



the Vindicator

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COLUMBUS OHIO AREA LOCAL
SERVING COLUMBUS AND CENTRAL OHIO

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AREA OFFICES

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The President's Message . . .



by Jennifer Sigmon

March is National Women's History Month. Let's take time to reflect on the sacrifices Women have made through the years. Starting in the 1930's with Labor struggles, women have been deeply involved. The first big sit-down strike of a mainly female workforce involved cigar workers in Detroit. 4,000 mainly Polish women worked in six cigar shops. Their grievances included working 6-7 days a week for a pittance, poor ventilation and inadequate toilet facilities.

Management of Bernard Schwartz, makers of R.G. Dunn cigars, told the workers to form a committee to present their concerns. On Jan. 7, 1937 Bernard Schwartz fired the entire committee. Feb. 16, the Women started a sit-down strike. Up to 2500 cigar rollers were sitting down. By Mar. 5, workers were leading a victory march through their community. On Mar 20, Detroit Mayor Couzens launched a counter attack. Detroit's police broke down the doors of the cigar plant, dragging the fighting women out by their arms, clothing and hair. Police beat sympathizers, even throwing a pregnant woman off her porch. Three days later, 200,000 people protested in Cadillac Square. Michigan Gov. Frank Murphy, feeling the outrage, called the two sides together on April 22. The next day every cigar shop in Detroit had a union contract.

These women cigar workers inspired other women to demand better treatment. There are countless sto-

ries of fearless women taking on the fight for better working conditions, raises, shorter hours, seniority, company provided uniforms and the right to strike without fear of reprisal. A lot of the benefits we take for granted today did not come without a fight. *(Obtained from the APWU website)*

Legislation was introduced in the House on Jan. 31 to address two key issues of concern to Postal Employees. The concerns are the pre-funding mandate and increasing postal revenue. H.R. 756 addresses the pre-funding mandate through "Medicare integration" with the Federal Employee Health Benefits Program (FEHB). It would place Medicare-eligible postal workers and retirees in Medicare Parts A, B and D. At this time, about 80 percent of Medicare-eligible postal workers and retirees are voluntarily enrolled into Medicare A and B. APWU workers say having both FEHB and Medicare saves them money in the long run. It expands Medicare's role as a primary payer, FEHB plans also would be given access to discounted prescription drugs through and Employer Group Waiver Plan with Medicare Part D. The Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act's (PAEA) required payments to pre-fund future postal retiree health care would be virtually eliminated by Medicare integration because it will create a huge reduction in the current unfunded liability costs. Postal employees have long subsidized Medicare, paying over \$30 billion in Medicare taxes since 1983.

This bill would restore and make permanent half of the exigent rate increase (postal rate increase) which expired in April 2016. This would result in increased postal revenue by almost \$1 billion annually.

All four unions, APWU, NPMHU, NRLCA and the NALC support this bill. The APWU believes, while not perfect, this bill

provides a workable route to achieve a robust future for America's Postal Service. So please research this bill and take time to send a letter to your Congressman asking him for his support on it.

We got a nice COLA increase. We will receive a 16 cent per hour cost of living adjustment effective March 4. The increase will be on the paychecks dated March 24. (Pay Period 6-2017) It will total \$333.00 per year.

Our Recording Secretary Kimberly Harrington-Ferguson retired from the Postal Service on February 24. She is going to continue on as our Recording Secretary.

Note to the City Stations: if you are not getting your breaks or lunch, give the Union Hall a call at 614-486-4837. Ask your Supervisor for a steward. You are entitled to lunch and breaks. The Union will grieve this issue. Management has caused this issue with the short staffing of City Stations. I have had window clerks tell me they have worked 8-9 hours without a lunch or break.

I have received information that OPM has contacted retirees and requested they opt to receive annual notices and 1099R's electronically rather than by USPS. OPM states that 2.7 million 1099R's must be mailed through the USPS. The answer to their request should be a resounding NO! Retirees please use the US Mail rather than E-Mail.

I think most members know we have a Worker's Compensation Specialist. In case you don't, it is Terry Moeller. She works Tour 2 at City Gate. If you get injured at work, give her a call. She can give you information to help guide you through the worker's comp process. Listen to her, do what she says. She is very good at what she does. You can leave a message at the Union Cubicle at 614-472-0595. She will get back to you.

In closing, I will say work safe, work smart. None of us are getting any younger.

Jennifer Sigmon



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