

At Swearing-In Ceremony:

Dimondstein Issues Call For a ‘Grand Alliance’

In an impassioned speech before more than 1,000 APWU members, President-Elect Mark Dimondstein issued a call for a “grand alliance” to save the USPS as a public postal service and to protect postal jobs.

“Writing to Congress is important,” he declared, “but it is not enough. Lobbying for legislation is important, but it is not enough.” To win, postal workers must build a movement, he said.

“When the Flint sit-down strikers occupied a General Motors plant in the 1930s, labor law reform was won. When women took to the streets to demand the right to vote, they won. When courageous civil rights workers fought segregation with sit-ins and boycotts, the 1964 Civil Rights Act followed,” Dimondstein said.

“History shows that movements move Congress. Movements create legislative victories, not the other way around,” he said.

“We must build a grand alliance between the people of this country and postal workers,” he proclaimed. “We must mobilize our allies and their organizations, including seniors, retirees, civil rights organizations, veterans groups, the labor movement, community and faith-based organizations, the Occupy movement, and even some business groups in defense of America’s right to vibrant *public* postal services,” Dimondstein said.

“Something is askew when national advocates can be sent into a local to defend four hours of overtime, but no advocates can be sent to help locals fighting to keep our plants from closing, keep jobs in our communities, and prevent workers from having their lives turned upside down,” Dimondstein said. He promised to implement a nationally-coordinated plan to fight plant closings.

He also vowed to aggressively address serious problems with the APWU contract and build greater cooperation among the four postal unions.

Dimondstein paid tribute to labor’s heroes and martyrs over more than a century, and noted that his family history molded his passion for justice. A great uncle was a leader of the Fur and Leather Workers Union, and many members of his extended family



“History shows that movements move Congress,” Dimondstein said. “Movements create legislative victories.”

joined the French Resistance to Nazism and perished in the fight, he said.

The heroes of the 1970 postal strike defied unjust laws to win decent pay, and their victory laid the basis for the APWU and good union jobs in the USPS, he said.

“But our U.S. labor movement is in dire straits. We are at the lowest unionization rate in 97 years,” he pointed out. Union busting and concessionary contracts abound, and workers lack any real independent political voice.

For the moment, Wall Street and the right-wing Koch brothers are largely having their way, he said. “Anything that stands for the public good – public libraries, public education, public utilities, public transportation and public postal services – is under severe attack, as are public workers and our unions.”

But we are not alone, he said. Public workers in Wisconsin stood up and fought back, he noted. “Wal-Mart workers are stirring. Fast food workers are demanding a living wage... A revitalized labor movement is indeed possible,” he declared, as he urged union members to join together to defend a public Postal Service and good union jobs.

Eighty national officers were sworn in on Nov. 7. Their three-year terms begin Nov. 12.