

National Business Agent's Report
Mike Weir
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This is my last article as National Business Agent for Region 5. Over the years, I have used these monthly missives to convey the most current information on topics of importance to all of us as letter carriers and working men and women. I have certainly not suffered from a lack of subject matter given management's propensity for ill-advised policy decisions and contractual non-compliance as well as the growing threats from outside sources to the survival of the Postal Service and the preservation of our jobs. Unfortunately, we now face daunting challenges on both fronts.

The results of the mid-term elections have made our task of putting the Postal Service back on a sound financial footing all the more difficult. The new leadership in the House is not as sympathetic toward our issues, nor do they seem to understand the difference between a reimbursement and a bailout. Additionally, given the reduction in the progressive majority in the Senate, it will be very difficult over the next two years to pass legislation that is favorable for working families. Corporate America learned that you really can buy happiness. Their money fueled a message that was, at best, distorted, and, for the most part, completely false. Suddenly, public sector workers, in general, and unions, in particular, are responsible for all the problems we are currently experiencing. Workers are being pitted against workers in a cynical effort to ensure that corporate excesses are overlooked and company profits are protected, if not enhanced.

We do not have the "deep pockets" that corporations enjoy. As a result, we cannot hope to compete with them on a level playing field in financing election campaigns and/or thematic commercial spots. Still, it is essential to our financial well-being that we counter their message and promote our own. Our greatest asset has always been our volunteers, the "boots-on-the-ground," who work the phones and knock on the doors to speak directly with fellow trade unionists and other working

Americans. Given the importance and immediacy of the challenges we face today, we can no longer delegate this duty to a few dedicated activists. It is incumbent upon each of us to take responsibility for protecting ourselves, our families and our way of life. Educate yourself and everyone else you know on the issues of importance to working families and the real threats to our financial security. In particular, talk to your family, friends and neighbors about the importance of the Postal Service, the underlying issues threatening our viability and what really needs to be done to preserve this essential institution. Become an ambassador for our company and a loyal customer as well. Our significant disagreements with management notwithstanding, we have a vested interest in seeing the Postal Service succeed. And if we have to drag management kicking and screaming toward realizing that goal, then so be it.

Over the years, management has spent an inordinate amount of time and energy devising ways to circumvent the contract. Lately, they have abandoned subtler methods and have taken a more blatant and flagrant approach to violating our agreements. I cannot adequately express my gratitude to the many officers, stewards and union activists in Region 5 who have stepped up to the plate to deal with these overbearing tactics. You have fought the good fight everyday in the trenches on behalf of your members, and your effectiveness in dealing with the daily turmoil has been an essential component of any success we may have achieved in this region. I am amazed at all you have accomplished while still managing to deliver your routes and provide quality service to your customers. All letter carriers should be recognizing your efforts and honoring you for your service. For my part, I just want you to know how much I appreciate your determination and expertise, and how much I value your friendship.

Each of us has a part to play in dealing with the hostile workplaces that inappropriate supervisory behavior and absurd postal policies have been creating. Going forward in the current environment, I believe we should take our cue from the

letter carriers who took part in the 1970 Postal Strike. Obviously, given the current state of the economy and the large numbers of people who are unemployed or underemployed, a strike would not be advisable at this time. However, the solidarity that the strikers displayed as they struggled to achieve their goals of a living wage and the right to collectively bargain served them well. Although there was, initially, significant disagreement on what approach to take, once the vote was taken, letter carriers stood shoulder-to-shoulder in the decision to strike and in their resolve to achieve a successful resolution of their redresses. We need to exhibit that same spirit of solidarity in today's environment. Stand together, cover each other's backs and give your stewards and officers your full support as they work to address management excesses. We are all in this together; let's ensure that we all weather the storm and emerge even stronger on the other side.

It has been an honor and a privilege for me to represent the letter carriers of Region 5. You provide an invaluable service to the people of this great country; and you do a remarkable job in spite of the obstacles management strews in your path. I count myself fortunate to have known so many of you; and I know I am a better person for our experiences together. Despite the daunting challenges that we must face, I look forward with hope and confidence knowing that the future of the Postal Service and the NALC is in the hands of such capable leaders and such fine, hard-working men and women at every level of our great union. I hope you enjoy a wonderful holiday season, and I wish you all the best in the coming years. Take care.

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