

APWU NEWS Bulletin

AMERICAN POSTAL WORKERS UNION, AFL-CIO



WILLIAM BURRUS, President MYKE REID, Editor

Celebrate: ‘100 Years of Progress’

It would not have been much of a birthday without a cake, so the American Postal Workers Union kicked off its 18th Biennial National Convention with a salute to a century of accomplishments and cake for 3,000.

The cake was distributed to convention delegates at the close of a 17-minute video presentation that celebrated the history of postal worker unionism.



J.R. Smith



Douglas Holbrook



Josie McMillian

Following the video, the convention theme, “100 Years of Progress,” played out in dramatic fashion with cannons spouting confetti as delegates sang along

and danced in the aisles to “Celebrate,” Kool & The Gang’s signature 1980 hit.

Forty years later, when Chester Parrish was hired, conditions were still ripe for unionism.

“I started as a mechanic-driver in 1946,” Parrish, recounted, “at 84 cents an hour, with no overtime or sick leave.”

Parrish went on to become president of the National Federation of Post Office Motor Vehicle Employees, one of five unions that joined in 1971 to form the APWU.

The need for a union was – and remains – strong, Parrish said. “All it was at first was just a few people who had no rights getting together ... and working for union recognition.” Parrish is the last surviving leader of the five merging unions.

John R. Smith, the former APWU Retirees Department director, and his successor, Douglas C. Holbrook, along with Josie McMillian, the retired president of the New York Metro Area Local, spoke about how postal workers of years gone by had paved the way for the workers of today.

“Your generation inherits their accomplishments, and on this occasion we pay tribute to their sacrifice and commitment,” Smith said.

“We honor their service,” said Holbrook, “by carrying on the tradition of aggressive representation.”

“We have not reached the mountaintop,” McMillian said, “but because of the 1906 pioneers – all the way to the leadership of today – we can truly say that we have come a long way and we’re moving on up.”



Chester Parrish, left, and President William Burrus cut into the ceremonial cake. Parrish was president of the motor vehicle union that was one of five to merge into the APWU in 1971.

Shortly after McMillian finished speaking, the video presentation played. And when it was done, confetti cannons shot colorful streams into the air and the cake was cut. The celebration had begun.



Delegates to the convention in Philadelphia celebrate “100 Years of Progress.”

A Rousing Welcome From the AFL-CIO

Chavez-Thompson Urges Rededication to Fight for Working Families

In an inspiring address on Sunday, AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson reminded convention delegates of the stark challenges posed by consolidation and postal “reform” and called on union activists to rededicate themselves to fighting political forces and corporations that have abandoned working families.

Since President Bush and conservatives in Congress took control in 2001, Chavez-Thompson said, “Millions of good middle-class jobs have been disappearing, day after day, year after year. ... People are working harder and harder and getting paid less and less,” she said.

“Wealthy corporations and their friends in Congress are now committed



Linda Chavez-Thompson

to reducing pension and healthcare benefits,” she said, “and to depriving workers of their right to have a voice in unions and the economy.”

“We have to make them accountable,” she said. “Talk to your union brothers and sisters about the issues that matter,

and urge them to inspire more working people to vote – and vote wisely – in 2006 and 2008.”

“It’s up to me, and you, to make things happen,” Chavez-Thompson said. “If we don’t do it, no one will.”

Another speaker at the Sunday night event, Dave Ward, Deputy General Secretary of the Communications Workers Union of the United Kingdom, announced that he and postal union leaders from Portugal, France, Spain, Romania, Israel, Serbia, and Italy would march in Thursday’s anti-consolidation rally at the Philadelphia post office at 30th and Market streets. (*See story below.*)

“We’re going to make it a true, international event,” Ward said.

Delegates to Protest Decline in Service

Philadelphians are keenly aware of a decline in area mail service in recent months, and Thursday afternoon the APWU will help make sure that residents hear that the dramatic deterioration in service is the result of ill-advised postal policies that can – and should – be changed.

Postal workers will take to the streets Aug. 17, in a rally at the 30th Street Post Office. The protest will coincide with the convention’s traditional “Blue T-Shirt Day,” when approximately 3,000 delegates will wear the union colors.

“We will stand shoulder-to-shoulder once again, this time with our postal union brothers and sisters, as they demand an end to the degradation of mail service, and an end to the assault on workers’ rights,” said APWU President William Burrus.

The deterioration in service has been caused in large part by the transfer of mail processing operations from 30th and Market streets to a new facility near the airport. The Lindberg Boulevard facility opened last November.

As local news stories have pointed out,

it is unlikely that the service problems are only temporary. The fact is that the new facility is grossly understaffed.

More than 700 jobs have been cut – many workers have been “excessed,” some of them hundreds of miles away and with only a few weeks notice – and casuals have been hired to replace career employees, in blatant violation of the Collective Bargaining Agreement.

“This is part of a much bigger picture,” Burrus said. “All across the country, the Postal Service has sacrificed service to individuals and small businesses in its quest to perform more favors for the big mailers.

“We intend to put a stop to that. We will encourage the American people to make their voices heard. We will work together to *Save Our Service.*”

Finally: The Polo Shirt



St. Paul Area Local member Dawn Ecker models the short-sleeve polo shirt.

Several APWU members made fashion statements at the Clerk Craft Conference, modeling new polo shirts that window clerks will be able to wear starting on Nov. 18.

The long- and short-sleeved shirts have been the subject of long and short discussions, tests, and reviews since 2003. Vendors will begin taking orders on these shirts early in October. One of the last issues to be resolved grants retail clerks the right to wear this style any day of the week that the window is open.

They can be purchased using the Sales and Service Associate uniform allowance. The cost is expected to be in the \$30-\$35 range.

Burrus: ‘A Century of Progress’ Highlights the State of the APWU

“With this convention, we begin the next 100 years,” APWU President William Burrus told delegates assembled for the 18th Biennial National Convention. “The past 100 years are filled with success ... and because of that, we are brimming with confidence about our future.”

While looking ahead and outlining APWU’s goals, Burrus took time in his State of the Union address Monday to reflect, crediting past leadership for “the middle-class status you now enjoy.”

“Each generation of postal leaders has met the challenge and we point with pride to their many accomplishments.” In particular, Burrus cited the five leaders of the APWU at its founding in 1971, and Moe Biller, the union president from 1980-2001.

“We intend to move forward to justice, and will use every resource at our disposal to achieve our objectives.”

Burrus called Biller, who died Sept. 5, 2003, at the age of 87, “the right leader at the right time. Through the force of his personality, Moe made his mark for all time. Wherever you are, Moe, we thank you.”

Shifting his focus to gains made since the 2004 convention, Burrus noted that the national agreement was extended for a second time and that APWU-represented employees received the second-highest wage increase in the history of postal collective bargaining. “We also continued to make progress toward our goal of upgrading every APWU position,” he said.

The APWU president said that he was especially pleased with the removal of all Transitional Employees from mail pro-



APWU President William Burrus

cessing facilities. “The APWU has purged the terrible decision of Arbitrator Mittenhall, which imposed tens of thousands of non-career employees upon our bargaining unit.”

With some issues that previously dominated our discussions having been resolved, Burrus said, it was time to focus on “current challenges no less daunting than those of the past.”

Among the challenges that “fill our members with a feeling of uncertainty and doubt” are: the loss of jobs to automation; worsening service and the dislocation of workers due to network consolidation; the lingering threat that postal reform could undermine our collective bargaining rights; the transfer of our work through jurisdictional determinations; employee complements at new facilities set so low that service falls apart; and additional subcontracting.

Noting that in a few weeks, contract negotiations begin, he said that negotiations are fraught with risk but offer “an opportunity to advance our goals, to improve our lives, and to capture the dreams and hopes of our members.”

“We intend to move forward to justice, and will use every resource at our disposal to achieve our objectives.”

One resource – and one that has been much stronger in recent years – is the

union’s political war chest. “In 2006, postal workers will have the opportunity to help change the political direction of our nation. This year, important midterm elections will provide us – along with others in the labor movement – a real opportunity to reverse the deadly and destructive political agenda of this Republican administration.”

The APWU, Burrus said, has never been stronger on the legislative front. “Myke Reid and Steve Albanese have established the presence of our union throughout the halls of Congress, and their activities have been strengthened through your help in reaching our COPA goals. To all of the activists who give of their time and money, I extend my appreciation and that of the union.”

While the membership helps raise money for political efforts, the union leadership strives to run an efficient operation.

“We have been re-evaluating every expenditure. For the third consecutive year, we have experienced surpluses and we have put in place processes to en-

“To all who give of their time and money, I extend my appreciation and that of the union.”

sure that this continues,” he said. “And we have continued to seek ways of increasing revenues.”

“To all of the resident officers, especially Vice President Cliff Guffey and Secretary-Treasurer Terry Stapleton, I say, ‘Job Well Done.’”

“Let history record that 100 years after the inception of the postal workers union movement, APWU is vibrant and moving forward.”

“And if you think the last 100 years have brought miraculous changes, you ain’t seen nothing yet!”

Craft Conferences Offer a Preview



The four APWU divisions met on Saturday and Sunday. At far left are members of APWU's Clerk Division; at left, a question is posed at the Support Services Division meeting; above, a scene from the Motor Vehicle Division conference. Below are delegates active in the union's Maintenance Division.

The pre-convention weekend featured the four APWU craft conferences.

While all the crafts focused on issues specific to the next round of negotiations, Clerk Division delegates discussed the threat to jobs posed by automation and jurisdictional disputes (RI-399), as well as upgrades.

Among other matters, delegates attending the Maintenance Division meet-

ings considered travel issues, pending arbitration cases, and MS-47 Handbook disputes.

Motor Vehicle Service Division delegates discussed resolutions to prevent subcontracting and protect seniority.

Discussions among delegates representing APWU's smallest craft, Support Services, focused on private-sector organizing efforts.



Chorus Sets the Stage



After its stirring debut in Los Angeles in 2004, the APWU Convention Chorus is back, starting each day of the gathering with a medley of inspirational songs. Starring at auditions on Saturday were, from left, Gwendolyn Glover (Detroit District Area Local), Audrey Betts (Birmingham Area Local), Vickie Beasley (Detroit DAL), Nettie Sabin (APWU Auxiliary, Schaumburg, IL), and Tracy Blakely (Redwood Empire, CA, Area Local). At right is Kenneth E. Wall (North Jersey Local). The chorus once again is being conducted by Elise Bryant, a senior staff associate at the National Labor College/George Meany Center.



Post-Convention Workshops

The APWU Research and Education Department is offering 30 workshops on Saturday and it is not too late to register for many of them.

The Post-Convention Workshop registration desk is in the delegate-registration area. Registration hours are Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

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Credentials Committee

As presented by Chairperson Geneva Greenlee of the Muncie (IN) Area Local, the preliminary report of the APWU Credentials Committee for Monday, Aug. 14, is as follows:

The 18th Biennial Convention's 2,457 delegates represent 359 locals, 50 states, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. Also in attendance are 84 national officers and four Retirees Department delegates.