



NATIONAL POSTAL MAIL HANDLERS UNION

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2011 Contract Update #8

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Postal Service Submits Harsh Proposals at Bargaining Table

Bargaining between the NPMHU and the U.S. Postal Service is reaching its critical stages, as the November 20th deadline draws closer.

During the next two weeks, the parties will determine if a negotiated settlement is possible. If a tentative agreement is concluded through bargaining, that agreement would be presented to the NPMHU membership for ratification through a referendum vote. If no agreement is reached, then the parties will resolve their dispute through either mediation or interest arbitration proceedings.

As is common in these situations, prior to the November 20 deadline the parties are required to present, on the record, their proposals on both non-economic work rules and on the key economic components of the National Agreement. A party's submission of proposals means that either the NPMHU or USPS management is prepared to put these proposals forward in interest arbitration proceedings if the parties eventually reach an impasse in their negotiations.

The deadline for work rule proposals has just passed, and before it did, the Postal Service submitted a lengthy list of proposals. These proposals could accurately be described as draconian, or even outrageous. But the bargainers on both sides understand that these are markers or place-holders, representing the most extreme work rules that might serve as a starting point and lead to a series of subsequent compromises.

Nonetheless, to this point the Postal Service has presented several work rule proposals that, whether considered individually or collectively, would effectively re-write large portions of the

current National Agreement to the detriment of all mail handlers. These proposals include the following, among others:

- total elimination of protection from layoff and reduction in force
- an increase in the non-career workforce to 40% of the mail handler complement, with no contractual restrictions on their hiring or use
- an elimination of overtime after 8 hours per day, such that overtime would be paid only after 40 hours of actual work each service week
- the elimination of extra pay for the Christmas holiday
- a declaration that all current Local Memoranda of Understanding previously negotiated under Article 30 are null and void, and the requirement that the parties start local negotiations anew with only a handful of permissible subjects.

It goes without saying that these USPS proposals are totally unacceptable. They will not be accepted by the NPMHU bargaining team, and the Postal Service obviously knows that they will not be accepted by the NPMHU bargaining team. The NPMHU therefore sees no particular reason to overreact to these proposals. At the same time, the NPMHU does not believe that these proposals say anything meaningful – one way or the other – about the chances or likelihood that the parties will be able to reach a negotiated settlement prior to, or even after, the current bargaining deadline of November 20.

As more developments in bargaining occur, they will be reported, so all mail handlers should stay tuned by watching and reading their bulletin boards.

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