

APWU NEWS Bulletin

MARK DIMONDSTEIN, President



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Delegates Take It to the Streets:

‘The U.S. Mail Is Not for Sale’



Delegates and Members of the Chicago Teachers Union Protest Outside a Staples Store.

Thousands of convention delegates and postal supporters, including leaders of the Chicago Teachers Union, protested the privatization of the USPS at a Staples store in the Chicago Loop on Tuesday.

The delegates traveled by bus from the McCormick Convention Center, after a spirited speech by American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) President J. David Cox, in which he reiterated AFGE's support for postal workers and the boycott of Staples.

“We will never shop at Staples until they stop what they’re doing to the post office,” he shouted to thunderous applause.

APWU members have protested at Staples stores and postal facilities at dozens of locations across the country since January. Last fall, the USPS announced a no-bid sweetheart deal for a “pilot project” to open postal counters

in more than 80 Staples stores.

“About a week ago, the USPS and Staples attempted to derail the boycott,” APWU President Mark Dimondstein said. “They announced the pilot was over, but admitted that Staples clerks would continue to do the work of uniformed postal workers under a program with a different name.

“We’ve got news for them: Our campaign to stand up for living-wage jobs and quality service for our customers isn’t over until we say it’s over.”

Staples’ announcement followed a July 12 vote by delegates to the American Federation of Teachers national convention to join the ‘Don’t Buy Staples’ campaign, which has been endorsed by the AFL-CIO, the SEIU, AFSCME, the International Association of Firefighters and many other labor and community organizations.

“We’re not falling for that ruse, and neither are the labor and community allies who have joined with us in this fight,” said President Dimondstein. “This campaign will continue so long as the USPS tries to replace

experienced, uniformed postal workers who are accountable to the American people with low-wage, high-turnover employees who have little training and who are not qualified to handle the U.S. Mail.”

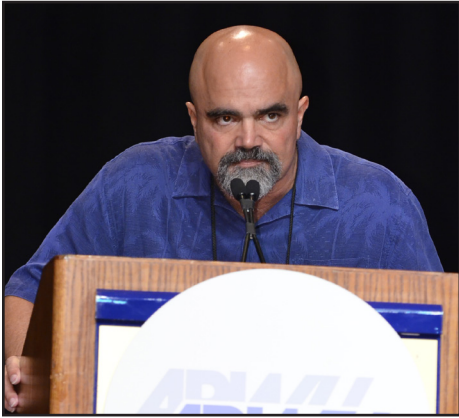
The campaign to Stop Staples has been a centerpiece of this year’s Convention and has attracted support from high-profile activists. AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka pledged that he and his 13.5 million members were not waning in their support for the Staples boycott. In fact, the support is, “getting stronger every day,” he said.

The Reverend Jesse Jackson also spoke to the crowd in front of the Chicago Staples store, urging onlookers to fight the privatization of public services. “Don’t sell the post office. Don’t sell the police department. Don’t sell the fire department,” he said before leading the protesters in a chant of “The U.S. Mail is Not for Sale!”



AFGE President J. David Cox, APWU President Mark Dimondstein and Rev. Jesse Jackson raise their hands in Solidarity.

Clerk Craft Focuses on Resolutions, MOUs



Clerk Craft Director Clint Burelson

The 2014 Clerk Craft Convention ended on Sunday, July 20 after two days of spirited debate. The delegates moved through 45 resolutions submitted by local and state organizations that were reviewed by the Clerk Craft Committee chaired by Elena White of the Trenton Metro Area Local.

There was some good news to share, like the establishment of a Customer Care Center (CCC) in Wichita, KS. The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) negotiated by the Clerk Craft creates 271 higher-level Tour 2 positions.

There were concerns as well. For

example, the Seamless Acceptance Program in Bulk Mail. It will give mailers more responsibility in verifying the mail with the potential for huge revenue losses on one hand, and on the other, the reduction of clerk jobs.

In the same vein, Clerk Craft Director Burelson observed, "Just like they went after mail processing they are doing the same with retail. They are moving towards privatizing by incentivizing."

With the usual eye on upcoming contract negotiations, delegates focused on provisions in Memorandums that are scheduled to expire and new language to protect members of the craft.

The broad areas of concern were conversions, higher-level pay and bringing work back to the craft. Limiting 204B's and upgrades were also on the agenda. The discussion on many of the resolutions made it clear that the members and leaders of the APWU are committed to protecting Postal Support Employees (PSEs) and fighting hard to convert them to career status. Many speakers acknowledged that PSEs are the future of our union.

The Officers' Reports highlighted

the importance of the Stop Staples Campaign and the effect the USPS-Staples deal, if allowed to stay in place, could impact clerk positions. Winning this struggle, they argued, will send a message to other retailers who might want to enter into a similar arrangement.

Burelson has said, "What we do in Chicago in 2014 matters. It matters for all of us."



Clerk Craft Delegates listen to Officers' Reports.

Maintenance Craft Debates Settlement



Maintenance Director Steve Raymer

Maintenance delegates gathered at a pre-convention conference to discuss a major settlement that resolves a long-standing dispute over custodial staffing and results in the conversion to career

of all Maintenance Craft Postal Support Employees.

In December 2011, the USPS announced new plans to modify the MS-47 Handbook.

"The MS-47 Handbook is probably the most litigated handbook in the history of the APWU," Maintenance Craft Director Steve Raymer said, noting that management has tried on numerous occasions to modify it, only to have the changes successfully challenged by the APWU in arbitration.

"The difference this time around was that management learned from their earlier arbitration defeats," he said.

The delegates were often unsure of what to think and were thankful for

the opportunity to get their questions answered.

"I have mixed feelings," said Delegate William Colbert from the National Capitol Area Local, "The truth is, I have a lot of questions and that's why I'm here. The Maintenance Conference is where I know I can get the information that's important to me."

"The delegates were fully engaged in spirited debates. Overall, it was a successful meeting," Director Raymer noted.

National officers reported on Maintenance Craft issues, and attendees received a CD containing updated training material to take home and share with other members.

Motor Vehicle Services:

‘Fighting for our Survival’

“We’re fighting for our lives, fighting for our very survival” said Motor Vehicle Director Michael Foster on Saturday, July 19 in his report at the opening of the MVS Craft Conference.

“Contracting out of Postal Vehicle Services (PVS) and Vehicle Maintenance Services (VMF) continue to be on the forefront of the Postal Service’s privatization plan.”

Of particular concern is the Postal Service’s “mode conversion” of PVS operations

to Highway Contract Routes (HCRs). Additionally, despite a March 2013 ruling that the USPS cannot overlook higher subcontracting costs when making outsourcing decisions, the APWU received a notice in April 2013 that the USPS intended to consider contracting out 162 PVS sites throughout

the country.

The requirements of the 2010-2015 Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) are intended to bring work back to the MVS Craft, not send it out to HCRs. The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Contracting or Insourcing of Contracted Service and the MOU on Consideration of National Outsourcing Initiatives, which are part of the contract, were intended to allow the APWU an opportunity to compete for work internally concurrent with the outsourcing process and early enough to influence any management decision.

By signing off on these MOUs and the MOU on Motor Vehicle Craft Jobs, the Postal Service agreed in negotiations to continue to expand the Motor Vehicle Craft during the term of the contract.

“The national union has been engaged in a tumultuous fight to turn back the

USPS’ decision to subcontract our MVS work,” said Foster.

After meeting with the Postal Service several times to discuss management’s effort, the APWU initiated a national dispute in March of this year.

The union contended that the Postal Service is in violation of Articles 31, 32 and the parties’ MOUs on Contracting or Insourcing of Contracted Service, on Consideration of National Outsourcing Initiatives, and Motor Vehicle Craft Jobs. In addition, the effort by the Postal Service to evaluate 162 Postal Vehicle Service sites, which is essentially the entire PVS operation nationwide, for possible subcontracting, violates the agreement of the parties to bring PVS work into the Postal Service during the term of the 2010 National Agreement.

“Contrary to what the Postal Service agreed to in contract negotiations, they are intent on contracting out MVS work,” observed conference participant Fred Wolfmeyer, president of the St. Louis Gateway Area Local. “The MVS Craft is under extreme attack.”

Participants also discussed 12 resolutions involving contractual issues.



MVS Craft Director Michael Foster

Support Services: Successful Negotiations

Members of the Support Services Division discussed three successful contract negotiations in 2014.

Despite a national arbitration decision that removed most clinical duties, the National Professional Postal Nurses were able to strengthen their contract with increases in salary and benefits, as well as improvements in on-the-job training and reimbursements for certifications and licenses.

Members of the Great Lakes Mail Haulers Local APWU were also successful in contract negotiations

with their employer, B&B trucking. The difficult negotiations resulted in improvements to the over-the-road mail-hauler unit’s first contract in 2010.

Support Services Craft Director Steve Brooks credited the persistence of the negotiations team for achieving the improvements. “They did not back down even though the company continued to throw curveballs,” he said.

Just prior to the start of the convention, the APWU and USPS reached a tentative agreement for contract employees in the IT/AS units.

The Support Services Division also debated one resolution to add a National Business Agent (NBA) to the division.



Support Services Director Steve Brooks

Delegates Debate Bargaining Resolutions

Delegates to the APWU's 22nd Biennial National Convention got down to business on the convention's opening day, debating and voting on resolutions submitted to the Labor-Management Committee.

In a demonstration of the union's commitment to its youngest and newest members, delegates acted on 35 resolutions dealing with working conditions, pay, and benefits of Postal Support Employees (PSEs). Among the most significant adopted by the

convention is a resolution making the conversion of PSEs to career status a top priority of all future collective bargaining agreements.

Some of the other resolutions acted on by the delegates included: elimination of the two-tier wage scale, staffing in small offices, non-traditional full-time assignments, holiday scheduling, excessing provisions and full-time flexibles.

At the conclusion of the

convention's second day, delegates had acted on 125 Labor-Management resolutions.



Delegates vote on resolution.

The Labor Movement: Time for a New Day



Chicago Teachers Union activist Kimberly Goldbaum takes questions from delegates.

Nearly two hundred members gathered Sunday afternoon for an inspiring and lively program organized by Retiree Director Judy Beard, that included talks by four panelists interspersed with singing and chanting led by moderator, Elise Bryant of the Labor Heritage Foundation.

It turned out to be a perfect prelude to the Convention theme of "Standing Up, Fighting Back." Presentations addressed the current political situation, examples of fighting against anti-union legislation and union busting and the need for solidarity.

Mary Bottari, Deputy Director of the Center for Media Democracy,

gave a great tutorial on the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC). Funded by the Koch Brothers, two of the wealthiest individuals in the country, the Council develops model legislation and trains right wing elected officials on how to get the anti-people bills passed in their states.

Daleo Freeman, President of the Cleveland, Ohio Area Local shared his experience fighting to restore collective bargaining for public employees in Ohio after the newly elected Republican majority passed a measure outlawing it in 2010. He emphasized what was the main lesson for him: hard work. He said, "That's why they call it struggle." They strategized with the labor movement statewide, knocked on doors in neighborhoods and visited businesses.

Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) activist Kimberly Goldbaum laid out a spirited history of their successful strike in 2012. The main ingredient was building solidarity as a union, with parents, community groups, and other unions. She reminded the audience "union jobs aren't 'jobs for life,' but they are jobs for lives."

The last panelist Steve Bruno of the University of Illinois School of Labor and Employment Relations suggested that the labor movement needed a "big idea" to change the situation and find a

new direction.

In his brief remarks to the participants, President Dimondstein addressed the "big idea" the APWU is implementing: the Grand Alliance of seniors, retirees, civil rights organizations, veterans groups, the labor movement, community and faith-based organizations, and some business groups in defense of America's right to vibrant public postal services. The audience responded with the chant "Stand Up, Fight Back; Stand Up, Fight Back!"

Video Highlights

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

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Credentials Committee

As presented by Chairperson Kim Guy of the Greater Smokey Mountain Area Local, the preliminary report of the APWU Credentials Committee for Tuesday, July 22, is as follows:

The 22nd Biennial Convention's 1,815 delegates represent 292 locals, 50 states, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. Also in attendance are 78 national officers and five Retirees Department delegates.