

Union Dues News



Wichita Kansas Area Local
American Postal Workers Union, AFL-CIO
Member of the APWU Postal Press Association



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Your Contact Does Make a Difference

Darrell Tate
President

I hope everyone had a safe and happy holiday season and I wish you all a happy and prosperous new year. Since the legislators did not pass a comprehensive Postal Reform Bill, I didn't get the Christmas present I had hoped to get. Instead, the can was kicked down the road again. Part of the bill to keep the Government running for another couple of months included a provision that the Postal Service would not need pay the \$5.5 billion to the Federal Government until August 2012.

Anyone that believes calling and writing your legislators has no effect needs to read the following story that Chris Pruitt, National Business Agent, shared at our January 10, 2012,

Union Meeting. Lincoln, Nebraska was on the verge of

shutting down their plant and moving it to Omaha. As you are aware, several Senators, including the Nebraska Senator, wrote a letter to the Postmaster General and suggested that they put all closings on hold until Congress had time to take some action. Congress agreed and put all future closings on hold until at least May. Lincoln must not have gotten the message.

The Postal Service felt since they had made the plans and were in the process of closing, they would continue the closing. The postal workers in Lincoln rallied and called their Senator, telling him that it was a slap in his face. In less than a week, Lincoln got the word that they would not be closing and that their plant closing was on hold, along with all the other plants, until at least May. Calling and writing your legislators can have an impact. We need to

keep pressure on our legislators... telling them that we want a comprehensive Postal Reform Bill passed, NOT the Issa bill moving through Congress.

The Postal Service is getting REALLY STRICT ON EMPLOYEE ATTENDANCE, using attendance as a basis for reducing employees. In the past month, we have seen more removals for attendance than we have seen in the previous year. Employees are expected to be regular in attendance and if you have a serious medical condition, you need to make every effort to cover your absences with FMLA, Family Medical Leave Act.

Usually, the first thing that comes to our mind when we think of our Union is filing a grievance to protect our rights. This is true. However, because of the climate the Postal Service has caused... our bigger fight

is trying to keep jobs and stop plant closings. This can only be done through legislative action and your national union is working hard at this, as is your local union. President Cliff Guffey has been on more TV talk shows than President Burris was during his entire tenure. The TV talk shows allow President Guffey to get the message out to the public that the postal job is a good middle class job and should not be lost, and that this is another way the middle class is taking a hit.

Let's hope that 2012 is a better year for the Postal Service. I wish the carriers and mail-handlers luck in pursuing their new contracts, which again have been extended.

I would like to express a special thanks to Cindy Bryan for the time, effort and the GOOD JOB she did as our Organizational Director. I would like to welcome Joshua Spell as the new Organizational Director. He has some big shoes to fill, but I am sure he will do a good job. Thank you again, Cindy.

Are you ready for a Hawaiian Luau?

Then come out to the DoubleTree by Hilton at the Wichita Airport and attend the Wichita Area Local's Installation Dinner!

The Installation Dinner for the 2012 – 2015 officers of the Local will be:

February 25, 2012 6pm - 11pm
Dinner served from 6pm - 7pm

Tickets are \$5 each - limit two per member. See your steward to purchase tickets or call 945-9430.

Tickets will be available for purchase starting 1/20/12 until 2/10/12.

Anyone interested in reserving a room at the DoubleTree needs to contact Felicia Carrasco at felicia.carrase@wichita-apwu.org.

The room rate for this event is \$95 a night.

Come dressed to enjoy the Luau!

The menu has not been finalized. As soon as it is available, it will be posted.

Ownership, Not Owned

Cindy Bryan
Editor

The other day I was talking to our EAP counselor Tom Edgar about issues, concerns, and problems at the REC. It was not an "official" EAP session, just an impromptu meeting that I don't mind sharing. This meeting included more than just Tom and me, but I don't think there is a need to mention these other participants. (Not that they aren't important, only because I haven't cleared it with them.) I just want to share a little about what we discussed and a few insights that I had during and after the meeting.

Tom mentioned that he had already been stopped by a couple of people on his way to see me (don't worry, he didn't mention who or the why – he is very ethical and does protect privacy and confidentiality). The response he received was "Get ready, you're going to get more calls." Unfortunately, that is the reality because DCOs are fed up with things at the REC. More frightening is the fact that I (okay, not just "I", but we – and I'm not just talking union representatives here) feel that things are going to get worse before they get better. For that matter, there may not even be a better. (Sorry, about that,

but my idealist, see the world through rose-colored glasses is slowly being replaced with a realist, cynical attitude.)

When the new REC manager came on board, people were optimistic. A few changes were implemented that gave DCOs hope for a better working environment. These changes actually sparked a little incentive in people to start actually giving a little more instead of simply being satisfied with performing their positions at the minimum requirements. One of the biggest (yet smallest) changes was DCOs being allowed to chew gum and eat hard candy. Gone

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were the days of risking being caught with gum that a DCO chewed to keep their mouth moist, stay awake, or simply because it was a habit and they forgot it was in their mouth. No longer did a DCO have to overdose on cough drops for the same reason. Finally, DCOs were treated as adults instead of as elementary students. This happened to the chagrin of some supervisors, but to the relief of other supervisors who were suffering just as badly as the DCOs (at least on the days they worked the floor and not the mezzanine).

Other changes included the formation of the Social and Recreation committee, a perceived increase of two-way communication, prizes, recognition, and a general feeling that DCOs might actually matter after all. There was even a feeling of having more job security as a DCO. Of course, that "secure" feeling

was a left over effect of the contractual changes for PSE. It just happened to be "settling in" when a new manager took over. Yes, the fiasco with the change from TE to PSE or career was a pain in the rump. No, I didn't agree with the way things happened and think it was a giant cluster (insert bad word that you find least offensive here). None of us liked seeing good people/employees lose a job and many of us didn't like seeing people we perceived as undeserving get those jobs. Nevertheless, the reality of that experience was that the day of the "revolving door" appointment/non-reappointment was over. (Disclaimer: that's the thought at this moment. As we have all seen, things change in the blink of an eye. Just because the contract says one thing, that doesn't mean someone, somewhere, at some time, won't try to violate the contract just to see if they can get away with it.)

These changes happened and there were DCOs who were optimistic and thought the REC was going to become a

good place to work. Some were hopefully optimistic (as in they saw potential but wouldn't place a wager on it), and there were a few realists with the thought "Just wait, it's always sunny before a storm." (For the record, since I already stated I am developing a realist, cynical attitude, I was among the group

The flip side was that DCOs who were under the "goal" efficiency were constantly reminded they were under the goal. It really sucks to be an employee who is just under the "goal" and told week after week that they aren't good enough. Here's the reality. A DCO gets an edit. The edit shows an efficiency

percentage. The supervisor circles the efficiency because it's below the "goal". Then, if the supervisor actually talked to the DCO when giving the DCO the edit, the supervisor says, "You need to improve your efficiency". On the other hand, if the DCO gets the edit without the supervisor talking to them, the efficiency is notated as "improve" or "too low". That's it. There may be a few supervisors who actually look at the DCO Activities Summary to see if efficiency below the goal is justified on the edit, but many just go by the number on the edit. There are problems with a supervisor simply going by the number on the edit.

First and foremost, when a person is told over and over they aren't good enough they start to believe it. People develop the attitude of "why bother trying" when they don't receive acknowledgement for improvements. I had a supervisor one time tell me, "Why should I tell them good job when they are just doing what they are supposed to?" Let's see, maybe because you catch more flies with honey? Seriously, people LIKE to be recognized for doing a good job or improving to do a better job. They feel like they matter. That acknowledgement of a good job or good work improving gives people a little boost of endorphins that make them feel good. And guess what? When people feel good, they perform better.

Second, even though management seems to think that the efficiency percent is a firm number, they fail to realize that fluctuations in this number are okay – regardless of any goal. Too many variables are NOT included in the DCO activities summary. When a person only sits in one seat, only keys in one platform, and only keys in one desk in that platform, then they can try to use the number as a firm number. There are people who can have an 82% efficiency who are better employees than others with a 91% efficiency are, but management doesn't see it. All they see is the 91% makes them look better during reviews. Let me explain.

There were DCOs who were actually pleased when they did increase their efficiency.



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Articles and letters to the editor should be typewritten, double spaced or on computer disk saved as a text file. Material submitted must be signed although names will be withheld upon request. Anonymous material will not be published. Computer disks cannot be returned. Articles should be submitted by the 15th of the month before the issue month.

Articles may be sent to
 P.O. Box 12190
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 Or may be taken to the Union Office
 6920 Pueblo
 Wichita, Kansas
 Office (316) 945-9430
 Fax (316) 945-0520
 Or they can even be emailed to:
 ckbryan735@yahoo.com

The Union Dues News is published monthly as a supplement to the PlainDealer.



Happy Valentine's Day!!!
 Share the love and attend your
 UNION Meetings!

NEXT REGULAR
 MEETINGS ARE

**Wednesday
 February 8
 at 7:30 P.M.**

and

**Thursday
 March 8
 at 8:00 A.M.**

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The person with the 82% is a fast keyer. This person exceeds the keying expectations by doubling what is required. Their error rate is extremely low and they are very accurate. When they start to go idle, they log off and switch or move. When there are cities that need to be cleaned up, they move quickly to each city to close out their mail for the night. They always set up the workstation ergonomically to prevent injury. They do what they are asked when they are asked. They follow the break cycle and never deviate from the 5-10-5. Yet, they move a lot – sometimes from one end of the building to the other. Their efficiency suffers. They switch when told to which also negatively affects their efficiency. Those seconds involved in switching do add up. A person who switches a lot could have a full 10 minutes worth of switch time. However, this person follows the rules and is told weekly how they need to improve.

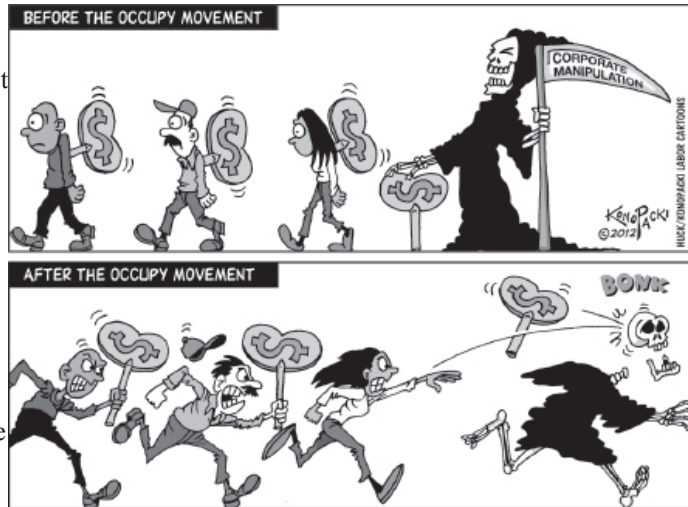
The other person with a 91% doesn't key so fast, just at the keying expectations. They ignore where they are supposed to go so that they can find a seat near their friend. They log into the system and don't mind sitting idle. They figure if management wants them to switch, management will log them off. They don't listen to the announcements, after all, they are at 91%, and their supervisor is always happy with them. They manage to sit in the same seat the whole night. This person never adjusts their workstation because they found the place that looks good enough. They listen to music on their phone and forget everything else. After two hours, they go take a 12-minute break because they really don't want to move to the letter city and a break gets them out of the move. They think the 5-10-5 is a load

of bologna any way. They don't take another break until after lunch. They didn't eat anything at lunch but now they feel a little hungry. They go ahead and take a 28-minute break. No worries, they aren't going to take another break. This employee gets away with it because their efficiency is perfect. The supervisor doesn't have any flags to bother checking this employees DCO activities summary.

These examples are extreme, but similar instances happen. Good employees who are following the work rules are being belittled. Bad employees who ignore work rules get away with it. Unfortunately, things are just beginning to get work. Management is starting to follow rules that have been ignored for years. They are even starting to follow rules that don't exist and were never agreed to by the APWU. They aren't even putting employees on notice – just springing this on individuals. I would truly love to tell you what is now being enforced, but there is absolutely NO WAY I'm going to tell you. If I did, I would be putting DCOs on notice of these "changes", at least the union members.

What I will tell you is IF you are asked to fill out paperwork and IF you receive any kind of discussion, you NEED to ask to speak to a union steward. IT CANNOT BE HELD AGAINST YOU FOR TALKING TO THE

UNION! THAT'S A FEDERAL LAW! It won't go against your efficiency either. The union HAS to know what is going on so that we can grieve these actions. It is not right for the employees being affected, nor is it right for those others who will be impacted later. If management asks you ANY questions, even if they say the answers won't be used against you, ASK FOR A STEWARD!!! These answers may not be used against you at that time, but chances are high that they will be used against you in the future. If you are denied a steward at that time, you must let the union know. That is a violation of your Weingarten



rights.

As for the "Beat Salt Lake City", I – like many other employees are SICK of hearing about SLC. That horse has been beaten to death five times over. I mean the employees of SLC no disrespect, but I wish it would vanish from the map. Actually, I think we should start calling it "The REC that must not be named." And the threats about us closing? Enough with that already. All the RECs were formed with the intention of one day closing. Tired of it – had enough –

move on. When and if we are actually scheduled to close, THEN it can be said. It really sucks to try to use that as a motivating factor. Besides, some people are beginning to look forward to the REC closing because it means a release from the hellhole called REC.

After I had vented all of these things to Tom (plus a lot more), he asked me what could change to make it better. I told him we need ownership of our jobs, not to be owned. I'm not talking the way a person owns a home; I mean an inside, personal ownership. I told Tom we needed to feel like we matter. We need to feel as though we are valuable and part of the service we provide, not just a drone. In the past, we actually had stand up talks with our supervisor. We knew the people in our pay location, who our supervisor was, and what the supervisor looked like. We were connected. We could bring up issues or gripes and discuss them. The benefit was there were times a person would bring up a keying question and we would find out something was being keyed five different ways. We were able find out the real rule and we all benefitted. We were motivated to be at work for our supervisor and coworkers. Now we have nothing except to collect a check.

If management really wants us to beat SLC, then they need to stop comparing us to SLC. They need to develop the Wichita REC into the Wichita REC with things that work for US. They need to rebuild the comradery that we used to have.



STOP!!! Don't throw away that uniform! Why don't you recycle it?

If you happen to be a window clerk who is fortunate enough to be retiring, put those left over uniforms to good use.

Bring them to the Union office so that other window clerks who do not receive a clothing allowance can get a little help.



Continuation: My Big Plan for a Little Change

Cindy Bryan
Editor

Since it never fails that management reads this union publication, I would like to point out a few things to supervisors. If you think I was referring to you in the previous article – I was. Because you are so egotistical to think it was a reference to you confirms that it was indeed in regards to you. I highly recommend you read “Zapp! The Lightning of Empowerment” by William C Byham and “Fish! A Remarkable Way to Boost Morale and Improve Results” by Stephen C. Lundin, et.al. These books will help you start using your power for good (plus it will make you look better in the long run, and I mean among your peers as well as the employees you supervise).

If you didn't think I was talking about you, chances are highly likely that you are correct. It's also possible that you have an idea about who I may have been referring to and again, chances are highly likely that you are correct. A plus is that it wouldn't hurt you to read the same books. If fact, you will probably find these books enjoyable as well as inspirational, which could possibly benefit you as well as the employee's you supervise.

If I had my idealistic, rose-colored glasses, optimist way, I would have every acting supervisor, supervisor, and manager at the REC read these books during the same time-period. “Why?” you may ask? I believe that a majority of you (members of management) might actually be motivated to actually use the ideas and concepts in the books – or at least give it a good, ole fashion try. If management actually read these books and tried to utilize these ideas and concepts, I think managements desired results would become a reality. Management is happy, DCOs are happy, and the REC becomes a happy place to work (No, I'm not smoking crack. Yes, I know, “happy place to work” seems to go against all we know about the Postal Service. Just because it seems like postal facilities are traditionally dark, depressing places to work doesn't mean the REC has to remain that way).

Now, since I do believe in disclosure and truth in advertising, let me just say for the record that there may be some things in these books that the union might find questionable or objection-

able. After all, these books are written for managers. But, and that's a big but, this does not mean that these ideas and concepts won't work. With proper labor management cooperation, these things can work within the parameters of the Collective Bargaining Agreement and Postal policies. Oh my! Not only could there be a happy place to work where management and DCOs are happy, the union could be happy too! (Crap! That idealist, rose-colored glasses me is again revealing itself!) There will always be disagreements on some issues between management and the union. Wouldn't it be nice if there were fewer disagreements?

Even though management and the union have different functions, the reality is that we are on the same team. I know this may be a bad analogy, but we (management/union) are like a sports team. Within a sports team, one side is offense and one side is defense. Each side can get caught up in thinking they are responsible for securing a win or protecting against a loss and feel more important than the other. Regardless of how each side views itself or the other side, both have the same goal – to win for the team. It's the same way when it comes to management/union; we both want to see the REC succeed. More importantly, if management put these ideas and concepts from the books into practice, I think we (the REC) could succeed together.

But alas, I am just a lowly peon DCO without the power to change the world (or at least the REC)! Add to that the fact that I am an evil union steward (tongue in cheek, I'm not really evil), I have even less hope of facilitating the positive changes I've mentioned. Of course, maybe I really could make a difference. I mean, just look at all the things that a single person set in motion: civil rights, women's suffrage, ending slavery, feeding the homeless, liberating people. Really, if so many individuals can start so many positive changes throughout the world, why shouldn't I at least try to make a little bit of difference? You know what? I've gone this far with my idealistic, rose-colored glasses thoughts on creating a utopian workplace (or at least happy workplace); indulge me in a few more idealistic dreams in an effort to make a little change.

If I could do what I want, I would buy

all of the aforementioned people both of these books. Unfortunately, policy prevents me from actually doing that. Of course, I don't think anything prevents me from loaning a book. After all, supervisors have loaned DCOs books on CD for years. I don't see why it couldn't work the other way. If I were asked, I would be happy to loan my copies of the books – all 50 of them. (Okay, technically I don't currently own that many copies, but I could get them. Many educational institutions would be grateful if I donated these books when I was done with them.) Even though I really don't think anyone would really ask to borrow a book, I still think it is important for these books to be read. This first step is the most important in my “Big plan for a little change”.

Oh heck, you know what they say, “If you're going to dream, dream big.” If management actually read the books and put the concepts and ideas in use (step two of my “Big plan for a little change”) for – oh, I don't know – a full three month period, I think there would be a noticeable change for the better. This three-month period would be step three. The final step would be at the one-year mark. I figure that at this point, people could see that the 3-month mark wasn't a fluke – change for the better can be accomplished. Voila! A work environment where many DCOs want to go to work because they like to go to work – not just because they don't want to starve. Granted, the reality is it won't be this simple because change is difficult. Supervisors have to adjust to a new way of thinking, although I think they will be happy with the results. DCOs have to adjust to the supervisor's new way and learn how to trust the new ways. I think DCOs will be happy with the results too. (Since I'm dreaming, think about it. A positive work environment, positive changes... the REC could be highlighted in the Western Area Update for excelling.)

I have already stated that I'm dreaming of my “Big plan for a little change” and I really don't think (even if I do hope) anyone in management will pay attention. However, just in case there is a forward thinking supervisor who also has the courage to attempt to make a positive change, I want to state how much I believe in my plan to make a positive

change. If management were to seriously try my plan, I'm willing to do something for management.

I believe so much that a positive change is possible if my plan is seriously attempted, I will dress any way management wants once a week for a year. That's 52 days and the possibility of 52 different embarrassing outfits. They want me to dress like a clown, fine. A fairy? Um, okay – but I'm probably not stopping anywhere between home and work. And the ultimate dress up day? Probably wearing a dress, heels, and – alas – no hat! (Yeah, I can see my supervisor jumping at that one!) Management doesn't even have to do the choosing. They could incorporate my “attire” by giving DCOs the ability to choose for me. I'll even let my picture be taken and posted so that EVERYONE gets to see me.

There! I've given my word. It's in writing. IF management were to take me up on this challenge, I will pay the piper. I believe the benefits are worth 52 days of embarrassing dress. (Yeah, I know and you know that it doesn't really take much to motivate me for crazy hats or to dress up for CFC. The difference is dressing up when nobody else looks goofy is still awkward, especially getting to and from work, even for me). The benefits of me dressing goofy? At the very least, people will get a chuckle and be happy at work for a brief moment. At the most, the same thing happens PLUS the work environment changes positively, productivity increases, people look forward to going to work, and the REC succeeds. (See? I'm back to that “happy workplace” thing again.) Everything else has been tried and nobody is happy. Morale sucks. Why not try something new? We might just revitalize our workplace and increase productivity by way of happiness.

