



checking the action !

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PO Production Prod Called PIP Could Be Exactly That

In a recent issue of *The Postal Leader*, the official Postal Service newspaper for its management personnel, a headline read, "New Push for Productivity." The article beneath that headline concerns a new Postal Service thrust called "Productivity Improvement Program" which is aimed at improving productivity and reducing costs. It seems likely that "PIP" will turn out to be a real "pip" as far as postal employees are concerned.

The program will put survey teams into the field starting with Newark, N. J.; Hartford, Conn.; Pittsburgh, Pa.; Richmond, Va.; Milwaukee, Wisc.; Cincinnati, Ohio; Nashville, Tenn.; Columbia, S. C.; Oakland, Calif., and Denver, Colo.

In addition to the first ten offices, an additional 20 offices are scheduled to be scrutinized by assistance teams in the near future. It is the goal of the Postal Service to have 117 of the largest offices covered by these teams by the end of fiscal year 1976.

As they have in the past, the USPS declares that the assistance teams will not in any way disrupt operations. I feel it is likely, however, as similar teams have done in the past, that they will create chaos and dissension, lower morale and increase grievances. The USPS teams will be going into strange offices, peering over shoulders and generally operating as "hatchet men." There is no way that such an operation can work to the benefit of any postal employee.

Another program being initiated by the USPS is called IMPACT which is shorthand for Improved Methods, Productivity and Cost Analysis Teams. This particular program is confined to the Southern Region. It was implemented by then-Regional Postmaster General Carl C. Ulsacker. It might

be noted that Mr. Ulsacker, who received some criticism for lavish spending while he was RPMG, is now at headquarters as Senior Assistant Postmaster General, Manpower and Cost Control Group. Like other programs of this type IMPACT will, no doubt, strive to reduce costs and improve productivity at the expense of the bargaining unit employees. We can probably anticipate a new batch of grievances following on the heels of IMPACT team visits to various offices.

COMPUTERIZED SCHEDULE STUDIES

Recently we have been receiving questions from the field regarding the computerized scheduling studies that are going into operation in two offices in each of the five postal regions. To stay on top of the situation we are presently making analysis of these programs and working on possible ways to combat them. It seems strange, indeed, that the computers are coming up with the same things manual surveys have already come up with in the past. That would seem to indicate that computers, like people, tend to produce what the boss wants them to produce.

I've already received a report from one region indicating that a computer-

ized staffing and scheduling study has resulted in 10 additional people being placed on the night shift working circulars at 10% night differential. Another result in this particular office is that the study showed a need to increase Sunday tours, at the additional cost of 25% Sunday premium pay, which has been one of the consistent results of manual studies in the past.

I've expressed myself on this before but I will say again that it's ridiculous for the USPS to conduct computerized studies which, in most instances only re-hash previous studies and ultimately repeat the same tired conclusions.

I've received reports in some cases that considerable computer errors have been discovered. However, local management is unable to do anything about the errors and so everyone must suffer with the results. The worst thing about dealing with a computer is the unfortunate fact that human judgment receives little or no consideration. Employees are considered simply as bodies to be counted.

Normally studies such as these result in an effort to eliminate positions and put employees on the least desirable tours at higher rates of pay. The Postal Service justifies this as more efficient and productive scheduling. Perhaps the USPS ought to consider turning a computer loose in its management ranks to see if some positions couldn't also be eliminated in the interests of more efficient, productive scheduling.

You can be assured that we are carefully scrutinizing these programs and we are working on instructions which will be issued to your national officers in the field. Hopefully, these instructions will be instrumental in providing help and assistance in offices where the inevitable problems arise.

WAR AND PEACE IN ARBITRATION

As has been reported in previous "Checking the Action" articles, arbitration is moving along with all deliberate haste. Here's one problem we have encountered, lately: the Postal Service is playing brinkmanship in regard to settling cases prior to scheduled arbitration dates. By brinkman-

ship, I mean that the USPS will sit down with APWU representatives two or three days before the hearing and suddenly they are willing to settle the grievances, most often in favor of the grievant. Obviously we are always happy to achieve a settlement of benefit to the grievant, but, such settlements on the brink of a scheduled hearing cause us to lose a hearing date and pay a penalty to the arbitrator because we have not given him sufficient notice to cancel the date.

The point is this: if the Postal Service is willing to settle a case two days before a hearing it should be obvious to any reasonable person that a settlement could have been arrived at two weeks prior to arbitration. The USPS policy of brinkmanship is causing us to lose the limited number of dates we have established. We have protested this and we will continue to do so. We have enough trouble getting cases before arbitrators; we certainly do not need obstacles placed in our path by the Postal Service.

Out of 16 dates for which arbitration hearings have been scheduled during September and October four have already been lost due to pre-arbitration settlement in four cases. For those of you who have been critical, and many times rightly so, of the delays in the arbitration procedure, it is hoped that this brief outline will give you a better understanding of one of our problems in this area.

As regards arbitration of cases pending under the 1971 Agreement through the use of the expedited arbitration procedures we have now reduced the number of cases to approximately 125. Of that number possibly 40 are scheduled and we anticipate

that 35 additional cases will be scheduled by the time this article is in print.

The chart below shows the number of cases certified and pending arbitration under the 1973 Agreement.

MAIL HANDLER ARBITRATION

It is pertinent to mention, as previously reported, that the APWU is still being attacked by the Mail Handlers union and attempts are continuing to raid various craft positions within the APWU.

It is regrettable that the Mail Handlers are employing this tactic and I can assure you that it is certainly disturbing to witness a brother AFL-CIO union taking such a stance at the present time—a union, I might add, that has in the past received help from us in its attempts to win exclusive recognition.

It has always been the position of the APWU that we do not wish to have our craft employees performing mail handler duties as they are provided for in the P-1, Position Description Handbook.

Unfortunately the mail handlers are attempting to downgrade positions and prove to Postal Service management that it would be more economical to have mail handlers performing clerk craft duties, thus leading to the elimination of clerk craft jobs. It seems that the Mail Handlers feel they should have carte blanche to reduce clerk craft jobs to Level 4, qualify them for mail handler positions, and thus bring about the elimination of clerk jobs.

According to a report I have received there are more than 700 mail handler grievances in the pipeline at the present time. A large portion of these grievances have been filed on the basis of a Mail Handlers campaign, conducted in many post offices

throughout the country, aimed at giving mail handlers practically any and all non-scheme clerk work.

In one piece of literature circulated by the Mail Handlers, which I have personally seen, they claim that we shouldn't call ourselves a union because we refuse to turn over jobs which they claim are rightfully theirs.

On the question of who is and who isn't a union I would be very much inclined to question the designation "union" when it is applied to an organization that is attempting to downgrade positions of union members in order to prove a point with the Postal Service.

That has to be one of the most anti-union actions I have ever encountered and it is certainly a poor one for any organization professing to be a labor union to take. Jurisdictional disputes are not uncommon among AFL-CIO unions but these disputes rarely question salary levels!

It seems incredible to me that we have been forced to become involved in an open war on such a phony claim. Nevertheless a great deal of time and money is being and will continue to be consumed in striving to protect ourselves.

Preliminary hearings were held on three mail handler grievances on the west coast recently. These hearings involved the offices of San Francisco, Oakland and Seattle and were in regard to the assignment of certain positions to the clerk craft. In these three cases challenges were raised over sack sorter positions relating to air mail pouches and dispatches in AMF, San Francisco; multi-slide outside parcels in Oakland, Calif., and multi-slide parcel distribution in Seattle, Washington.

These cases were heard over a four day period, starting Oakland and ending up in Seattle. I would like to take this opportunity to express the appreciation of the entire APWU to attorney Daniel Jordan for his excellent presentation on our behalf. However, these particular hearings are not yet concluded and they will be continued later this year. Sometime during November mutually agreed upon dates will be set for final arguments. In view of this schedule we may not receive a final decision prior to February 1, 1974.

CERTIFIED CASES UNDER 1973 AGREEMENT

Region	Step 4's	Non-Removal Discipline	Removal
CENTRAL	77	24	5
EASTERN	86	23	8
NORTHEASTERN	143*	41	4
SOUTHERN	92	20	14
WESTERN	66	8	4
	464	106	35