The President's Report

by Art MacNeil, President

Dear APWU Sisters and Brothers,

This being a holiday issue of the B.S.P.W., it was my intention to keep it light and positive. So I will begin by wishing you a Merry Christmas. If you celebrate some other holiday, I wish you a happy holiday and I hope you all have a Great New Year.

As is way too obvious, the management at the USPS continues to strive for failure. It was certainly a lot better a few years ago when their goal was mediocrity. Now, they have proven beyond all doubt that they won’t be satisfied until they facilitate our complete demise. The rush to close stations and branches is unconscionable. The places they are trying to close are often very profitable enterprises that serve the elderly, the poor and the disabled — people who find it a genuine hardship and in many cases nearly impossible to travel several blocks to the next postal facility. There are many folks who purchase our money orders to pay their bills at a still fairly reasonable cost. These folks will have to purchase bank checks at several times the cost of money orders. These are people living on fixed incomes with minimal resources.

A mile away, in an affluent neighborhood where the residents would be inconvenienced, a couple of phone calls to influential friends can halt plans for closure in a heartbeat. Oh well, that’s the world we live in and many times in the last couple of months, our union brothers and sisters have done the necessary work to stop closures. We have alerted the media and the local authorities.

We have told our friends, neighbors and customers about the service they were about to lose and joined forces with our allies to try to keep the service honest. As I’ve said so often, we could be profitable or at least break even if the service would stop giving away the store. President Burrus has challenged the service to give us back our work and let us do it for the money they are giving away for in the form of outrageously deep discounts.

I know folks are tired of hearing this song and quite frankly, I’m tired of singing it but I have to take a couple of minutes to discuss health care reform. The spin on this is the worst I’ve seen in my adult life. WE all know we need reform. Reasonable people can see that the cost of health care is burying this country faster than any war is. Unfortunately, those who seek to derail reform seek only to see our president fail, so we will be vulnerable in the next election cycle. They have publicly called health reform his Achilles heel and that trumps doing the right thing by the constituents they represent. They want to retake the house and senate and don’t care about the price.

They have sold their souls to the FOX party that parades itself as a fair and balanced news agency. When our president sees them for what they are, they cry foul. Let me tell you my good brothers and sisters, when you are the leader of a political party and you have to march in lock step with Limbaugh the junkie, Beck the idiot, and O’Reilly the molester, you are not representing your peers. You are representing FOX. These morons have called our president a racist and a bigot. The big boss, Rupert Murdoch has publicly agreed with them. An idiot screams in the house chamber that the president is a liar and he becomes the darling of the FOX political party. There was a time when they would temper their behavior in congress with a little decorum but unfortunately, that time is gone. Thank God they live in America because it’s the only place in the world you can treat the leader of the free world with such disdain and just shrug it off as though you did nothing wrong.

On a brighter note, 2010 marks a great year for our great organization. We will have a joint convention with the other New England states in Newport Rhode Island. This is a goal we have had for many years and it is starting to become a reality. It won’t be perfect but it will happen.

While Connecticut, Rhode Island, New Hampshire and Massachusetts are fully committed to a New England convention, Maine and Vermont are expected to have some representation at this first joint convention. This too, could only happen in America. We are hoping this works well and it will be a catalyst for Solidarity. I promise it will be well attended by national officers as it provides them an opportunity to communicate with many members from several state and local organizations at one time. It’s an event whose time has come and I hope to see many of you there.

In the meantime please stay engaged, help us keep our service alive and fight like hell when you hear about a branch or station on the postal chopping block. We can’t save them all, but we must try. Together we have a much better chance to succeed than we do alone.

In Union Solidarity.
By Lorraine Sawyer, Executive Vice President

Since Veteran’s Day had just passed, I would like to say “Thank you!” to all the Veterans who fought for our freedom as well as the current members of Ameri-
can’s Armed Service who are out there 24 hours a day preserving our freedom.

As most of you have already heard, we are going forward with our 1st armed Service who are out there 24 that it is time for all of us in New England to join together since we fight for a common cause. This is not in any way an attempt to take away any State’s auton-
omy; it is an effort to form a united front to our National Officers and the Postal Service, to show that we are united on issues and are willing to stand together in the fight for the rights of workers. The details are still being worked out but as I see it we are open to suggestions, we would have a day of training on Friday with our State E-Board meeting follow-
ing. On Saturday, each State would meet separately to conduct their own business.

To me there is no other choice. We are fortunate at this time of a national health care crisis to have the ability to choose what would be considered a Cadillac health plan. In my 29 years of postal employment I’ve had a number of different plans and most had their good points. None had the comprehen-
sive coverage that we now have in the APWU plan. I’ve been enrolled myself now for three years and couldn’t ask for better coverage. If you are not a member as yet, please give serious consideration to our own union sponsored health plan. You won’t be sorry.

— Keeping Up The Fight —

by Ken Fitzpatrick, Secretary-Treasurer

I have written in the past about the following benefits that go unused by most of our membership. They may seem like much on the surface but they are both worthwhile to all of our mem-
bers and we should remind them to use them.

FLEXIBLE SPENDING ACCOUNTS

Flexible Spending Account open season comes up every fall about the same time as Health Plan open season. This benefit allows us to deposit medi-
cal, dental, eyeglass, childcare, and prescription expenses in pre-tax dol-
ars by depositing bi weekly amounts into this account. The deposit is made prior to taxes being taken out of your pay. When you use any of the allow-
able expenses you can immediately file a claim to receive reimbursement from your account. A good example would be a need for eyeglasses early in the year, let’s say February. You can claim reimbursement for the cost right away without having to wait until that amount has been deposited into the ac-
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So as you can see you save in two ways. First the money deposited is not taxed and second the money can be received prior to the amount be fully

funded into your account as long as your yearly FSA funds will cover it. Don’t fail to sign up. You’re saving money us-
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by Mike McDonald, Director Motor Vehicle Division

On behalf of the Officers of the Mass-
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MVS SOURCING:

The Motor Vehicle Craft remains a prime target in the Postal Service’s cam-
paign to privatize its operations. During the MVS portion of the last All Craft Conference in Las Vegas, NV, delegates had the opportunity to engage President Burris in a discussion about the recent MVS Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) he signed.

Briefly, this MOU allows local un-
ions to enter into a “Pilot Program” with the Postal Service to change the “Hours of Work” for MVS employees in an effort to avoid a Mode Conver-
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continued on page 4

Executive Vice President’s Report

Happy Holidays

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Secretary-Treasurer’s Report

Worthwhile Benefits

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President Burris continually emphasized that the MOU provided local unions an opportunity to negotiate. Arias's article was important for its discussion of the role of each state's executive board, its relationship with the national union, and the need for effective communication and collaboration among members.

Arias's emphasis on the importance of collective bargaining and the role of the executive board in addressing the challenges of the industry provides valuable insights for union leaders and activists. The ongoing struggle for better working conditions, increased wages, and improved benefits is critical for the survival of the postal service and its employees. The executive board must continue to be vigilant in advocating for these issues and ensuring that the interests of its members are protected.
By Bob Dempsey, Editor

First of all, I’d like to wish everybody the best this Holiday Season. The New Year will be a busy one for the APWU with a National Convention, National Elections and contract negotiations all falling in the same year. With all the gloom and doom in the newspapers lately concerning the Post Office, I’m sure it will be a challenging one for us. There can be no question about it, the OIG isw again in the news and they were once again recommending the Postal Service could save money by subcontracting out custodial jobs.

In this OIG report they made reference to some concerns expressed by President Burris that the OIG inappropriately interfered with the collective bargaining agreement. They went on to say; “While we respect differences in opinion, the OIG has a mandate to promote economy and efficiency in the Postal Service. Thus, recommendations made to management to lower the cost of custodial service remains within our statutory responsibilities”.

When we (Boston Metro & company) were at Arlington National Cemetery in the visitor’s center the Postal Service had a display which we went over to check out. As we were looking over the display Bob Keough (Boston Union President) made a comment about the OIG report which got us talking about the fact these custodial jobs were originally intended for Presta workers. He said, “the OIG claims they respect differences in opinion, I’ll share mine; I believe the Postal Service and the OIG are disrespecting our veterans by not allowing them to have these jobs. What is wrong with our veterans being allowed to have a “Federal” job with a decent wage and benefits? Where is the outrage with what is going on within the Postal Service these days from our elected officials? Maybe subcontracting those jobs and suggestions such as that should be addressed by these elected officials including Obama. Speaking of outrage, these consolidations being proposed by the Postal Service to our stations and branches is a farce and just another attack on our jobs. This Postal Company (they removed service with the passage of the 2006 postal “reform” law) doesn’t think twice about inconveniencing the customers these days.

“The APWU is doing everything we can to stop this insanity but we need our involvement. If you need our help contact your congressional representatives. Let them know you want your jobs back, you want to have a Federal job with a decent wage and benefits. Tell them they need to find out the truth because the Postal Service is spewing all kinds of garbage, mistruths, and misleading statistics about what is really going within the Postal Company. Tell them you would like to see a Postal Service in the future for your children. What is wrong with a so called federal agency being expected to offer jobs that provide a decent wage and benefits? This attack on our custodians, truck drivers and clerks needs to stop before we are all gone. We have to get this deceptagon out of our way. The Postal Service wages are not our fault and we shouldn’t be allowed to be the scapegoat. We need our elected officials to put a stop to this destruction by CEO Potter. Our careers are now under this capitalism driven attack on decent jobs and we need you to get more involved for our survival.”

By Don Sheehan, Legislative Director

THE PATIENT SAFETY ACT

We have a disturbing crisis in Massachusetts hospitals. Registered nurses are being forced to care for too many patients at once, and patients are suffering the consequences in the form of preventable errors, increased lengths of stay and preventable errors, avoidable complications, and many other opinions being expressed to the OIG. In both 2006 and 2008, the Massachusetts House of Representatives passed the Patient Safety Act by overwhelming margins. The Massachusetts Nurses Association (MNA) is continuing to fight to get this important legislation passed in the Senate, but they need our help.

To get more information & contact your legislator to support this “patient focused” legislation: Visit: www.massnurses.org AND OR www.protectmasspatients.org

JOBLESS RECOVERY

On Thursday, October 1st many members of APWU locals from throughout the state took to the streets of Boston with over 1000 other people to protest the country’s jobless recovery. Dozens of area unions and allied community organizations - participated in this “Rally for Jobs”. The goal of the public action was to fight against a jobless recovery and demand an economy that works for everyone.

The event started with a rally on Boston Common followed by a march to another rally in front of the State House.

My hats off to those APWU members who took part in the rally, some marching in an event of this nature for the first time. It was a great demonstration of labor and community unity and shows what can be accomplished when people work together. To kind of paraphrase what one extremely captivating speaker said about the OIG claims; “It’s about cheap labor, it’s as old as time. Do you know what motivates us is pain. We’re in pain now. In any key situation you either get bitter or you get worse. Now we better get better or it’s not going to get better “. I couldn’t agree more.

FUEL TO THE FIRE

To add fuel to the jobless recovery fire, more bad news on the nation’s jobless rate was announced on November 6th. Unemployment worsened in October to 10.2 percent, a huge jump from 9.8 percent in September. That’s 15.7 million jobless workers, according to the U.S. Labor Statistics. Worse, the unemployment and underemployment rate combined is a jaw dropping 17.5 percent—that’s more than 27 million American workers without full-time jobs.

The construction, manufacturing and retail industries had the biggest losses, with 62,000 construction jobs lost in October, 61,000 in manufacturing and 40,000 in retail. Health care and temporary employment were the only bright spots, with health care jobs increasing by 29,000 and temp jobs by 44,000. Temp jobs...is that the future “bright spot” for Americans to look forward to?

As the September into October numbers show, the overall jobs situation doesn’t appear to be improving any time soon. Long-term unemployment is the worst in 24 years, and there now are more than six workers for every available job. Some economists predict that one-third of the U.S. workforce will be unemployed or underemployed by 2010. You are probably saying, yeah, why should I care, I have a job. Care! It should tick you off! It is way beyond time that we ALL started to care about our fellow Americans that are in pain, union and non-union, or we are eventually going to live in a country where there are two classes of people, rich and poor. No joke.

It really doesn’t take a lot. Get involved occasionally, take part in public actions like the one outlined above in this article, instead of playing poker on your computer, search the web for working family issues, contact legisla-
Out Of Their Freakin’ Minds

by John Flattery,
Director Clerk Division

Well, it’s official now, the people running the USPS are out of their freakin’ minds. On October 26, 2009 it was announced that the Mystery Shopper Program will become the Retail Customer Experience. According to USPS news link the name change is a result of feedback received from area and district customer relations managers.

So let me see if I’ve got this right. The Postal Service is in crisis, volumes are historically low, employees are being involuntarily re-assigned at an alarming rate, plants are being consolidated, stations and branches are being closed, the Postmaster General is pushing for five day delivery, we are losing billions of dollars this year and the imbeciles that run the USPS have the gall to actually pay someone to review our mail and budget, allowing them to better understand what that particular purchaser might need” using that technique as a barometer I would say we aren’t selling up we’re shaking down the customers and I don’t see how that is good for business.

As I see it we are creating the impression that the only way to make sure your mail gets delivered is to send it express which means our other options are not reliable, I don’t think that’s a positive image to put forward. When a customer discovers that he could have sent something parcel post or media mail for a few dollars but instead spent $28.00 because that’s all he was offered that will not be a happy customer. Then there are the customers who don’t want to hear all these stupid questions, how is it helpful for the Postal Service to aggravate customers and increase the time others wait in line?

Last year the Postal Service and the APWU agreed at the national level that Mystery Shopper evaluations will not be used as a basis for issuing discipline. However discipline is being issued based on Mystery Shopper evaluations and each day more clerks are threatened that they will be next. It is time for our APWU leadership to help improve the working conditions for window clerks everywhere and stop this insanity, but it’s up to all of us to let them know how much of a problem this is and they won’t know unless we all tell them so I urge you to contact our leaders in Washington D.C. and demand that something be done, and maybe after we get this problem we can worry about diversity at USPS Headquarters.

Happy Holidays

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