about reducing the matching employer payments to the Thrift Savings program and changing the 'high 3' to a 'high 5' formula for Federal retirees. We must stand together to win this fight.

By now, if you are in the plant, you have seen the ERRP (Ergonomic Risk Reduction Process) team on the workroom floor. This team will be looking at the jobs on the workroom floor to see if they can identify ways to control musculoskeletal disorders (MSD). There will be changes made to help reduce MSDs. Hopefully, in the future you will see some different types of equipment and working practices to help reduce injuries. More to come later.

Did you know that the average CEO of a major company received 9.83 million dollars in total compensation, a 12 percent increase over 2003, compared with the inflation-

ravaged 3.6 percent raise the average worker received. I'm not greedy, but I would like a 12 percent raise for the year. Between the raise that the Union fought to get us and the two cost of living raises, I don't think we got a 12 percent raise. Most of these CEO's are the same ones who said that Unions are ruining this country and bad for America. Go figure.

Be American
Buy American

Michael Fealtman, Sr.

BILL'S CORNER

SPRINGTIME – A TIME FOR CHANGE

Well, spring has sprung, and my personal thoughts have drifted towards retirement or more importantly, I need a nest egg, if I ever hope to retire.

I have come up with two good ideas how to make some fast cash. (1) I need to charge a quarter (twenty-five cents) toll for every individual that tries to gain access to the GMF by entering the double doors in the middle of the front of the building; and (2) I need to charge a nickel (five cents) surcharge for every time any employee uses the word "fair" (normally used in conjunction with "that isn't").

After much consideration on the plausibility of both of these options, I have decided to use the K-Mart approach of sales versus the high-end stores. (four sales at a quarter = one dollar, but forty sales at a nickel = two dollars). Therefore I have decided on the nickel per "fair statement".

To better enable my plan, I have decided to please the employees I represent. I can no longer use or enforce a contract such as the Collective Bargaining Agreement, it just does not contain the elasticity needed to please all the people on a daily basis.

In August I will be attending the Clerk Craft Conference. I plan on putting forth the following proposal: (FAIR ARTICLE)

A.) Strike out Articles 1, 2, and 4 thru 43. I cannot strike out Article 3. This Article contains management's rights which gives management the right to do whatever they want, unless it is a violation of any other article. If I was to exclude it, management would never sign the new contract.

B.) Add Article 99, which will read as follows:

'Whenever any question as to what is right or fair, as it contains to any situation, leave, discipline, overtime, holidays, jobs, seniority, etc., the following procedure will take place. Any employee and/or manager that questions 'How does it work? What is fair?', I think should be like this SHALL put in writing their idea, question, suggestion to management (must be in the form of a yes or no question). Within three days of receipt, management and the Union (only if the polling process has named Stewards), will at random poll five (5) employees (one employee must be a scab, (Being Fair), to elicit their answer.

Majority Rules. This decision is binding and a grievance can be filed (if the polling process has named stewards) if the new rule is violated. This new rule cannot be

overturned unless another employee submits the same question and the rule is voted out.

The following also applies:

- A.) There can be no polling on the same issue for twenty-eight days after it was first decided.
- B.) The same five employees cannot be polled on the same issue more than once a year.
- C.) The same five employees cannot be polled, twice on the same day, or more than three times in the same week.
- D.) If a Steward has been named, the Union shall choose two of the five employees (Union Members Only) to be polled. Management shall choose two of the Five employees (Union Members Only). The fifth employee (Scab Only) will be nominated by the other Scabs to represent them in the polling process.'

I THINK THE ABOVE IS FAIR, DON'T YOU? (You get what you want, I get rich.)

Yours in Solidarity,

Bill Bechtel

M V S
By
Butch Kreider

I was asked to write an article for our newsletter---here goes.....

The first thing I want to address is the clerk dispatcher(s).

First: To the members, I want to make it clear; the clerk dispatchers are members of the MVS craft. If they need to see a steward, an MVS steward will represent them. They are not in the clerk craft and they are not part of management. A clerk/dispatcher cannot sign/date a leave slip. Find a supervisor or acting supervisor to sign and date the leave slip that they were notified. Be sure to fill out the leave slip in triplicate so you have a copy as proof of when management was notified.

Second: If you think a violation of the CBA or LMOU has occurred, please ask to see a steward and go to the steward's office to discuss the violation. This is your right. I don't know about the other stewards, but when I am not on steward's time and a driver discusses a violation, I usually have trouble remembering what I was told. I have been told that this will only get worse as I get older! Once again, with emphasis, *please request a steward and go to the steward office to discuss a suspected violation.*

Third: SCABS- do not discuss contract issues with them. They do not pay dues. They are parasites walking around with their hands in your pockets, stealing wages and benefits that you pay for. National negotiations will begin soon. One of the issues up for negotiation is for scabs to negotiate their own contract. I wonder how successful they will be with no one paying dues to support their efforts. I repeat, DO NOT DISCUSS CONTRACT ISSUES WITH SCABS. In fact, why talk to scabs at all?

Fourth: Never talk to a postal inspector without a union representative. NEVER.

Fifth: If a supervisor wants to question you about anything, ask for a steward. They are

not just chatting, they are looking for trouble.

Sixth: Never talk to a postal inspector without a union representative. **NEVER!**

In Solidarity,

Butch
MVS Steward

THE RETIREMENT BLUES

By
Rich Creason

As we approach post prime time and start to consider what's going to be left in the tank when retirement thoughts start popping up in the back of your mind, it's time to take stock of the asset side of the ledger and give close scrutiny to what out of pocket expenses await.

Without even pretending to know what lies ahead financially, a few warning signs should be on the horizon. Most importantly, the cost of picking up your own health insurance is presently in the \$300-\$400/month range. With previous raises of 15% to 20% per year, it doesn't take a mathematician to calculate the remainder of your retirement funds, especially with survivor benefits. It doesn't leave a lot in the kitty. Even with a tidy sum in your thrift savings plan and possibly some social security benefits, the erosion of that monthly stipend is likely to happen at a much faster rate than we can anticipate at this time.

Those of you with the ability to acquire part-time work afterward in a field that might be somewhat rewarding are way ahead of the game. For the majority of us, making ends

meet at our current salary is difficult enough. Increases in fuel costs with no limit on the horizon will eventually eat into whatever cushion we thought we might have after health care. The northern part of the U.S. could see some sort of mass exodus if the government doesn't step in to subsidize either a national health care plan or some alternate form of heating fuel. That also doesn't bode well for housing, despite the claims recently that Harrisburg is one of the best places to make ends meet (for professionals). For hourly pay employees, any bump in the financial highway could result a massive pile up.

Each person should sit down and start examining what's important in his/her life and start working toward what it will take to get there. I would avoid some of the estate planning, boiler plate assistance and look carefully at the realities that lie ahead. It may take some retraining in other areas that will still be hiring. It may take giving up a lot of the cushy lifestyle we pictured in days past. Whatever the case, start now and think about where you want to be when the time comes. Otherwise, we'll be working the DBCS long after our backs are telling us no more! There are no pat answers, even though it would make life a lot easier. Believe me, the longer you wait, the foggier things become. Some realize this now after dealing with aging parents and the lack of forethought that went into their later years. Nursing home costs are horrendous. It's never too soon to start evaluating the landscape five, ten or twenty years from now.

I'll be waiting down under.

Rich Creason
Tour 2 Steward

**DON'T DO IT !!!!!!!!!!! AT LEAST RE-
QUEST A STEWARD OR YOUR AT-
TORNEY!**

By
Mickey Rozell

What do you say when management introduces you to a Postal Inspector and says they want to talk to you?

What do you do when the Inspector wants you to write a statement or writes a statement for you and wants you to sign it?

What do you tell your Postmaster or Supervisor when they ask you to write a statement and sign it?

Whether you believe you're guilty of any wrongdoing or not, you need to follow these steps:

- Remain calm.
- Correctly identify yourself.
- Request a steward, a union representative or an attorney as appropriate. Remember management and the Postal Inspectors do not have to inform you and usually WILL NOT inform you of your right to have a union representative present, YOU MUST REQUEST ONE. You cannot be required to say anything until one is made available for you, even if they must wait until one is located and travels to your Post Office.
- Remain silent until you have consulted with your steward or an attorney
- DON'T sign any papers waiving your rights. Consult with your steward or attorney.

- DO NOT deny or admit to any allegations without consulting with your steward or attorney

- DO NOT sign any type of written statements or make oral remarks without consulting with your steward or attorney.

- You cannot be required to give a written statement. Any statement, either written or recorded is voluntary and you should ALWAYS consult with an attorney prior to giving a written or oral statement to the Inspection Service. Remember....anything you say WILL be used against you.

- DO NOT, I REPEAT DO NOT ever sign a PS Form 1067 until you have hired legal council. This is a waiver of your rights.

THE BEST ADVICE IS: DO NOT SIGN ANYTHING!!!!!!

I know many of you have seen this same information repeated over and over and hopefully you will never need it, but when suddenly thrown into these types of situations panic sets in and you forget everything you have ever read or heard on the matter. By repeating this information I hope at least some of it will be retained if or when you may need it.

Yours in Solidarity,

MICKEY

SCABS

By
Bob Meyers

The Merriam Webster Dictionary defines the word scab as follows "1. Scabies of domestic animals; 2. A crust of hardened blood and serum over a wound; and 3. A contemptible person, b (1) a worker who refuses to join a labor union." No wonder so many non-dues paying members get angry when the local union posts their names on the union bulletin boards. The plain and simple fact is that IT IS WHAT IT IS!!! Some of your friends and your co-workers are not and have not been paying their fair share of the burden to provide you with representation against many of the postal services unreasonable practices and policies. Because the law requires that even non-union members be entitled to some representation, these scabs enjoy a lot of the benefits your dues paid to ensure.

Let me give you a few examples. Our union President, Gina Meade, refuses to blow her own horn and publish the things she and her stewards do on a daily basis to support the union's dues paying members. Union stewards are not required to assist non dues paying members with family medical leave submissions, on the job injury processing, their application for disability retirement etc. Employees injured at work are finally being paid while they are off work for the injury they sustained. This has almost never happened in this facility but again due to the filing of grievances and labor management meetings this situation has been improved dramatically. If you get injured at work and you are a dues paying member please notify your union steward. Employees being emergency placed improperly have been brought back to work and compensated because of grievances being filed by your stewards. Make up overtime, annual leave, protecting

your contractual rights and dealing with abusive supervisors are a daily battle.

The local agreement negotiated by your union has unprecedented rights not matched anywhere in the country. These rights were negotiated by your support and dues payments, entitling us all to benefit from this agreement. Unfortunately the scabs also benefit from some of these hard fought rights. We recently had a manager from the Lancaster Postal Facility join us and after being here only a couple of days phoned the union office laughing that an employee wanted to go home on same day annual? When informed that this was proper not only could he not believe it but went onto explain that it wasn't that way in Lancaster. Needless to say he simply had to be reminded that he wasn't in Lancaster any longer. The right to take leave in the month of December is unheard of across the country, but we have that right here at the Harrisburg P&DC. The ability to have your leave become automatically approved if your supervisor doesn't get it back to you by a certain time is another benefit locally negotiated. I could take up an entire newsletter expounding on this topic. The scabs unfortunately get to enjoy some of the same hard fought benefits you members have and that's sad. I have a clear understanding that we are all different and because someone doesn't act or think like you doesn't make them a bad person but simply different. I also certainly believe in the right to choose. I became a union steward to do my personal best to make sure management was not violating the clerk employee's legal or contractual rights. I just can't get my mind around or understand the fact that non-dues paying members can look themselves in the mirror each morning and not at least wonder if they are doing the right thing? O of course they say stuff like "I Lost My Job" (Hello I believe you are still working here), The union stewards don't do anything, (If you only knew how much they do and how crazy this job can

be), I don't believe in unions (Neither does Wal-Mart at \$8.00 an hour), I can't afford the dues (Yet you can afford to enjoy the benefits on the backs of your fellow workers). The union protects only the criminals, employees who should be fired. (This last one is my personal favorite) If the union or a union steward could decide on their own who's rights they would protect and who's they wouldn't, I would be worried about when they were getting to me. I am encouraging our president to again publish the scab list by section and solicit these folks in advance to rethink their position. The purpose of posting the scab list is not to embarrass the scabs. The purpose is to simply make sure our records are accurate and that the dues paying members have an opportunity to see whom they are carrying. The local could use your assistance in encouraging these non-members to do the right thing and support you, the union and our families. I am not saying the union or local are perfect but think what this place would be like with out us. In closing, when we were doing a petition to have a bullying manager removed from their position a few members, who initially were reluctant to sign, stated that this manager hadn't done anything to them. After it was explained that it wasn't about them but about supporting their fellow union members that had been abused and supporting the local acting on their behalf for a decent work environment they changed their minds. Together we can do wonders but it takes a united front. Talk to the scabs you know and tell them it's a team effort and you are tired of paying their share as we all have been doing in some cases for years.

Yours in Solidarity,

Bob

P.S. I am a retired professional military soldier and am aware of a few ex- service men and woman who are not union members. I can honestly say that this puzzles me more

than anything else when we talk about supporting the union. I have always believed that one of the many reasons this country of ours is so great is that the founding fathers truly believed in the ideology of truth, justice and the American way. When I was in the military, it was always about mission and men. Taking care of both. You cared and look out for your men and the mission; it was a collective and joint effort of the chain of command. Even these folks have seen numerous examples of the postal managers taking advantage of their positions and showing little to no concern for the employees. Who would stand up for the individual rights of employees at this facility if not the union and its stewards? I would reiterate that I am not expounding on the fact that this union or any other is perfect, but the alternative is hard to even imagine. They are lucky that even though they don't pay for their representation they still get to enjoy the hard fought for benefits. We all justify our actions or inactions in our own minds, and we certainly don't see ourselves as others do, but we still have a right to choose to do the right thing or not.

ON THE JOB INJURIES

By
Bob Meyers

If you are injured at work the first two things you should do is report the injury to your supervisor and request a union steward. A labor management meeting was held and the postal services' eastern region labor officials along with the supervisor of the shared services office finally agreed in writing to abide by the Federal and Postal regulations concerning injured employees. The practice of not following the correct procedures and not assisting the employees injured on duty has been an ongoing problem in this facility and throughout the nation. Thanks to the settlement the union ne-

gotiated, these problems should no longer exist or will at least be minimized. In addition the plant manager and the local president are working collectively in an attempt to simplify the procedures the first line supervisor's are to utilize when an employee reports being injured at work. Lastly, remember you have a right to choose your own physician, your manager should give you a complete copy of the forms when completed, and you have a right, if completing a CA-1, to request the continuation of pay or take annual or sick leave.

**MY SHOP STEWARD IS A MORON.
I'M DROPPING OUT OF THIS #@*%\$
UNION!**

Contributed by
Lu Ann Garber, Steward, Gettysburg Office

HOW MANY TIMES HAVE YOU
HEARD THAT?
HOW MANY TIMES HAVE YOU
SAID THAT?

HERE'S EXACTLY WHAT DROPPING
OUT OF THE UNION DOES:

1) You lose your voice and your vote. Nothing you say or do will ever matter in the business of the union. You cannot affect the outcome of elections and you certainly have no say in how the business of the union is conducted.

2) You lose your right to information published by the union, both nationally and locally. All the research, seminars and training that your union reps participate in will be kept from you.

3) Pulling your financial support from the national and local union contributes to weakening the position and strength of the union when it comes to bargaining for national and local Collective Bargaining

Agreements; which again, you will have no say in. Things like the no lay off clause, wages, sick, vacation and overtime benefits. All are negotiated by the union. If the USPS had its way, we would all be casuals. Don't believe that? Come to the union office and look at the lists of casuals being hired to replace retiring career employees. Who is monitoring and grieving that? The union is. Your dues pay the expenses involved.

4) It says to your fellow dues paying employees that you are willing to sit back and suck up all the benefits that they pay for, without contributing your fair share.

So, you say, nothing I say or do does matter to the union. When I complain about my shop steward or anything else, they don't do anything anyway.

Complaints are investigated, however, not all complaints are grievances. As long as your shop steward is doing the job they are legally and contractually required to do, there is no reason to remove them from the job.

The steward job is not a popularity contest. Stewards must follow the letter of the contract. They can't make deals or play favorites. In fact, stewards are routinely told that, if at least half their members aren't po'd at them at least half the time, then they aren't doing their job! By the way, have you ever volunteered to be a shop steward? Do you know that everyone who does attends @ three hours of training on their own time? Do you know that if they go to the national convention they use their annual leave? Do you know that if they're on lwp for union business, they are losing retirement benefits? Do you know that the union does not pay overtime no matter how many hours they work? Are you willing to do any of this? If so, call the union office, they are always looking for shop stewards!

To vote on the business matters of the union.

like who goes to conventions, what charity events we participate in, whether or not we have a picnic, how much dues are and how much officers are paid, you have to be in attendance at the meetings where these things are discussed. Have you ever been to a union meeting? Most of the regular attendees at meetings are shop stewards, who again, are not paid to be there. There is also a core group of dedicated, concerned members who attend regularly. Others only attend when they have some issue they want to bring up for discussion. All members are welcome and encouraged to attend. Consider going to a meeting-if for no other reason than to find out what goes on, and if you don't like it—say so!

So, you say, I don't need the newsletters or other publications from the union because I can always go online and look up whatever I need to know. The stuff they print is boring anyway.

Yep, that's true. There is a lot of information on the internet that you can access. It's also true that the stuff in the newsletters is often boring—that is until you need it. Nobody wants to be bothered with the detailed regulations of workman's comp, or FMLA benefits—that is until you need them. These are things your union reps are already trained to handle. You want to be a scab and do all the research yourself? Go ahead, have fun.

Other information on the local and national websites is password protected, things like transfer opportunities, local memorandums of understanding etc. You can only access by inputting your membership information. If your fellow dues paying employees are stupid enough to share information with you that they pay for, well 'nuff said about that.....

So you say, there are plenty of others who keep paying dues to support the work of the union. They are not going to miss my money. Yes, most employees are dues paying members. In the Keystone Area Local,

it's about 75%. Probably because most of them appreciate how much work it takes to achieve and maintain the benefits postal employees enjoy today, after @ thirty years of the union's battling with management over everything from guaranteed time to Sunday premium. However, the numbers are declining. Last year there was a voluntary early retirement offered. The Keystone Area Local had almost 1100 members at that time. After the retirements were processed, with many positions being reverted due to automation, the membership now stands at about 875. That's a big hit financially. Now, multiply that by all the locals and members at large nationwide and you get a sense of how much each individual's dues mean to the ongoing work of the union.

So, you think your fellow dues paying members don't care that you are a parasite sucking up the benefits they pay for? I dare you to ask them.

Remember, you are the union. Not your shop steward, not your elected officials, you are. Without each individual contributing their part, whether it's your money, your time or your talents, every member matters.

If you find yourself doubting the benefits of union membership, talk to your friends and neighbors who work in non-union shops and compare their wages and benefits to yours. It will quickly become obvious who is better off.

So, what exactly would change if you drop out of the union? Your shop steward will still be your shop steward. The union will continue doing its work, but without the benefit of your contribution. You will have neither accomplished nor proven anything.....

Yours in Solidarity

Lu Ann