



FARGO TOUR GUIDE



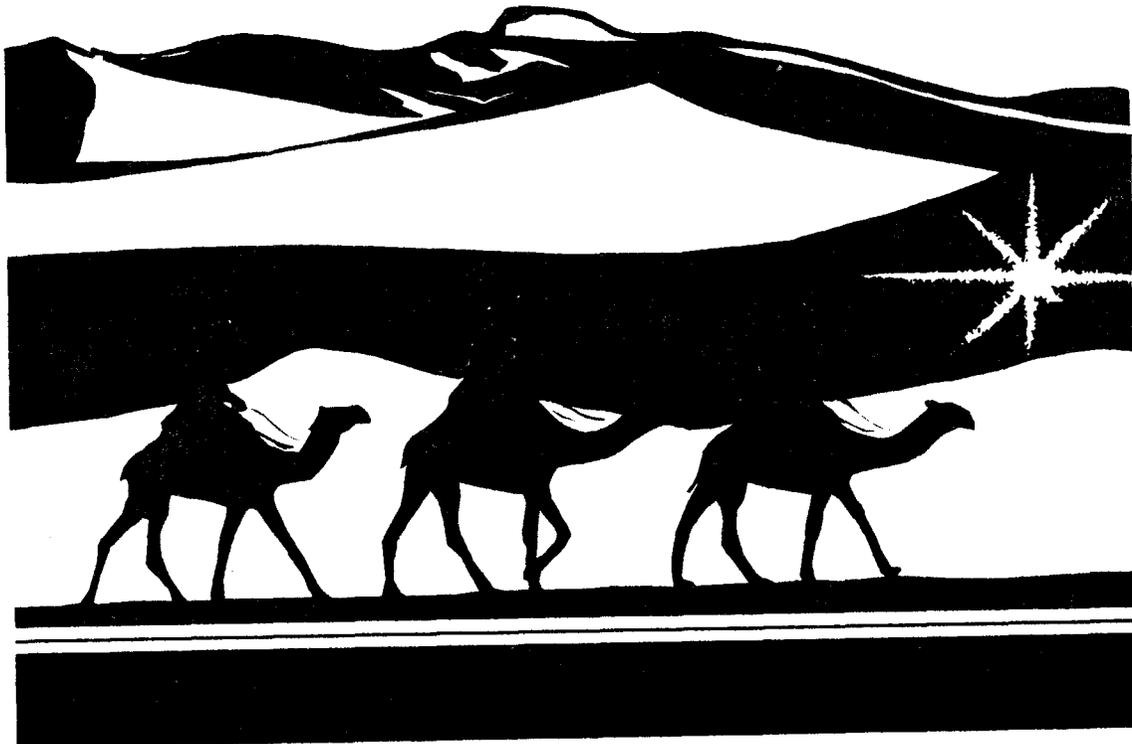
Local 88 Box 1874
Fargo, N. Dak. 58107

VOL. 15 NO. 2

FARGO, NORTH DAKOTA

DECEMBER 1997

PEACE ON EARTH!



THE WALLS HAVE EYES OR WHO NEEDS SUPERVISORS HERE?

One member last month wrote and said, among other things, "Don't you get upset when another's laziness dumps more work on you?" and "The sloth of some of us will tarnish all of us, eventually." Some people here apparently don't understand that we don't have "quality work circles" where we get to vote on who we work with--as much as they wish. Yes, they have given overall work ratings on many individuals, on both the quantity and quality of their work.

We're hourly employees. I'll make the assumption you're pretty much working the whole time you're here. I'll make the assumption the other person in the example, actually is working less than you. If the work gets dumped on you, so what? You are supposed to be working. If you don't get the work done, you either go home at your scheduled time or get overtime. And with half the building on that OT list you should be happy for the slothful person.

Next point. If that person is so bad, how come management hasn't dealt with that person? Perhaps they have and you don't know. Or perhaps your work standards are tougher than the big, bad management here. In that case, we're damn lucky some of you aren't in charge.

The truth is that numerous times, I've heard Employee A tell me what a lacy no-goodnik Employee B is and B tell me the exact same thing about A. Same for employees C, D, E and F and so on. Simply put, lots of these complaints are bull dung.

Heck, I had one employee call me to account one day, catching me chatting with another employee, derelict in my duty. I turned to the person, looked the person square in the face and said, "Would you like me to call you to account every time I see you talking with someone or looking at a magazine? I don't want to do that, but if you're going to do that to me, I'll do it for you." No reply and that was the last peep I heard out of this person. Undoubtedly, from then on the person had the decency and courtesy to talk behind my back.

In his column last month, Leo Persails, APWU Coordinator of Central Region, wrote that 20% of postal expenditures go for the salaries of managers. As for me, I agree with Leo and think that we have more than enough supervisors.

Now lets all get to work and take care of ourselves. That's a big enough job for most of us.

(Editor's Note: The author of this article would like to remain anonymous.)

WARDROBE CHECK

by Pam Glaesman

Are you like most of us? And wake up and wonder, what am I going to wear to work today? Do you dread wearing the same old T-shirt and jeans?

Well, I have a solution. Brand new APWU clothes. Yes, purchase them from me, Pam Glaesman, your APWU clothing representative.

Choose from an assortment of APWU clothes, like an APWU royal blue T-shirt for \$6.00 or hor about a pair of APWU royal blue sweatpants for \$12.50 and top it all off with an APWU baseball cap. Plus many more items to choose from. Be the envy of everyone on your tour. Show everyone you're proud to be an APWU member.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Summer Aberle	Tour I
Kelley Rapp	Tour I
Eric Holte	Tour I
Linda Harmon	Tour I
Renaë Boyle	Tour III
Kyu Brent	Tour III
Shelley Eisenzimmer	Tour III
Patrick Laducer	Tour III
Marie Breidenbach	Tour III
Wayne Rolph	Tour III
John Larson	Tour III
Steve Sorenson	Tour III

All members are invited to submit articles for the paper. All articles to be printed must be signed. Opinions expressed are not necessarily the opinion of the Editor, the Local, or the APWU.

Articles and address changes may be sent to:

Fargo Area Local APWU
P.O. Box 1874
Fargo, ND 58107-1874

THE PRESIDENTS REPORT By John Durham

I've been quite busy these past few months, so I'll try fill you in on what's been goin' on.

As you can see by our new member list, we have many new employees working at the Fargo Post Office. If you haven't done so already, please introduce yourself and welcome our new brothers and sisters. I hold a lot of respect for all the new employees who made the right choice to join the APWU - Thank you!

If you know any new employees that have not yet joined the union, please take the time to talk with them about all the benefits of union membership. With honest, positive communications and information, hopefully, the rest of them will join us in the continuing battle.

On October 19-23, Jeremy Cahill and Cheryl Chamberlain flew out to APWU headquarters in Washington, DC to assist our national officers in an arbitration hearing concerning a nation-wide grievance to upgrade all the Mail Processors from Level 4 to Level 5 pay. The grievance was filed over eight years ago here in Fargo. Because of the well-documented facts and strong evidence in the case, the grievance initiated here in Fargo (by our own Jeremy Cahill) was selected by our National APWU officers to spearhead this monumental case. The reports on the arbitration hearing were very positive, and we hope to find out the results by February or March of 1998. So you better get your autographs from Jeremy now while they're still cheap!!

The Fargo Area Local APWU has recently purchased a new computer, which has greatly improved the efforts of all our officers and stewards. We are now able to perform many tasks quicker and easier, such as financial reports, meeting minutes, membership information,.... In the months ahead, I also am planning to use the computer to analyze overtime violations and track make-up overtime, track the 80-20% FTR to PTF/PTR ratio, and keep a log of grievances for each section and tour.

Tour III has a new supervisor. Combined with the frequent use of 204B's, our management staff continues to be very inexperienced. So if you feel something is not quite right (overtime, leave policies, etc.), don't hesitate to ask a steward. Hopefully we can have things running smoothly as possible by Xmas.

Speaking of Christmas, I asked Fargo management at the last Labor/Management

meeting, what the policy was to be for working on Christmas Eve. Last year was the first time in over 20 years that schedule changes and /or annual leave was not allowed on Tours II & III. Their reply was, "The policy will be the same as lasts year, no schedule changes or annual leave. We must clear the mail in order to keep our numbers up." So I decided to write the following letter to our dear Postmaster:

I am writing this letter to confirm the statements made in the past Labor /Management meeting held on 10/23/97 concerning your policy on working Christmas Eve and to ask you to reconsider your current position. It is my understanding that your policy will be to not allow any schedule changes or spot annual leave on December 24, just as your policy was last year. It was stated during our meeting that out going prime mail was the first priority, because "that's where we get our production numbers from".

Senior employees have informed me that for the past 20+ years here at the Fargo Post Office, management has always allowed the employees schedule changes and/or annual leave in appreciation for the efforts put forth during the holiday season. But last year was the first time this policy was not allowed. Many questions were raised by all of us as to why this "gesture of thanks" that was regularly put forth by management and appreciated by all employees was suddenly stopped. Was the volume of mail last year substantially larger than all other pasta years? Did the Fargo employees suddenly start working with less zeal and effort than past years? Has the pressure on the USPS to "meet the numbers" finally reached an all-time high?

I would sincerely like to request that you reconsider your decision in this matter. The employees here in Fargo are among the most dedicated postal workers you'll find across the nation. In fact, we have employees that are so committed to the customer they will routinely go that "extra mile" above and beyond what is normal requirements of an employee in order to help a customer or finish a dispatch.

All of us here in Fargo realize the holiday season is the most important time for the USPS, and (cont. on page 4)

Presidents Report cont. from page 3...

that it is most critical to our business that we meet our customers' needs during the month of December. We all roll up our sleeves and "dig in" during this time. Many of us work 12-hour shifts and work during both of our days off. We are subject to extreme overcrowding during this period, many times working in unsafe conditions of blocked aisle ways, doorways, and fire exits.

All of this is done because we all know what Christmas means to the public we serve. It means joy and peace. It means friends, families, and happiness. It means putting aside what petty differences we all might have for a small moment and reflect on what is truly important in life. Our employees hold these same feelings too. Many of us will miss our family gatherings again. Many of us will not see our children, grand children, nieces, nephews...etc. participate in their Christmas programs. Throughout the month of December, the majority of us will spend more time working at the post office than time without families. Of course, we all decided to make these sacrifices when we applied for employment with the USPS. And for the past 20+ years here in Fargo, management has generously offered a "thank you" by granting the workers schedule changes and/or use of annual leave on December 24th in appreciation of these efforts.

Again, I sincerely request your reconsideration on this issue and reopen the path of mutual respect, cooperation and kindness between management and the craft employees during Christmas. We would all like to enter this holiday season with a very upbeat, positive attitude and hit December hard like a ton of bricks!

I look forward to your response.

MANAGEMENT'S RESPONSE:
(from Doc - Plant Manager)

As per your letter dated 11/2/97, let me reiterate our Christmas Eve Policy:

Fargo is an ADC (Area Distribution Center) and processes mails 365 days a year, that's our job. December 24 mails must be worked and cleared like any day to meet service standards by getting it in the air and on the trucks to its destinations. Our consistent goal (excluding weather and major back logs of mail) is to request Star Routes to return two hours early, the process the mails as fast and accurately as possible and then allow annual leave or LWOP to whatever employees want to go home early and that's our plan again, and if start routes come in early than this

schedule great, we'll go home earlier, but if they're late, we'll have to stay and process mails, I can't control the weather or the public's mailing patterns. It's just life at a processing and distribution center.

For all of our sake, I hope we enjoy a mild and smooth Christmas season, it would be nice for all. Thanks for sharing your concerns.

As you can see, Mr. Chipps didn't even have the time or courtesy to personally respond. I'll keep you posted on what develops. Keep watching your Bulletin Boards!



SAFETY CONCERNS

By Mary Gillespie, Safety Officer

Walking around the floor at the main Post Office can be hazardous. Management complains about the safety record but they do not provide enough room for us to do our job in a safe manner.

Management wants us to Red Tag defective equipment which is a good deal but then we don't have enough equipment to get the work done. Equipment should be Red Tagged and let management worry about the equipment.

Form 1767 is an important form to be filled out if there is an unsafe condition. These are found at the supervisors' desk. If these are filled out, management must reply.

TOUR II STEWARDS REPORT

By Jeremy Cahill

So many topics to choose from...What news is most on the members' minds?...Is it the first year in review for Mr. Chipps? (F)...How come no one applied for Prairiewood Station Manager? (see previous question)...Move the main window section to someplace else downtown? (Bill Brown's longterm plan for contracting out)...Who's going to be working at the warehouse? (nobrainer-casuals)...What happened in Washington?

Well, we finally got to something that's a little closer to my heart. Way back, in the olden days, I filed a grievance in 1988 for higher level pay for mail processors. 9 years later and we are about to see closure on this grievance. It's quite unusual for a local officer to have one of their grievances reach the national level, see it argued, and have a decision rendered, but, that's what's about to happen for me.

This was a rather plain grievance at its outset. With the aid of some locals from around the country (Portland Or, Manassas FL, Oklahoma City OK), and Clerk Craft Officers Cliff Guffey and Bob Tunstall; during the hearings in 1994 and 1995 it blossomed into a very nice representative case for the APWU. Frankly, when Mr. Mittenthal rendered his decision on whether the issue was interpretative or not in 1995, and would hear the merits of the case in Fargo, the APWU leadership was stuck with the Fargo case to present.

On October 21st we began the presentation of this case in Washington before Mr. Mittenthal. Again, several locals from around the country were involved (Wichita KS, Manchester NH, Denver CO, South Miami FL) and assisted with the tactics and preparation. The APWU advocate Daryl Anderson, a lawyer from the APWU firm, scored two fine coups before the hearings even began. He convinced the USPS lawyer to permit testimony from other locals, as long as it could be tied into the facts in Fargo. Also, we pretty much agreed on the issue, what we were arguing about, and Mr. Mittenthal also agreed with the two sides, very unusual indeed. Two witnesses took the stand on our behalf on Tuesday, and at the end of the day it appeared that the APWU had a real fight on its hands.

On Wednesday, we opened with second witness from South Miami, and then brought out the secret weapon...Cheryl Chamberlain from Fargo. With Cheryl's credible testimony, Daryl was able to enter into the record all of the evidence that had been collected over the many years. By the time we had rested our case at the end of day two, the USPS was reeling from blow after blow. With arbitration, you never know, but, right now, our chances look very, very

good for an outright win on this one. The USPS has two days in December to present its side of the case, if it chooses to continue. Figure another 30 days for briefs, 30 days for review... a decision sometime in February would be a good guess.

Now, let's understand that all this past month, Cheryl has traveled to Washington, alone, to assist with the preparation of the case, and then, knowing full well that her career change is the day after the second day of hearings, still...makes the trip to Washington, spends two twelve hour days (no OT on headquarter's assignments) plus almost a full day on the witness stand, and literally devotes three days to the APWU of what has to be one of the most important periods in her personal life. I wonder whether I would have made that sacrifice, but, that's what unionism is about. It's the "WE" not the "ME". I have few words...what a courageous and selfless act. Wherever you are, good luck and godspeed. Thanks from the bottom of my heart. JC

TOUR III STEWARD'S REPORT

by John Durham

There are still many overtime violations on Tour III. I haven't taken an exact count lately, but it must be close to 200 hours of make-up overtime this year on Tour III. In addition, some of the make-up was not offered within the required 90 days, resulting in payment of 24 overtime hours divided among six different employees within the past two months.

We also received two Step 3 grievance decisions in our favor, resulting in the payment of eight hours of penalty overtime to one employee, eight hours of overtime to another employee and two OT to three other employees each. All these payments were the result of management scheduling 204b's for overtime.

I filed a grievance on behalf of all the employees who lost their saved grade for failing to bid on the VOMA (Vehicle Operator Maintenance Assistance) position. Although it was a Level 6 job, the posting was very confusing, the job ID number was incorrectly printed on the notice and the notice for saved grade employees to bid was left off for the very first time since the LSM removal. As a result, over half of the saved grade employees lost their Level 6. The grievance is currently awaiting a Step 3 decision.

Last year management agreed that a bid card that was missing a signature was not to be automatically declared (cont. on page 6)

STEWARDS REPORT cont. from page 5...

void. Management agreed that if it could be determined and validated by the employee whose name was on the card, then the bid would be considered valid. Well, management quickly backed out of that agreement and promptly took away one employees' saved grade for not signing his card. Despite claiming that they "don't have time to ask employees if this is really their bid", they found more than enough time to fill out all the necessary paperwork, including mailing copies to five different addresses, all to ensure this employee lost his saved grade. The note to the employee even stated, "you lost your saved grade because you forgot to sign your card." There was no indication that an unidentified individual forged the bid--management knew whose bid it was. This grievance is also waiting for a decision at Step 3.

I have been working very closely with Jeremy on the recent attack management has launched on our window clerk positions. In the last several months, management has reverted or abolished three Tour II jobs with weekends off, and management has made it quite clear they fully intend to revert more window clerk jobs as they become vacant. They intend to replace them with PTFs and PTRs in the short term, with long-term plans of fully contracting out the window services. It is the belief of upper postal managers that clerks with many years of service and experience are useless at the window, and can be better replaced with younger employees who can be "molded" to their liking. By contracting out and paying a far lower wage \$5-6 per hour, management can save salary costs and "have their way" with these new employees. We will continue to fight this attack vigorously with meetings, grievances, unfair labor practice charges... Whatever it takes.

Remember, when requesting to see a shop steward, you are only required (if asked) to give the general nature of your problem (re: overtime, sick leave policies, working conditions). You do not have to give specific details. And you should be granted steward time within 24 hours of your request. Talk to you later and don't let anybody give you the old SHAFT-OLA!

TOP TEN REASONS WHY FLAT SORTER SUCKS

10. Tired of getting jams.
9. Too much mail jumps the mail slide and goes into the wrong tub.
8. People run marginal mail through the machine and risk shredding it because they believe the FSM is efficient.
7. Tired of mail getting caught at the end of conveyor belt when keying.
6. Tired of people saying "flip them in, they'll work" - another machine inefficiency as mail is address-side down after doing this and it promotes wrist strain.
5. Tired of having to restack mail on the keyer's ledge because the second handling mail was all messed up by the FSM the first time around.
4. Tired of pulling a tub and having a piece of mail dumped on the floor.
3. This machine shreds mail and its called progress.
2. Tired of having to clear a slide backed up with mail because the FSM can't put it in the tubs right.
1. TIRED OF HAVING TO READ ADDRESSES UPSIDE DOWN AND SIDEWAYS BECAUSE THE MACHINE WILL ONLY TAKE MAIL A CERTAIN WAY.

Tired of working on the FSM because I can work the mail faster and more accurately in the 200-year old manual case design.

Submitted by:
"The Luddite"



THE INTEGRATED BUFFER SYSTEM

By Doree Waggoner, Reprinted from The Eagle's Eye

The entire membership of APWU is waiting for some word on the first Integrated Processing Facility for the USPS -- located in Fort Myers, FL.

Since the first video was released depicting management's "dream" of a completely automated Postal Service plant, some interesting developments have taken place.

The original "bombshell" from Peter Sgro, USPS, dated March 6, 1997, was effective in one respect: spreading panic among the workers that are to be affected. Management helped by posting this letter to Moe Biller on bulletin boards around the Plant -- before the Union had time to blink!

Sgro's letter explained:

"This facility, when operational, will be a fully automated processing facility, merging most of the current technology being tested or deployed throughout the Postal Service.

"This facility will integrate such technologies as Robotics, image lift at the Automatic Facer Canceler System (AFCS), the Tray Management System (TMS), an Integrated Buffer System (IBS) and pinch belt conveyors to move the mail within and between operations. When complete, this facility will be the automated processing facility of the future and these fully integrated technologies will significantly reduce the need for manual labor to load, transport, unload, feed and sweep machines. The only manual labor will be limited to employees who will take care of jams or machine malfunctions.

"...This project may eventually necessitate a major reassignment of employees from this facility. The exact employee impact has not been determined at this time, but the complement needs are currently being examined for such a determination."

Sgro enclosed a video tape of the IPF which has been distributed country-wide.

Our president, Bob Huston, continues to have close contact with the National Executive Board and is planning as many trips to DC as there are meetings

between APWU and USPS in the stratagem of this "dream".

In August, a team of engineers and employees of the Elsag Bailey Company from Genoa, Italy, arrived at the P&DC to install the Integrated Buffer System.

This huge green contraption was immediately dubbed GODZILLA by postal workers. It reaches from the image lift AFCS (fed by BARNEY, our purple culling/storage system) to the DBCS/OSS and OCR. The machine transports, stores and feeds automated equipment in the outgoing mail operation. The system that is being deployed at our plant is a prototype unit. If it proves successful, it will be considered for manufacture and deployment at other facilities.

The Union has been denied requests to photograph the IBS at this time. Perhaps after acceptance, scheduled for January, we will be allowed to capture the image of this larger-than-life stepping stone into the future of the USPS.

Godzilla reaches almost to the ceiling and stretches nearly half the width of the P&DC -- quite an impressive storage system full of belts, pulleys, doors and ladders.

The following explanation of its workings comes straight from our Plant Manager's monthly P&DC Review:

The USPS is constantly looking for ways to reduce expenses and improve service. The IBS was designed to:

- Reduce feeding and sweeping
- Shorten processing windows
- Create a continuous flow distribution environment.

The IBS will work in conjunction with the AFCS, DBCS/OSS and OCR. Mail will be transported from the AFC and will be handled by the IBS as follows:

Barcoded mail (FIM) will be transported and fed to the DBCS/OSS.

OCR candidate mail (enriched) will be transported and fed to the OCR to have a barcode applied and then will flow through the IBS and be fed to the DBCS/OSS.

Script mail images will be lifted

by the AFC and sent to the Chattanooga Remote Encoding Center for processing. The image will be stored in the IBS until the barcode result is obtained from the REC. At that time the IBS will transport the mail to the DBCS/OSS to have a barcode applied.

We are currently running live mail and the goal is to continue increasing the volume input into the buffer. Presently, the average is approximately 150K per night. The purpose of running mail at the present time is to fine tune the system and experiment with different sort plans.

The IBS will continue to be monitored the by Elsag Bailey/USPS crew, and modified to meet the needs of the Postal Service.

BIG BIRD, the robotics wonder, has been operational for a couple of weeks. Still in the testing stages, I watched it's huge suction-cup appendages lift trays and packages from a conveyor belt and transport them to supposedly correct storage in GPCs.

With the crowds arriving weekly for management's "guided tour" of the facility, I'm sure that local Postal employees will be afforded the same courtesy very soon.

Surely, management realizes what effect these changes are having on their employees who are watching as their jobs are being replaced by machines and computers.



Do Not SIGN.....EVER!

When an employee is injured at work, many forms will be placed in front of the member to sign. Most will be the standard forms. One will be slipped in and it is PS Form 2488. This is an authorization for medical report. Under no circumstances should this form be signed. It gives postal management the authority to dig into your medical records from birth until today. Most of this medical information postal management has no business knowing. If management says an employee needs to sign this form in order to process their claim easier, this is totally false. This is your private record and management has no right to it! Do not allow them access.

If a compensation claim ensues from the injury, the inspection service would use this to pry into your life in order to find something to get you, the employee. Remember, **DO NOT SIGN PS FORM 2488!** An employee has a perfect right not to sign this form. As a reminder, it is always best for an employee to read any form placed in front of them by management. If an employee has a concern, ask for a Union steward to be present to answer your questions. If one is not available, just don't sign anything until there is!

Remember! Don't sign PS Form 2488.

Reprinted from THE BLACK SWAMP OUTRIDER

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Fargo, ND 58107

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Trustee Pam Glaesman
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