

The way it is . . .

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Clerks vs. Mailhandlers An Update on Pending Arbitration

Your Union completed the presentation of our case against the United States Postal Service on jurisdictional assignments contained in Regional Instruction #399 on April 11, 1980.

We have agreed to amend three exhibits designed to show the impact on the Clerk Craft since the issuance of this document. The Postal Service and/or the Mail Handler Division of LIUNA may request that the Union offer an additional witness to testify in connection with the development of the evidence offered by these three exhibits.

If this request is made, your Union will then be required to offer testimony from one of your representatives who actually made the observations at the several Post Offices where such studies have been conducted.

On the several days that were required for the presentation of the American Postal Workers Union's case, a number of witnesses gave testimony concerning functions which we believe should not have been assigned to the Mail Handler Craft and which have the greatest potential for loss of Clerk Craft jobs. Testimony was also presented on other items although that testimony was not nearly as extensive.

Much of the testimony involved the award of nearly all of the functions of Operations 010 and 020 to the Mail Handler Craft. Our presentation was designed to show that this work had been shared by the two crafts for many years.

Although this work was originally performed almost entirely by Clerk

Craft employees before the introduction of sizeable numbers of Mail Handlers into the Postal work force, the practice for many years has been for part-time flexible clerks and full-time regular clerks to be utilized in these two operations at the beginning of the evening outgoing peak period. In many, many post offices, it is essential that some clerical employees share in this work until a sufficient volume of mail has been generated to justify a large number of clerical employees in outgoing letter and flat distribution operations.

In some offices, the Postal Service has already overhired Mail Handlers for Operation 010 with the result that there is not sufficient work for them after the outgoing evening peak. This is an invitation to management to assign excess Mail Handlers to Clerk Craft work.

We believe our presentation has proved that this work has been shared by the two crafts for many years, although there is not a totally consistent pattern, comparing one office with another.

SINGLE PIECE DISTRIBUTION

Even more time was spent in emphasizing our position that all single-piece distribution mail has historically been performed by members of the Clerk Craft with the exception of "occasional simple distribution of Parcel Post" as appears in the position

description of a Level 4 Mail Handler employee.

We are well aware that Mail Handler employees were able to infiltrate distribution functions in some Post Offices during the past several years as evidenced by the hundreds of jurisdictional grievances which have been help up pending the outcome of this arbitration case. It has been our position that the use of Mail Handlers in any distribution work not specifically mentioned in their position descriptions is a violation of our jurisdictional rights.

In preparing Regional Instruction #399, the Postal Service is in fact attempting for the first time to formally award single-piece distribution of certain classes of mail to the Mail Handler Craft.

If this practice is not eliminated, it would be the first step of what would then be an ever-increasing effort by the Mail Handler Craft to obtain similar distribution of other categories of mail.

MORE DELAY LIKELY

The arbitration case will probably not be completed for at least four more months since we have been notified that the next two hearing dates available are June 6th and 30th.

Not including possible supporting testimony for the three documents mentioned earlier in this article, we believe that the Postal Service and the intervening party will probably use a minimum of eight days in presenting their case.

For this matter to drag out for several more months means that additional work which we believe we have proved to be Clerk Craft work will be assigned to Mail Handler employees. As mentioned in one of my earlier articles on this same subject, the parties have agreed that the arbitrator will have the authority to make his decision retroactive in cases where in his award determines that work was improperly assigned.

We will keep you advised of developments after the June hearing dates, either by an article in your magazine or by information in the News Service Bulletin.