



Razorback Scheme

American Postal Workers Union • Fayetteville Arkansas Local 667

March 2012

— FAYETTEVILLE PLANT SPARED — We were one of the few that survived!

FROM THE PRESIDENT....

Ike Mills

Hello, brothers and sisters:

Boy, how time flies! I can't believe that the month of March is almost over. There has been so much happening, it is hard to know what to write about first.

I guess the most important should be the first, so for those of you that have been fighting the fight to keep our plant here in Fayetteville, I again want to say thank you, and thank God that our efforts were not in vain. I was very relieved; as I am sure you all were, to get the good news that the Postal Service disapproved our AMP study.

At the same time I was very saddened to think of the many thousands of our brothers and sisters around the nation that were not as fortunate with the decisions on their facilities.

The Postal Service seems to be set in their resolve to dismantle the Postal Service as we know it, with no regard to the impact to the employees or customer service. That is why it is so very important that we have a resolve as strong, if not stronger to get active in the continued fight to save our jobs.

There are many ways to do this. You can get more active in your Union's Local; there is always work that needs to be done.

You can and should give to the APWU COPA fund through several options available to you. The National APWU's goal is for each member to give \$7.00 to COPA each year. This past year only three of our Local's members donated to COPA through some form of contributions and the total equaled \$495.00 with 85 members for an average of \$5.82 per member. Imagine what we could have done with better participation.

I would encourage each member to participate in COPA this year with a donation of at least \$10.00 and more if it is possible. If you need help getting signed up for automatic deductions it only takes a few minutes so feel free to ask me for any help you need. If all you want to do is a one-time donation let me know and I would be

glad tell you how you can do it. You can get active politically through several options also.

The most important, making sure you are registered to vote (if you haven't done so already). If you need a voter registration card see one of your Locals Officers we have registration cards for you.

The second issue is to keep yourself and others informed of the issues that could affect your jobs and the future of the USPS. For those of you that are not checking out the issues at APWU.org on a regular basis I would encourage you to do so. This is just one of the many websites available to you to keep you informed on the issues affecting you and the public concerning your job and the status of the USPS.

In the first article I wrote as President I mentioned another way for you to get involved is to talk to your coworkers that were not Union members and encourage them to become members. At that time (November 2011) we had 80 members and 31 non members and were 68% organized. At this time we have 84 members and 30 non members and are 74% organized. We have gained some ground but still have some work to do.

Let's get out there and contact those non members and encourage them to be a part of our great Union.

*Yours in Solidarity,
Ike Mills*

8-STATE APWU CONVENTION • OKC • March 6-8, 2012

By Vincent Dacheille, Tour 3 Steward

First off, I would like to thank you all for being chosen to represent you at the 8-State Convention in Oklahoma City. It was informative and nice to be able to see our national team in action.

The main point they were trying to drive home [besides specific classes, i.e., the PSEs, Excessing, etc.] was that this coming November will be one of the most important Novembers in our lives — at least concerning our livelihoods.

There are many powers out there that want to plot our downfall. National APWU leaders pushed that we all need to get out and vote and get our voices heard.

Cliff Guffey, President of APWU, also said that until we get our work back, he is not going to move on the 50-mile excessing radius.

I attended the Excessing Class the following day, and it was informative, although luckily the topic doesn't pertain to us in the sense we aren't slated currently for excessing or closure. There is a "national move day" procedure that encompasses anyone getting excessed — that the Post Of-

fice must follow (at least in my understanding). The next one is June 30th and at intervals 90- days after that.

Next, I attended the Retail Sales Class for which I admit I was sort of lost since I've never worked the window. Many in attendance seemed happy the Mystery Shopper is gone.

The PSE and Legislative Classes followed. The Legislative Class involved the history of the Post Office and how bills are written and passed through Congress. Some facts I learned — 96% of congressional and senate incumbents are re-elected for repetitive terms and there are a lot of bills out there FOR and AGAINST us. When the dust finally settles and a new Congress reconvenes, they might actually bring legislation to the floor concerning our chaotic situation in the Post Office and we might actually hear something solid for a change.

A couple of main things from the PSE Class: Any hours they work over eight (8) are grievable, and we have to track their hours to make more Full-Time positions.

Thanks again for allowing me to represent you at the conference. If you have any questions, feel free to come and ask me.

—Vinny

Ask The Editor.... By Andrew Heyd What Happens To Creep Overtime?

I was recently asked this question by a clerk.

Let me start by saying, nowhere in the National Contract or our Local Agreement is creep or incidental overtime addressed. Incidental (creeping) overtime is basically a nominal amount of overtime generally performed to complete one's duties. For a clerk that is on the OTDL (as well as one who is not), this would still constitute an opportunity if it's greater than 5 minutes.

The problem arises when a clerk who is on the OTDL is sent home or not even asked to stay overtime and another clerk who isn't on the OTDL stays. This especially becomes a problem when a clerk who is on both the pre-tour and post-tour OTDL comes in four hours early for pre-tour overtime. He (or she) is then sent home at 10 hours and another clerk who isn't on the OTDL stays.

Basically....if you want to stay over...sign the OTDL. The union has been fighting this recently because it is a violation of the contract and a violation of the rights of the individual's that sign the list. If a clerk comes in pre-tour and works 10 hours and is then sent home, while a clerk who is not on the list stays 5, 10 or 15 minutes....that's a violation against the clerk that was sent home.

Incidental (creeping) overtime should not be used as a window of opportunity to avoid paying a clerk penalty overtime. Now, for the clerk that opts to stay overtime on their own accord, to "get the job done" without the authorization of management.

While a grievance against this might not be substantial, this is unauthorized overtime, and in doing so, is subject to disciplinary action. Do you really want to risk a letter of warning or worse for 5 or 10 minutes?

On March 6 - 8, I attended the 8 State Conference in Oklahoma City. With the potential closings of so many post offices, I

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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, April 15, 2012

Jim's Razorback Pizza • 1:00 p.m.

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was pleased to find that the overall atmosphere was not one of gloom.

I know many of you are wondering if anything was said about early outs or incentives for retirement. Well, actually, there was. Mr. Guffey stated, once we get all the work back to us within a 50 mile radius — all work that has been contracted out, all work that the supervisors are performing (i.e., all EAS, Time Keeping...etc.), only then would he consider incentives for retirement.

Now, I know this is not what many of you want to hear, and others have recently questioned whether the Union has the authority to accept or reject any incentive. However, this is still a very noble quest.

We must stand strong and regain the work that was once ours — especially when it's been shown we can do the work at less a cost than outsourcing it.

FINALLY...

Ice Storm (Act of God) 2009 Grievance is over. Management said we couldn't win it, but we did! Request all clerks and maintenance employees who were included in this grievance to check your pay stubs. You should have been credited with 8 hours of Administrative leave. This only applies to those that used annual leave or leave without pay.

Prime Motive by Loren Adams, Local VP

Most important in a person's life is his/her **PRIME MOTIVE** — our purpose for living. It's what makes us tick. While some may be motivated by greed, vengeance, hate or materialism, others are undergirded by family, building a proud legacy of integrity or affection.

What is it that floats your boat? That question is central to your existence.

In union-life we should be driven by caring for one another and building up of the work-family by strengthening job conditions and benefits — by building bridges and cultivating good relationships.

However, if we're caught up in vengeance, settling a score with some nemesis from the past, or trying to prove ourselves right over some inconsequential issue, then we have lost our way. Life becomes empty and meaningless. No longer can we focus on what really matters. We're here to provide for our families, are we not? — while at the same time, making the best of the conditions in which we work. Is this correct?

You've met people who own a less-than-noble agenda, those hell-bent to fulfill whatever they inwardly propose in their minds, who'll walk over anyone just to get their way. Destruction inevitably follows their path. In the meantime, they're tough to work WITH or FOR. It's torment to always have to look over one's shoulder to defend against the unpredictable. Workfloor politics is

not always the best — where some smile in your face while whispering uncomplimentary remarks behind your back.

The last few months — we've been through a very rough patch — where our jobs and livelihoods were actually threatened, our futures were placed in jeopardy.

But we can make life better at work if we try. Compatible individuals are those that have a prime motive of wanting to make things better for all, not just themselves or their few favorite associates. They go out of their way to serve and are pleasant to be around. We all need to search deep down to see if we're truly motivated by virtuous compassion rather than destructive desires.

The last few months — we've been through a very rough patch — where our jobs and livelihoods were actually threatened, our futures were placed in jeopardy. This is, indeed, the testing time, the big semester exams — to see whether or not we have the moral fortitude to endure. Sure, we were rescued from shutdown by some "unknown miracle" (Wallyworld, a strange fluke of postal "miscalculation," or an act of God). Further tests lie ahead — as chaotic changes are proposed that seem to benefit no one. Our foundation is being tested in this process, the foundation of motive.

Each of us has a prime motive. What's yours?

Going Anti-Postal — Reports from OKC What kind of nation won't fund a Post Office?

by: Michael I. Niman

Published in the March / April 2012 Humanist Share
nlist.org/march-april-2012/going-anti-postal/
target = _blank<http://thehumanist.org/march-april-2012/going-anti-postal/>

There was a time not too long ago when mantles lined with Christmas cards were as ubiquitous as Christmas trees, when birthdays bestowed us with similar arrays, when the letter carrier would regularly visit our homes and drop off tangible graphic reminders that people loved us — that we were part of a community. Now our hundreds or thousands of Facebook "friends" hit a key and post to our pages. Our email inboxes might clog for a day or two with similar messages, laden with banner ads to market us happiness or merriment in accordance with what the date requires. Love, hate, and business, the pundits tell us, have migrated to email and social media, and hence that molluscan dinosaur, snail mail, is extinct.

But my disgust with the radical scheme to kill off the United States Postal Service has nothing to do with nostalgia or romanticism.

The Postal Service is not a mere delivery service, an outdated, inefficient alternative to FedEx or UPS. It's a public service that every nation on earth, except for Somalia, maintains. In fact the United States joins Somalia as one of the only nations that doesn't fund a postal system. We used to fund it, from the birth of our nation until Ronald Reagan's presidency. It's one of the only public services specifically addressed in the U.S. Constitution — right in Article One. Its genesis dates back to the Second Continental Congress, which appointed Benjamin Franklin as our first postmaster general.

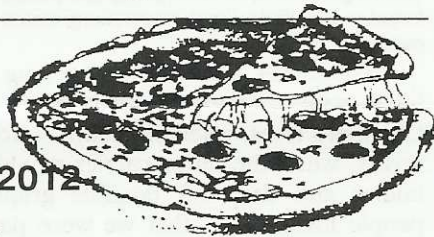
The original purpose of the Postal Service was not to deliver Christmas gifts or iPads but to deliver democracy. It was the conduit for political discussion and debate, tying a geographically dispersed population into a single, somewhat informed electorate. That's why magazines and newspapers historically enjoyed a low, government-subsidized rate. The Founding Fathers realized that a large nation must communicate through media, and that privately funded media would skew the national debate toward the interests of the rich. Hence, they established the Postal Service and gave it a mandate to subsidize independent media with deeply discounted media mail rates. That's why its formation was enshrined in the U.S. Constitution — for the same reason the Constitution guarantees freedom of speech and names journalism as the only profession that it specifically safeguards. A free press, including a means for disseminating that press, are paramount necessities for a democracy to function.

Today, one could argue that the Internet fills this function, rendering media mail obsolete — at least for the 60 percent of the population that have dedicated Internet connections. But there are a few major differences between the Postal Service and the Internet that undermine

the latter's ability to protect our democracy. First off, our Internet connection comes via a private portal. A handful of corporations monopolize ownership of this infrastructure and keep trying to exert control over what passes through it and at what speed, if at all. We must never forget this, and never take the Internet, or its temporal anarchy, for granted. We've already seen governments and compliant corporations around the world employ simple algorithms or outright filters to censor the Internet. The Postal Service's media mail provides the redundancy that we need to guarantee a free press.

Also, unlike the cable and telephone monopolies that control our Internet connections, the Postal Service is legally required to provide uniform service, quality, and pricing to all Americans, regardless of where they live. By contrast, approximately 40 percent of the U.S. population doesn't have dedicated Internet access, and about a quarter have no access at all to the so-called information superhighway. Those of us who do enjoy Internet access pay exorbitant rates, usually to maintain a subpar connection. One way to correct this would be to have the Postal Service run a government-subsidized Internet system, with the same guaranteed, universal access to affordable service that the postal system has historically provided. This would be in line with the founding fathers' original charge to build mail highways, with the information superhighway being the modern equivalent of a road specifically constructed to facilitate communication. Also in line with the original intent, an affordable Internet with guaranteed net neutrality would protect future access to a free press. In a democracy, access to information should be a public service and a guaranteed right.

Union Meeting



**Sunday,
April 15, 2012
1:00 p.m.**

*Jim's Razorback Pizza,
Westgate,
Bypass (I-540) & U.S. 62*

- The Battle for Our Jobs!
- Stewards' Reports
- Soft Drinks & Cheese Bread on the House!
- YOU COULD WIN \$50! (*Cheryl Wing did in March!*)

Essentially, the war against the U.S. Postal Service is part of the same corporate-funded war against democracy that brands itself as a supposed libertarian battle against "big government."

A postal Internet, however, would challenge entrenched corporate interests in the communication sector — entities that persistently rip us off and openly work to undermine our democracy. It's no surprise that these communication corporations employ an army of lobbyists on the state and federal level, and are among the largest political contributors to pro-corporate politicians who carry their water in the halls of Congress. These are the same politicians who cut all subsidies to the U.S. Postal Service during the Reagan years, and now want to finally see it completely decimated.

Essentially, the war against the U.S. Postal Service is

part of the same corporate-funded war against democracy that brands itself as a supposed libertarian battle against "big government." The obvious contradiction in this rhetoric, however, is that you can't have libertarianism while corporations are left standing. Remove the "we the people" checks on a plutocracy that government is supposed to provide, and we're left at the mercy of unfettered corporatism, no matter how seductive the brand marketing is.

The Postal Service has been able to hang on to life, thirty years after it lost all public funding while retaining all of its public service mandates, thanks only to its work force.

Here's how the cards were stacked against the Postal Service. Congress passed a law mandating that the Postal Service, and only the Postal Service, pre-fund parts of its retirement system seventy-five years into the future. This mandate, which costs the Postal Service \$5 billion per year, does not apply to any other government agency or private corporation. Take away this burden, and the Postal Service, amazingly, would be profitable. I say "amazingly," because the Postal Service still provides media rates, as low as eleven cents, to deliver magazines and newspapers, and as low as seven cents to deliver nonprofit mail- all without the subsidy that similar agencies enjoy around the world, and that our Postal Service previously enjoyed for more than two centuries.

Even the regular first-class postage rate, which has gone up to forty-five cents, is remarkably cheap, considering that it includes pickup at your home and two-day delivery to almost the entire nation. Now think about UPS, FedEx, or DHL coming to your home to pick up anything for forty-five cents.

And it's not just ordinary people who enjoy this service. As much as we hate junk mail, small businesses often survive by using bulk mailings to send parcels of up to 3.3 ounces for as little as fourteen cents. None of this is really lucrative business, which is why postal services around the world are subsidized. Ours is not. Add to this disadvantage the fact that corporate delivery entities like UPS and FedEx can cherry-pick services that are profitable to provide, much like charter schools cherry-pick problem-free students, and it becomes obvious how the deck is stacked against the survival of the Postal Service. It's no coincidence that FedEx and UPS are two of the largest campaign contributors funding politicians working to kill the Postal Service altogether. Such a move would eliminate their primary barrier to unfettered profits, much like the absence of public service Internet

has allowed communication companies to saddle us with the some of the most expensive and slowest internet connections in the developed world. I believe this is racketeering.

On December 5, 2011, the Postal Service, facing a predictable budget shortfall and the unwillingness of Congress to restore any funding to the agency, announced that it will close half of its mail processing centers and end next-day delivery of first-class mail. This would essentially initiate a downward spiral of service cuts followed by revenue drops, eventually leading to the total collapse of the Postal Service. This plan, temporarily on hold, is already being prematurely celebrated by the corporatist press. In a December 15 column in *Forbes*, Roger Kay looks forward to the day when the mail system is privatized. He writes, "*I predict that the shift will be a net benefit to the overall system, despite the loss of jobs for more than a half-million postal workers. I hope they don't go postal on me for saying so.*"

The Postal Service has been able to hang on to life, thirty years after it lost all public funding while retaining all of its public service mandates, thanks only to its work force. These are, for the most part, highly educated workers who secured their jobs through a competitive process. They've kept this unfunded public service system running against all odds for decades. They not only handle mail but keep an eye on disabled shut-ins, senior citizens, and our homes, often being the first ones to notice if anything is amiss. Most chose this public service career because it offered secure employment with a guaranteed pension. The very precepts of this agreement are now in jeopardy because of a corrupt Congress beholden to corporate special interests that, in their unfettered greed, want to privatize and profitize all government services, no matter the cost to society, our democracy, or our freedoms.

I'd rather see these middle-class postal workers keep their jobs and continue to provide an essential communication service while *Forbes's* Roger Kay queues up in a bread line, or, better yet, tries to find some honest work. Perhaps he'll move to Somalia and experience the bliss of a postal-free society.

As the Postal Service creed goes, "*Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night stays these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds.*" Let's hope they can also survive a Republican Congress.

Dr. Michael I. Niman is a professor of journalism and media studies at Buffalo State College. This article was originally published by ArtVoice on December 21, 2011. Previous columns are at artvoice.com, archived at www.mediaistudy.com, and available globally through syndication.

Destroying the Postal Service in Order to Save It?

By Chuck Zlatkin, Legislative and Political Director, New York Metro Area Postal Union, Sept. 2011

The big lie seems to be working. Most Americans now believe that the U.S. Postal Service is on the verge of a financial collapse. The explanation seems logical: email, too many post offices, unnecessary six-day delivery, overpaid and underproductive workers. Unfortunately, these are half-truths, misinformation or outright lies.

It is true that the nature of mail has changed because of the Internet but it is also true that three biggest years in volume in the 236-year history of the Postal Service were 2005, 2006 and 2007, well into the Internet era. The bigger impact upon the Postal Service was the financial collapse of 2008.

But the root cause of the financial distress that the Postal Service is going through is overwhelmingly caused by Congressional mandates that were imposed upon the Postal Service. Congress passed the Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act (PAEA), which was signed into law by President G.W. Bush on December 20, 2006. Under the guise of modernizing the Postal Service for the 21st Century, it actually doomed the Postal Service. If not for the PAEA, the Postal Service would be functioning fine even with the impact of email and the financial collapse of 2008.

One of the provisions of the PAEA was to mandate that the Postal Service fully pre-fund future retiree health benefits for the next 75 years, and to do it within a ten-year window. This means that the Postal Service is required to send to the U. S. Treasury \$5.5 billion each September 30. Remember, this is to pay for the future retirement health benefits of people who haven't even been born yet. The Postal Service is the only entity that is mandated by law to do this. No government agency, corporation or organization is required to fully pre-fund future retirees' health benefits.

But that is not the worst of it. Both the Postal Service's Office of Inspector General (OIG) and the independent Postal Regulatory Commission (PRC) commissioned audits to look into possible overpayments that the Postal Service has made into the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS). Both audits show that the Postal Service has overpaid at least \$50 billion into the pension fund over the years.

There is a piece of legislation, H.R. 1351, introduced by Stephen Lynch (D-MA), which now has 183 co-sponsors, which calls upon the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to do an audit to determine the definitive amount of the overpayments to CSRS and transfer that amount to the future retirees' health care funding. Basically, it is a bookkeeping adjustment that saves the Postal Service billions and does not cost American taxpayers any money at all.

What also isn't being told to the American public is that the Postal Service workforce has been reduced by over 100,000 workers in the past four years through attrition and that the American Postal Workers Union (APWU) and the United States Postal Service (USPS) negotiated and signed a 4 -- year collective bargaining agreement in May of this year. The agreement, which was hailed by Postmaster General Patrick Donahoe, saved the USPS \$4 billion in labor costs

over the life of the contract. In exchange for the givebacks, including the creation of a lower-tier (non-career) category of worker, no pay increases for two years, postponement of cost-of-living adjustments, the union won an extension of its no-layoff clause.

Within three months Postmaster Donahoe was calling upon Congress to pass laws to gut the new contract enabling him to layoff 120,000 workers. Nothing has changed between May when Donahoe signed the contract, and August when he made his frantic call to Congress. Enter Darrell Issa. Representative Issa (Rep-CA) is the chair of the House Government Oversight and Reform Committee. After the contract had been negotiated, and while members of the APWU were voting either up or down on it via a mail ballot, Issa called hearings on the contract before his committee. During that hearing Postmaster Donahoe was called out by Issa and Representative Dennis Ross (FL) on his negotiations.

Since that time Donahoe has abandoned any pretense of honoring the contract, or fulfilling his responsibilities to the American people who depend upon the Postal Service.

One clear action that needs to be taken is for Postmaster General Patrick Donahoe to tender his resignation. If he doesn't, he should be fired. It would also be wise to institute a complete investigation into the unprecedented retirement package his predecessor John E. Potter received. Their legacy has been a damaging one.

Cutting back on service by reducing delivery, closing post offices and mail processing facilities will damage the ability of the Postal Service to carry out its mandate for universal service. To the people who most depend upon the Postal Service: the elderly, the disabled, the poor, and small business owners, it will be devastating. The impact on a local community when a post office is closed is only negative.

Mail and package delivery will still have to take place if the Postal Service fails. It will take place by a privatized system that does not employ union workers making a living wage and it will not provide universal service to those who need the Postal Service the most. What is taking place is a kind of "wisconsining" of the Postal Service, an excuse to break postal unions and siphon off the profitable aspects of mail delivery to private enterprise and demanding that those most in need sacrifice again.

The saddest part of all of this is that it doesn't have to happen. It would help to start by telling the truth about the financial crisis. After that was done it would be easy to remedy the problem. What is needed is for President Obama and Congress to do their jobs on behalf of the American people by lifting the suffocating Congressional mandates that have prevented the Postal Service from doing its job. Pass and sign H.R.1351 and then you won't have to close 3700 post offices, cut back in delivery, close hundreds of mail processing facilities and lay off 120,000 workers.

Chuck Zlatkin is the Legislative and Political Director of the New York Metro Area Postal Union, the largest local of the American Postal Workers Union, AFL-CIO.