

APWU NEWS

Bulletin

MARK DIMONDSTEIN, President



JOHN MARCOTTE, Editor

Postal Banking: An Urgent Public Need

Nearly 150 Convention delegates attended the Postal Banking Forum on Wednesday after the convention adjourned.

The session, moderated by Eastern Region Coordinator Mike Gallagher, included Denis Lemelin, president of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers; Jose Sayagues, federal secretary of the Spain FSP-UGT Postal Sector; Jose Oliveira, international relations secretary of the National Union of Postal and Telecommunication Workers, in Portugal; and Ariel Yacobi, chairman of the Israel Union of Government Employees.

The panel spoke about the history of postal banking in their countries and how public banking meets the needs of low-wage workers.

In 2012, Canadian Union of Postal Workers initiated a new campaign based on Canada Post's research that highlighted the fact that low income and aboriginal people are lacking banking services and subject to 1,350 payday lenders who drain more than two billion dollars a year from the people.

In Spain, 10% of people are unable to get credit and 5% are not able to open a bank account. "Postal workers can do the same job or better than the banking sector," said Sayagues. And to the APWU, "Your success will be our success as well."

Ariel Yacobi argued that the public post office must provide social needs and services. In Israel, 25% have a need for access to banking services.

While Israel Post is currently operating a public bank, the country's commercial banks are fighting to



Postal Banking Forum

privatize the service and split banking operations from the mail.

Jose Oliveira said, "I do not wish for the APWU to experience the same situation we have in Portugal."

The Portuguese Postal Service has had 70% of its offices privatized. At one time, they had a State Savings Bank and even paid pension funds through postal networks.

Oliveira urged the APWU to "fight for a postal bank and to resist privatization with all of your forces."

President Dimondstein opened the forum by reiterating the importance of postal banking to the APWU and the American people. He noted that low-income workers often spend over 10% of their income on fees and services when forced to use payday lenders.

The need for such a service is supported by the fact that almost one quarter of the population lives outside the financial mainstream. Sixty-eight million American adults do not have bank accounts or have limited access to financial services. These families pay \$89 billion in interest and fees, negatively impacting their well being.

The USPS Office of the Inspector General issued a 'white paper' in January 2014, that argued the USPS should provide basic financial services. The report endorsed the idea postal unions have supported for years. APWU research indicates that with more than 35,000 post offices, stations and branches – located in every city and town in America – the Postal Service has the infrastructure to provide the desperately needed services.

Thirty-eight percent of USPS retail offices are in 'bank deserts' – zip codes with no banks; another 21 percent of zip codes serve communities with just one bank.

Senator Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) has offered her support for postal banking, writing, "If the Postal Service offered basic banking services – nothing fancy, just basic bill paying, check cashing and small dollar loans – then it could provide affordable financial services for underserved families, and, at the same time, shore up its own financial footing."

Senator Warren's support is important, but the APWU will not pursue a legislative strategy to achieve postal banking. Instead, the union will lead a grassroots campaign aimed at the Postmaster General.

"The Postal Service would better serve the needs of potential customers – and the nation – because it won't victimize customers," President Dimondstein has said regarding the fact that the USPS is consistently rated one of the most trusted public institutions.

New Workshops Reflect New Spirit

The APWU Research and Education Department offered 22 pre-convention workshops on a range of informative topics, from legislative and political action to issues facing Postal Support Employees (PSEs) on Friday, July 18.

Delegates were excited about the workshop topics and were pleased with the opportunity to learn about important issues affecting postal workers.

The Building Worker-Community Coalitions to Fight Post Office Consolidations workshop was among the most popular. Rob Preston, president of the Colorado Springs Area Local said, "My plant is on the list to be consolidated. I want to learn everything I can. Anything helps. I want all the ammunition I need to fight unjust actions taken by the Postal Service."

This year's workshops included sev-

eral that reflect the union's new activist spirit. A prime example was How to Win a Grievance Without Filing (Using Our Power at Work). Led by Ajamu Dillahunt, the former president of the Raleigh Cosmopolitan Area Local APWU, the session focused on using our members' collective strength and creativity to address workroom floor problems.

"The sheer number of grievances makes it clear that the system is broken and that it is unreasonable to expect all or even the majority to be resolved in the immediate future," the workshop handout said.

Many PSEs hoped to learn more about their rights and ways to strengthen them.



PSE Steward Sara Hall

Sara Hall, a PSE steward from the Montpelier [VT] Local was ready to take what she learned back to the workplace. "As a steward, I'm learning how to protect these jobs and to turn them into careers," she said. "I took lots of notes and I'm ready to face management!"

Retirees Answer the Call

"You are, and we are, a value to the union!" Retirees Department Director Judy Beard said at the Retiree Conference on Saturday, July 19.



Retirees Department members at a conference session.

Retiree members from all over the country gathered at the conference to send a clear message to the union: they are active, mobilized, and ready to fight for the APWU.

Retirees Department members organized eight local retiree chapters

and one state chapter since the last convention in 2012. Nearly every retiree chapter delegate in attendance reported that their chapter had been involved in Stop Staples actions. "Our retirees are out there on crutches, they're out there with walkers, they're out there with scooters, your participation in the protests is valuable," Director Beard told the assembly.

President Mark Dimondstein addressed the meeting, and was greeted by members chanting, "Postal Staples has got to go!" Dimondstein thanked the retirees for their spirit and activism. "If the post office goes down, it doesn't just affect the current workers, it affects the retirees," Dimondstein said, "The activism of retirees helps sustain the union for

years to come." He closed his address by leading the group in chanting, "The US Mail is not for sale!"

Retiree members have been volunteering their time and energy to every APWU cause. Over half the attendees were actively involved in the AFL-CIO affiliated retirees' organization, the Alliance for Retired Americans. Several others have worked for APWU legislative campaigns.



Retiree Director Judy Beard

Campaign for Justice:

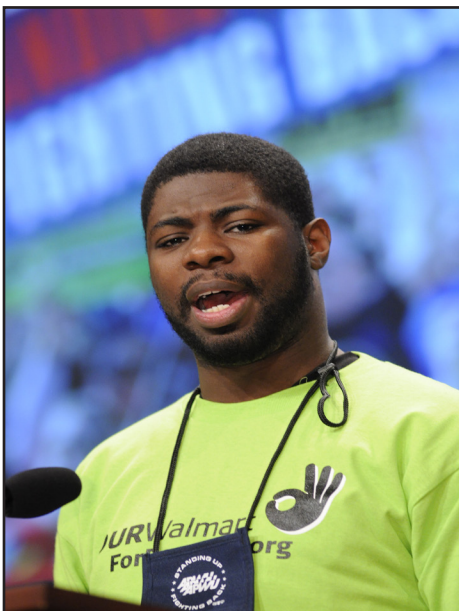
OUR Walmart, Fast-Food Workers Inspire Delegates



Jessica Davis, Fight for 15

The Convention theme of Stand Up, Fight Back was on display on Tuesday and Wednesday when two of the most exciting labor struggles in the country honored the assembly with their presence. Fast-food workers and Walmart workers are on the cutting edge of labor struggles today. In the anti-union and pro-business environment encouraged and enforced by the 1% and their henchman in state houses and Congress, these workers are inspiring all workers to fight back.

In the fast-food industry, the "Fight for 15" campaign began in November 2012, when fast-food workers joined together to fight the corporate giants,



Richard Wilson, OUR Walmart

joined [Fight for 15 Campaign] because I wanted justice. Thousands of workers in Chicago and across the nation are standing up and saying enough is enough."

Fast-food jobs are no longer temporary or part-time positions held by teenagers; for many families it is the source of their entire livelihood. Without a livable wage, 52 percent of fast-food workers are forced to depend on public assistance to provide for their families.

Davis, who has worked for four years at McDonald's earns \$8.98 an hour. Meanwhile, McDonald's reported net profits of \$5.6 billion in 2013.

At the opening of Wednesday's convention, members of the Organization United for Respect at Walmart (OUR Walmart) shared news about their struggle. OUR Walmart is demanding annual wages of at least \$25,000, more full-time openings and an end to retaliation against workers who speak out against poor working conditions.

including McDonalds, Burger King and Wendy's.

Many in the industry do not earn enough to cover basic necessities, such as food and housing. Speaking at the convention on Tuesday, Jessica Davis, a 26 year-old fast-food worker said, "I

"I'm a mother of three and I do have to work a second job to make ends meet, working for the biggest retailer in the world," said Walmart worker Linda Haluska. "I shouldn't have to do that."

Although Walmart had earnings of \$16 billion last year, it pays its employees so little that many must rely on food stamps and other subsidies just to get by.

"I'm making less than \$14,000 a year," said OUR Walmart activist Richard Wilson. "At the end of the day, you're just another number on the bottom line. Walmart has to do better by paying its workers a livable wage. We're



Linda Haluska, OUR Walmart

fired up and we are not going to take it anymore," he said.

In an impressive display of solidarity, convention delegates unanimously adopted resolutions supporting the fast-food and Walmart workers in their campaigns for justice.

Delegates Begin Work on Constitutional Resolutions

On the convention's third day, the Constitution Committee, Chaired by Cleveland Ohio Area Local President Daleo Freeman began its report.

Delegates worked throughout the day debating and voting on resolutions primarily affecting the structure of the union. The committee will resume its report on Thursday, July 24.

International Solidarity

The 22nd Biennial Convention continued the tradition of hosting union leaders and activists from around the globe. Their presence is an expression of building solidarity on an international level.

The delegates who attended came from public sector unions in their countries. They were from Canada, Spain, Bulgaria, Portugal, Egypt, Israel, Greece, Russia and the United Kingdom.

Speaking for the group, Billy Hayes, president of post and logistics of the UNI Global and president of the Communication Workers Union of the United Kingdom, shared with the delegates the challenges that postal workers are facing in his country.

In regard to the Stop Staples Campaign Brother Hayes said, "In the UK we are very familiar with such moves. Management has been transferring Crown Offices facilities to WH Smith—a private retailer. Royal Post now has competition in delivery from TNT, an Australian based company controlled by the union-buster, Rupert Murdoch."

Brother Hayes indicated that his

union shares a common vision with the APWU in expanding services for the public. "In UK, we are campaigning for the establishment of a Post Bank. Many postal services throughout the world have one, and they are usually very profitable."

As Hayes was preparing to depart for the NALC Convention in Philadelphia he said, "we have to build unity with our 'cousins' in the US because you work for the largest mail service in the world and we have to support each other."

APWU Honors Mary Ann Medina

Calling her activism "a source of great inspiration," APWU President Mark Dimondstein honored Mary Ann Medina for her many years of union involvement, during the APWU Retirees Conference on Saturday, July 19.

Medina started her postal career in 1966, and has been a union activist since 1968. A participant in the great postal strike of 1970, she has held a number of union positions.

As president of the San Francisco Retiree Chapter, APWU second alternate to Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW) and vice president of the San Francisco CLUW chapter, she remains a devoted unionist.

Her most recent endeavor includes participation in dozens of daily "Stop Staples" protests.



Left to right: Secretary-Treasurer Elizabeth Powell, President Mark Dimondstein and Mary Ann Medina.

APWU POWER Caucus Held

At a caucus held after adjournment of Monday's convention session, members and supporters of the APWU Post Office Women for Equal Rights (POWER) heard inspiring accounts from a number of sisters about their life experiences and paths to leadership roles in the APWU because of POWER.

"Currently the APWU has 18 women elected to national offices, more than any union in the United States of America," said Joyce Robinson, POWER National Liaison and APWU Research & Education Director. "We are proud of

that."

"The POWER movement is not about taking over the union, it's about women having their fair share in the Union. Men of quality are not threatened by women seeking equality," Robinson said.

Recognizing their involvement and active participation had not kept pace with an increase in the number of female union members, a women's movement in the

APWU developed in the late 70's, designed to raise consciousness among the rank and file women of the union. Out of the movement came POWER.



Caucus participants hear testimonials from POWER sisters.

Video Highlights

Videos of convention highlights will be posted on the APWU website each day.

APWU NEWS Bulletin 22nd Biennial Convention Bulletin No. 3

Jul. 24, 2014

Credentials Committee

As presented by Chairperson Kim Guy of the Greater Smokey Mountain Area Local, the preliminary report of the APWU Credentials Committee for Wednesday, July 23, is as follows:

The 22nd Biennial Convention's 1,879 delegates represent 304 locals, 50 states, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. Also in attendance are 78 national officers and five Retirees Department delegates.