

**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LETTER CARRIERS
COMMITTEE OF PRESIDENTS
SPRING 2000 MEETING
APRIL 8-10, 2000
SEATTLE, WASHINGTON**

**UNOFFICIAL OPENING AND MEETINGS
APRIL 8, 2000**

Branch Presidents of the National Association of Letter Carriers began gathering at Westin Hotel, located in the Emerald City - Seattle WA, on a fine spring day in the Pacific Northwest. By the time all had been registered a total of 264 voting delegates (Presidents or their designees) were in attendance. Hosted by Branch 79, the early SNAFU's of the location for this assembly had been ironed out aptly by President Jo Anne Pyle. The delegate packets included information on Seattle, specially designed "amazing pens", World Famous Washington State apples and an explanation for the sudden change in accommodations.

BREAKING THE ICE!

A hospitality room was hosted by Branch 79 and staffed by volunteers from the Wenatchee WA Branch 1350. From here on out the COP became a very bumpy ride. ***[If you get the impression that I am repeating myself at times in this report, it is because issues were revisited.]***

**APRIL 9, 2000
AFTERNOON SESSION**

Following an invocation and The Pledge of Allegiance, Jesse Johnson, COP Co-Chair, introduced some of the people and topics that would be demanding the time and attention of these Union Activists.

Mel Sawyer, Hotel Employees/Restaurant Employees, Regional Representative (HERE):

A hearty welcome to a fine Union Hotel. In the past 10 year period, HERE membership has been cut in half, mostly as a result of multi-national corporate mergers. When the World Trade Organization (WTO) conducted their highly controversial sessions in Seattle, the only non-violent demonstration was when 30,000 Union members paraded through the streets.

Jo Anne Pyle, President Branch 79 - Seattle WA:

The Emerald City and Branch 79 welcomes all to this Committee of Presidents Meeting. At last night's Mariners / Yankees baseball game, a block of seats were reserved for the delegates who wished to go. However, there were some non-Mariners fans that took advantage of this opportunity. Fortunately there were no major incidents resulting from their cheering for the WRONG team! The sudden change in accommodations for this meeting were the result of the discovery concerning the Renaissance Hotel having an affiliation with the Marriot System's reservation service. The Marriot System is listed on the HERE DNP (do not patronize) list for anti-Union activities. A more detailed statement of this problem is included in the handouts that all delegates received when they registered for the COP. Since the time for cancellation had past, there was a \$7000 cancellation fee owed by Branch 79 and herself.

Jim Williams - NBA - Northwest Region: I will give the first \$20 to help defray the cost of the cancellation fee and challenge all delegates to do the same.

HERE has agreed to defray 50% of the cost of the cancellation fee with the generous donation of \$3500 to Branch 79.

COP Scheduling:

Sense of the group - Only Union hotels should be utilized for COP Meetings in the future. Motion - Only cities that can provide Union hotel accommodations will be considered. An amendment offered to the motion that this policy will take effect following the Fall COP meeting in Tampa FL, since there are no Union hotels in that city. Amendment accepted by the author of the motion. Amendment to have co-chairs of the COP conduct the negotiations with hotels and sign all contracts. Amendment rejected by the author of the motion. Motion seconded with the initial amendment. Motion carried. Motion to have COP co-chairs conduct negotiations and sign contracts for future hotel accommodations for COP meetings. Motion seconded. Motion failed. These

procedures were repeated 3 times to insure that all delegates were very clear on what the issues were and that there were no mistakes in understanding the resolutions. On the final vote concerning co-chairs conducting negotiations, Division was called for. A show of hands demonstrated overwhelming opposition to the motion. Motion FAILED! In the future, following the meeting to be held this fall in Tampa FL. all future COP meetings will be held only in cities that can provide Union hotel accommodations. The Branch of the Host City will continue to conduct all negotiations and sign all contracts for accommodations.

Eastern Co-Chair:

The COP co-chair for the Eastern District of the Committee of Presidents is resigning. Nominations for this position are opened. Nelson Gaskill being the only nominee was declared winner by acclamation.

Spring 2001 COP Meeting:

Nominations for host city for the Spring 2001 Committee of Presidents Meeting were opened. The only city offering its name for nomination was Atlantic City NJ. By acclamation, Atlantic City will be the host of the Spring 2001 COP Meeting

Violence In The Workplace - Kevin Sullivan President - (city), MA:

In the specific incident a supervisor was overzealous in his supervision of a particular carrier. The carrier would be followed to the coffee machine and even to the bathroom. The case was brought to arbitration and the Arbitrator issued a Cease and Desist order, additionally stipulating that the supervisor could no longer supervise this particular carrier. Decision was based on the fact that the supervisor's actions were harassment and intimidating. 16 NALC members stuck together and testified on behalf of the carrier in question and against the supervisor. Case # C-27650

Passing The Hat:

It was suggested that the hat be passed around the delegates for a collection to help defray the costs incurred by Branch 79 in the financial liability for the Cancellation Fee at the Madison Renaissance Hotel.

LEGISLATION:

HR-22, Postal Modernization Act authored by John M. McHugh, has been referred to Committee on Government Reform. Because NALC has not taken a position on this Bill, they are still involved in discussions before the Committee concerning HR-22. One rumor says that it has been pulled from Committee discussion. Another rumor says that it will come up before the Full House in early Summer.

VINCE SOMBROTTO **QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

Since COP in Tampa FL will be held at a non-Union Hotel Vince will not be able to attend. Even though Tampa is a fine Branch and has fine membership Vince's policy is to not patronize non-Union establishments. At this time he thought it would be useful to open the floor to some Q & A.

Local Negotiations: The recommendation is not to open Local Memos in most cases. Management can now open the Memos. If it goes to impasse, is there any way to expedite the process. We are trying to insure that matters are handled timely. One of the most divisive issues that a Local can come up against is the question of fixed or rotating days off. Anytime Locals are opened Management will try to take away benefits that have been gained, especially in the area of number of employees off at the same time and the duration of Prime Time. There are some instances where issues have been at Impasse for over 6 years. One from Vince's home Branch of Brooklyn where management wants to reduce the wash-up time down from the 22 minutes authorized. ***[Peels of laughter from the delegates]***

Members of some Branches are starting to get upset with the provisions concerning Composite and Vertical Flat Case (VFC) memo provisions? Vince: **"LIVE WITH IT! Listen, it is going to happen"**. The Hempstead Decision addressed the issue. The Mittenthal Award on DPS established 2 approved methods and the most efficient method would be the one that would be chosen. The testing was supposed to last 9 months but in fact lasted 3 years. At the end the results were very similar but the Vertical Flat Case method had a slight edge. It was also determined the 5 row case is most efficient. The difference between the 2 methods was less than 0.08 hours. No matter what management projects as savings there are still rules and contracts that must be followed. The fears that a T-6 would become a 'straw boss' never materialized. There are certain rights that

Management has. Under the 6 Memorandum of Understanding they had the right to choose the most efficient method. They chose VFC. The Letter Carriers will figure out how to handle the demands to save time. They are going to save ZIP - nothing. 40% of the routes in this country are already on VFC. The third bundle rule will still apply to the new work methods.

Ergonomics Issue - will the issue of back and knee problems be examined because of the additional twisting and stretching involved in a VFC environment? Are any testing procedures planned? No tests are known about or planned for Ergonomics. OSHA might be examining this issue but NALC has not been notified.

Every route may not be adaptable to this memorandum. In certain business routes and routes without DPS might not be affected. In those areas where local memos allow carriers to case DPS mail they will be allowed to continue. **"There has never been any program that the Postal Service has ever implemented nationwide that WAS ever implemented nationwide."**

Carriers are upset that they are being told that their methods are not the most efficient? Management has the right to mismanage. Look at Article 3. It took them 3 years to do a test that was supposed to take 9 months.

At the present time there is no movement in Congress on Market Based Pricing for the Postal Service. The Postal Service just announced the beginning of E-Bill Pay; a partnership to handle paying bills online. The Postal Service handles over 100 billion pieces of mail. 60% of the revenue is from 1st Class Mail. This new service is projected to generate \$400 million. That is not even enough to cover the cost of Level 6 Upgrade. If USPS is successful in this electronic venture, we will have less to do. If the USPS doesn't find new streams of revenue that could be a daunting problem for us.

NALC was the only Union Representative to attend the Postal Forum. The future of the Postal Service could be in doubt as things shift to E-Commerce.

Even if we capture 60% of all the kind of mail generated by E-commerce we would have to capture all of the business that FedEx and UPS do combined to offset our losses in 1st Class Mail.

The signs are there that could be very ominous for us. If USPS doesn't get involved in a way in this new dynamics in electronics and technology, if they don't utilize the worlds best delivery system we could be in trouble. Only one Union is getting involved in this process - that is the NALC. APWU is trying to organize truck drivers for private delivery companies. They gave up on their own membership. NALC is trying to save the Postal Service.

The Postal Service is not planning to build any new Post Offices according to Stan Waite. Our only hope for the future is ourselves. FedEx is trying to set up a delivery network. But, that is what we do best. We already have the best Delivery Network in the World.

Passing The Hat collected \$2212 to help defray the cancellation penalty. Seattle was one of the Test Sites for the work methods determination. - Jo Anne Pyle, President Seattle Branch 79.

If percentages are not addressed in Local Memorandum there is no trigger for 41.3.O to post routes for bid.

The difference between USPS and NALC position on Level 6 was USPS wanted to consider it a promotion and NALC considered it an upgrade. Our position won out.

Rural Craft: The Rural Carriers are very dissatisfied with their negotiations. If they had an honest count the contract extension would not be ratified. They don't have local branches. They have State Associations. If a State Association votes 60 - 40 in favor, the measure takes all the votes. However, State Boards have the right to overturn the vote. There are 2 issues at stake in the ratification process of the NLRCA. One is the widening gap between the wages of the Rural Carrier craft and the City Letter Carrier craft, and, the right of the membership to have their views reported fairly and honestly. 60% of all Rural Carriers are part-time. They have no Health Benefits, Retirement Program, and their wages are controlled by the Rural Carrier Association in support of Management. They have no voice in their Union; they can't talk to their officers, they can't go to conventions, they can't even choose to stay at a non-union hotel if they want to. We cannot afford to have Rural Carrier Association undermine the City Delivery Letter Carriers. In 20 years Vince has tried to convince them

that they would better off if they joined with us to work together since our job performances are so similar. If not having one organization, at least to work in coalition with each other. We could even interchange the work we do. How would you feel if in a meeting with all of the other Unions and your president got up in front of all the others and told the Vice President of the Federal Labor Relations Board and told him that Management would speak for your Union. That is what the Rural Carrier's President did! There are some discussions that range from forming a coalition or a merger of our 2 Unions or even decertifying the NLRCA and becoming members of NALC. All those having Rural Carriers in their office were asked to volunteer to get the message out to them that there is a better way for them.

Dispute Resolution Teams - Alternate Dispute Resolution Process; as the discussion ensued there were some complaints about the way that the B-Teams were not going to come into the office where the problem initiated and interview the people involved. It was felt that this denied a grievant the opportunity to express his/her own case to the people that would ultimately decide their fate. Some who have the UMPs (Union Management Pairs) process and have been a test site for the DRT process consider the UMPs to be fairer because DRT does not come into the field for a hearing. DRT relies solely on the documentation provided to make the decision. More than 50% of cases brought to arbitration by the Union are denied. The Joint Contract Administration Manual should make contractual issues easy to resolve by DRT. Whether it is called UMPs or DRT this is what the members requested at Convention several years ago. Article 15 is broken. DRT is a fix for that process. Most of these same delegates were at that Convention that voted to change the Article 15. The National Officers are trying to follow the wishes of the Delegates to that Convention!

The differential between Grade 5 and Grade 6 Carrier Craft employees will not be maintained for VOMA's. The reason that T-6 employees do maintain the differential and VOMA's don't is because DPS working environment has impacted the way that T-6 employees work and has not affected VOMA's. There are only 900 VOMA's in the Postal Service. Of that, only 300 are Carrier Craft Employees, out of 225,000 City Carriers.

Under the test procedures for DRT only about 10% of the cases are being presented to the next level as a result of impasse between the Management and Union representatives of the B-Team in the process. Considering the problems that exist under Article 15, this is an impressive improvement. Some of the areas that are part of the test procedure have been working with the UMPs procedure for over 12 years. They are finding that the new process is not as fair to the employee because DRT does not come back to the field (where the grievance began) to hear word of mouth testimony from the parties involved. A change to Article 15 was requested and voted on at National Convention. NALC is trying to follow the demands placed upon it by the membership. What has been proposed is the type of improvement that the Members demanded.

The difference between the T-6 promotion and the upcoming Level 6 upgrade is this. When the Utility Swing Carriers were elevated to Grade 6, they had a change in job description. Effectively they did receive a promotion. When all City Letter Carriers receive the upgrade to the new NALC Grade 1 (Level 6 pay) they will not have any change in their duties or job description. They will have an upgrade in pay status, but will not receive a promotion to any other duties or responsibilities. When NALC informed management that we would not agree to consider this a promotion, they decided to abolish Leave Sharing and Sick Leave for Dependent Care (SLDC).

SLDC and Leave Sharing have been incorporated into the new Memos agreed to on March 20, 2000. However, this will not be retroactive. Any grievances pending at the National or Local level that pertain to converting Annual Leave to Sick Leave under the 1994 - 1998 National Agreement for the period from November 28, 1999 through March 21, 2000 are to be set aside. If, however, Sick Leave was granted for any instance for Dependent care during that same time frame, it cannot be converted to Annual Leave under the agreement between USPS and NALC.

The Bagmaster Test Program has some drawbacks. All the mail, flats, Advos, residual letters and DPS mail are placed in a single bag, the bags are set in trays in delivery sequence in the office. When the carrier arrives at the delivery point the single bag containing all the mail is placed in the receptacle. Of course this increases Office Time, but is supposed to reduce Street time. Late word indicates that the test has been canceled in Carson City NV (one of the 2 test sites).

A Joint Contract Administration Manual (JCAM) update is being discussed. It should include all changes made to the National Agreement by negotiations or arbitration.

NALC Grade 1 and NALC Grade 2 will take the place of the current PS Grade 5 and PS Grade 6 on November 18, 2000. These Grades were created to avoid any similarities between our work and the work in other crafts. Since the T-6 pay differential had to be maintained and a Grade 7 upgrade would mean less of a differential and a loss of money the new Grade System was created. At the time that we are elevated to Level 6 status Grade 5 clerks would no longer be eligible to be excessed into the Carrier Craft. So that was not a consideration that affected the decision to create the new Grades. For other crafts to maintain pay parity and catch up to the Letter Carrier craft, they would need a 3.4% wage hike in the first year of their new contracts at a cost of \$1.2 Billion to USPS.

Negotiations are continuing on a repair of Article 15. DRT is the groundwork that is receiving the strongest consideration. But even if an agreement on DRT were reached next week it would take 2 - 3 years before it could be fully implemented nationwide. It would require joint training of the teams at National, Regional and Local levels.

The National Association of Letter Carriers Health Benefit Plan (NALC-HBP) began in the 1950's when no Federal Employee Health Benefit (FEHB) Program existed. FEHB came into existence in 1960. Almost 100% of Carriers belonged to NALC-HBP when it became a FEHB program. NALC underwrites the HBP. At present only 15,000 active members belong out of 225,000 Carriers. 90,000 Retirees or Survivor Annuitants belong to the plan. The older participants are subject to greater health care needs. With these facts in mind it can be seen that the HBP is in danger of being closed down or going bankrupt. If it does go bankrupt NALC would be responsible for all of its debts. If we were forced to close it down, those 90,000 retirees would be forced into another plan in the FEHB program. Every day \$1.2 Million dollars are paid out in benefits to the members of the Plan. \$400,000 of that is in prescription services alone. The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) has sent out Presentation Notices. It should arrive at NALC HQ this coming week. We will be asked to present our case to OPM in the very near future. The future of the NALC-HBP will be a topic of discussion at the National Convention in Chicago this year.

The National Rural Letter Carriers Association (NRLCA) has sent a threat of sorts to Vince. In it they say that if he doesn't stop contacting Rural Carriers about merging with NALC, then NRLCA will instruct its members not to help with the Food Drive.

MEETING ADJOURNED AT 6:38 p.m.

APRIL 10, 2000
MORNING SESSION

Legislative Update: George W Bush, Governor of Texas has an anti-union record in that state. He favors the so-called Payroll Protection plan that would prevent Unions from contributing to political campaigns or even using Union funds to provide political education to its members. He has vetoed a dues deduction program for State workers in Texas. While still in debate in committee, he orchestrated the defeat of a minimum wage bill for State Employees in Texas. This way he could claim that he never vetoed a pay raise for State workers. Texas is ranked 48th in the nation in Education. Texas is the most polluted state in the nation. Houston TX had more Air Quality Warning days than any other city in the Nation last year. The head of the Environmental Control Agency for the State is the President of a major chemical firm in the state. He was hand picked by Bush to head the agency that oversees the very firms that cause the most pollution. The Labor Movement in Texas has a saying: "Three More Years". They would rather see Bush stay in office in Texas than unleash him on the rest of the Nation.

Russell Vonk, Des Moines IA addressed the meeting as an advocate for Prostate Cancer Screening. During a recent physical exam he had a routine PSA (prostate specific antigen) test done. The results came back with a very high reading. He is scheduled to undergo surgery next week. He is hopeful that it was detected in the earliest possible stages. He urges all men to routinely have this easy and effective test conducted especially after the age of 45. Prostate cancer and Breast cancer are silent killers but if detected early enough they are treatable and have one of the highest survival rates of cancers. So it is a good idea for women to have routine mammograms done as well.

CRV - FFV: Ford Motor Company is making the newest Carrier Route Vehicle (CRV) chassis and power train. The vehicle does have a window in the cargo area that allows the driver to have more visibility outside the vehicle. The work tray is stationary in this vehicle making access to the cargo area from inside the driving area nearly impossible. The door latch on the driver's side door is not recessed and can catch the driver's elbow when the door is open. The parking brake is located to the left of the driver's seat. This is the area where parcels could be lined up in the past. It is because of the brake placement that the work tray is immobile. Some carrier input was permitted during the testing phase. It seems that the only input that was accepted was the installation of an additional window. Even there they fell short of the carrier input. Carriers had asked for vision to the rear of the vehicle with a window in the cargo door. Some carriers that are using the vehicles would just as soon return to the LLV. The major drawbacks cited are the parking brake location, door latch, stationary work tray, and cargo not accessible from inside the vehicle. If anyone would like additional information on the vehicle, the testing phase or, the carrier input during testing, they should contact Al Ferranto at NALC Headquarters.

Associate Supervisor Program: This program calls for Representatives from all of the Unions to address the trainees in Week 2 of the training. If you have this program in your area and have not been asked to be a part of it, bring it to the attention of the USPS and your National Business Agent.

The NALC and the NRLCA have some joint programs that have bridged some of the gaps between them. Some of those programs are the Carrier Alert Program and the National "Stamp Out Hunger" Food Drive. There has been some dialogue between the 2 Unions for years. Recently those talks have tended toward a merger or at least joint negotiating with the Unions and USPS. A lot of the work that we do is similar or identical. It makes sense that we should join forces to try to improve the working conditions for both Unions. There have been rumors of a movement that could even result in the Decertification of NRLCA with the membership joining NALC. Vince Sombrotto is willing to talk to representatives from NRLCA. This is causing considerable friction with the hierarchy of that Union. Delegates to this meeting who have Rural Routes in their Post Offices are asked to volunteer to help disseminate information to Career Rural Carriers as well as RCR's and RCA's so that they can make informed decisions. The window of opportunity is closing and it is suggested that we act on this within the next 30 - 60 days.

With the advent of PCES (piece count estimate system) and POST (projected office and street time), carriers are being asked to use our estimates of workload as a commitment to actual time needed. It is our duty to inform management of our estimate of the workload. If we anticipate the workload will be more than eight (8) hours we request a Form 3996 and fill it out. It is Management's responsibility to instruct you whether they will authorize overtime, auxiliary assistance or curtail mail. When the 3996 has been submitted, do not get into an argument with the supervisor. If the supervisor will not give you instructions, follow the guidelines of the M-39 and M-41. Do your job according to those instructions. If they persist in trying to argue with you, ask to see your Union representative. Also ask to modify your estimates on the 3996 to include the additional time of the debate. The POST program is currently awaiting Arbitration at the National level. Linear measurements are used to arrive at the figures in the printout of POST. Linear measurements in any form are not valid for discussions or discipline of Letter Carriers for performance evaluations. The only accurate evaluation of a Carrier's performance remains an actual piece count and inspection of the Route. POST is only a management tool. The data from the printout is only as accurate as the data entered into the computer. "Garbage In, Garbage Out!"

There was no further discussion on the "Bagmaster Program" that was on the agenda. The issue seems to be moot since the testing has ended in such a short time frame.

Delivery Redesign: A lot of data is being falsified in some of the test sites by various means. This includes the data being recorded by supervisors and managers as well as by the Carriers themselves. Some supervisors are making wild guesses as to volumes. Some Carriers are falsifying their clock rings. (E.g. they are timing out to street duties before actually finishing office duties.) All of this is being done just to make it look like it is working the way the "micromanagers" in charge of it want it to work. The testing has been going on for 2 years. All requests for data by the Union have been met with the response that no data is available. However, there are 2 semi-trailers full of data at one location!

The raffle of MDA (Muscular Dystrophy Association) resulted in \$605 being donated to this cause

The NALC National Convention for the year 2004 will be held in Honolulu HI. Now is the time to start making your plans and saving your money for a great Convention and - for those that can - an extended vacation!

The Tampa COP meeting will be September 9 - 11, 2000. For more information on accommodation call 877-895-0599, toll free. As additional information, if suitable Union Hotel accommodations can be arranged for Vince Sombrotto, he will try to attend the meetings if there are no scheduling conflicts.

The Spring 2001 meeting of the Committee of Presidents will be held in Atlantic City NJ. No date is currently available. These meetings are usually conducted in February or March unlike this meeting. It is hoped to return to that schedule.

All Delegates are urged to insure that their Official Personnel Folder (OPF) is kept up to date. Make sure that all information is current and correct, and, that there are no expired disciplinary actions contained in it! Delegates should admonish all of their Branch members to do the same.

A total of 264 Delegates were registered for this meeting of the Committee of Presidents

Passing the Hat for COLCPE brought in \$1820 for the political action wing of NALC.

This session of the Committee of Presidents adjourned at 10:45 a.m.

CREDITS AND DISCLAIMER

First I would like to thank Jo Anne Pyle, President - Seattle Branch 79 and her support staff for hosting an event of this magnitude and the fine accommodations in light of the adversity that she had to overcome. It is because of such dedicated Activists that we are able to have such a very informative and enlightening session. All who provided strategic and logistical support deserve accolades for the hard work that goes into making one of these so successful.

A special thanks to Vincent Sombrotto, President of NALC, for his support of this forum and his willingness to 'take the heat' and respond to very pointed questions. The dialogue may have been animated and heated on both sides at times but the exchange was educational.

What is contained in these notes is reported as it was heard. Some editorial comments have been added and are [***bracketed, emboldened and in italics***]. Every effort has been made to report as accurately as possible what took place. Nothing should be taken to be a direct quote unless enclosed in double quotation marks (" "). The opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the NALC, the Committee of Presidents Officers, or, of this reporter. If anyone finds any inaccurate statements feel free to contact me and I will try to make the corrections. I cannot guarantee that the corrected version will be redistributed to all recipients.

Respectfully submitted by
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