



NORTH DAKOTA

The Fargo Tour Guide

Volume 23, No. 2 Fargo , ND September 2004

APWU PICNIC AT RHEAULT FARM



Fargo Area Local APWU

Serving members in Fargo, West Fargo and Wahpeton

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The "Fargo Tour Guide" is published four to six time a year by the Fargo Area Local APWU. The view and opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the Editor, local officers or the American Postal Workers Union. Mistakes are intentional for the express purpose of finding out if anyone is reading this paper and to keep those happy who are not happy unless they can find something wrong with everything.

Letters to the editor may be sent to:

Fargo Area Local APWU
 P.O. Box 1874
 Fargo, ND 58107-1874
 Union Office: (701) 241-6163

Upcoming union meetings

Saturday September 25, 2004 10:30 a.m.
Monday October 25, 2004 7:00p.m.
Saturday November 27, 2004 10:30 a.m.
Monday Dec 27, 2004 7:00 p.m.
Saturday January 22, 2004 10:30 p.m.

All meetings are normally held at the F-M Labor Hall, 3002 1st Ave N, Fargo, but may be moved to Wahpeton, West Fargo or other locations if decided by the membership. Meetings usually don't run over two hours in length, and are required to conduct the business of the local. If you have any financial interest as to how your dues are spent, or how decisions are made at work, you must attend these general membership meetings.



"You gotta admit, that is the truth."

Editorial Policy:

The "Fargo Tour Guide" encourages letters to the editor from the membership. We ask, however, that they be legible. The writer's name, address and telephone number for verification must be included, and must be signed. Names will be withheld upon request. The editor reserves the right to edit letters and articles for length, style, grammar and spelling. Opinions expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the editor, union officers, or most important the membership of the American Postal Workers Union.

A note from your president

By Amy Tuscherer

Greetings! I hope everyone's summer has gone well; I can't believe it is already back to school time! We have had a fairly calm summer, just the same old issues that we deal with every day. I would like to invite all the members to stop by and visit our new office space, but you will have to do it one or two at a time. Management has decreed that we must open up and make accessible all the doors in our office, which amounts to three doors in our very small space. Now that we have done that, we cannot fit more than two people in the office at the same time. But rest assured that all of management is being well taken care of. One of them even had to rearrange his desk in order to open up a door. I hope that wasn't too much of an inconvenience! And the others now can have more privacy for their telephone conversations, as their old office was just too noisy! Meanwhile, we have had to put yet another file cabinet on the workroom floor. I would like to see management's files on the floor. But I really don't think that will happen, do you?

I just returned from our National APWU Convention in Los Angeles, along with Patty Carriere and Sue Carnahan. It was a busy and exhausting week and a half, with Pre-Convention Workshops the first two days, the Clerk Division Meetings the next two days, and the General Sessions the next five days. National contract changes were discussed and debated, along with changes to the National Constitution. We will all give a report at the next meeting, so please come if you want to know more!

As you all are probably aware, our supervisor's are coming and going through a revolving door. It makes you wonder if the powers that be ever sit back and say "hmmm...I wonder what the problem is in Fargo. They can't seem to hold on to their supervisors!" Obviously not, because nothing seems to be changing! We are going to be down to a handful of SDO's, a new MDO on Tour III (that should be interesting!), and 204-B's. Our only "real" MDO at the moment has a "my way or the highway" attitude; our VOE survey results have really had an impact there! One bright spot has seemed to be our Tour III Acting MDO. So far anyway, she actually listens when we talk. I am just afraid that one day that will end and she will fall in step with all the rest. I hope not.

And speaking of the VOE Surveys and the Focus Groups; that is also turning out to be another flash in the pan idea. I had a commitment from Management that these meetings would be held regularly, without exception. I cannot remember the last Tour III meeting. I told management that the APWU would participate in these Focus Groups until I felt it was no longer useful. Well, I see no need in continuing. Management even had a problem in the beginning getting their MDO's and SDO's to buy into the idea. If they can't convince their own kind, why should we be convinced that anything is going to change??

On the casual front, we have two grievances in the system. Same stuff, new day. No matter what else has happened, or what settlements in our favor we have received, management **still** has 8 hour a day, 40 hour a week casuals. They have their various reasons for each casual; we are disputing them all. To me, an 8 hour a day

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40 hour a week job should be held by a FTR, not a casual, for whatever reason!! I attended a pre-convention workshop on casuals in lieu of, taught by our NBA Lyle Krueth. Fargo seems to have dotted all their I's and crossed all their T's in respect to filing these grievances. John and Jeremy have done an excellent job in setting the standard with these grievances.

I would like to thank **Mary Gillespie** for volunteering to be a steward on Tour III. With Kyle Kuntz going into the 204-B "program", that left Tour III short on stewards. Mary will be handling all of the overtime issues for Tour III, so please let her know if you have problems with your OT.

Recently, our local held a picnic at Rheault Farm in south Fargo. Patty Carriere did an excellent job in organizing and setting up this picnic, and I thank her for that. I was disappointed in the turnout, however. This appears to be an event that most of you are not interested in. I know Patty was very discouraged as well. We deal with constant complaints and problems on the workroom floor, and we thought this would be a way to get away for a bit and relax and have fun. I guess we were wrong. We would definitely be interested in any suggestions the membership might have for any future gatherings!

Attendance has become an issue with management, and it seems that they are on the path to issuing discipline again. Please let your steward know if you are being hassled for your attendance, or especially if you are being issued discipline. We can't help you if we don't know about it. Also, if you are attempting to file FMLA paperwork, and are getting the runaround (as most have), please see a steward. Management is asking for much more information than they are entitled to, and are bullying clerks into getting it. Legally they are only entitled to a certain amount of information.

Last, I would like to stress the importance of signing up the non-members. They are reaping the benefits and rewards that you and I pay for. We need to get organized! This is every member's responsibility, not just your stewards and officers!

Thank you!

Thank you for the lovely plant.
We are doing fine.

Jen and Aubree
Skaurud

Thank you for the plant offering given in memory of my mother Dora Ordahl. The China Doll plant is beautiful. We are grateful for the remembrance.

Wanda Ordahl

Letters to the Editor

CFS still surviving

By Sue Carnahan

Retirements, transfers, bidding out and a detail have reduced the full time regular staff in CFS to seven clerks. Eight transitional employees are filling in the vacancies, PARS, Postal Automated Redirection System, was to impact CFS this year but is not expected now until the fall of 2005.

Two of the jobs reverted in CFS were grieved because Management did not post what action they were taking on these jobs in a timely matter. Knowing the projected staffing for the department, the Union hesitated to take Management's offer to post the two CFS jobs after they denied a reinstatement as the original remedy. A counter offer was made to open the whole month of December for annual for all clerks in the Fargo Post Office. Management did not buy into that. They did agree to post two Tour 2 jobs on the floor.

Welcome New Members!

Angela Vetter, TE, CFS Unit, Fargo

Jeannine Kukes, TE, CFS Unit, Fargo

Michael Philpot, TE, CFS Unit, Fargo

Darlene Nelson, Wahpeton

Clerks on the overtime desired list are regularly maxed out, volunteers are used, and the TE's are hovering around 60 hour work weeks. Unfortunately, mail is still being delayed almost daily but we are doing the best we can. The upgrade to Level 5 comes in November, 2004, which is well deserved.



Tour III has a new steward

By Mary Gillespie

Hi! I am the alternate steward on Tour III. I will be handling mainly the OT issues and whatever President Amy throws my way. I have been with the United States Postal Service for just over 22 years. Boy does time fly by! I still have a lot to learn but so far I have gotten make-up OT for at least a few people. I hope to stay on top of things to keep the OT books straight. If you think that you have been passed by either let Amy or myself know and I will check into it. I have been looking at the OT books at least once a week, more if there seems to be a problem. I hope I will be able to do the best job for the members that I can. Don't be afraid to ask if you have any problems.

17th APWU Biennial Convention Los Angeles, California

By Amy Tuscherer, President

Well, I made it back in one piece! My travel mate wasn't quite as lucky. By the time this is published, I hope she is feeling back to her same happy self! The APWU National Convention, held in Los Angeles, was a busy and exciting time. I traveled with Patty Carriere and Sue Carnahan. Our first two days were filled with Pre-Convention workshops. Thursday morning I attended a Casuals in Lieu of workshop, taught by our own NBA Lyle Krueth and Robert Kessler, NBA for the St. Louis Region. Thursday afternoon I attended a session on the Consumer Driven APWU Health Plan. Friday, Day 2, I attended a class on Safety and Health Committee Training, and the afternoon was spent in an FMLA workshop. I returned with much more information than I left with, mostly on paper!

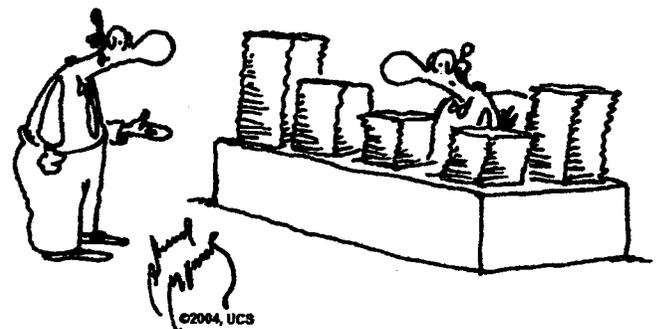
Saturday was another busy day, with the first day of the Clerk Craft Division meeting. Sue and I were also able to take in a Dodgers baseball game. The Dodgers came out on top, which made for an exciting game. Sunday was day two of the Clerk Craft Division meeting, which was finished up by late afternoon. Some of us were then able to take a trip to Hollywood Boulevard on our free evening. All I can say is what a lot of sights to see!

Bright and early Monday morning we

arrived at the LA Convention Center, meeting with our Four States on issues to be discussed during the next five days. Our National Business Agent's gave short speeches, and we also heard from Greg Poferl. We even had a visit from President Burrus, speaking for a few moments about the days ahead. From there we headed to the convention floor, where we found our table waaaay down front. We were seated directly below the speakers tables, so we had a fantastic view! No big screen's necessary for us! The seating was arranged according to each state's COPA contributions and goals. North Dakota came through and went beyond the goal President Burrus set for us. Thank you once again!!

The next five days were spent going over proposed resolutions for changes to the National Contract, and changes to the National Constitution. Two of the most hotly debated issues were changing the terms of the National Officers to four years, and changing the National Convention from every two years to every three years. After much debate, both of these resolutions were defeated.

I want to thank the Fargo Local for allowing me the opportunity to attend this Convention. It was an incredible learning experience, and I hope that I am able to put all of the knowledge I brought back to use.



"I want to reward you for all your hard work, Davidson.
How about a bigger desk?"

What would postal employment be like without the union?

by Randy Sutton, former Assistant Maintenance Director, APWU National Negotiating Team

Cost of living (COLA) would not exist. Other federal employees do not get a COLA. COLA is a bargained benefit from the APWU. This benefit keeps our wages in our economy. Without the union, we would soon lose spending power and our families would suffer.

Annual leave and sick leave would be reduced. In the 1994 National negotiations, management tried to reduce the annual and sick leave you could earn. The APWU held fast and kept our leave benefits where they are today, and even added the benefit of dependent care. Your benefits were not given to you by a generous employer. They were bargained for by the APWU. Annual leave quotas were not given to you by a generous employer. They were bargained for by the APWU.

Salary bargaining would not exist. No other federal employees bargain over wages. Management could choose what to pay us. Our jobs would be minimum wage with no benefits. Before the APWU got us collective bargaining, we relied on Congress to give us a raise. Of Course, we could lobby Congress for raises. That was collective *begging*. I wouldn't want to rely on Congress often in favor of privatizing the USPS.

Union rights negotiated in the National Agreement would not exist. You could be fired for no reason. The 204B at the end of the aisle could just say, "*You-are-otta-here*" and you would have no recourse. No right to file a grievance would exist. You would be at the mercy of the "benevolent supervisor."

All of your rights to bid would not exist. You would be trained once and never allowed to switch jobs because it would cost too much to retrain you. It would be cheaper to hire someone new at a lower wage. Without a union, just try to tell a supervisor you are not going to do certain work because that is not your bid. If you did, your next stop would be the unemployment line. Your rights to any guarantee of work hours (full-time or part-time) would not exist. You would be completely at the mercy of management.

Layoff protection wouldn't exist. If management no longer needed you or your job, they would just terminate you. You would have no contractual rights to another position. Article 12 would not exist. Just look around the country and see all the people who have been laid off as jobs were sent to other countries. With the APWU's bargained protection, not one single postal worker has been laid off. This protection was not given to us by a generous employer. It was bargained for by the APWU.

Seniority would not even be in management's vocabulary. They would care nothing for how long you had been with the Postal Service. All rights and privileges would be based on how nice you were to the boss. If you didn't get the hint, you would be a **CASUAL** at \$8 per hour with no benefits if it weren't for the APWU.

So, if you get the urge to bad-mouth the union or quit the union, keep the above in mind. I'm not saying the union is perfect. I'm saying that the union allows us to enjoy many rights and benefits that we sometimes take for granted. So when you are faced with an adverse change, blame management, but be thankful that the union has protected your job and salary.

Schedule Changes

Requests for a temporary schedule change for personal convenience must be submitted by the employee on PS Form 3189. Each request is submitted in duplicate and must be signed by the employee and the local union steward.

The union does not approve or disapprove changes in the schedule. The union steward only signs the request form to indicate a waiver on any claim for out-of-schedule premium pay resulting from the change. **Management approves or disapproves all requests** for temporary schedule changes.

The local union is responsible for determining if a request for a temporary schedule is legitimately for the convenience of the employee rather than for the convenience of management. If there is any operational convenience for management (even if it is advantageous to the employee), the steward may refuse to sign the request.

Management is strictly prohibited from asking an employee to sign a temporary schedule change in order to prevent payment of out-of-schedule overtime.

The union must give full consideration to each request for a temporary schedule change. If the request has merit and is made by and for the convenience of the APWU bargaining unit employees and does not impose undue hardship to other employees, then the union should sign the request.

The union may refuse to sign a temporary change of schedule request for the following reasons:

1. When the request for a schedule revision was initiated by management and does, in effect, constitute an attempt to avoid payment of overtime and/or out-of-schedule premium pay for work performed outside of schedule.
2. When signing the request would result in undue hardship on other employees.
3. When the requests are for such frequency or duration of time that the employee has, in effect, assumed a schedule that he/she could not obtain by seniority bid.
4. When the request for change of schedule is for an indefinite duration (no specific ending date).
5. When the request for change of schedule circumvents the provisions of the National Agreement.

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