

THE PITTSBURGH AREA RETIREE CHAPTER
OF THE
AMERICAN POSTAL WORKERS UNION, AFL-CIO ³⁹
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There has been a lot of bad news about the Postal Service recently due to reduced customer service window staffing and hours of operation, elimination of overnight delivery, closing mail processing centers, and the requirement to pre-pay \$millions for health benefits for future retirees.

In the midst of these critical issues, the district manager for Western Pennsylvania has issued a new Dress Code Policy. (Copy enclosed.) The policy will be applied to 'inside' non-uniformed employees who do not interface with public. Uniformed employees, such as letter carriers and window clerks, are governed by long standing policies and regulations.

Usually, documents of this nature are issued to respond to substantially documented problems on the work floor. Some of those former policies require a 'reading between the lines' to understand their meaning and purpose.

That is not the case with the current policy. To our knowledge and belief, there is no substantial documented record of safety or other problems that the policy is intended to correct. To describe it as unprecedented and outrageous is putting it mildly.

A reading 'of the lines' of the policy themselves , rather than 'between the lines', speaks for itself:

Item....."Appropriate undergarments will be worn". The definition ofappropriate undergarments..... is not stated. One must wonder what in the world anappropriate undergarment is... in this day and age! Also, who and how will it be determined what anappropriate undergarment is.... on a case by case basis? It hasn't been too many years ago that it was the style in some circles to not wear various items of undergarments. In today's society, it is the style to expose various parts of underwear as a fashion statement. It is nothing more than a sign of the times. Moreover, there is nothing unsafe or hazardous about this style of dress.

Item....."Fingernails must be a reasonable length"..... . In more than 55 years experience as a union official we have never heard of a case where fingernail length has been a safety problem or any other kind of a problem.

Item....."Beards and mustaches should be kept well groomed and clean." What is the criteria for well groomed? In today's world facial hair runs the gamut from 'peach fuzz' to full beards. To our knowledge and belief there has never been substantial documented cases where facial hair has created a safety issue or any other issue.

Item....."Hair, which restricts forward or peripheral vision or presents a risk of being caught in machinery (longer than shoulder length) must be tied up in a manner that prevents it from hanging below the shoulder or be worn under a cap or other headpiece which does not add to the hazard." It should be noted that in 1978, the single time an employee, Michael McDermott, in the New Jersey bulk center, got his hair caught in machinery, **it was because management ordered the removal of a safety device from a conveyor that was in active operation, which created the hazard that led to the accident. No universal "hair policy" was either necessary or resulted from that tragedy for lo these many years. There is no need or justification for a draconian local hair policy now.**

Item....."Hems of skirts, jumpers, dresses, shorts/cutoffs must be not more than four (4) inches above mid-knee." "Leotards, uni-suites (sic), yoga pants, body suites (sic), etc., may be worn when covered by an appropriate skirt, dress, shorts, or similar type clothing."

"Tank tops may not be worn". One must be in a quandary, as we are, why there seems to be a fascination with appearance and wardrobe which has nothing to do with safety or any other concerns. All of these situations have existed for many years without incident. Absent substantial documentation that there are legitimate safety concerns or other concerns and a reason to impose the policy, we believe there are other issues at work here.

This policy clearly has nothing to do with legitimate safety concerns. It is more akin to the establishment of "fashion police", that seeks to regiment the appearance of these employees to some imagined standard that leans heavily on the presentation and attire of the human body that has nothing to do with performance of their duties. The appearance and dress of the employees covered by the policy reflect the fashion of society at large, nothing more. There is no substantial documented record that prompted the policy.

If I were a part of upper management, I would look to the maker of the policy to determine what the real basis for it's content is, perhaps going so far as to introduce professional counseling for the maker.

Those impacted by the policy are hard working dedicated rank and file workers who are being trivialized and penalized by the policy.

Moreover, with all the problems in the Postal Service today, the policy is more of a laughing stock than a serious effort to address a real problem.

If the policy is not withdrawn and discarded for the outrage that it is, appropriate action can be anticipated by the Unions, thus adding to the financial woes of the Postal Service.

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