



Solidarity against the sellout of new workers! No to wage cuts and 30-hour flex work schedules!

Vote NO on the APWU contract!

The APWU leadership has agreed to a disastrous tentative contract with postal management. If passed, *future* career postal workers' standard of living would be severely slashed, 20% and more of the clerk workforce would be abused *temporary* workers, and *present* career workers would be robbed by rising health care premiums and by being forced into flex positions that Postmaster Donahue envisions as 30 hours a week. Don't let management destroy our livelihood and pit present and future workers against each other! Vote this contract down!

No layoff clause a misleading "victory"

In order to sell this disaster, the APWU national leadership boasts that they retained the "no layoff" clause for present employees. Management is just going to rob us while keeping us! Though good, the no-layoff clause won't protect anyone hired in the future. And this clause has not stopped management from eliminating 170,000 jobs in recent years. Nothing in this contract will stop the job loss by attrition, automation and increasing workloads that has led to massive excessing and overwork and has turned workers' lives upside down. APWU president Cliff Guffey brags that his contract will reverse some outsourcing and bring work back in, but this work may largely go to the new temporary workers (called PSE's). And tens of thousands of clerk, carrier and mailhandler jobs will be lost if 5-day operations goes into effect, an issue which Guffey, while touting the contract, has declared he will not fight.

Limits on excessing a fraud

But what about the new contract's claim to limit excessing to within 50 miles of the workplace? The contract contains a loophole big enough for a U-Haul moving van to drive through. Under the agreement, management could say it has no positions available within 50 miles. Then the agreement permits excessing past 50 miles. But management always claims to have no positions in the area; it's their constant chorus! So this limitation is a fraud.

Besides, despite the alleged current national freeze on excessing there's still a lot of outrageous excessing, and management plans a huge number of closings and consolidations nationwide. In Detroit, excessing of window clerks and others continues as bid assignments go unfilled. But Guffey advises us to trust management not to take advantage of the excessing loophole! Really, Cliff! That's right up there with the tooth fairy!

Wages and COLA for current workers – eaten away by inflation

Guffey considers the wage settlement fair. Let's see. Over four and a half years, wages increase 3.5%, but the first raise of

1% doesn't arrive for a year and a half, in Nov. 2012. Inflation will outstrip that puny 1% "gain", and maybe by a lot considering rising gas, food, and health care prices. The first COLA raise won't happen until Jan. 2013, or three years since the last COLA increase. There are some other tiny wage hikes and some COLA payments backloaded to the end of the contract. But they won't make up for all the losses before that.

Soaring health insurance payments

Further, health insurance payment increases will insure that our wages are sucked dry. This contract would reduce the share management pays for workers' health insurance by 1% a year, raising the employee contribution from 19 to 24%. In itself that would increase many workers' health insurance costs several hundred dollars a year. But that doesn't count the rising costs of the health insurance itself. Based on recent trends, premiums are likely to rise at least 10% a year. If today the total premium cost was \$400 per pay period, it will rise over 60%, to \$644, over five years. Today the worker pays 19% of that \$400 each paycheck, or \$76. Five years down the road the workers would pay 24% of \$644, or \$155 each payday. So a postal worker's health insurance costs could easily double over life of the contract. In this example, health care payments taken from wages would cost workers an extra \$2,054 a year five years from now. So what sellout Guffey calls a "slight" increase of just "several" dollars a year actually is a big rip-off of wages.

Wage cuts for future career workers

A particularly horrible feature of the tentative agreement is it turns new career hires into second-class career employees. Their starting wages will be considerably lower than present career employees, cut by about \$8,000 a year at Level 3 to about \$5,000 a year at Level 5 or 6. New career workers would never reach the current top pay levels. These wage losses will also reduce pension benefits which depend on wage levels. New career employees would not be covered by the no-layoff clause, which applies only to those hired by November 2010. So the APWU leadership is accepting that there should be two unequal types of career employees. And in time, as the old workforce is replaced, the whole career workforce will suffer this much lower compensation. This atrocity is so bad that even former APWU president Bill Burrus, who produced many rotten contracts himself, is forced to admit this contract should be rejected.

Doubling the amount of abused temporary workers

The contract would create a new form of third-tier temporary workers similar to present casuals. Essentially the use of what are presently called casuals could double to 20% and more of the

workforce in mail processing and 10% in retail, maintenance and motor vehicles. These temporary workers would be renamed Postal Support Employees (PSEs). PSEs would be allowed to exceed 20%, as the contract provides that they will do whatever out-sourced work is brought back and that these PSEs would not be counted towards the 20% limit.

The PSEs would make very low wages, between \$12 to \$14/hr. depending of the job. They, like casuals now, would be hired for 360-day tours, with no work guaranteed beyond two hours on a scheduled day. They would be subject to layoff at any time and would be dependent on the "good will" of management to re-hire them each year. They could pay union dues, but could not grieve short hours or management's failure to rehire them. Postmaster Donahue drools over using this growing army of low-tier slaves, boasting about how whatever restrictions exist on how they are scheduled are ripped away. Donahue states: "**No more restrictions around window, no restrictions around schemes, no restrictions around the time of day.**" And he adds they could work in several jobs and facilities with different hours all in the same week.

But the union claims they have made great improvements compared to previous casuals. Let's see. They say that the PSEs would get health benefits. But they only qualify if they're rehired for a second year, giving management an incentive not to rehire them but just bring in a new bunch. They would get some annual leave, but limited to 2 1/2 weeks maximum and reduced if their hours are cut. They can contribute to TSP retirement, but get no matching funds from management and no postal pension. PSE wages would be so low they couldn't put much into the TSP. PSEs could join the union, which is nice, except for the fact that the union is allowing them to be so abused.

These often-empty benefits can't hide the fact that overall, the tentative contract allows a huge increase in the number of employees who make low wages, have almost no benefits, and endure horrible schedules and no job stability.

"Flexible schedules": goodbye 8-hour days, hello 30-hour weeks

Working over eight hours a day strains a workers health, and should be voluntary and higher-paid. The new contract undermines this. By introducing "non-traditional" flexible schedules, the tentative contract means a number of clerks (50% in major facilities) who would normally have a basic schedule of five days at 8-hours a day would now be forced to work 10, 11, or 12 hours with no overtime pay based merely on working over 8 hours. Overtime would only kick in if the set hours for the weekly schedule were exceeded.

The contract says present full-time workers could be forced into these new "flexible schedule jobs" (Non-Traditional Full-Times, or NTFTs), only if they're not less than 40 hours a week. **But actually, present full-time workers could also be forced to accept sub-40 hour weeks in order to escape continuing excessing.** Postmaster Donahue outlined his plans for us: "*The flexible regular clerk came up, and the way it works is this. If you can be a 3 to 11 clerk working 5 days a week, and your new assignment gives you an opportunity to work in maybe one office for two days, another office for three days. As a clerk you may only be working 32 or 33 hours a week as part of your schedule.*" **You want to talk about wage cuts? Going from a 40-hour week to a 30-hour week is a 25% wage cut!!**

New career and PSE employees could be assigned to any NTFT position, even if it's less than 40 hours a week. They could

also be forced into jobs with split shifts. Management can change any position into an NTFT position as soon as the job becomes open. And controversies over the new flexible schedules would not be subject to the local grievance procedure.

Vote no! Get organized for struggle!

This contract is a disaster for new and present employees. Having a major section of the workforce extremely underpaid and doing the same work as current career employees would fuel disunity among postal workers, making it harder to resist management attacks. New workers should have the same level of compensation as career present workers now have. A vote against the contract would reinforce solidarity among postal workers. Under the contract, all workers would suffer financially and flex schedules would destroy more and more workers' livelihoods. Workers across the country are starting to see through this sellout contract; and for example, the Northeast Massachusetts District local has strongly called for a No vote. **Vote "no" to protect all postal workers now and in the future!**

But how can our just demands be met if the USPS is losing money? Actually, there are billions of dollars a year available if the postal income created by our labor was not robbed by unjust government raids on the postal budget. The APWU leaders know this, but by accepting massive worker concessions, they make us suffer and help let the budget-robbers off the hook. The other immediate cause of the postal budget crisis is the overall economic crisis caused by Wall St. and big business. They got trillions in bail-out money for their crimes. Postal workers have already been made to pay dearly, with 170,000 lost jobs, massive excessing, overwork, etc., but now management and the union leaders want to gouge the workers again with a sellout contract. It's time for the workers to be bailed out, not the rich! Reject this contract and fight to have the postal budget balanced in a just way!

Voting "no" and defeating the contract doesn't settle matters, however. Mediation and arbitration follow. Left to their own, management, arbitrators and the national union leaders are not likely to improve our contract much. It will be up to the rank and file to turn up the heat on them. Rank-and-file activists should form their own networks. Circulate anti-concessions leaflets, hold meetings, discuss what forms of struggle can be organized. The more we organize and protest, the more pressure will be put on management and the arbitrators to return with a better contract. Given former APWU president Burrus' opposition to the contract, there may even be certain union officials who oppose it. But given their history of betrayal, the rank and file must keep the initiative in our own hands. Workers in Wisconsin rose up when under attack and attracted great public support. Postal workers need to do the same. And whatever the outcome of this struggle, the more the rank-and-file stands up, the better suited we will be for future battles.

Vote NO! Prepare for struggle!

Read Communist Voice

CV is a journal of revolutionary theory. It exposes the capitalist system, and tackles controversies facing activists. It upholds real Marxism-Leninism, which has nothing in common with the false "communist" regimes like the former Soviet Union, or China and Cuba, or with Trotskyism, Stalinism or Maoism.

Subscription info and to see articles: www.comunistvoice.org

E-mail: mail@communistvoice.org

Or write: **CV PO Box 28536, Joyfield Sta., Detroit, MI 48228-0536**
