



LOCAL UNIONS GATHER FOR NATIONAL UPDATE



As required by Article IX of the Constitution of the National Postal Mail Handlers Union, the first Semi-Annual Meeting of the Local Unions (SAMLU) for 2012 was held in San Diego, California beginning March 8, 2012. NPMHU National Officers met with representatives of the Local Unions, providing a state of the Union, a full financial report, a report from the Contract Administration Department as well as matters related to legislation, the Committee on the Future, as well as other items of interest submitted by the Local Unions.

National President John Hegarty brought the meeting to order on Thursday morning and began by introducing Sister June Harris, who delivered the morning's invocation. Following the Pledge of Allegiance and the roll call of all Local Unions and a few welcoming words from Host Local President Eddie Cowen, Brother Hegarty began his report to the body. President Hegarty wasted very little time getting to the heart of the challenges we face as a Union. As many of you already recognize, each of the major issues that confront us today are intertwined, or, as in Brother Hegarty's words, have created a massive "tangled web" for mail handlers as well as other postal employees. As our Union forges ahead in its efforts to secure a fair and equitable collective bargaining agreement, an arduous task under the best of circumstances, the continuing fiscal woes faced by the Postal Service and their strategy of closing thousands of post offices and hundreds of mail processing facilities across the country, and the failure of our Congress to provide a real solution makes for a sordid stew and an uncertain future for all of us. President Hegarty cited some of the major issues that have stalled our contractual efforts and revolve around management's insistence that we suffer an agreement similar in many respects to that of the APWU. Specifically, the Postal Service's closing offer would cut current wages by 5%, eliminate the Cost of Living Adjustment, create a new entry level wage scale, change the very structure of our health plans, ultimately raising our contribution, increase our life insurance premiums, reduce leave accrual rates, both annual and sick, eliminate or severely restrict our Local Memoranda of Understanding, and allow for a 40% casual workforce with no restriction on their employment. Recently the parties agreed that the next step in the bargaining process would be mediation. If mediation results in an agreement it would be submitted to the rank and file for ratification. If no agreement is reached through mediation the matter would then be settled through binding arbitration.

As explained by our National President, the financial condition of the Postal Service, partly caused by the erosion of first class mail and the impact of the overall economy on other classes of mail as well as the required \$5.5 billion in retiree health benefit pre-funding mandated by Congress, is driving the discussion regarding the closing and consolidation of hundreds of mail processing facilities, which in turn, is driving the need to degrade service

standards in order to consolidate in many cases. It is certainly a vicious cycle and it appears as though only legislative intervention can stop it. President Hegarty characterized the Service's philosophy as an all or nothing proposition, demanding that management be permitted to cut service from 6 day delivery to 5 or even fewer days per week, degrade service standards, and close and/or consolidate thousands of Post Offices or mail processing facilities. In the view of the reasonable, financial solvency could occur without these devastating steps. The President did announce that the National Office is studying all available options to challenge many of the Postal Service's actions. In addition, the National Office continues to analyze each AMP study for violations of the Contract as well as evidence that could lead to a potential legal challenge.

Finally, although there are discussions at the National level relating to a Voluntary Early Retirement Authority (VERA), there are no details to report, but it is important to note that an offer, if one is made, would be contingent on the outcome of the proposed closing and/or consolidation of mail processing facilities. In other words, if they don't close, a VERA is less likely to occur.

National Secretary-Treasurer Mark Gardner followed with his report regarding the financial state of the Union. Brother Gardner provided and discussed a number of reports including the fourth quarter financial statements for 2011, an up to date complement and membership summary as well as membership and revenue trends for the NPMHU. The National Secretary-Treasurer confirmed what most of us already know, complement and membership are on the decline and with it revenue. In addition to the financial synopsis, Brother Gardner provided an overview of the preparation for the National Convention which will celebrate the centennial birthday of the NPMHU. The slogan for this year's event is "Honor the Past, Shape the Future, 100 Years of Solidarity."

At this point on day one we were greeted with an unannounced visit by LiUNA General President, Terry O' Sullivan. Brother O'Sullivan described the state of employment within the Laborers' ranks, including unemployment rates in the construction trade over 17% and more than 20% unemployment overall within LiUNA.



Brother O'Sullivan addresses the Union's Leadership

To close out day one, Legislative and Political director Bob Losi and Senior Legislative Advisor Roger Blacklow provided the group with a synopsis of all relevant activities on Capitol Hill. To date, under the 112th Congress, more than 30 bills have been proposed addressing or relating to the situation within the Postal Service. For a listing of the most important, please visit the Union's website at www.npmhu.org and link through the Legislative Tab. And as always, please contribute to the Mail Handlers Political Action Committee (PAC) through direct contributions or through a payroll allotment established through Postalease. Remember, only PAC contributions can be used to support a candidacy directly, no dues money can be used. No matter the party affiliation we support the legislators who support us.



Following the morning's preliminaries, the second day began with National Counsel Bruce Lerner as he provided the group with a litigation report and a legal perspective of the Postal Service's Network Optimization initiative and our potential legal response.

The next presentation brought Brad Corban of Coventry Health to discuss the Mail Handlers Benefit Plan and our open season results. As expected with a diminishing Postal and Federal work force, enrollment declined by 5% during open season. Locally, enrollment decreased by a little more than 3%.

Contract Administration Manager, Bill Flynn then delivered his report which focused on the major issues currently facing mail handlers. Of course first and foremost is the aggressive consolidation and closing initiative rolled out by the Postal Service in September of last year. This massive undermining of the postal network brings with it a whole host of complicated contractual applications, obviously impacting those threatened with relocation as well as those in the gaining facilities.

The Local Presidents in attendance were then provided with a status report regarding the restructuring of the Contract Administration Department and Regional Offices by Michael Hora of the CAD. As described, the process continues as the former Regional Offices are collapsed into Washington, DC and Denver, CO. Following Brother Hora, Sam D'Ambrosio provided an update on the Article 12 Taskforce promising to address specific Article 12 inquiries during the full seminar scheduled for the following day. Brother Tim Dwyer of Local 301 then discussed the benefit of the Modified Arbitration Process, which has as its mail goal the reduction of the backlog of cases, providing quicker resolution of grievances and reduced costs. If you have any questions or concerns regarding these or any other Union related matter please do not hesitate to contact me at your convenience.

In Solidarity,
John Gibson

SHOP STEWARD TRAINING CONTINUES IN LOCAL 308

National Shop Steward Trainer and Eastern Area Vice President Sam D'Ambrosio once again visited Local 308 to conduct a new stewards training seminar on March 15 for some of 308's newest representatives. Laying a solid foundation in what will be a continuing education is crucial to providing the best representation pos-

sible. We give a heartfelt thanks to Brother D'Ambrosio and those attending stewards for their commitment to protecting the rights of mail handlers. Without the dedication and hard work of the many stewards and other representatives across the Local, I hate to think what the wayward in management might get up to.



Deveral Wilson, Stuart Beckman, Darryl Conroy, John Gibson, Kyle Hamilton, Sandra J. Bradley-Adkins, Sharry Theal, Sam D'Ambrosio, Joseph Stancell, Darren Eley

*NPMHU, Local 308
President's Report
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