



American Postal Workers Union, AFL-CIO

1300 L Street, NW, Washington, DC 20005

William Burrus
Executive Vice President
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June 27, 1997

Dear Brother Reichert:

This is to respond to your inquiry regarding the history of the USPS policy on violence in the work place and the reasons why the American Postal Workers Union was not a signee of the final policy establishing "Zero Tolerance".

Following the Oklahoma City and Michigan tragedies where postal employees assaulted their fellow workers, I initiated discussions with postal management at the headquarters level to discuss solutions to this serious problem. Several exploratory meetings were held between APWU and headquarters postal management with the parties discussing a wide range of ideas. During these meetings the Postal Service unilaterally implemented a review of all employee records ostensibly to identify background information that fit within a general profile. APWU vigorously objected to the background checks and meetings were temporarily discontinued.

During this hiatus, postal management invited all of the postal unions and management associations to convene and discuss postal violence and a joint approach to the problem. The American Postal Workers Union did not agree with the concept that the interest of all postal organizations would be served by a collective effort to address the problem and participated in these meetings only as an observer and during this period meetings continued between APWU and USPS representatives to develop a separate approach to violence. The APWU representatives believed that the interest of postmasters and supervisors, who had the authority to discipline bargaining unit employees, was sufficiently diverse from that of our union that any final action beyond public statements would be applied disproportionately to bargaining unit employees. The history of the Zero Tolerance Policy document that was adopted without the concurrence of APWU has proven that our concerns were well founded as the policy has been unevenly imposed for speech and supervisors perceptions and applied exclusively to bargaining unit employees.

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The policy adopted by the Committee on Violence was signed by all of the postal employee organizations with the exception of APWU. We vigorously opposed the language of the signed document, forwarding to postal management a letter expressing the union's position that APWU bargaining unit employees would not be covered by the agreement to which we were not a part. We continued separate meetings with USPS officials which lead to the printing of an APWU manual for use by local representatives on the subject of violence.

The American Postal Workers Union has consistently maintained that the Zero Tolerance policy does not apply to APWU employees as the policy and controlling document were created through an agreement in which APWU did not concur or sign. The provisions of Article 16 of the national agreement represent the sole basis for discipline agreed to between the American Postal Workers Union and the United States Postal Service.

Thank you for communicating with my office on this issue. If I can be of further assistance, please don't hesitate to contact me. With regards, I remain

Yours in union solidarity,

William Burrus
Executive Vice President

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