



# THE VOICE



OF THE GOLDEN GATE LETTER CARRIERS

BRANCH #214

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LETTER CARRIERS, AFL-CIO

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Award-winning newspaper

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## DISASTER IF 5 DAY DELIVERY HAPPENS

### Wednesdays and Sundays off a possibility

*Not only T-6's would be affected*

**By Lili Beaumont, President**

What's it gonna take for carriers to believe that they are in jeopardy of possibly losing their job and/or their benefits? The Postal Service has been in all the news lately. Some of it is true and none of it is good news. Recently even President Obama went on record saying that he would endorse reducing one day of delivery if it meant saving the Postal Service. Since that statement we've received feedback from the workroom floor



where carriers are saying that going to 5-day delivery would be great because they'd get Saturdays off and that it would be only the T-6 carriers losing their jobs.

Losing one day of delivery will have such a devastating impact to ALL carriers not just the T-6s especially when you combine it with all the other changes and struggles the Postal Service is going through like

post office closures, FSS implementation, continuous decreasing volume, and the constant attacks on postal employees' benefits by those in Congress who are not fond of unions and either just don't like the Postal Service or do not understand how its finances work.

Let me explain the "bigger picture" of going to 5-day delivery. **Firstly, who guarantees that if one day of delivery is eliminated it would be Saturday?** With mail processing plants and other post offices closing, the Postal Service is already extending its service standard for certain types of mail in order to have enough time to sort and transport that mail into cities. If one day of delivery is eliminated, the Postal Service will most likely have a say in which day they would like to eliminate based on their operational needs. So in order to keep the pharmaceutical and video companies that mail their products priority mail for delivery on Saturdays when customers are mostly home, and in order to give the Postal Service

enough time to sort and transport mail, it is entirely possible that the one day of delivery eliminated may be during the Monday to Friday workweek. So carriers' work schedule may be 5 days a week without a rotating day off, and their days off may end up as Wednesday and Sunday. Carriers can then say goodbye to their long weekends and to their Sunday-Mondays off whenever there is a holiday.

**Secondly, in going to 5-day delivery, it is not only the T-6 carriers who will be affected.** If the T-6 positions are eliminated it will affect 1/6 of our total workforce. As per our contract, everything goes by seniority. So if T-6 carriers lose their bid assignments it will trigger in-house bidding everywhere. Those T-6 carriers with seniority may land on a bid assignment which may leave a junior regular without a bid assignment and thus an

*(continued on page 3)*

Can the Postal Service survive?

### Is it just contract year rhetoric?

**By Bill Thornton Vice President**

As contract talks approached, the Postal Service ramped up their rhetoric, adding to their desire to cut delivery to 5 days and proceed with plant/station closures. Postal Service management is now suggesting pulling out of FEHBP Health Benefits program, pulling out of the FERS and CSRS retirement plans, proposing to lay off 120,000 employees and requesting Congress to abrogate labor management agreements that protect employees from layoffs.

**Obama administration, friends and foes in Congress**

The Obama administration's plan would allow the end of Saturday delivery.

*(continued on page 4)*

## Branch 214 notes:

Shannon Lee, actor Bruce Lee's daughter, is commemorating on July 20, 2011, the day of Bruce Lee's passing, by initiating a US postage stamp for release in 2012, the Chinese year of the dragon. Bruce Lee was born in San Francisco. See [www.brucelee.com/site/stamp](http://www.brucelee.com/site/stamp)  
By David Mabalatan

The reprint in **The Voice** of an internet-generated item on the tea party has been reprinted, appropriately, on the web version of the Branch 782 newsletter. See [www.782nalc.com](http://www.782nalc.com) the August 2011 issue, page 18. The editor is Basil Zuniga.

Juan Dominguez's front page article on the coming tsunami of FSS machines in the May/June 2011 **Voice** was reprinted in "Postman's View," July 2011, Branch 231, Fresno, CA.

## Background on the U.S. Postal Service

- The Postal Service is an independent establishment of the U.S. government that is specifically authorized by the Constitution of the United States. It was

established as the Post Office Department (P.O.D.) in 1775 and was a cabinet department until 1970, when it was reorganized as an independent agency and renamed the U.S. Postal Service. As such it is one of the oldest institutions in America.

- The USPS employs 560,000 career employees, making the Postal Service the nation's second largest employer next to Walmart. Its annual sales of \$67 billion would place it at number 34th on the Fortune 500 list of largest American companies if it were a private company.
- The Postal Service delivers 40% of the world's mail.
- The USPS is financially self-sufficient. It pays for its operations through the sale of postage and has not received any taxpayer subsidy since 1982. In 1971, before postal reorganization took effect, Treasury appropriations covered nearly 25% of the P.O.D.'s budget. In today's dollars, that would cost taxpayers approximately \$16.25 billion. So postal reorganization has saved taxpayers tens of billions of dollars since 1970.
- Postage rates in America are among the lowest in the industrialized world and, relative to wages, stamp prices are among the most affordable anywhere.

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## WEB NEWS, [www.nalcbayarea.com](http://www.nalcbayarea.com)

Visit our award winning website. Get forms, check manuals, link to national NALC website, see photos of Branch 214 stations, and more, more, more. Some areas are limited to shop stewards and union activists.

Go to [NALC.org](http://NALC.org) to sign up with the NALC e-Activist Network to receive periodic e-mail action alerts and information on issues important to NALC members. Join together with thousands of your fellow active and retired letter carriers to make your voice heard! FOR NALC MEMBERS ONLY.

### Win \$100!

For the first time, e-Activism could also net you a \$100 American Express gift card.

To provide further encouragement for members to sign on as e-Activists, the NALC will conduct a drawing for ten \$100 American Express gift cards at the end of the year.

You must be on the e-Activist rolls with a valid e-mail address by Dec. 1 to be eligible to win, and winners will be notified via letter mail as well as e-mail.

Check out our Facebook group link. The most current news is here. You can participate.

Please read all the information we have on JARAP to assist you. Your feedback is appreciated.

There is more and more on this award winning web site.

NALC Branch 214 is now on Twitter@NALCBranch 214. Keep informed!

**Beaumont** (continued from page 1)

unassigned regular. Furthermore, too many employees and not enough bid assignments in certain city post offices will trigger severe excessing. This means that the junior full-time regulars may be excessed out of their post offices and into other post offices where there are full-time assignments. The excessing radius has now expanded to up to 900 miles away from where one currently works. Who knows how many more miles it might expand to by the time one day of mail delivery is eliminated.

**Thirdly, don't think that just because you're not one of the carriers who are excessed you won't be affected.** The contract provides that when a city carrier is excessed from his post office to another he/she retains his/her seniority. So as this carrier comes in to the post office to which he/she is excessed, he/she will bump carriers in that office further down the seniority list. For example, when carrier A, whose date of hire is July 1999, gets excessed to the Zebra Post Office he will bump down the seniority list any carriers whose dates of hire are after July 1999. If many carriers are excessed into one Post Office, the employees at that Post Office may be bumped down the seniority list and they may eventually find themselves as "junior" carriers again on their seniority list. This loss of seniority for these carriers would mean loss of bidding strength for vacation weeks on the annual leave board, opting, and bidding on to vacant assignments. It would also mean that those junior full-time regular carriers are vulnerable to being excessed should more routes go away due to the continuing decrease in mail volumes. Eliminating one day of delivery, going to 5-day delivery, begins a chain of events that is not good for any carrier.

**Fourthly, if one day of delivery was eliminated and after all the in-house bidding and all the excessing we are still left with too many full-time regular carriers and not enough full-time regular positions, lay-offs would probably occur.** The contract now provides that no carrier will get laid off if they have at least 6 years of service. Our contract is ending next month and there is no guarantee that the "no lay-off" clause of our contract will stay the same. In fact, recently Postmaster General Donohoe went to Congress asking them to lift the 6-year no lay-off clause in our contract right now. Fortunately he was unsuccessful. Additionally, Congressman Darrell Issa (CA – CD49), the Chairman of the Committee in Congress that oversees the Postal Service, has introduced a bill – HR2309 – which proposes to recklessly downsize the Postal Service by allowing the Postal Service to lay off its employees regardless of what our contract states. He has also recently added language to his bill that the Postal Service should first lay-off or "separate" all of its employees who are eligible to retire before laying off the

junior employees. It is also rumored that he also proposes to do away with the union's ability to negotiate a contract.

So if you are one of those people that believe all of these changes are good and will not affect you and your family, think again. **If you know that your job and/or benefits are in danger of being lost forever, wouldn't you want to do something about it before it happened? Here's what you can do:**

- **Keep yourself informed and educated: Sign up for e-Activist.** It's free. Complete the e-Activist form below, clip it and mail it to NALC Headquarters at 100 Indiana Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20001-2144. Once you become an e-Activist, you will receive regular email messages informing you of what is going on with all the legislative issues affecting letter carriers and what the union is doing to protect your job and benefits and sometimes how you can help.
- **Give to COLCPE (Committee on Legislative & Political Education).** It is our Union's fund, comprised of voluntary contributions from NALC members, that allows us to advance our legislative & political agenda which is almost always about protecting our jobs and benefits. Giving \$5 per pay period is like giving approximately 6 cents per hour or about 50 cents per day. That is a very small amount to protect and preserve your job and benefits package. Call me at the union office and I can help you sign up to give.

(continued on page 15)

## Receive an e-mail worth \$100



The future of the Postal Service – and your job – is being decided in Congress right now. You can have a voice in the decision – if you're open to receiving messages.

NALC is asking every member to become an e-Activist to receive e-mail alerts when it's time to act on issues affecting active and retired letter carriers and the future of the USPS.

At the end of the year, NALC will send e-mails to 10 lucky e-Activists announcing that they've each won \$100 American Express gift cards. You must be an NALC member, and a valid e-Activist by Dec. 21, 2011, to win. To enter, give your valid e-mail address below and send this form back to NALC Headquarters.

First name: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Please print clearly)

Last name: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_ @ \_\_\_\_\_

Cell phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

**Thornton** (continued from page 1)

Obama agreed that nearly \$7 billion the post office has overpaid into the federal retirement system should be refunded to the agency, urged that its payments for advance funding of retiree medical benefits be restructured, and said the post office should be allowed to sell non-postal products and raise postage rates. The proposal would also allow the agency to enact a one-time rate increase of 5.6 percent.

Obama proposed deferring \$13.8 billion in retiree health benefit payments for the next two years so that they can be used for postal operating expenses.



The postal changes are part of the \$3 trillion deficit-reduction plan Obama sent to the congressional committee, whose job is to cut at least \$1.5 trillion from the federal deficit. The Postal Service has said cutting Saturday mail delivery would save \$3.1 billion a year.

“The president’s proposal would help the Postal Service update its business model to reflect Americans’ changing communications habits,” said Senator Tom Carper, a Democrat.

Republican Darrell Issa has refused to consider revamping the prepayment or returning retirement fund money.

The Issa bill would end Saturday mail and set up

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### **At the heart of the debate is the question of what the Postal Service means to America.**

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groups to close facilities and cut costs if the agency misses payments. The amendment doubles the amount the agency would have to save by closing processing facilities and phases out delivery to front-door mail slots.

Obama administration officials said their plan supports retirement incentives but not layoffs.

Rep. Darrell Issa, R-Calif., who has his own postal reform bill in the House, responded that “the president’s proposal is not what taxpayers or the Postal Service needs.”

He asserted that Obama’s plan “will certainly cost taxpayers money.” Currently the post office does not receive tax funds for its operations.

Meanwhile, 75 members of Congress led by Reps. Gerry Connolly, D-Va., and Don Young, R-Alaska, called on the independent Postal Regulatory Commission to block the post office’s plans to close as many as 3,700 local offices across the country.

The letter called for establishment of a new business

model for the post office without closing offices and cutting its work force.

Democratic Representatives Elijah Cummins and Stephen Lynch (author of progressive HR 1351) said the Postal Service could continue to provide excellent service without “abandoning collective bargaining ...and dismantling employee rights.”

Even some Republicans were supportive. Senator Susan Collins questioned policies that “drive customers away and lead to further reductions in volume”, like ending Saturday delivery.

**The good:** HR 1351, supported by the NALC and allies, calls for an immediate solution that helps prevent USPS from defaulting on mandated future retiree health benefits pre-funding payments and gives Postal Service some breathing room to focus on other areas of concern.

**The bad:** USPS Financial Responsibility and Management Assistance Authority to rewrite our Collective Bargaining Agreement. Congressman Daryl Issa Bill HR 2309. A little history

#### **The perfect storm**

The 2006 Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act mandated prepayment requirement, ostensibly to ensure that future retirees have coverage. Without having to pre-fund 75 years in 10 years USPS would have actually turned a profit in the recent past, about \$700 million over 4 years.

There was a “perfect storm” that hit the Postal Service in 2009 with the worst economic crisis since the 30s. So the economic circumstances were severe.

Resolution of the pre-payment and overpayment issues would provide the Postal Service with much needed breathing room. But beyond that serious issues remain concerning its so called business model.

#### **First class mail declining**

First class mail has peaked and is expected to decline, parcel post growing at 3% annually, and we have the “last mile” option available.

First class mail (formerly not seriously affected in economic downturns) is expected to decline by 37 percent by 2020 in that period as consumers opt for electronic bill payments and other forms of electronic communication.

Paul Vogel is the Postal Service’s chief marketing sales officer and he tries to persuade banks to keep sending paper statements in the mail. But Vogel says: “Inevitably, it’s going to go to those new technologies,” he sighs.”

The part of the old business model with first class mail subsidizing the growth of cheap standard mail is gone. First Class mail volume fell below standard mail for the first time in 2005. Postal Service needs (3) pieces of standard mail to replace the profit of a first class letter.

Common sense comes from the head of the PRC

(continued on page 15)

Picketing news update

## Some good news and continuing pressure

By Karen Eshabarr, Executive Vice-President

On June 22, 2011 many of us gathered to picket an abusive manager at the San Francisco Collection Unit. The manager was the one responsible for issuing a ridiculous amount of discipline. You may recall, during the planning of the picket, we became aware that she had been altering the Collection carriers' clock rings. At that time we had only discovered 3 months of repetitive manipulations of the rings. We were shocked at what we saw for those three months, but given what we had already uncovered, we decided to request the clock rings for the drivers that



went back a year and a half. Since this was done through Article 17 and 31, which gives the union the right to information, management provided us with over 10,000 pages of documents. Reviewing the information was tedious and seemed to be never ending, but what we uncovered was unreal. She had altered almost every carrier's clock rings during that year

and a half period.

### Changing carrier clock rings

To understand how this occurred, the carriers were instructed to be off the clock by 7:00 PM every night. Their begin tour often fluctuated when they were assigned extra duties. One must realize that the drivers return from all corners of the city, and as we are all aware, San Francisco streets can be very congested, especially during the evening rush hours. Obviously one cannot always be back at the scheduled time. Well you and I may acknowledge this, but this manager did not. When the carriers would come back after seven PM she would either delete all hours after 7 completely, or, she would delete all hours after seven then add those hours deleted to the front end of the begin tour.

**Confused? It looked like this.**

**Carrier original clock rings**

**BT13:00 ET19:15**

**She would change it to look like this.**

**BT 12:75 ET 19:00.**

**This is just one example of how she changed the carriers' clock rings. She really did whatever she wanted with the time records. And of course, every**

*(continued on page 11)*

Cooperation brings results

## Now is the time, now is your union

By Bradford Louis, Steward, Pine Street Station

(Part 1)

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines a Labor Organization as: an organization of workers formed for the purpose of advancing its members' interests in respect to wages, benefits, and working conditions. It may appear to be unusual to begin an article with a definition published in a standard dictionary, but it is this very subject that I want to address in this article. Who we are and the effect of our current struggles with postal management dominates our lives, not only during working hours but in



our homes as well. The current management in the USPS uses a managerial style with their employees which can best be described as if they were at war with their employees. I believe it is time for us to recognize and deal with management in the same manner (albeit tempered with respect and dignity) which they have chosen to inflict upon us.

### This company cannot exist without carriers' thankless daily efforts

As management uses the argument that we in craft positions are lucky to have a job in this economy, always keep in mind that this concept holds even more true for management. In fact, the USPS is lucky to have us as the quality workforce which really does service the customers of this company. We in craft are the ones without whom this company may not exist, and if you truly think that this company is not relevant to the continued eco-

### Without the support of the membership, leadership is toothless and cannot succeed in their efforts

conomic well being of this country, I refer you to President Obama's pronouncement that should the government shut down due to funding problems, the Postal Service will continue to operate because it is an entity that is vital to the nation. The thankless efforts we exert daily are considered as vital to the nation. That is the job performed

*(continued on page 15)*

*Ben Franklin, the first postmaster*

## The last postmaster

By Ivars Lauersons, Editor

Someone has taken possession of “Patrick Donahoe”, allegedly the postmaster of the U.S. Postal Service. This imposter has proposed a series of actions that would lead to the dismantling of the postal service, making him the last postmaster. He is proposing a loss of 220,000 jobs, a reduction of delivery from six days to three (with a stop at five days), the closing of 3700 small post offices, the exit from the FEHBP, and the exit from the federal retirement system. The real postmaster would try positive approaches, take advantage of the inherent good will the post office has, and work with the unions to save jobs.



Until the real postmaster, whose interest is in protecting the postal service through difficult economic times and a changing communications system, reappears it is in the interest of all NALC members to work to protect our jobs.

Donahoe’s minimum aim seems to be the elimination of six-day delivery. This could be a key demand of the NALC in contract negotiations to forestall even more drastic actions. This is only a foot in the door. When a postmaster talks of ultimately making a 3-day delivery system, he is giving up on the post office as we know it.

### Defeat on the information front

The NALC has had difficulties countering the misleading statements about the fiscal health of the post office. We have the public believing that the post office is

### We may be serving under the last postmaster.

broke. We have not gotten the information out about how successful it’s been during the recession. For example, the \$20 billion loss over four years is accounted by the required pre-payment of health care of \$5.5 billion a year. Over the four year period, during the recession, the post office made about \$700 million. Based on this totally false perception of massive losses, the postmaster can propose all kinds of radical, job destroying ideas with the public thinking that it makes a lot of sense. Years after the post office was made into a self-supporting entity, there are still editorials that imply the post office is tax-supported

and will require a tax-supported bailout.

The information battle has been lost to the imposters for now in spite of efforts during the summer by President Rolando and others to counter each media attack that veers from the facts. Even as objective a source as the *New York Times*, first in an editorial on August 31, 2011, and then in a front page article on September 4, 2011, took the position that the post office is about to be broke and faces a shutdown unless there is a drastic reduction in service and number of employees. There was no exposi-

### Current policy is to eliminate 220,000 middle class jobs for no good reason.

tion of the facts that the NALC has publicized, treating information counter to what the postmaster proposed as simply being opinion.

President Rolando is quoted at the end of the web version saying, “This is about one of America’s oldest institutions’ he said. ‘It survived the telegraph, it survived the telephone, and we have to do everything we can to preserve it and adapt.’”

### Congressional relief needed

The immediate fight for relief is in Congress where suggestions for relief include suspending the \$5.5 billion pre-payment and raising the limit for how much the post office can borrow to meet short-term obligations. HR 1351 is written towards immediate relief. To that effect, and to change national opinion, the postal unions are

### The public erroneously thinks the post office is broke.

organizing a national day of demonstrations on Sept. 27, 2011 in all 435 Congressional districts to defend our jobs. The fight also goes on in Congressional hearings.

The suggestions to close down 3,700 post offices because they are unprofitable defy logic. The post office is mandated only to break even overall, nationwide, not make a profit at each location, or at every facility. Surely members of the House, whose districts include some of these post offices, might hear some objections from their constituents. There is also a question raised by some economists about the calculation of profitability of small post offices. Apparently, the calculation takes into account the sale of stamps and services, but leaves out the delivery part.

On September 6, 2011 President Rolando and “Tom Donahoe” appeared on the PBS Newshour to continue the clash of facts and opinions. The real postmaster, the successor to Ben Franklin, was still absent.

*Carriers must get involved*

## The Post Office in Hell

By Herb Mitchell, retiree

These are pictures of my lovely wife, Adrean and me in front of the post office in Hell. Is this Pine Street Station, Collections at GMF, San Francisco, or any number of post offices nationwide where letter carriers are dealing with abusive management? No, the location is the post office in the town of Hell on the Caribbean island of

### Sometimes everyday life at the post office feels like hell on earth.

Grand Cayman where we vacationed in April of this year.

The post office in Hell could describe the present USPS. What with the prospect of office closures, layoffs, defaults, declining volume, abusive management, and political attempts to sabotage the Postal Service, it makes it seem like everyday life at the Post Office is Hell on earth. A letter carrier has to be a strong person to deal with abusive management, FSS, DPS, JRAP, IRAP, YOURAP, and all the changes in the way we perform our duties on a daily basis. Letter carriers must stand strong amidst all the attacks on our jobs from outside forces and USPS management.



Photo courtesy of Mitchell family

### Become professional carriers

We must support our union in its efforts to protect our jobs and the future of the Postal Service. We must also support the NALC's legislative efforts to confront the

### The union is the only line of defense against negative management.

political forces that are working to bring on the demise of the Postal Service. The best way to deal with the day to day situations in our workplace is to become professional letter carriers, support your union officials and remember that the union is the only line of defense against the negative management that carriers deal with on a daily basis. Get involved, not only with your union, but also with what is happening in the communities where we live.

### The rich are turning the middle-class against each other

It is sad that in this country there are forces that are trying to turn middle-class working people against each other. You have neighbors being critical of one another because politicians and the media have convinced them that the country or their city is financially strapped because you have a decent pension and health care that you have worked 20 to 30 years to achieve. You find neighbors on different sides because politicians want to strip your unions of the right to negotiate fair wages and benefits. The rich in this country have turned the middle-class against each other and also against the poor. We must stand firm against these forces and support unions and political candidates that support the working people in this country.

### Contribute to COLCPE

Support the NALC and its efforts to save the Postal Service, contribute to NALC COLCPE (our political action committee) to help fight the political forces that are trying to bring us down. With that being said, I will continue to contribute to COLCPE and be fully behind the NALC in its efforts.

Now let's see, I think the lovely Adrean and I will next check out the post office on the island of Aruba. Yes, that's right; I am enjoying my retirement, my nice pension and health care. Do you want to do the same? Then you better get involved because there are forces who think you should not have any of that. Think about it. Solidarity forever!

## THE LETTER CARRIER'S LAMENT

By Lynda Beigel, retiree

*with apologies and appreciation to the late Pastor Niemoller*

First they came for the writers, called them "commies" to shut them up; then they came for the coal miners, stripped their unions like mountain tops; then they tackled the UAW and Detroit saying their cars weren't very good; then it was teachers' and nurses' unions – down to "the girls" –

And at our cases, we didn't stand up for anyone... approved the shippers *On the Waterfront*\*, spread that carbon into the air conditioning, bought cars made abroad and their stock too, sent our kids to private and charter schools, decided health insurance prices were the workers' fault.

No, we didn't stand up for anyone... so now they've come for us!

\* A film by Elia Kazan in the Joseph McCarthy era that painted all dockworker unions as corrupt. Kazan was never blacklisted, unlike many in the film industry, including refugees from the Nazis.

**APOLOGY:** We mistakenly listed a member in good standing, Dante Acoba, Mill Valley as a non-member in our July/August issue. We repeat, he is a member in good standing.

## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Misun Henderson (Civic–San Rafael)  
Rosemary Schumacher (Civic–San Rafael)

## IN MEMORIAM

Robert D. McAdoo (father of Mike McAdoo)  
joined Branch 214 in 1937  
Thomas Newman (Retiree, formerly of Redwood City)

## Branch 214 Meetings

### Branch meetings, 7:00 P.M.

September 7, 2011 ILWU Hall, 400 North Point, SF  
October 5, 2011 ILWU Hall, 400 North Point, SF  
November 2, 2011 ILWU Hall, 400 North Point, SF

### Steward meetings, 4:30 P.M.\*

September 7, 2011 Union Office, 2310 Mason St., SF  
October 5, 2011 Union Office, 2310 Mason St., SF\*  
November 2, 2011 Union Office, 2310 Mason St., SF

### Retiree social meetings, 12:30 P.M.

October 3, 2011 740 Del Monte Ave., South SF  
December 5, 2011 740 Del Monte Ave., South SF  
February 6, 2012 740 Del Monte Ave., South SF

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## Resolved: Save the Public Postal Service

**San Francisco Labor Council Resolution—  
Adopted unanimously, Sept 12, 2011**  
*Based on a Branch 214 resolution*

**Whereas**, enshrined in the U.S. Constitution as a right of the people, the public Post Office has provided universal postal service over many generations, and is continuously rated as the most highly regarded government entity by the American people. Since the 1970 postal strike, which shut down mail service nationwide for four days, postal workers have had good liveable-wage jobs supporting their families in every community, and collective bargaining through their unions; and

**Whereas**, Postmaster General Donahoe wants to eliminate Saturday delivery, shut 3,700 postal facilities, and fire 120,000 workers [220,000 by 2015], despite a no-layoff clause in union contracts. Rep. Issa, chair of the House Oversight & Government Reform Committee, wants to void the postal union contracts altogether and open the door to privatization. Their proposals would sabotage and destroy our national treasure—the public Postal Service; and

**Whereas**, the scheduled service cutbacks will hit seniors, and poor and rural communities the hardest. . . .

. . . **Whereas**, just as Governor Scott Walker declared war on Wisconsin workers, what's coming is a war against the 574,000 unionized postal workers and their families – the next target of the big business class and their henchmen in Congress and the media. Like Reagan's attack on PATCO, this is an attack on all of Labor, and Labor needs to close ranks with every community now to defend the postal unions and save the public Postal Service.

**Therefore be it Resolved**, that the San Francisco Labor Council will join with postal unions, other central labor bodies, state labor federations, national and local unions, the AFL-CIO and Change to Win federation, and community allies, in a campaign including mass demonstrations to defend the postal workers, save Saturday delivery, stop the post office closings and layoffs, and save the public Postal Service; and

**Be it finally resolved**, specifically, that the council will join the campaign to stop the closing of the Bayview Post Office; that the council will support any demonstrations at local Congressional offices as part of the Tuesday, September 27th National Day of Action called by the postal unions; and that the council will urge Bay Area congress members to co-sponsor HR 137, which calls for maintaining 6-day mail delivery, and HR 1351, which seeks to prevent the Postal Service from defaulting on payments for future retiree health benefits—both measures supported by the postal unions.



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A challenging job

## Union stewards under attack and it's not what you think

By Charles Gonzalez, Chief Steward, San Leandro Main

(Part Two)

(In *Part One* we said that management can act under Article 3 of the National Agreement, Management Rights, but that it interprets the “exclusive right” clause to act in whatever way they want. In fact, it must act in accordance with applicable laws, contract provisions, etc. Part of the steward’s job is to protect carriers under these provisions. In addition, stewards volunteer to help carriers with FMLA (family medical leave) and workers compensation forms and rules. A majority of carriers appreciate this work. But some carriers are blaming the stewards for actions by management which are totally out of the union’s control. The JARAP (Joint Alternate Route Adjustment Process) is one of these issues. The last sentence of Part One read, “One of the most contentious issues that these carriers have is the JARAP process.”)



### JARAP process not in steward’s control

It is hard for me to understand how anyone can blame the union for the JARAP process.

This is one of the areas where management has the exclusive right to manage, as is stated in Section C & D of Article 3 of the National Agreement.

### Many carriers complain that they have to skip lunch and street breaks so they can get back in the allotted time.

Fortunately, our leadership at the national level has been able to negotiate the Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) that makes it possible for the union to scrutinize the data that management has relied on to adjust routes. This data includes, but is not limited to, such things as the time that is allowed for vehicle inspections, breaks and lunch, and office functions that are performed on what is called “Fixed Office Time”. Each carrier is allowed a certain amount of time for each of these functions, and the MOUs that have been negotiated ensure that every carrier is given credit for every minute that these functions take.

### What is Fixed Office Time

The Fixed Office Time is automatically given to each carrier, however, getting full credit for the other functions, the Expanded Vehicle Inspections (27 points of inspection), and breaks (two at 10 minutes each in most offices), is the responsibility of the carrier performing the function.

Unfortunately, many of the carriers that I spoke to while I was the Local Office Contact (LOC) in the JARAP process have lamented about how they regularly skip their lunch and breaks in order to get back to finish their routes in eight hours. These two functions alone total fifty minutes that these carriers are giving back to the Postal Service, and an adequate vehicle inspection should take no less than 7 minutes.

### Whose fault is it if you regularly skip your contractually negotiated 30 minute lunch?

I have personally witnessed some carriers who start the ignition, honk the horn and then run back inside the office to start casing mail. Naturally, the front-line supervisor is not going to tell the carrier to take the full time that you are entitled to, because this would ultimately only hurt his/her “office numbers”.

While management might preach safety, this is usually an afterthought, unless you’re unfortunate enough to get into an accident. Then you can expect to be beaten like a rented mule. The union is the only one that will tell the carrier to take the time to do the job safely and efficiently. This is one of the reasons why it is so hard for me to understand how a carrier who has had an addition and/or transfer of territory to their route could possibly blame the union. Had the union not been able to negotiate the MOUs that govern the JARAP process, management would have not been held accountable for ensuring that each piece of mail is accounted for, and that every carrier gets credit for every function that is performed.

### We do control our own work performance

We cannot control the affect that the recession has had on the mail volume, but we can control our own performance. The carrier has the right to check management’s recording of the data every day by checking the posted Workhour/Workload report that management is required to post daily in accordance with the negotiated JARAP MOU. Our branch conducted an after-work class on understanding the Workhour/Workload report, but unfortunately only about 15% of the membership showed up. That means that approximately 85% do not understand how to read the report. If you are having trouble understanding it, ask a steward to explain it to

(continued on page 11)

**Eshabarr** (continued from page 5)

day she made her unit look like everyone was off the street every day by 7:00 pm. She made herself look like she could manage like no other. This is likely so illegal. She ended up shorting the carriers of hours upon hours of night differential, regular work hours, guarantee pay, and in some cases overtime.

**Do as I say**

The nerve of this woman. To think she was engaged in this alleged criminal activity and then issued so many disciplines.

In just about every case she charged the carriers with being in violation of the ELM 665. This section reads in part; 665.11 Loyalty

*Employees are expected to be loyal to the United States government and uphold the policies and regulations of the Postal Service.*

*665.16 Behavior and Personal Habits*

*Employees are expected to conduct themselves during and outside of working hours in a manner that reflects favorably upon the Postal Service. Although it is not the policy of the Postal Service to interfere with the private lives of employees, it does require that postal employees be honest, reliable, trustworthy, courteous, and of good character and reputation.*

Hypocrite! Should we be shocked?

Now it has been 3 months since Supervisor Shen Yi was removed from the collection unit. The drivers in the unit have expressed their appreciation of the collective efforts of our union. Other crafts at the plant have made comments saying that we really proved what a union is all about. They have said that it was really great to see us out picketing in force with such a big crowd.

So where is Waldo, I mean Shen?

**Gonzalez** (continued from page 10)

you. Every carrier is entitled to time on-the-clock to review this data, and we should be taking advantage of this opportunity.

**Carrier rights in the merging of offices are limited**

Another issue that has been a sore subject is the Delivery Unit Optimization (DUO) that is scheduled for merging the San Lorenzo Post Office into the San Leandro Post Office. Once again, this is an area where management has the authority to make decisions under the authority of Article 3 of the National Agreement. Here again is an area where our leadership at the national level has been able to negotiate two (2) MOUs in the interest of the gaining and losing installations and local NALC

There have been sightings of her sitting alone in a closet type office. Her whiney voice echoing in the halls... and upper management is being tight lipped with their plans for her. So I have to wonder, are they really going to just let her walk? Where is the justice?

**Problem at Pine Street Station**

On another note, Pine Street Station carriers have been coming to us regarding major problems they are encountering with Sharon Gray, the Acting Manager. Bill

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**She shorted carriers of night differential, regular work hours, guaranteed hours, and overtime.**

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Thornton, Karen Schuler and I have been out there trying to support the members. We have made multiple calls to her boss about the problems the carriers are making us aware of, and our vain attempts to get Gray to listen and respond. The manager really does not like this, but... too bad. We suggest talking to your carriers, instead of badgering them.

Managers and supervisors should realize that decent communication skills go a long way. If they choose to be abusive with their power, we are going to step in. Carriers should never be afraid to call us for help. If ever any of your managers or supervisors tells you that if you call the union that they will deal with you, or threaten in any manner for speaking to us, let us know. This is an unfair labor practice, and charges can be filed against them with the National Labor Relations Board. Again too bad, we are not going away. If multiple carriers are calling us from a single unit, we believe what they tell us and acknowledge that there is a problem and we act on it. That is our job.

branches. While the union does not have the authority to stop such DUOs, we do have the right to negotiate the terms and conditions that affect the letter carrier craft as a result of a DUO. These issues include, but are not limited to, seniority, annual leave, route assignments and overtime. These MOUs were fashioned in a way that would protect the rights and benefits of all of the employees in both the gaining and losing installations.

One of the more contentious issues seems to be the "fusing" of San Lorenzo's Seniority List into San Leandro's, but if the tables were turned, and San Leandro were going to San Lorenzo, we would expect no less. Keep in mind that the DUO is a management decision, and protecting the rights and benefits of the membership during this process is the union's responsibility.

*The Wisconsin aftermath*

## A very sour sweetness

By Mike Williamson, retired San Rafael carrier+

I'm not really into revenge. It's not that I'm a better or more Christian person. I still believe that those who do me wrong deserve retribution. I still desire that same revenge when those I care about are harmed. I still get that same sweet thrill from retribution that other people do. I'm basically the same as everyone else. The reason I'm not into revenge is entirely selfish. I found something better.

Amazingly, my discovery of a revenge-substitute is a product of my service to our union. I noticed that, almost always, any wrong-doing by management contained the seeds of its own self-punishment. If some supervisor forced a carrier to work with the flu, then others would catch the bug, increasing the absenteeism the following week. If a manager pressured workers into working faster than was safe, then there was an increase in injuries, causing scheduling problems. And, when postmasters tried to cut corners on training, they invariably ended up with work that had to be done twice. No action was necessary by the union or the victims. Management's actions alone triggered the adverse side-effects (a.k.a. retribution). I had discovered that karma isn't just something that affects your soul in



### The retribution principle is at work automatically.

the next life; it seems to be an observable quick-acting natural law. And this discovery was useful. I actually found some instances where I could help change managerial bad-behavior, just by making sure some other manager was aware of the adverse side-effects.

#### Self-retribution principle

As time went by, I discovered that this self-retribution principle applied much more widely than I originally thought. Even though I first found it within the Postal Service, I found that it seemed to apply in just about any aspect of life. Sometimes you had to search for the adverse effects, but they were almost always there. I delighted in being the only person that saw the cause-and-effect relationships. "Revenge" is so much sweeter when the bad guy is doing it to himself.

Or, so I thought. Then, I saw the Wisconsin mess.

For those who have been ignoring national news, the governor and legislature of Wisconsin have passed laws which dramatically reduce the rights of public employees to representation, and give Wisconsin state and local governments the right to unilaterally reduce health and retirement benefits included in existing contracts. This is effectively the same as reducing the pay of Wisconsin public servants, without their approval, and without notice. Thousands of public employees will be affected. Clearly, this is an evil act, worthy of retribution.

#### The Wisconsin example

But, retribution against whom? Who's the bad guy in Wisconsin? Surprisingly, it's not the governor or the Republican-dominated legislature. They may be foolish and short-sighted, but they say that they are representing the people who voted for them. And, they say that they were elected to clean up an already existing financial catastrophe. They're right. In every state of the United States, sovereignty rests with the people. The people can

### We are the government because we vote.

pick any representatives they want, but the people are then responsible for the actions of those representatives.

In Wisconsin, previous elected representatives created the financial quagmire, and the current elected representatives attacked the public employees. The people themselves elected those representatives; so the people themselves are responsible for their foolishness and lack of foresight. The bad guy in Wisconsin is the voting-age population of Wisconsin.

If my self-retribution principle holds, then the people of Wisconsin should expect some "revenge". It turns out that we don't need a crystal ball to see it coming.

#### Migration of teachers, police, and firefighters

Starting right away, a lot of the young incoming teachers, cops and firefighters will want to start their new careers elsewhere. Why give up rights in Wisconsin that they can keep in Iowa or Michigan? Even if the new laws are repealed, how can these young people trust that the people of Wisconsin will maintain the vigilance needed to keep some future legislature from passing similar laws later? Many will instead decide to work in Minnesota or Illinois and trust *those* people instead. With some exceptions, the only people available to hire as public servants in Wisconsin will be the rejects of the surrounding states.

Soon (perhaps already) many of Wisconsin's *current* teachers and public servants will also start looking for jobs in other states. They'll figure that whatever seniority that they've accumulated in Wisconsin isn't worth the uncertain future. Those other states will be delighted

*(continued on page 13)*

**Williamson** (continued from page 13)

to take some of Wisconsin's best and brightest. In a few years, after the current crop of senior public servants has retired, Wisconsin will be left with the employees that other states don't want. Crime-fighting, fire-fighting, and education will all be second-rate. Within a decade or two, Wisconsin corporate boards will notice a lack of educated workers and an increased tendency for stores and offices to burn down and get robbed. They'll move their businesses elsewhere. This will result in Wisconsin's economy (and tax-base) tanking. The people of the state of Wisconsin (who elected the short-sighted government) will suffer.

#### The government we deserve

No wonder they say that people get the government they deserve. It's just a special case of the self-retribution principle. In order to save a few bucks, the citizens of Wisconsin gambled the welfare of their employees, the economy of their state, and even the future education of their children. They lost the bet. The "bad guy" gets punished. But somehow, this knowledge doesn't seem very sweet.

### As individuals we need to foresee the consequences of our actions.

Perhaps this analysis is too pessimistic. As I write this, the people of Wisconsin (actively supported by unionists) are trying to undo the damage caused by these shortsighted actions. Some of the legislators have already been recalled and efforts are underway to elect more practical representatives in the next election. But a lot of damage has already been done. Some aspiring teachers have already taken jobs elsewhere, and many cops and firefighters will never again trust their employers to the same degree. It's always harder to clean up a mess than to prevent it from happening.

We have to keep Wisconsin-style messes from occurring elsewhere. Sometime in the next several years, we will all probably be face-to-face with similar situations. If we don't guard against disasters, we will get disasters. Each of us, as individuals, need to foresee the consequences of our own actions, as citizens, as voters, and as unionists. We can't count on anyone else to do it for us. We each need to take personal responsibility for doing our part.

#### What can each of us do?

- **As individuals**, we can spread the word. Most people seem to ignore the long-term consequences of political actions. You can't get something for nothing. We have to give our friends a heads-up.

- **As citizens**, we can recognize that we really do get what we pay for. Trying to get stuff on-the-cheap is always a bad policy in the long run. We have to always think in those terms.
- **As voters**, we can remember that our vote (or failure to vote) has long term consequences. We have to base our vote on the candidate's character and general knowledge of multiple issues; not any single issue (no matter how important).

### We each need to take personal responsibility for doing our part.

- **As unionists**, we can protect our fellow workers. Wisconsin is just an early round. We have to make sure that our union officers and representatives guard against Wisconsin-style legislation at workers' expense, and we have to make sure that our fellow workers are aware that these sorts of power grabs are occurring.

Wisconsin is just the beginning. The choices made by the people of Wisconsin were foolish, but they're done. What's scary is that just about every state government has already made many of the same long-term mistakes. This means that each of those governments is only one step away from the same sort of mess, and the same self-imposed punishments. If we don't pay close attention, the same thing could happen in any state, or even at the federal level. The very efforts that our union and others are expending in Wisconsin mean that those resources can't be applied elsewhere. Somehow, we need to avoid this fate. We don't want to be the victims of our own self-retribution. Being on the receiving end isn't very sweet.



Letter carriers walking the picket line.

Photo: Courtesy Branch 214 Archives



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**Louis** (continued from page 5)

by you, me, and all of the other people who toil every day under unsafe and overworked conditions.

The NALC is among the top 20 national labor organizations in the country, and if combined with the APWU the NALC would move up to the 11th position overall (with all USPS associated labor organizations, 6th overall, with a membership just short of 1 million). True, our union represents a political force on the national stage in those numbers. As long as we have a union representing us, our organization will have the ability to negotiate fair pay and good benefits for our work. What we often fail to realize is that the same collective principles hold true locally, not only politically in a district, but in our branch and in our individual stations.

#### **Union leadership cannot work without member support**

I have always been a strong advocate who believes that without strong leadership, our working conditions will suffer, but without the support of the membership, leadership is toothless and can not succeed in their efforts. A union is much more like a cooperative than a democracy in as much as to the degree in which we operate together we will continue to have our share of the profits and the benefits from that cooperation. Leadership and membership are in a symbiotic relationship, and both have a duty to hold up their end of the partnership.

Our union is one of the strongest (if not the strongest), in terms of the contractual rights we enjoy, in the country. We are held in envy by other unions for the rights we enjoy as letter carriers. Who else had contractual rights to: 1) No Lay Off Clause in their contract 2006–2011; 2) Pay increases throughout 2006–2010; 3) Guaranteed 40 hour work week 2006–2011; 4) No loss in health benefits; and 5) Overtime protections listed in Article “8” of the National Agreement.

Aside from wages and hours guarantees, we also have the added protections of Article 14, Safety, and Article 19 which incorporates the rules and procedures listed in postal handbooks and manuals, which management violates on a daily basis. When you get written letters of discipline, management always quotes as many postal regulations as possible, but somehow they believe these rules do not apply to them.

#### **Do not let management divide and conquer**

There is no way to list all of the many rights that we have won through the grievance procedure that have improved or maintained the benefits to our working conditions. All of our gains are useless if we are not willing to fight and support each other in our efforts to prevent management from stripping away what we have so painstakingly achieved.

*(To be continued)*

**Beaumont** (continued from page 3)

- **Recruit your letter carrier friends and co-workers who are not in the union.** Get them to join the union. Now is a most critical time to show union solidarity, and as union members I thank you all for paying into the union to protect your jobs and your benefits. But there are many letter carriers whose jobs and benefits are also protected but they do not pay a dime for that protection. It is time for those carriers to pay their own way. It is a most critical time for non-members to be in the union because as more and more active union member carriers retire it means a loss of income to the union, so if we are not full strength union organized, we will not be able to operate full strength as an entire Union from the national level to the state level to the branch level, and the fight to protect jobs and benefits becomes harder to win. Meanwhile, all these non-members receive the same protections and the same benefits as those dues paying members. It isn't fair, but it unfortunately is the law, and the only way around it is for all of us fellow carriers to recruit our non-members into the union.

So get involved in some way. Don't wait for 5-day delivery to come, or for lay-offs to happen, or for your benefits to be reduced. It will be too late by then.

**Thornton** (continued from page 4)

(Postal Rate Commission) Ruth Y. Goldway.

She took to task all the reports that conclude the Postal Service needs to cut service. “An axiom in the business community is that a company cannot cut its way to success.” “It has to have a real plan.”

Ruth Goldway and others question the savings as in the elimination of 6 day delivery estimated by Postal Service and raise the question whether all the mail can be delivered on Monday.

“... Postal Service could lose its greatest strategic advantage – ubiquity... “Reducing service is detrimental to mail growth and to public perception of the value of the mail system.”

“The Postal Service has been playing the volume game and it can no longer do that. Instead of continuing to focus on jamming as much as possible through its channel, the Postal Service needs to instead come up with new, higher-value products that people want to pay for.”

At the heart of the debate is the question of what the Postal Service means to America. Its mission is to bind the country together - to connect “every American household, business and institution through its universal service network... the agency is “literally part of the fabric of the nation.” (Ruth Goldway)



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## THE SKY IS FALLING ISSUE: POSTAL CRISIS: See commentary inside



1 NALC members from as far as Sacramento and San Francisco joined other unions and the San Diego Labor Council on Sept. 1, 2011 to protest Rep. Darrell Issa's attacks on the post office. 2 Among the picketers, from left, Branch 214's Karen Schuler, Karen Eshabarr, State President John Beaumont, and Mark Lesch, CSALC District 7 Rep. 3 Other labor unions joined the NALC picket line in San Diego. 4 A personalized picket sign expressing opposition to Rep. Issa's attempts to reduce pay and negate collective bargaining in the post office.

Photos: Courtesy Branch 214 Archives

### Ninth contract COLA: \$978 annually

The ninth and final cost-of-living adjustment as negotiated under the 2006-2011 National Agreement is \$978 annually, based on the July Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (CPI-W) announced Aug. 18 by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

The cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) is effective in Pay Period 20, which begins Sept. 10 (pay date Sept. 30). The COLA was based on the increase in the CPI-W between January 2011 and July 2011.

The COLA is equal to just over 47 cents per hour, or \$37.60 per pay period.

#### 2012 Retiree COLA: 3.3%

The projected accumulation for the 2012 retiree COLA was 3.3 percent following the release of the July CPI.

Because there was no retiree COLA for 2010 or 2011, the 2012 retiree COLA will be determined by comparing the average CPI during the third quarter of 2011 and the average during the third quarter of 2008.

#### 2012 FECA COLA: 3.4%

Federal Employees Compensation Act (FECA) COLAs are applicable only in cases where death or disability occurred more than one year prior to the adjustment's effective date.

The projected accumulation for the 2012 COLA under FECA was 3.4 percent following the release of the July CPI. The 2012 FECA COLA will be based on the increase in the CPI between December 2010 and December 2011.

### ALSO INSIDE:

- **Postal facts** . . . . . —page 2
- **Local picket update** . . . . . —page 5
- **Sticking together** . . . . . —page 5
- **Last postmaster** . . . . . —page 6
- **Real Hell** . . . . . —page 7
- **A prose poem** . . . . . —page 8
- **JARAP attack on stewards** . . . —page 10
- **Automatic retribution** . . . . . —page 12