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# PRESIDENTS REPORT

FEBRUARY 2019

**As** many of you are aware, the APWU and the USPS were unable to come to a negotiated agreement, and once again we are headed to arbitration.

How we arrived at this point this year is another story entirely.

My perspective on the Rank and File and 1300 L Street:

I need to thank first of all Rank and File Committee Chair Scott Hoffman, Boston Metro Area Local, our Vice Chair A.J. Jones Eastern Montgomery County PA Area Local and our Secretary Doris Orr-Richardson President for the State of Florida for all their leadership throughout the experience. Brother Scott kept us focused, AJ provided much insight and Doris did the tireless job of recording the vital information the committee needed as we conducted our business. All three are exceptional local and state leaders in their own right, but they made the APWU proud the way they lead this committee.

As members of this committee, the 13 of us that had the duty to determine whether or not any tentative contract would be worthy to be given to the general membership for a vote. I have to say I was very proud to serve in such a capacity on the committee.

The committee spent nearly forty hours over several days both in DC and from home via conference call reviewing numerous tentative agreements that made up a possible new contract. The tentative agreement was presented to the committee by President Dimondstein as an extension of the current contract. However, with so many changes it seemed more like a new contract than an extension of the old contract. So it was after scrutinous deliberation that a majority of the committee rejected what President Dimondstein presented to us.

I regret that we were not able to vote to send the membership a tentative agreement for consideration. I have stated several times that I have never been on the winning side of any vote and felt so defeated. No one wants to go to arbitration if it can be avoided.

While we as a committee have agreed to stay silent on the sticking points to avoid tipping our hand to the USPS as we head to arbitration, I would like to report to you some of my experiences as a member of this committee.

First, I have to say the future of this union looks very bright, the young leaders on the committee showed we have a solid foundation for the future. There was a great mix of young and older members each of us listening to the others as we deliberated and debated the various aspects of the tentative agreement.

Truthfully, I expected the more experienced members of this committee to lead and they did but what I witnessed time and time again was the younger members stepping hard into this challenging process and more often than not directing the conversation and focusing the deliberations.

I also expected that some of the members would be beholden to the officer that picked them for the committee. However, what I saw was a majority of the committee deliberating independent of who selected them; Instead focusing on the deal in front of us and spending hours reviewing it as we sought to determine how it may impact the decades to come plus the several hundred thousand current and future APWU members. The simple truth is we were consumed by this assignment and the importance of it.

Honestly, I witnessed a severe disconnect between our President and quite a few other elected national officers.

The fact not one National Craft Officer or the Executive Vice President was sitting at the head table during direct negotiations with the USPS was an avoidable error by President Mark Dimondstein. Ultimately, it's what I believe led directly to some of the issues we just could not overcome when the committee had to decide whether the tentative agreement was good enough to send to all of you for an up or down vote.

I walked away from this experience seriously troubled by our national president's management style. We had several interactions with President Dimondstein regarding our concerns over the agreement, and he was combative, profane and disrespectful. I kept wondering if he feels comfortable being so rude to one of the most critical committees this union has how does he interact with the remainder of this union's other elected officers?

While I can understand Mark takes this personally, no one can spend days and months working on something and not feel some serious ownership of it, but at the end of the day, we all owe each other the respect we demand from postal management and Mark's behavior was simply unacceptable. The

committee had a job to do, and we did it, he minimally owed us the respect we gave him.

We have always heard that 1300 L Street is a politically charged environment but what I took away from this experience was that's it's also a hostile workspace and that hostility is driven by our national president.

We witnessed some of this at the national convention in Pittsburgh when President Dimondstein overtly and publicly disrespected APWU National Executive Vice President Debbie Szeredy by refusing to allow her to run the convention when he stepped away for a break. That public display of disrespect left the Michigan delegation as well as others ready to shut the convention down.

Mark's temper was in evidence again at the Presidents conference in Maine when he disrespectfully lashed out at a local president when questioned about his decision on a specific MOU.

As your local president, now in my third term, I try to leave local politics out of the decisions I make. While I have supported other candidates in our elections over the years, I make every effort to work with every elected board member and chief steward in this local whether I supported their candidacy or not; to do otherwise would be a violation of the oath I took to put this union first in every decision I make.

I get up every day knowing the difficult task in front of me, and I know that I do not have all the answers. I would never unilaterally embark on any serious negotiation without the input of the officers, steward, and members impacted by these negotiations. I believe President Dimondstein did just that, I think he purposefully excluded the craft officers and the executive vice president from the head table, and for reasons only he can explain he went forward with just the counsel of the Industrial Relations Director Vance Zimmerman.

We are one of the more democratic industrial unions in this nation and what I continue to see from our chief executive is behavior that is exhibited by those who unilaterally believe they know what's best and it is becoming clear that Mark does not tolerate any form of dissent.

Dissent in our democracy is vital to its health; we are many voices from many backgrounds all coming together for a single common purpose, to bust our butts to ensure we have the best job security, decent wages, benefits, and work environment.

Besides this article, I have sent President Dimondstein a personal letter outlining my concerns with his treatment of the rank and file committee. I get no pleasure out of any this especially since I have known Mark for most if not all of my union life. I have considered him a friend, and I believed him to have the qualities to be a great leader.

It is clear he can build coalitions outside this union, what's also clear is internally we have some pretty severe divisions, and it all starts and stops with our chief executive.

We have an uncertain future, the polarization of our national politics has put working people at the back of the line. Also, brothers and sisters, we cannot tolerate such an epic level of dysfunction at 1300 L Street.

We have a national election coming up, it pains me to say this but if president Dimondstein cannot unify this union from 1300 L Street on down, if he cannot live the solidarity he preaches then we may well have to find another leader to steer us through the difficult times ahead.

Leadership is hard, and decisions must be made. Then the explanations for those decisions follow. What we cannot allow is a few at the top excluding the rest of those elected craft officers, thinking they have all the answers.

We cannot voluntarily take one step backward; labor has sacrificed enough. If we have to go to war with the USPS then we expect our chief officer to lead us into battle, not attack us for disagreeing, not criticize or vilify us for having the courage to speak truth to power - even if it's his.

All we have is each other, and at the end of the day I stand shoulder to shoulder with the APWU, I do so proudly, I do so willingly, and I will speak truth to power no matter who it is. We will disagree, elections will come, and presidents will go. This exercise isn't about me as your president; it's about what's best for this union and its rank and file.

I challenge President Mark Dimondstein to go back and reread his oath of office, bring the National Executive Board to the table, clear the air, and recognize the decades of talent he has in that room. Perhaps then he will understand the real power that comes from rising above the pettiness of politics and that when unified we are a formidable force! It's time for President Dimondstein to quit worrying about the next election and instead take us into arbitration and get us the best damn contract he can. The membership deserves better.

Nothing about writing this article was easy, but it's what I witnessed, and sisters and brothers I stand by every word.

In Solidarity,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Roscoe Woods". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right from the end of the name.

Roscoe Woods, President  
480-481 Area Local