

of stations and branches. These efforts undoubtedly will continue for the foreseeable future. And the Postal Service continues to adopt cost-cutting programs, including a hiring freeze on craft employees and a large downsizing in management and supervisory ranks. The Committee analyzed each of these topics, and addressed the NPMHU's continuing efforts to deal with these issues in a consistent and thorough manner.

Since the Committee's meeting in July 2011, the Postal Service has made clear that it will try to close or consolidate several hundred postal plants, and has proposed legislation that would abrogate the National Agreement's no-layoff clause, and its mandatory coverage for mail handlers under the federal health insurance and retirement programs. These proposals will be opposed strenuously by the NPMHU, as President Hegarty recently made clear in his latest memorandum to the Local Unions:

With National bargaining over the terms of the 2011 National Agreement about to begin, the Postal Service has publicly announced that management is seeking wholesale changes in its collective bargaining agreements. USPS management also has decided to try to bypass the NPMHU and other postal unions, by asking Congress to enact legislation that would impose most of its outrageous proposals. Instead of coming to the bargaining table in good faith, management is looking for two bites of the

apple. The mentality seems to be: Let's see what we can get through bargaining, and then if we don't like it, we'll go to Congress. This might lead one to ask: Has Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker been named the new PMG?

Just recently, the Postal Service announced that it was seeking to abrogate the no-layoff clause, eliminate the application of the CSRS and FERS retirement systems to postal employees, and end the Postal Service's coverage under the Federal Health Benefits Program. And to make matters worse, the Postal Service did not propose these changes at the bargaining table, but instead went straight to Congress to seek these changes by legislation. USPS management has circulated two "white papers" on Capitol Hill and in the press that attempt to justify their actions. Those "white papers" were posted on our web site, and were circulated to the Union Leadership at our upcoming National-level meeting (which ironically was held in Wisconsin).

Apparently, the Postal Service understands that such draconian proposals would have little chance of being supported by the NPMHU during the next round of bargaining, so instead the agency decided to ignore its obligation to bargain directly and in good faith with the NPMHU. Such tactics do not suggest that postal management will

be adopting an enlightened and cooperative atmosphere during this year's collective bargaining, but only time will tell. In the meantime, the NPMHU and all of its Local Unions and members are urged to oppose these changes with their elected representatives on Capitol Hill. This end-around by USPS management only reinforces the need for all rank and file mail handlers to put pen to paper, and write to their elected representatives to oppose this foolhardy scheme.

The National Office continues to gather additional information, and these matters will be discussed in greater detail at next week's Semi-Annual Meeting of the Local Unions in Milwaukee.

## Impact on Mail Handlers.

The recent proposals from postal management make clear that the financial state of the Postal Service is directly relevant to each and every mail handler represented by the NPMHU. During its meetings in July, therefore, the Committee focused on these issues in both the legislative/regulatory arenas and in the context of contract administration.

With regard to contract-related matters, the Committee discussed recent meetings of the joint NPMHU-USPS Article 12 Task Force, focusing in particular on issues arising as a result of excessing, in the mail handler craft and in other crafts. The Committee also discussed the

implementation of the FSS and the deployment and jurisdictional issues surrounding the Automated Parcel Bundle Sorter (APBS), as well as potential upgrades to the AFCS, more efforts by the mailing industry to reduce the use of plastic straps and plastic wrap, and more equipment upgrades such as the Automated Letter Movement System (ALMS).

## Impact on the NPMHU and its Local Unions.

Another result of USPS downsizing is its impact on all levels of the Union. On one side, constant management actions requiring implementation of Article 12 place additional stress on mail handlers and additional burdens on the stewards and officers who represent them. This forces the Union, at both the National and Local levels, to devote available resources to deal with the constant movement, reassignment, dislocation, and inconvenience that are being imposed on the membership.

At the same time, because of the Postal Service's downsizing, the Union has been losing members, and there is virtually no USPS hiring. Thus, at precisely the time when the Union must marshal its resources, the financial resources of the Union are becoming more limited. The Committee discussed the practical impact of these trends, emphasizing the need to continue organizing new members, especially among current postal employees who are just becoming members of the mail handler craft. The Committee has recommended that the National Executive Board implement a targeted organizing