



The RETIREE RECORD

A NEWS BULLETIN FOR MEMBERS
AFFILIATED WITH APWU POSTAL PRESS ASSOCIATION

PITTSBURGH AREA RETIREE CHAPTER
OF THE AMERICAN POSTAL WORKERS UNION, AFL-CIO

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DELEGATES SLAM RETIREES AT APWU CONVENTION

RETIREE ASSISTANCE IS NOT NEEDED OR WANTED

In a stunning turn of events at the recent APWU Convention, the delegates voted in alarming numbers that retiree involvement in support by retirees for active members in opposing threats of privatization and other dangerous initiatives is not needed or wanted. This became crystal clear during a spirited debate about retiree representation at conventions. Leading the attack on retirees was Eastern Region Coordinator Gallagher. Gallagher is remembered as a supporter and promoter of a return to the hated temp category of PSEs. One of the other anti's even referred to retirees as "those people"! On the supportive side of the question, a large number of speakers in support of retirees pointed out that retirees were the backbone of the recent Staples boycott and other Union projects that saw very limited involvement by active members. One speaker stated that the Union not only wanted that support, but needed it to be successful. Those arguments did not sway the majority who obviously came to the convention with retirees in the cross hairs. Every retiree proposal was summarily rejected by the majority. For the record, the PA State APWU and Metro Local President Pugar voted against us. It was a sad day for the Union as the uninformed neophyte reactionary forces turned the clock back, nearly taking back previous retiree modest gains.

RETIREES ~ WE'RE NOT TAKING IT ANYMORE?

It was obvious at the Retiree Conference that preceded the convention that some delegates were pretty fed up being treated as step children when we have borne the burden of the Staples boycott and other Union projects that saw limited active member participation. The retiree participants at the conference were convinced that there would be recognition and gratitude for those efforts warranting very modest amendments to the APWU Constitution that would have seated a few handfulls of retiree delegates at the conventions at no cost to the Union. Some felt that if the proposals were rejected it was a clear sign that our efforts were not appreciated or wanted. The proposals that came forth from the Retiree Conference were limited in scope, void of any provocative proffers.

ON A PERSONAL NOTE ~ Our Chapter, under the auspices of the Western PA Postal Workers Solidarity Committee, was the driving force that demonstrated at various Staples stores every other Sunday for nearly three years. The Pittsburgh Local was indifferent at best. Few Local executive board members were seen at the demonstrations. Our Chapter wrote all the publicity that motivated Local rank and file, while having that material published by the Local was like pulling teeth. Nevertheless, despite that reluctance, the demonstrations were held at most Staples stores in the Western PA area. Moreover, the Pittsburgh Local leadership refused to promote the recent PERF campaign by a home mailing to their members. The result ~ thousands of dollars were raised by Branch 84 NALC and our Chapter memberships, from Pittsburgh Metro's members, zero. The Local has a shameful record of activism. The leadership prefers to sit in the office rather than going to the streets.

(over)

At the 2016 PA APWU Convention at Lancaster, which I attended, armed with all necessary Staples demonstration material, the leadership **refused** to hold a demonstration at the local Staples store! These toothless tigers were at the forefront very vocal in rejecting the retiree initiatives. It will be instructive to observe their efforts(?) supporting APWU opposition to the threats coming out of the Trump administration to privatize the Postal Service and gut Social Security and Medicare supported by the lap dog Republican Congress. If past behavior is a prediction of the future, the Union is for a rough ride.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

While Executive Board member Gallagher was ripping retirees from the Convention floor, where were the top officers of the Diamondstein administration? Retiree action in the Staples Boycott was praised many times by the administration. Yet they sat silently while one of their fellows threw the retirees under the bus. That message was received and understood! One may then ask what role if any retirees may have in the future.

One obvious conclusion is retirees may act at their peril by supporting the administration in the future. Are we a resource to be used at the whim of the administration, then summarily dumped after saving the union's bacon again? That is not the way one's most valuable asset should be treated. Retirees did not seek any special favor for our volunteerism, but we deserved merely having a few seats at the "table".

After the votes were taken on the retiree proposals and were overwhelmingly defeated, a long time retiree activist took to the floor and mused that he could not understand, in view of all we had done for the Union for non-retiree issues, how the modest proposals could have been treated so harshly by the delegates. I agree. From the heat from the anti's during the debate, it was obvious that principle was not the basis for opposition. As I saw it, it was thinly veiled hatred for retirees by the speakers. Because of the venom of the anti's, I don't see where retiree progress in the future has much of a chance. The wounds inflicted to retirees by the highest body in the Union will take a long time, if ever, to heal.

I expect that there would be a lot of soul searching by the retiree establishment in the coming months. Our next gathering will be at the All Craft Meeting next year. By then the enormity of the behavior of the Convention will be better understood, as will the attitude of the majority against the retirees. The Pittsburgh Area Chapter and this writer doesn't need a ton of bricks to fall on us. We know exactly where we stand in the Union universe.

MANY MANY THANKS AND A TIP OF THE HAT

A few days before the Convention, Retiree Director Olumekor requested assistance from our Chapter to prepare the bags for the 200 expected delegates to the Retiree Conference. Our outreach to the Chapter resulted in the following volunteers: Valerie Golphin; Vaughn Fry; Betty Koch; Blanche Plummer Jones; Bernadette Mitchell and grand daughter Phynix Cohen; Natalie Williams; Joe Anthony; and Pittsburgh Metro members Joe Radovich; and Charlotte Richards. Working together we completed the task in record time. I want to express my gratitude to these volunteers for a job well done.

SHUT-IN LIST ~ Otis D. Smith, Norbert Conway, Jeanne McCarthy, Laverne Heil, and Veronica Bujdos, are on the shut-in list. Please keep a good thought for our shut-ins. There but for the grace of God..... (To be included on the shut-in list, call the Chapter at 724 947 9374.)

MAY BE PASSED AROUND/DUPLICATED