

COLORADO MAIL HANDLER NEWS LOCAL 321

“SERVING THE STATE OF COLORADO”



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DON GONZALES—EDITOR

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TENTATIVE CONTRACT REACHED!

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I LIKE MY JOB?

Now there is a statement that most of us have not even considered making in quite some time! In fact, for some of our newer employees, this statement is not even in their vocabulary. They probably had a good feeling when they were told they had a job with the Postal Service, additionally believing in their fantasy world that they had a good job where they would be paid and treated well.

There does not seem to be any relief in sight to the way the Postal Service has changed and the negative impact such changes have made in all of our lives. When I was hired 20 years ago we started at 9.75 per hour and worked at least a 60-hour workweek, week in and week out. Even with these long and repetitive days, for the most part workers were happy. We made a good wage, hung out together after work --usually right at the edge of the facility property (this usually included craft and management equally). Craft and supervisors normally worked to-

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VOLUME 9?

Volume 9, Issue 1. In laymen's terms that means I am starting the ninth year as editor of this newsletter. We started this newsletter in 1994 as a way of trying to help keep the membership informed. I have always encouraged my fellow officers and stewards to write articles for the newsletter.

Some representatives are really great at making sure that they submit something for each edition of the newsletter. Others are more sporadic and give me an article every couple of editions. The reason I bring this up is that I would like to see articles submitted from the mail handlers on the floor. I know that sometimes in the craziness of all the business we conduct as a union, we do lose perspective we had when we were on the floor full-time.

Believe me, there are days when I wish I could just walk away and go get lost humping sacks so I didn't have to deal with the "problems" which arise as a representative. However, I chose this path and my heart really is in representing the "little guy", so I persevere and do what I have to do in the best interest of the mail handlers.

As I enter my 9th year as an officer, 12th year as a representative, and my 22nd as a mail handler, I can't help but remember the "good ol' days" when I started at the BMC in 1980. We could call-in pretty much as we pleased and before discipline would be issued, management actually would place you on "blue-line" aka restricted sick leave. This was the tool used to control your attendance, not an

office full of people who are paid a healthy amount of money to screw with your call-in, whether legitimate or not. Hell, if management used the attendance control people and all of the other wasted EAS positions to work in craft, maybe we wouldn't have the mandatory overtime caused by the vast shortage of mail handlers in the GMF.

Back in the early 80's management didn't seem to be so intent on issuing discipline for every minor infraction. Most of the older supervisors knew the rules and tried to follow them. Integrity within their ranks was the norm and not the exception. When they broke the rules knowingly, most grievances were settled at the lowest level.

... "Others achieve their managerial and supervisory positions through EEO's, nepotism, or the plain old buddy system" ...

Managers for the most part were semi-competent in the job and actually gave a damn about the mail. Now days it's a bit different. Managers are intent on covering their butts, period. They don't care about the mail, if its cancelled, or even if it is delivered on time. All they care about is their precious numbers and if

the numbers look good, then all must be well. Any moron with a pencil can adjust figures to show numbers. A real supervisor should open their eyes and look around, thus making sure the mail gets moved.

Some of the more worthless craft workers are promoted into management positions. And not only are they lazy, some of them are just plain dumb—to say the least. Others achieve their managerial and supervisory positions through EEO's, nepotism, or the plain old "buddy system". Then we are expected to "respect" the position and follow their orders without hesitation. DUH! No wonder we lose

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money as a company.

The old saying that there is only so much room at the top doesn't apply to the postal service. Hell, most of us learned with legos or in the sandbox that if you put too much weight in the top of the building, and not enough support on the bottom, the structure will probably fall over. Isn't that what the PO is doing?

Isn't it amazing that every time the PO has to raise stamp prices, it is "because of rising labor costs"? This is a totally misleading statement, as the cost for supervisors, managers and all of the administrative personnel are included in the term "labor". I mean really, what kind of raise in **our** labor have we seen recently? **None, zero, zip, zilch, nada.** The

last raise mail handler employees saw was in September 2000, a period of almost 17 months. (This article was written before the terms of the new tentative National Agreement were released.)

Meanwhile management "gets theirs" through the illustrious and often abused EVA program. What a scam.

Over the last 8 or nine years, I have had a chance to be involved with Denver Public Schools in various capacities (Collaborative Decision Making, PTA's, After School Programs, Marching band...). It is amazing how similar their structure is to that of the PO. Top heavy and bureaucratic would be the main similarities. Why do these organizations that are committed to "serving the public" make themselves so top heavy?

That's a question that no one probably has the answer to, but my theory is that too many people want to be the boss, and the upper managers like to create "safety layers" which can

be removed before their position is ever affected. The end result being, "Too many chiefs and not enough Indians!" (Apologies to anyone who finds the term offensive—I do not mean it to be.)

I find it ironic that at a time when the Postal Service is dying financially and cost cutting measures studied, our members were being **MANDATED**—even the non-OTDL—to work overtime in the GMF. What the heck kind of cost cutting measure is that? And to top it off, management now figures that pretty much most employees need to work every holiday—even in this time of supposed low mail volume, we get the mandates for people with upwards of 25 years seniority. This is ludicrous.

... "The old saying that there is only so much room at the top doesn't apply to the postal service. "...

If management took a hard look at how much they pay the new employees, including benefits, there has to be a point in time when it is more cost effective to hire, rather than to work overtime. And I would venture to guess that we have hit that point in time.

So, as the world turns—it seems as though ours is taking a turn for the worse. Hang in there and remember, we work to live, not live to work. (Some managers may disagree with that.) And at the end of a particularly stressful day, when you get to your house, take a look at the house that you've worked for, your family you feed, and the amenities you own. That is the reason you go to work everyday, and the reason we put up with the BS that sometimes happens.

Don Gonzales
Recording Secretary

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gether in a relatively good environment and the financial status of the USPS was sound enough that it was not even considered an issue. Discipline used to be for the exceptional situations where time and effort offered no solution and something had to give. Even at that, through cooperation from both sides, most issues were resolved in short order.

Unfortunately change is inevitable. But change that does not serve to improve the company and the lives of its employees makes no sense whatsoever. The evolution of the USPS over the last 10 to 12 years has sprouted a very rigid approach to its employees, with no consideration given for people being human and the inevitable problems that come with being human.

To take a day of leave should be almost as simple as saying since it is a benefit you have earned and for which you worked hard.

Yet, asking for a day of leave normally is no longer an option when you really need the time off, as the odds of approval are slim at best. Now days when someone really needs the day off, they are forced to call in for sick leave or emergency annual to ensure management does not deny their request (trust me whether it is to go home and rest, or to take your kid to hospital because they were hit by a car, makes no difference to the mentality that answers the phone in attendance control).

FMLA was a much-needed right gained in the mid-1990's by most workers in the U.S. However in our world FMLA had almost the opposite, impacting all of us whether FMLA directly involves us or not. FMLA for the

most part has been turned around and used by management to justify interrogation for all call-ins. Initially when FMLA was signed into law and rolled out to the public many employees opted for the protection of the act and brought to management's attention the reason for their right to such leave. Initially FMLA requests within the USPS were approved without question, and employees were free to exercise the rights that came with it.

The agency then realized that sick leave usage had almost doubled! Rather than make minor adjustments as need to control its usage, management did what they almost always do, they over-reacted, swinging the pendulum from one extreme to the other.

...”Now days when someone needs the day off, they are forced to call in for sick leave or emergency annual to ensure management does not deny their request”...

As a result of the abuse that came with FMLA requests (under this new postal harassment technique), most employees actually entitled to the protection of the Act, declined to request FMLA. These people--even though they still require time off--seek no

protection under FMLA. They choose to battle the “unscheduled absence” discipline process to deal with their problems.

This is about where attendance control took over. With morale sliding, an aging workforce, deteriorating wages, and a decline in overall revenue management apparently placed controlling sick leave costs at the top of their agenda, thus attendance control was born. The concept has been twisted and everything humane ignored, in order to justify its existence. It is amazing when you look at the lovely charts posted around the facilities how sick leave usage has slowly moved from

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“unsatisfactory” over to “outstanding” category.

During the same time frame as the improvement in sick leave usage, the other goals such as service and customer satisfaction have slid from the “satisfactory” category where they used to stand, under the heading “unsatisfactory”. Management will boast of a yearly savings in the area of reduced sick leave usage equal to about \$400,000.00 here in Colorado. What is not considered - at least for comparison - is the reduction in productivity as a result of the sustained and excessive abuse imposed on us by the effort to control our attendance. The bottom line is that when employees have low morale, productivity will suffer. And that translates into bad customer service.

Current numbers support a position that the productivity for the Denver GMF is about 60% that of other similar facilities. **If the payroll of the Den-**

ver offices was just one million dollars every two weeks, the 60% productivity figure (which has been driven down since attendance control came on line) would show a loss in productivity of \$400,000.00 **every 2 weeks**, which is equal to the annual saving being found in sick leave savings.

In reality, the payroll for those offices falling under attendance control jurisdiction in Colorado is more in the area of 5 to 10 million dollars every two weeks. Using the lower number of 5 million for payroll every 2 weeks, coupled with the fact that there are 26 pay periods in a year, then figuring the current productivity figure of 60%, the loss in productivity achieved in saving the \$400,000.00 a year in sick leave usage is at an

expense of over 52 million dollars a year in labor cost return.

These issues, along with a multitude of other factors, have now evolved our floors into one of the more miserable work environments currently operating in the U.S. We used to hold meetings where morale was a concern and something that warranted discussion.

The term “morale” used to mean something within the company, but over time (I think it was about 3 years ago) it just packed up and left. I honestly think if I was just being hired or only had a few years in, I would (after getting a taste of what it is like now days) pack up and move on without ever looking back. Unfortunately many of you, like me, have worked too many years and have gotten too old to start

...”. The bottom line is that when employees have low morale, productivity will suffer. And that translates into bad customer service....”

over. We are now left with riding it out to retirement (hoping there will be a company to retire from). What’s even worse is that in riding it out to reach retirement, many of us will

be so bitter by the treatment we receive that there will be no enjoyment, as the bitterness will never wear off.

We keep waiting and hoping for solutions and or someone who cares enough to change things but that seems hopeless as well. Over the next several months it is anticipated and rumored that another restructuring will begin to materialize. Along this same line it is also anticipated that a new Postal Reorganization Act will be pushed down our throats in the near future. I wouldn’t hold my breath that another restructuring will offer any positive change to the working conditions on the floor. In fact I believe (based on restructuring and reorganization history) our problems may in-

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crease once again. A restructure will offer less managers and supervisors on the payroll. If this equated to an increase in staffing, it could be viewed as a positive change but that probably won't be the case. Ultimately there could be less postal workers, and if by chance we have a good year, there will just be more money there for Congress to raid.

The term "reorganization" is probably the single most devastating word to the wages we use to enjoy. It was in a prior reorganization that some idiot determined that postal workers were overpaid. This led to implementation of the regulation requires our wages to be increased at a rate equal to 1% less than the average increase felt by the average worker in the U.S. Under this requirement, this practice is to continue until such time as we are viewed to have wages comparable to the public sector doing similar work.

There are no real positive changes to recap or I would. I would rather have an optimistic view than a morbid negative view. On occasion a manager does

come along with the right ideas and direction to make positive changes that could return a belief that we like our jobs and don't mind going to work. Unfortunately such managers either don't last long or they are unable to effect change in the direction of their beliefs.

I hope I haven't ruined your day with all of this negativity and (unfortunately) accurate picture of changes forced on us in recent years. I think most of us hope for a job that is not repulsive. A job where doing your work results in being treated fairly, with consideration and tolerance for those human errors we all make, and a relatively decent wage to support a decent life style. Clearly no one in upper man-

agement is trying, to any noticeable degree, to improve our employment issues. Recently we all heard that the USPS was about out of money and the first thing the upper managers did was schedule and held an almost week long meeting in Vegas to discuss possible solutions. Just a thought but staying off the plane might have been a good place to start for these managers.

I would like to solicit (maybe that's the wrong word), no I mean suggest that employees shake off the apathy that has settled in and push for an assurance that what few rights we still have are honored and enforced. Management needs to know that employees will, as a whole, protect those rights they are entitled to and stand-up when those rights are infringed upon. In small numbers (which is the current

scenario) standing up for ones rights can lead to being backed into a corner by management.

Clearly if you are one of the minority who stands up for your rights you stand out and live in the limelight, leaving you in unfair position. On the other hand if we stand-up

as a collective whole to

ensure our rights are protected, management would soon learn this and eventually get accustomed to allowing employees what they are entitled to without it becoming a living hell.

In closing I once again would like to encourage all employees to quit tolerating the abuse and protect your rights. Anytime you feel one of your rights is being violated or denied, you need to, for the good of all of us, standup. **It does not take any extreme effort to ask for and meet with a union steward so a grievance can be filed over protection of your rights.** I know its that old adage, the Union doesn't do anything and they never get

... "Management needs to know that employees will, as a whole, protect those rights they are entitled to and stand-up when those rights are infringed

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anything fixed, those guys are in there screwing off, they don't care. Yep I used to be there, wanting to know why I was even in the Union when they were offering me nothing. It was at that point some eighteen years ago that I decided to make my own difference and I got involved, learning my rights and the various avenues available to me in a pursuit of making such a difference. Over the last eighteen years I have thrown my hands up more times than I can count with a temporary give up attitude. Fortunately the day passes and my determination to prevail returns. I can assure you that for the most part your stewards do care about your issues and the rights of all of us. I know that now and then we end up with a representative that is selfish and is mostly looking for time to screw off but that is not the norm. As we become aware of such problems they are corrected or removed opening the way for a Union that really does care.

Don't expect positive results or settlement of every grievance that is filed on your behalf. Sometimes grievances only serve as a statement from the floor over what is considered fair and acceptable. Sometime bad issues get settled and good issues get denied without any real reason. Sometimes the employees get thousands of dollars more than they are entitled to in a given settlement that may occur, but it is never deliberately. Other times employees who never have an issue and are always at work put in one valid grievance and it gets denied and ends up dying without resolution. But even with all of these misgivings, the process does resolve many issues to a level that leaves both parties happy and on occasion the issue is gone forever. If more employees enforced their rights, issues which pose real problems would be much more evident and solutions much more beneficial for both parties.

Consider my perspective and your role in how management treats all of us and decide

where you want to be. Enough of my ramblings (can you tell its one of those days/ weeks where there is no light at the end of the tunnel and nothing seems to help, well tomorrow is another day with a new outlook).

David E Ross
 President Local 321
 NPMHU

GREETINGS FROM THE MPA

I thought it would be nice to write to let all our brothers and sisters know what is happening at the Mail Processing Annex. Assuming, of course, that anyone really cares.

Some things never change and that would be Mail handler staffing. The MPA seems to be especially hard hit on the staffing front. There are several grievances in the system on staffing and bids and the related issues of cross crafting. Hopefully we can negotiate some relief.

By the time you are reading this article, we should have a flat sorter running at the MPA. Some of you may have been forced to leave the GMF and now be working at the MPA. If this action was voluntary, welcome to our building, if however you were forced here, sorry and I hope you end up appreciating the quiet of the MPA. No, we don't have the amenities here (cafeteria, lots of break rooms, plenty of restrooms, etc) but it's quiet and pretty mellow. You just need to remember to duck when the pigeons inside are flying low.

You all take care and, GO RED WINGS!

In Solidarity,

Lorie Farrand,
 T-2 MPA Steward

COMPARING APPLES AND ORANGES

The *Denver Post* recently printed their annual chronicle blasting the postal service, addressing our inability to meet published service standards and delivery goals in the Colorado market. When compared to other major cities, Colorado and Denver's performance continually ranks near the bottom.

Goals, service standards and rankings are only as good as the data used to create them in the first place. This comparison of Denver to the rest of the country is meaningless. Denver is unique with exclusive mail delivery profile difficulties and the analysis of this western area market in comparison to Baltimore, Pittsburgh, Minneapolis or any other major metropolitan area is like comparing apples to oranges.

One accident on I-70 can easily sever access to the western slope for hours. A storm can restrict accessibility for days. Operational problems in one facility within our P&DC can stop processing altogether. Our operational infrastructure is not like those in more densely populated regions. Colorado's logistical problems are not an anomaly. They are predictable and reoccurring.

The 2002 census bureau ranked the Denver metropolitan region as the 19th largest metropolitan area in the country. Our bean counters should consider how it is that the 19th largest metropolitan area in the country consistently postmarks Christmas' highest single-day cancellations in the country. Due to Denver's unique geographic positioning, we move a

great deal of mail through our disproportionately sized installation. The centralized processing of Colorado's mail through the AMC, BMC, MPA, GMF and COS is like breathing through a straw. You may be able to do it, but you are not going to like the results. These market comparisons and delivery rankings are skewed.

As long as the Denver/ Colorado region continues to populate, and until another processing center is opened, Denver's scores will continue to be low. This is not because the Denver employees do not care; it is a result of uncontrollable geographic demands.

There are interim solutions to the problem (if management is listening):

... "Our bean counters should consider how it is that the 19th largest metropolitan area in the country consistently postmarks Christmas' highest single-day cancellations in the country" ...

1) Scrap the commodity trucks. They facilitate double and triple handling of the mail and the violent floor conveyor damages letters and flats further reducing automation's sort percentage ef-

- fectiveness.
- 2) Stop wasting so much time and money on sick leave and attendance control. If attendance goals become unrealistic, they work against you. Denver has the lowest sick leave usage in the country, but everyone in the facility hates their job, their supervisor and their manager. It does not have to be like this.
- 3) Focus more on your assets— take care of the people with a respectful and dignified supervising methodology. We will respond.

In Unity

Michael J Hora
VP/ 321

WHAT IS A MAIL HANDLER?

When anthrax began to be discovered in our eastern postal facilities and in Washington D.C., many news articles appeared and many references towards mail handlers appeared in these articles. However, we soon discovered that the media did not differentiate between the mail handler craft and mail handlers, which presumably is anyone who handles mail!

Well, if anyone in the future has a problem distinguishing the mail handler from anyone else who handles the mail. Here are ten easy pointers to help tell us apart from the rest.

- 1) We move the mail in mass.
- 2) We load and unload the trucks.
- 3) Every piece of mail is moved by a mail handler
- 4) We operate the machinery.
- 5) We cull, identify, separate and process the mail.
- 6) We ensure that the rest of the workers have the equipment and mail necessary for them to do their jobs.
- 7) We ensure that the processed mail is timely dispatched.
- 8) We make sure the mail is going to the right destinations.
- 9) We sweat and toil in the BMCs of this nation to move thousands of tons of mail from state to state, and
- 10) We endure the sore backs, long hours, abusive supervisors, lack of gratitude and forced over time in order to accomplish the first nine.

In short, we are the overworked and underpaid who keep GMFs and BMCs from coming to a screeching halt, that's who we are!

John M. Meding
State representative

WHAT'S WRONG WITH DENVER?

Recently, another in what is now a long line of articles was printed highly criticizing our states mail delivery. As was the case in the preceding articles, fault was placed without careful thought to the reason. Sure, the usual superficial excuses were again given along with some newer excuses such as anthrax and September 11th. However, the entire country endured both without the negative effects felt here! There has to be something more that has caused us to be continually below par. But what? The craft workers who work in our facilities are as competent and able as those elsewhere. And the problem must be here! There is no doubt about that! Denver's BMC is number one in the west! So what's up with that?

I have learned that the leaders of this plant want to blame our failure on the effort of the working people. The *effort* just isn't there! Maybe effort *is* a large part of our problem, But maybe the craft worker is being blamed for the lack of effort of others. After all, we're all part of the same team, *are we not?*

Lets start with this *matrix* that management used as an excuse to monkey with the starting times for about the fifth time! This matrix supposedly brought the mail profile and the worker in harmony with maximum efficiency, right?

Well since this great scheme didn't seem to help as much as it did harm things, where is the *effort* to reconcile the problem?

No comparative analysis was ever done to see if overtime, plan failure and other factors that control our success changed for the better or for the worse since implementation of our matrix. Where is the effort? The simple fact that mail volume has dropped significantly should have, *by itself*, made our fight

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TENTATIVE AGREEMENT HIGHLIGHTS

By now you should be aware of the terms of the National Agreement. We still get to vote on ratification of the offer. Ballots should be in the mail soon. Local 321's Executive Board supports the tentative Agreement and encourages you vote for ratification. The highlights of the Agreement are outlined in this article.. Be sure to exercise your right as a dues paying member to vote. Please find the highlights of the Agreement starting on page 15 of this newsletter. Read them carefully, as you should make an informed decision.

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ELECTIONS

By the time this newsletter gets to your house, the Judges for Local 321 officer elections will have been picked. These Judges will be in charge of every process of our elections this year. The Judges were selected by the Executive Board and had to meet the same criteria members have to follow when attempting to become an elected officer of the Local union. The provisions for running for office are outlined in the Uniform Local Constitution (ULUC), which you should have received when they came out after the 2000 Convention. The rules are outlined in Article V of the ULUC. All of the terms outlined below are for a period of three years.

Positions which are going to be open for nominations are:

- President**
- Vice President**
- Treasurer**
- Recording Secretary**
- State Representative**

Additionally Branch Presidents for the following locations will need to be elected. The Constitution provides that candidates be employed in the office for which they are seeking to be Branch President.

- BMC**
- Boulder**
- Colorado Springs**
- Grand Junction**
- GMF**

As always, we encourage all members to vote for the candidates of your choice. This is the process of democracy and if you don't vote, then you are wasting your opinion and your right to voice such opinion and have it count toward the representative of your choice. Remember, the union is all of us, and without your support we would not exist.

A VIEWPOINT

Here we are again, under the destruction of the same thing that was supposed to be the answer to our woes. The Matrix is moving again.

Where are the 55 bodies we were promised? Even management does not know. Seems the stations couldn't afford to give them up, and some probably found other jobs (outside the postal service) when told they would have to report to our facility.

But, one thing is true... we have a mess. Things are going to change again around here. There are bodies trickling in from stations and to those of you, we say, Welcome! Unfortunately, with those bodies, came more work than those bodies could absorb.

Will it be enough to fix our woes? I don't think so and neither do they. So it's time again to change the numbers in your units and spread you a little thinner to make things work.

The solution? They have acquired a new blue-print for this facility. They have approved of a massive project to install overhead automated lines to direct the mail in the facility. The price tag? About 2 million dollars. The end result? Mail should move in the facility a little easier and help to ease some of the congestion and lack of tow motors on the floor.

More Bodies? Yes, but probably not enough to make it right, but at this point, anything has to be better than nothing.

Colorado Loose Pack Gone? Remember that story? Well, looks like it will be back with the new plan. In short, there will be lines

from all machines to carry the mail to the dispatch area, and more to send the mail to the machines from other areas.

Time frame? They are hoping to have the project complete by Christmas this year. The plan in general looks good on paper, but then again, they usually do. I guess we'll see when it happens.

I'm sure most of you know by now, that there is another FSM 100 on the ground at the MPA. And the flat prep of the standard, 2nd class, and the new zones which have been added to the flat 100 area, have also been moved to that facility. I keep asking when they are going to knock out this west wall and expand the building. They continue to look at

me like I'm crazy. But, the fact is, we outgrew this facility before we ever moved in. Everybody knows it, and there's nothing we can do about it.

Is your job safe? Seems we'll never know the answer to that. Yes, you still have a job.

You're not on the street looking for one like so many of the nation's employees are at this time. So I suppose, it would be safe to say yes. But, will it be the job you are currently doing? I don't know, I'm not sure they know, and until it's completed, I suppose none of us will know.

Automation is supposed to be a means to use less mail handlers as we've been told so many times. But, those of you who can remember the old 110 belt, can attest to the fact that it actually created more jobs and not less. But, when you add more machines, and better machines, that can move more mail than before, it seems only logical that you would need more hands to move it than you already have. But, that isn't necessarily the case most of the

...”Automation is supposed to be a means to use less mail handlers as we’ve been told so many times”...

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time.

I know a lot of you are very concerned about doing the right thing out on the floor. And, I would ask what is the right thing? Yes, you should care about the job you do. Yes, you should be concerned about efficiency, but not to the point of losing your own job. Please abide by all the safety requirements of your job. You may be doing a different job if you compromise these issues.

Do your job to the best of your ability and within the perimeters set by the safety office and you will have done the best job that you can. Remember, if you get hurt, they don't care why you were doing what you were doing, they only care that you didn't do it safely. It's at that point that you become the victim of circumstances and you are the only one who will feel the pain.

Pick a pace, do it safely and remember you sleep in there. Keep in mind the amount of years you have left to do this job. Your body is no different than a machine. With time and the amount of work, it breaks, and then they will replace you with another body, just as if you were a machine.

So, just what is the next big change that will come with this "Tech Mech", which it has been named by those involved in making it? We don't know. We do know that the Union was not given a written 30 day notice to the effective change.

Will we be advised as these things happen or will we know in advance? I suppose they only know those answers. My guess, we will get the small tidbits that are in progress and about to become large headaches, and asked to help solve them immediately.

We will do our best to keep you informed, but that's only if we are informed. We can not predict the future. We can only try to ease the pain of the future as it happens.

There are other channels which are working to improve this problem. There are a few

commitments from Mr. Middleton, which should make things a bit clearer and easier with time.

Time heals all wounds, and I'm ready for some healing. I know you get tired of me saying, things will change. But, I truly believe that we are on the right track on some things, which would inevitably fix other things.

So, in the meantime.... do the best that you can do and that is all that anyone can expect of you. We will continue to fight for your rights and do the best that we can for you.

Cindy Hoehl-Rinker

MAIL HANDLERS

M^{any}
A^{wesome}
I^{ndividuals}
L^{iving}
H^{ero}
A^{mericans}
N^{aturally}
D^{evoted to}
L^{ivelihood and}
E^{xcellent}
R^{eliable}
S^{ervice}

THANK YOU

Thank you for Standing together.
 Thank you for knowing your rights.
 Thank you for your help in defending your rights!
 Don't know your rights?
 Read your contract.
 Ask for interpretation from your representatives.
 Be involved!
 Thank you for being our eyes and ears.
 Thank you for your written statements.
 Thank you for being our best asset!
 You see,
 We need you as much as you need us.
 Don't assume we know everything that you see and hear.
 If we don't know it, we can't pursue it.
 Participate!
 Go to your membership meetings
 Vote!!!
 Use your voice!!
 Use your chain of command!
 Climb your union ladder—get knowledgeable!
 Respect each other!
 Respect your bothers and sisters!!
 We're all in this together and without each other we are nothing.
 To each and everyone of you who help me in my duties daily,
 I thank you!
 We thank you!
 The Strong Will Survive!

In Unity,
 Sister Cindy Hoehl-Rinker



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a little easier. But it didn't! The increase of overtime while mail volume is dropping should have been a clue. And the fact that we are apparently going broke! Shouldn't some **effort** be devoted to that? Apparently not!

United Airlines took immediate and drastic measures at the very thought of bankruptcy, but that prospect doesn't seem to bother us. Why?

Wouldn't four two bids cut down on night diff. pay? And wouldn't Saturday/Sunday off bids cut down on Sunday premium pay? If you're going broke, is this a good time to al-

...”we can start with the one hundred 204b’s that can’t do anything but create grievances for performing craft work”...

low overtime to go through the roof? Oh, we need the over time to get the mail out?

Well, we can start with the one hundred 204b's that can't do anything but create grievances for performing craft work, due to the lack of workers. Put them back to work! Cut the grievances and cut the overtime all at once! Unfortunately no *effort* has been made to do any of these things. Too bad!

The mail handler craft is seriously short staffed in the GMF, yet no effort has been made to correct this. But hell, someone would have to write some letters to get this done and no one has made this effort. And if this installation is going to blame September 11th and anthrax for our woes, where is the *effort* to ensure our safety? What ever happened to our heightened sense of security? It lasted less than three weeks! Is the threat of further terrorist's attacks over? Isn't the contamina-

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tion of mails still a possibility?

Aside from the weak attempt to turn our maintenance personnel into security guards, we have made no *effort* to make things safer. Hey, if we're in last place shouldn't some *effort* come from the plant manager to correct the reasons why? First, we have to acknowledge the reasons why and stop misplacing the blame. We have played with established mail processing procedures so much that I wonder if anybody still remembers the correct procedures. We have allowed the two individuals who run the attendance office to stand around outside smoking cigarettes all day while their crew badgers, harasses and humiliates the very employee necessary to ensure our success and efficiency!

Management cannot do enough to demonstrate that the cares and concerns of the working person mean nothing to them. Morale is at an all time low, yet management allows the status-quo to continue. People perform the work. People run the machines and people fix and clean the machines. People push, lift, cull, process, distribute and deliver the mail. People! Yet people have taken a back seat to statistical control and plain experimentation. Here's the bottom line:

If we can't get this state's mail delivered on time when we need to, nothing else matters!

People are the key to this. If the leaders we have now can't understand this, then we need new leaders to succeed! If and when our present leaders are willing to show a little *effort* To accomplish this, Denver **will** succeed as we have in the past.

As always, strength in unity!

John M. Meding
State Representative

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Term

The 2000 National Agreement will cover four years, and will expire at midnight on November 20, 2004.

General Wage Increases

All mail handlers will receive four general wage increases during the four-year term: the first, retroactively effective to November 18, 2000, will be approximately 1.3%; the second, retroactively effective to November 17, 2001, will be approximately 1.9%; the third, effective on November 16, 2002, will be approximately 1.5%; the fourth, effective on November 15, 2003, will be approximately 1.3%.

For a Level 4 mail handler at top step, the general wage increases during the four years of the 2000 National Agreement will total \$2,321, including \$503 retroactively effective in November 2000; \$735 retroactively effective in November 2001; \$580 effective in November 2002; and \$503 effective in November 2003.

For a Level 5 mail handler at top step, these general wage increases will total \$2,373 over the four years of the contract, including \$514 retroactively effective in November 2000; \$752 retroactively effective in November 2001; \$593 effective in November 2002; and \$514 effective in November 2003.

Cost-of-Living Adjustments

All mail handlers will receive at least five cost-of-living adjustments, in accordance with the historical formula:

the first COLA was to be effective in March 2002, but due to deflation in the economy since September 11, the COLA in March is likely to be \$0

the second COLA will be effective in September 2002

the third COLA will be effective in March 2003

the fourth COLA will be effective in September 2003

the fifth COLA will be effective in March 2004

the sixth COLA will be effective in September 2004

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All cost-of-living adjustments paid during the 2000 National Agreement will be rolled into basic salary immediately.

The exact amount of the COLAs will be based on future increases in the Consumer Price Index. Economists are projecting that these COLAs will together provide somewhere between \$1,500 and \$1,800 per employee in base wage increases over the next two and one-half years. Of course, should inflation increase more than expected, these guaranteed COLA payments will provide even greater wage increases.

Lump-Sum Payments (to be paid as soon as administratively practicable)

There will be a lump-sum payment of \$499 to make up for the two COLA payments from March 2001 and September 2001. This payment will not be added to base pay. All mail handlers also will receive payments reflecting the retroactive portion of the general wage increases of November 18, 2000 and November 17, 2001. These amounts will differ depending on Level and Step and hours worked for each mail handler, although a Level 4, Step O mail handler will receive at least \$1,150, in addition to the \$499 lump-sum payment, when the retroactive amounts are fully computed and paid.

No Layoff Clause

All mail handlers employed as of November 20, 2000 will be protected against layoff or force reduction during the entire four-year term of the Agreement, unless Congress repeals or significantly relaxes the Private Express Statutes.

Health Insurance

The Postal Service's share of the cost of health insurance, which is 85% of the weighted average formula used by OPM for federal employees with a maximum percentage of 88.75%, will be maintained. For comparison purposes, the federal government pays only 72% of the weighted average health insurance costs for federal employees.

Sunday Pay Premium and Night Shift Differential

Notwithstanding the Postal Service's proposal to cut night differential and to pay Sunday pre-

mium only for hours worked on Sunday, the night shift differential and Sunday pay premium will continue without any change.

Clothing Allowance

There will be a 4.5% increase in clothing allowance effective in November 2001, and another 2.5% increase in clothing allowance effective in November 2002.

Other Contractual Provisions

Article 11 will be amended to give employees who work their holiday the option of receiving straight time pay (and the additional one-half time for work on Christmas) plus an additional eight hours of annual leave, instead of the pay only option to which employees are presently entitled under Article 11. This choice of annual leave instead of pay is completely at the employee's option, and will begin with the Memorial Day holiday in 2002.

A prior MOU allowing mail handlers to use LWOP in lieu of sick or annual leave for time off under the Family Medical and Leave Act (FMLA) will be added to the National Agreement. A prior MOU will be added to the National Agreement to make clear that mail handlers may use annual or sick leave in conjunction with LWOP, after the absence is approved in accordance with normal leave approval procedures, for the purpose of continuing eligibility for health and life insurance benefits and the no-layoff protections of Article 6.

Several clarifications to Article 12, including:
 - employees may withdraw their bid on a posted assignment in writing or in the telephone or computerized bidding process, at any time before the closing time (hour and date) of the posting
 - employees coming from another craft to the mail handler craft will have their seniority established as a part-time flexible one day junior to the seniority of the junior part-time flexible employee
 - redefinition of "bid" to make clear that bids may be submitted in writing, by telephone, or by computer where telephone, computer or other electronic means of bidding are established

Various improvements to Article 15 governing the grievance and arbitration process, all designed to provide more accurate and more timely

CHANGE

It is amazing how quickly things can change. In December, we were inundated with stories about the dire straights of the postal service's budget and how important it was to reduce costs. This did not stop their EVA bonuses, but that is another story. The busiest month of the year brought with it very little overtime, then things changed. Our delivery scores were released to the public and someone in the Western Area grew tired of last place.

Overtime-mania and a scheduling panic took over. On January 7, 2002 management began an all out assault on the Denver P&DC mail handlers demanding 7 day work weeks/ 12 hour days of our OTDL volunteers and 6 day mandates of our tour three non-

volunteers. Every action deserves a response and local 321 responded in grand fashion. Hundreds of grievances were generated challenging every aspect of the oppressive scheduling methodology. One arbitrator has ruled that when a non-voluntary 6-day workweek becomes the rule rather than the exception - the service must find other alternatives, calling similar scheduling demands oppressive.

The union challenged the mandatory overtime calls, excessive overtime, unsafe levels of sustained overtime, overtime without notice, posting errors, overtime by-passes, leave denials, OT waiver denials and casual violations to name a few.

The postal service is in a "prevent-defense" mode. Some time in the future they are going

to be forced to explain to an arbitrator how it is they continue to utilize a temporary (casual) workforce in lieu of career mail handlers, when for all practical purposes we have no part-time flexible (PTF's) to speak of, yet continue to hire and use casuals. In an attempt to reduce the agencies liability — in a future hearing, management will testify that all mail handlers were utilized to the fullest extent possible — with regard to overtime opportunities.

The value of this opinion remains to be seen, but one thing is clear. The grievances are having a direct impact or the correction of this problem. We secured a change in the scheduling methodology. I cannot predict how long

before the problem resurfaces, but for now the mandatory overtime calls have stopped and management has found a way to hire mail handlers.

The union was told at numerous levels that there was nothing that could be done, referencing a national hiring freeze. Management complained about the inundation of grievances with particular heartburn about the requested remedy to hire mail handlers. Well, they found a way to hire, so it is possible and there is some flexibility to hire during a "hiring freeze." They just had to be shown the way. Rest assured, this fight has only begun and more changes are imminent for they know no other way.

In unity,
Mike Hora

*...Overtime-mania
and a scheduling
panic took over...*

BELIEVE IT OR NOT!

This company has rules and regulations for nearly everything. Just when I think I've seen it all, I found something new. When is the last time your supervisor said thanks? Maybe they have not seen the regulation...

ELM 471.32 outlines specific requirements for each category in the USPS awards and recognition program. Exhibit 471 offers guidance for awarding a *thank you*. The regulation says "*thank you*" can be written or spoken and requires a genuine expression recognition for extra effort or contribution.

You will be glad to know that there is no approval authority for this recognition. It can be offered without higher level concurrence and can be given to anyone.

Thank you for your continued support to Local

321 !! 😊

Mike Hora

EDITORS NOTE:

Gee Mike, you wouldn't expect common courtesy to prevail would you? Of course there has to be a thank you rule, otherwise the bosses wouldn't know the meaning of the word! I guess we never get them because of the clause stating they must be genuine!

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resolution of grievances filed by mail handlers. These changes include:

- Grievance settlements and arbitration awards that entitle a mail handler to compensation from the Postal Service will be paid in a timely fashion. In the event that the payment is not made within 60 days of the receipt of the necessary paperwork, as defined in ELM Subchapter 436.4, the employee will receive an advance equal to seventy percent (70%) of the net amount owed to the employee.

- Following resolution of a "representative" grievance, the parties shall meet at Step 2 within 7 days to identify pending grievances involving the same issue and to apply the resolution to those grievances

- Whichever party refers an issue to Step 4 for National handling must specify in writing the precise interpretive issue to be decided

- Either party may submit a written request to conduct pre-arbitration discussions regarding cases pending on the Regional arbitration docket

- Suspensions of fourteen (14) days will not be served until 14 calendar days after service of a written notice (up from the current ten (10) days), and an employee will remain on the job or on the clock in pay status until after issuance of the Step 2 decision if a timely grievance is filed

- Letters of warning will be purged from personnel files if, upon the effective date of the Agreement, they have been in effect for at least 6 months, have not been cited in subsequent discipline, and were not issued in lieu of a suspension or removal

Several changes to Article 30 of the National Agreement and related MOU will do the following:

- Set the period for negotiations over Local Memoranda of Understanding to run for 30 days from September 1, 2002 to October 30, 2002

- Substantially limit management's ability to challenge a Local MOU provision as

"inconsistent or in conflict" with the National Agreement. In particular, management can use these grounds for challenging Local MOU provisions during the local implementation process only by making a reasonable claim that the MOU is inconsistent or in conflict with new or amended provisions of the most recent National Agreement, or with provisions agreed to since the prior National Agreement. (Currently, management is allowed to declare items inconsistent or in conflict at any time, and need not show a reasonable basis for its action.) Moreover, if local management fails to abide by a Local MOU on

"inconsistent or in conflict" grounds, and an arbitrator subsequently finds that local management had no reasonable basis for its claim, then the arbitrator is specifically empowered to issue

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an appropriate remedy. Finally, the challenged provisions declared to be inconsistent or in conflict must remain in effect for 120 days or the date of the arbitration award, whichever occurs sooner.

Article 32 concerning subcontracting is amended to allow the Union to give its own proposals to avoid subcontracting, and its own proposals to minimize the impact of any subcontracting, earlier in the decision-making process, thereby giving the NPMHU a better opportunity to stop possible

Subcontracting.

Article 36 is amended to provide that "all travel for job-related training will be considered compensable work hours," whether or not such hours occur during an employee's regularly scheduled tour of duty.

All members of Safety Committees will receive orientation no later than November 1, 2002.

The 1998 MOU terminating any effort to develop a centralized uniform program will be eliminated as obsolete.

The 1998 letter applying the MOU on Transfers on a prospective-only basis will be eliminated as obsolete.

A new MOU on Return to Duty will govern the review of medical certificates submitted by employees who return to duty following extended absences due to illness. These certificates should be reviewed, and a decision made based on the presented medical information, on the same day the medical information is submitted. Normally, once the decision is made, the employee will be returned to work on the next scheduled tour of duty, or on a later date stated in the employee's medical documentation.

Continuation of Joint Education and Training Fund, with additional funding of \$1 million per year.

Supplemental Agreements covering MTEC employees will continue to be enforced, although they will be removed from the printed version of the National Agreement.

Continuation of all work-rule improvements obtained as part of one-year extension in 1993, the 1994 National Agreement, and the 1998 Na-

tional Agreement, including daily volunteer lists for after-tour overtime after exhaustion of ODL; volunteer lists for non-scheduled day overtime after exhaustion of ODL; no time off for suspensions of less than 14 days; no service of suspensions of 14 days until a grievance is answered at Step 2; MOU allowing mail handlers to use up to 80 hours of sick leave to give care for dependents; annual leave exchange option (for employees who use fewer than 75 sick leave hours in the prior year); and installation-wide measurement of casualties

All other provisions of the 1998 National Agreement are being maintained, except for date changes that may be necessary to accommodate the new contract.

So there you have it—in a nutshell—the fruits of the labor our National office has been working for on our behalf. Remember to cast your vote on the terms of this Agreement as soon as you receive your ballot. Also, your non-member buddies who choose not to pay dues are going to get the fruits of this labor also, if we approve the Agreement. Isn't it time for a little peer pressure to get them to pay their fair share and get off the union welfare?

Don Gonzales

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IF SO, PLEASE PROVIDE YOUR UNION WITH YOUR ADDRESS
SO WE CAN KEEP IN TOUCH.

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