

Report Confirms Worst E

Welcomed by the mailing industry but condemned by consumer and labor organizations, the final report of the Presidential Commission on the Postal Service came as no surprise to many who closely followed the panel's proceedings.

"The commission's recommendations confirmed our worst expectations," APWU President William Burrus told union members in a video report sent to every local. "Simply put, the commission has declared war on postal workers. If enacted into law, the commission's proposals would have a devastating affect on your jobs, your pay, your health benefits, your retirement, and your collective bargaining rights."

Much of the 208-page report focused on cutting the Postal Service's labor costs through outsourcing and wage and benefit cuts. The following is a review of some of the most objectionable commission proposals.

Postal Pay: The report recommends replacing the Postal Rate Commission with a Postal Regulatory Board that would be charged with determining the "comparability" of postal pay to private-sector pay. In its calculations, the board would include set values for job security, holidays, leave, insurance, pensions, and health-care benefits. Ultimately, the board would establish a wage cap that could not be exceeded under collective bargaining.

Health Care and Retirement: The report recommends that postal unions be required to bargain for federal pension and health-care benefits, which currently are guaranteed by law. The commission also proposed that Congress repeal the provision of the 1970 Postal Reorganization Act that guarantees that employee fringe benefits be at least equal in quality to what the unions and postal management agreed to after their first post-strike contracts were reached in 1971.

In addition, postal workers could ultimately be forced out of the federal pension and health care programs.

Job Security: The commission called for eliminating the no-layoff clause and making new hires subject to federal reduction-in-force (RIF) procedures.

"Right-Sizing" Through "Outsourcing": The commission proposed that all but the "first and last mile" be

contracted out. Calling mail processing, transportation and maintenance "incidental to mail delivery," the commission said such work could be performed more efficiently in the private sector.

It also called on the Postal Service to move retail transactions out of post offices and into banks, pharmacies, and convenience stores. Burrus calls this "the stealth privatization of everything but mail delivery."

Collective Bargaining: The commission recommended changing the ground rules for contract negotiations, calling for, in short, a reduced time period for negotia-



The Presidential Commission delivered its final report July 31.

tions, requiring mediation, and utilizing a "Last Best Final Offer" mechanism when negotiations stall.

Plant Closings and Consolidations: The commission has proposed that the president appoint a special Postal Network Optimization Commission (P-NOC) to select mail-processing plants for closing or consolidation. The P-NOC recommendations would take effect automatically unless Congress disapproves them in their entirety.

Universal Service: The commission recommended giving the new Postal Regulatory Board the power to "clarify and refine" the postal monopoly, and to "review and refine" the universal service mandate, including six-day delivery. "The commission would give broad authority to a politically-appointed Postal Regulatory Board to set postage rates, define and adjust the scope of universal

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service, amend the postal monopoly, set wages and benefits, and review and act on complaints,” Burrus said. “The commission would give the board unprecedented authority with no accountability.”

Closing and Selling-off Post Offices: The commissioners recommended changing the law that prevents the Postal Service from closing post offices solely for economic reasons. “Giving the Postal Service the power to close local post offices without citizen involvement,” Burrus said, “could have a devastating impact on small businesses and rural communities.”

Uniform Postage Rates: In addition to allowing the Postal Regulatory Board to modify service standards, the commission opened the door for ending the long-standing

practice of one-stamp-goes-anywhere by suggesting that uniform postage rates be maintained only “where appropriate.”

Expanded Discounts for “Worksharing”: Although the commission recommended against creating any new work-sharing discounts that exceed the costs avoided, it tacitly endorsed the present below-cost discount structure. The report supports the principle of discounts for pre-sorted mail and recommended that the practice be expanded.

A ‘Fundamentally Dishonest’ Set of Proposals

APWU President Burrus called the final report “fundamentally dishonest,” adding, “We got exactly what we expected from the commission, a set of recommendations that serves the mailing industry at the expense of postal workers and the American public.” ■

Our Struggle Moves to the Halls of Congress

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larly to all crafts, as well as to supervisors and postmasters. A Nazi concentration camp victim once said:

“They first came for the communists, and I did not speak up – because I was not a communist. Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak up – because I was not a Jew. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak up – because I was not a trade unionist. Then they came for me – and by that time no one was left to speak up.”

What You Must Do

Whether or not other postal organizations find common ground with APWU objectives, it is your responsibility to join with efforts to protect your job. All of the benefits emanating from the strike of 1970 are in jeopardy.

There can be no “free ride.” In this struggle, you are either a part of the solution or you are part of the problem. You are being called upon to join in local efforts to engage your elected representatives and your community. If you are too busy to spend the time necessary to effectively lobby, please give to the Committee On Political Action so that others can represent your interest. Your future is at stake and you must be a part of the solution.

(One good way to be part of the solution is to give to

COPA through PostalEASE. The method is simple; instructions are provided on page 13.)

The struggle continues. ■

Allied Effort



TV and radio ads sponsored by the Consumer Alliance for Postal Services (CAPS) aired in Waco, TX, while President Bush and much of the national press corps spent time at his ranch in August. The spots decried the presidential panel’s recommendations to “close down post offices all over the country, hitting small towns and farming communities the hardest.”