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NEWS SERVICE

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**APWU Demands Congressional Support of USPS and Postal Workers!**

Moe Biller to Congress: 'Postal Reform' Drive Must Protect USPS And APWU Members!

APWU President Moe Biller presented the union's views on "Postal Reform" legislation before the House Committee on Government Reform on Wednesday, May 16, 2001. Biller's testimony shot down the arguments being put forth by the Postal Board of Governors and postal management, which are being used to create a phony "crisis" in the Postal Service as a pretext for reducing postal services and attacking the rights and jobs of postal workers.

President Biller's testimony drew on his 64 years in postal service, which included the following perspective:

"The long-term perspective I want to offer begins 31 years ago. In 1970, postal workers—who were at that time Federal Government employees—engaged in a nationwide work stoppage. They withheld their labor because working conditions were intolerable and wage levels were unacceptably low. In 1970, postal workers in New York City qualified for welfare.

"It is important to recall that, in the Postal Reorganization Act [of 1970], Congress addressed the problem of inadequate pay by enacting an increase in postal wages. Thereafter, Congress wisely provided for free collective bargaining over wages, hours and working conditions.

"From 1970 through 2000, the real wages of bargaining-unit postal employees (wages adjusted for inflation) have remained virtually unchanged. Those who call for a decrease in postal workers' compensation as a way of saving money must confront this fact. Postal workers will not accept a cut in real wages. We will not go back to inadequate pay. Any attempt to take that approach to the financial problems of the Postal Service would be self-defeating.

"So whether your perspective is short term (within the last three to six years) or long term (the 31 years since postal reorganization), the present financial crisis should not be permitted to obscure the fact that the Postal Service has succeeded in keeping postage rates in line with the underlying rate of inflation in our economy.

"Next, I want to discuss . . . the contribution of rank-and-file workers to the success of the United States Postal Service.

"At this time, bargaining-unit wages are only 57 percent of Postal Service operating revenue. I want to emphasize that this 57 percent includes all bargaining-unit employees combined, not just APWU-bargaining-unit employees.

"Rapid automation has reduced labor costs as a proportion of postal revenues. Postal workers are now more productive than ever, and postal worker productivity has played an important part in keeping postal rates in line with inflation in the economy.

"Finally, I want to outline the principles the APWU considers of fundamental importance should Congress consider legislation to change the Postal Service.

"1. The rate-making process as it presently exists takes too long. Either the present rate-making process must be compressed into six months or less, or it should be replaced with a different process.

"2. Legislation must protect universal postal service, including six-day delivery of mail. This is essential both for the public welfare and for the financial health of the United States Postal Service.

"3. We support the provision of pricing flexibility for the Postal Service. As close observers of the antiquated postal rate-making process, and of the marketplace, we are convinced that the Postal Service has been forced to operate in a highly competitive market with one hand tied behind its back. Additional pricing flexibility is warranted; and

"4. The right to engage in collective bargaining for wages, hours and working conditions must be protected. Postal workers will not accept an effort to go back to 1970. Any such effort, if it were accomplished, would be counterproductive. We have opposed in the past, and we will continue to oppose, legislation that places an artificial cap on postal wages. Such legislation would strike at the heart of free collective bargaining."

Postal Governors Launch Legislative Assault

On the eve of President Biller's congressional appearance, the USPS Board of Governors submitted its own proposal for postal "reform" legislation. This proposal would put postal workers under the federal Railway Labor Act, instead of the National Labor Relations Act, and thereby put postal workers' wages at the whim of the Congress and the President of the United States. Postal collective bargaining would be a thing of the past.

President Biller addressed this last-minute surprise in a separate statement, which said, in part:

"The Board of Governors' proposal is contrary to every sound tenet of labor relations. Postal workers would be deprived of free collective bargaining, while the Postal Service is deprived of its stated goals. . . .

"The APWU supports giving postal workers the right to strike under the National Labor Relations Act. If the Postal Service wants to be treated like a private-sector employer, for example, United Parcel Service, postal employees should be covered by the NLRA and have the right to strike."



American Postal Workers Union President Moe Biller, accompanied by Executive Vice President William Burrus, presented APWU's views on possible "Postal Reform" legislation at a May 16, 2001, hearing conducted by House Government Reform Committee Chairman Dan Burton (R-IN). Biller introduced his statement, part of which is reprinted in the main story at left, by saying, "The testimony we give today is not just our personal testimony . . . it is given on behalf of the 366,000 dedicated employees of the United States Postal Service represented by the American Postal Workers Union."

June 24-25, 2001, in Madison, WI

National Presidents' Conference

The next meeting of the National Presidents' Conference will be held in the Central Region on Sunday June 24 and Monday June 25, 2001 at the Madison Concourse and Governor's Club at One West Dayton Street, Madison, WI 53703.

The host local president is Steve G. Raymer, 608-249-2755; Badgerland@aol.com. The conference will be held from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm on Sunday and from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm Monday. A fee of \$50.00 will be collected at registration, which will be held from 3:00 pm to 7:00 pm on Saturday, June 23, 2001 at the Madison Concourse Hotel and Governor's Club.

To register in advance, complete the form below and send it by June 1, 2001 to the address given, along with a check or money order for \$50.00 payable to "APWU Presidents' Conference."

Conference Agenda

Agenda items will be accepted until June 1, 2001. Fax to 910-485-7909, or mail to Tony D. McKinnon, Sr., 2606 Raeford Road, Suite 11, Fayetteville, NC 28303. Items may also be submitted by e-mail until the day of the conference at Najar@att.net. Please be as thorough and explanatory as possible. Agenda items will be accepted at the conference, but those sent in advance will have priority.

Agenda items should include the following information: local name; local president; local address, phone, fax, and e-mail; type of issue (national, collective bargaining, operational, regional or local), title for agenda item, explanation, and any documents that could assist the chair. You will be contacted if

your agenda item needs further explanation.

Hotel/Travel Information

To make reservations at the Madison Concourse and Governor's Club, phone the hotel at 608-257-6000. Room rates are \$99/single, \$109/double (\$10 for each additional person). All guest room rates are subject to the current 13.5 percent tax, which is subject to change. Please identify yourself with the APWU Presidents' Conference. Check-in time is after 3:00 pm.

Local President Raymer has blocked rooms for Friday, June 22 through Tuesday, June 26 at the above rate. If you intend to arrive before Friday, please contact him to assist in securing arrangements. A complimentary shuttle from the airport to the hotel is available through the local; delegates may call ahead with their flight arrival information or call from the airport. The hotel is 90 minutes from the Milwaukee airport and two hours from O'Hare airport.

REC Site Conference

The REC Site Conference registration will take place at the Madison Concourse and Governor's Club on Saturday June 23, 2001, beginning at 9:00 am. It is open to all presidents, officers and stewards with REC concerns. The registration fee is \$15.00 per delegate. Please submit advance agenda items to Morline Moore, Chairman, PO Box 469, Beaumont, TX 77704, no later than June 1, 2001. If you have any questions, contact Moore at 409-838-0189.

**APWU National Presidents' Conference
June 24-25, 2001**

Name _____ Title _____

Address _____

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Local _____ Telephone _____

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Delegate Alternate (choose one)

Enclosed is a check or money order for \$50.00, payable to "APWU Presidents' Conference."

Mail to: **Steve G. Raymer, President
Madison WI Area Local
P.O. Box 7711
Madison, WI 53707**