



The RETIREE RECORD

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

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SPECIAL ALL CRAFT REPORT

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THEY BLEW IT!

The Retiree Department at the All Craft Meeting in Las Vegas last month convened with a backdrop of vital issues facing retirees. Trump administration attempts to throttle our health care benefits and annuities and Postal collective bargaining were clearly out in the field, and serious internal issues, were on the agenda, **or at least should have been of primary concern.** Initially these and other important issues were subjects of various speakers and discussion within the meeting. But after the discussions and debates concluded and various votes were taken on proposals that had been submitted before the meeting things went awry!

For the record, there were fewer than a half dozen written proposals that were submitted prior than the meeting, falling generally into two areas. One area was a proposal concerning retiree representation at Conventions; the other was increasing funding for local and state retiree chapters, and increasing funding for organizing at the national level. Among several blocs were the funding increases, and among other blocs was seeking representation at Conventions. It was instructive that Director Olumeker, who has done a good job organizing from the national level, came under attack from several factions when that issue was discussed.

OUTSIDE INFLUENCES

When it came time to vote on preferences, several activists, obviously relying on direction from others who were not in attendance, foisted a procedure on the meeting whereby only one proposal would be advanced to the Convention for consideration there. That proposal was to seek seating retiree delegates from local and state chapters at Conventions at a ratio of one delegate for every one hundred members or fraction thereof. They seemed to believe and in fact stated that using this tactic, and rejecting all the other proposals, would result in amending the Constitution to adopt that scheme. How sad! A similar proposal was advanced at the Pittsburgh Convention last year, and failed. More on that later. Suffice it to note that the outside oracles and their inside sycophants have an agenda that seeks to wrest increased retiree involvement at Conventions despite the fact that that is an area that draws immediate hostile responses from other active member delegates.

(over)

ANALYSIS AND COMMENT

This writer is very wary of single issue activists who approach their agendas in a take it or leave it scenario. Their ultimate goal is hidden in their approach, and rightly has raised suspicions in others, notably at Conventions. When the issue of seating retirees as full delegates at the Convention arose at the Pittsburgh Convention last year, the violent negative comments on the floor from "regular" delegates, including taking back the modest but deserved representation retirees does have, made it perfectly clear that this is probably a non starter.

That is not to say a balanced approach by retirees that emphasizes areas of support that retirees can and do contribute to the progress of the Union could include movement in advancing participation at Conventions. Retirees were at the forefront of the Staples boycott, for example, and we are being tasked to a greater degree in the political sphere. The key to that approach is a balanced agenda that leans more toward service in support of the Union rather than a raw political gambit that seeks who know what as the ultimate goal.

WHO KNOWS WHAT IS AHEAD?

When the single proposal concept was discussed, it was pointed out that what will be on the retiree agenda at the next Convention is a great unknown. It was further pointed out that proposals to amend the Constitution can come from every local and state Locals, and every local and state Retiree Chapters. The Pittsburgh Chapter will be submitting several proposals to deal with fiscal and organizing issues as well as a serious representation issue affecting retiree members at large without access to a local or state Chapter. Moreover, the issues of most immediate concern to retirees about Medicare and the Federal Employees Health Benefit Act (medigap coverage) and the COLA formula being used and desire to improve that will be on the table. The single issue approach is a myth that will not stand up to reality.

WHAT NEXT?

We expect that when the word of the power grab gets out to the Union at large there will be a howl that the retirees are trying to take control of the Union. That was the reaction at the last Convention that prompted some serious anti retiree comments from the Convention floor. At the next Convention in Los Angeles next year those strident voices will be heard again whether the representation question is a single issue or even if part of a comprehensive package of proposals that emphasizes retiree service to the Union. Whining about past accomplishments backed up with scant evidence except Convention oratory will get a predictable response. Retirees were initially asked only to Contribute to COPA. Our record there is enviable. Onward and upward!