



National & Local Unions Meet



The first of two Semi-Annual Meetings of the Local Unions (SAMLU) was held recently, concluding on February 20th. Over the three day meeting a multitude of reports and information were disseminated to all Local Unions represented which totaled 36 in all. Following opening procedures and roll call, National President Hogrogian recognized recently retired Local 304 President, James Bell, who served Mail Handlers locally and nationally for nearly fifty years. Brother Bell's commitment to this Union should serve as an inspiration to all. Brother Hogrogian continued the meeting by delivering his report on the state of the Union. As you know, preparations for collective bargaining have been ongoing for months, but the hour is at hand for us to begin negotiations, scheduled to open the week of February 22nd. There are certainly many challenges ahead for our bargaining team as we expect the Postal Service to make every effort to take, take, take. The National President's report covered a wide variety of critical issues facing the NPMHU, including Postal reform legislation designed in part to restructure the retiree health benefit prefunding requirement in order to lend stability to the financial standing of the USPS. In addition, efforts to retain the exigent rate increase beyond its expiration could prevent an estimated \$2.1 billion loss in revenue. Paul continued his report by discussing the quickly approaching closings and consolidations scheduled to begin this April. As you know, our Scranton facility is still slated to be consolidated into the Lehigh Valley P & DC. The National Union has challenged the scheduled consolidations, or more specifically a violation of the procedures contained within the Area Mail Processing handbook, the PO 408. Many of the AMP studies that have given rise to the Service's misguided plan to close or consolidate literally hundreds of mail processing facilities, including the Scranton study, were conducted as long ago as 2011. The Postal world is much different today than it was five years ago. The data relied upon then clearly does not hold the same value now. For example, the package market for the USPS has increased dramatically year over year since then and collapsing the network further simply makes no sense. So, at the very least, the hope is that new studies would have to be completed to try to justify continuing the lunacy of closing more buildings. The NPMHU is the initiating Union and the APWU has intervened. Thus far, one day of hearings have been conducted with additional dates to be scheduled. This is a critical case and as developments occur the National will provide updates.



National President Paul Hogrogian

As mentioned the NPMHU begins bargaining for a successor agreement the week of February 22, with the APWU already into arbitration. It is clear that the result of the APWU arbitration hearings will have some effect on the Agreement we finally obtain. So, with that understanding, our National office has offered to provide assistance to the APWU wherever that opportunity is presented. Recently arriving at a tentative agreement, the National Rural Letter Carriers Association, now submit their pending contract to their membership for ratification.

Brother Hogrogian then discussed the recent decision by the Postal Service to cancel its plans to subcontract NMO operations and our continuing efforts to return work to the craft by discontinuing the subcontracting of Mail Transport Equipment Centers (MTEC) as well as the Surface Transport Centers (STC). Turning his attention to the Cyber Breach Paul updated the group on the continuing negotiations to extend credit monitoring protection for those previously enrolled. Our National President reviewed recently signed Memos covering aspects of the Filling of Residual Vacancies Memo and the agreement regarding the disciplinary process for Mail Handler Assistants. Both of those agreements can be accessed through the National's website at www.npmhu.org The National President concluded with a discussion of a variety of pending jurisdictional matters including the controversial reversal of the assignment of all Small Parcel Sorting System (SPSS) jobs to mail handlers. As previously reported, the NPMHU, filed a grievance, a jurisdictional dispute, and took both the APWU and the Postal Service into court.

Following a short recess, National Secretary-Treasurer, Mark Gardner provided those in attendance with a comprehensive report on the financial state of the Union as well as detailed information regarding membership and revenue trends. Brother Gardner reported that since the introduction of Mail Handler Assistants in 2013, the bargaining unit has enjoyed growth of approximately 6%.



National Secretary-Treasurer Mark Gardner

Closing out Day 1 were reports covering pending litigation, by National Counsel Bruce Lerner, including the status of our SPSS suit, as well as a legislative update provided by National Political and Legislative Director, Brother Bob Losi.

President Hogrogian began day two of the SAMLU with the customary roll call and housekeeping agenda before introducing representatives from Aetna, administrators of the Mail Handler Benefit Plan. Aetna's Director of National Accounts, Brad Corban, described an open season mail handlers have long waited for. With significant enhancements to the benefits provided by the plan, along with an extremely competitive price point, the MHBP standard option experienced real growth during open season and with word spreading we anticipate even greater growth next year. As we have said many times before *Revenue equals Representation*, and MHBP growth means an increase in revenue.

The meeting continued with a report from T.J. Branch, Manager of the National's Contract Administration Department (CAD). Brother Branch summarized the distributed report covering all of the major activities of the National Union since the report was last provided. Obviously, the most pressing matter for the CAD, and will remain so for the foreseeable future, will be the negotiation with the USPS over the terms of our next National Agreement. Notwithstanding the enormity of that task there are other matters before our National Office including pending National Arbitration regarding the Handbook PO-408, which controls closings and consolidations as well as pending arbitration related to severance pay when impacted employees choose not to relocate outside of the commuting area. The CAD also continues to discuss the dysfunctional jurisdictional mechanism in an effort to reboot this broken process. The CAD report also covers a range of issues important to the craft, including technological and mechanization modifications to existing machinery, revisions to handbooks or manuals, sit-stand stools for either the FSS or AFSSM-100s, the continuing discussions over the cyber breach and much more. For additional details see your facility Union representative.

Immediately following Brother Branch's report was the report on the Article 12 Task Force provided by CAD Representative Tim Dwyer. As many of you know the effects of reassignments as well as the recently agreed to Memorandum of Understanding entitled the Filling of Residual Vacancies are two topics of many within the purview of the Article 12 Task Force. Brother Dwyer as well as Brother Branch make up the Task Force for the NPMHU.

As established by National President Hogrogian, the third day of the SAMLU now focuses on providing attendees from around the country with topic specific contractual workshops. The scheduled workshop this time around dealt explicitly with an updated review of the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA). The NPMHU FMLA Handbook was recently updated over a period of several months and will soon be available to all Union representatives and was reviewed during the SAMLU. Contract Administration Manager TJ Branch, National Shop Steward Trainer, Tim Dwyer, Counselor Kathleen Keller of Bredhoff & Kaiser, along with the undersigned led the discussion.

Should you have any questions or concerns regarding these or any other Union related issues, as always please do not hesitate to contact your local Union representative or this office directly.

In Union Solidarity,
John Gibson

*NPMHU, Local 308
President's Report
SAMLU Edition*