

Contract Interpretation Manual, together with a Resource Manual that contains each and every arbitration award, memorandum of understanding, letter of intent, and Step 4 agreement that is cited in the CIM. This revised version of the CIM includes all updates necessary under the 2006 National Agreement, as well as matters that have been settled at the National level during the past few years.

Feedback on the publication and utilization of the CIM has been extremely positive. The manual took years to write, and each revision also takes a very long time to produce, but the bottom line is that, for the first time in the history of collective bargaining between the NPMHU and the Postal Service, the parties publishing the CIM have set forth, in a comprehensive manner, their substantive agreements about the appropriate way to interpret the National Agreement. To be sure, the CIM has not resolved all work-related disputes; but it has helped the parties at the Local and Regional levels to narrow their disputes by concentrating on the facts underlying particular grievances or issues that are not covered by the CIM.

Reports from the Union's Regional representatives show that the number of Step 3 appeals has decreased, and that management representatives at Step 3 are resolving those cases where local management is not adhering to the requirements set forth in the CIM. The CIM also is being used as a resource to cite when Step 3 decisions are being issued at the Regional level. And a review of the arbitration decisions being issued—at both the Local and National levels—demonstrates that many of the interpretations included in the CIM are being enforced and implemented, and often provide the common rules from which eventual decisions are reached.

Thus, the CIM continues to be used to settle or resolve cases at a much earlier stage of the grievance process, saving the Local Unions from expending resources that can then be used to represent members in other cases. In previous years we have reported that there has been a tremendous decrease in the number of cases pending Regional arbitration: eight years ago, the NPMHU had more than 5,600 open cases pending arbitration; four years ago, that number was down below 2,000; today, that number remains below 2,000, for a reduction of more than 65%.

It is safe to say that the development and publication of the CIM has had an extremely positive impact on the entire grievance-arbitration process. The document has proven to be far more substan-

tive, and therefore far more useful, than prior efforts at joint interpretation of the National Agreement. The National Office will continue to update the CIM and its supplements, to ensure that these manuals pay dividends for many years to come.

Contract-Based Training Programs:

Throughout the past four years, the National Union has continued to develop and conduct a series of comprehensive training programs on a host of contractual and statutory issues important to all members. Each of these programs has been aimed at assisting Union officers and representatives from the Local Unions to advocate for Mail Handlers more effectively. Education and training is a crucial component of the National Union's overall program for improving the representation of Mail Handlers; indeed, the importance of this training can hardly be overstated, as educated Union representatives—at both the National and Local levels—are the lifeblood of the effective representation constantly being pursued by the National Union. That is why training during the past four years has been extensive, as reflected by these examples:

- (1) Training Around the Local Unions** is held continuously, to ensure that the first-line Union representatives are properly filing and processing grievances. These training programs, conducted by National Shop Steward Trainer and Eastern Regional Vice President Sam D'Ambrosio, often accompanied by Northeastern Regional Vice President and Local 300 President Paul Hogrogian, are invaluable, and include not only basic shop steward training, but also a series of advanced training programs, with special emphasis on defending Mail Handlers who are being disciplined, challenging the hiring and use of casual employees, arbitration advocacy, and reassignments under Article 12.
- (2) Arbitration Advocacy** training was held in Washington, DC in December 2010, and included a comprehensive review of the procedural and evidentiary rules that govern local arbitrations, strategies for dealing with grievants and witnesses, and approaches to settlement, among other topics.
- (3) Article 12** training was held in conjunction with the Semi-Annual Meeting of the Local Unions in March 2012, to provide Local Union representatives with the tools needed to deal with seniority, reassignment, relocation, and excessing issues that arise in the context of plant closings and consolidations.

- (4) QWL Training** for coordinators has been held at various locations, in order to encourage the continued success of the Quality Work Life process for those Local Unions that choose to participate.

To prepare for each one of these training programs, and well as prior programs on casuals, the Family and Medical Leave Act, and occupational safety and health, the National Union has developed comprehensive manuals or handbooks on the specified topics, including outlines of the covered material and relevant documents needed by stewards and other advocates. Supplementary materials often are developed to include relevant arbitration decisions and case law. Of most importance, these manuals or handbooks also are circulated by mail—in either hard copy or on compact disc—so that the benefits of each training program is shared with thousands of Union representatives across the country.

Jurisdictional Disputes and Regional Instruction 399:

For more than five decades, since the 1950s, no area involving the job rights of Mail Handlers has been more difficult for the NPMHU than its ongoing jurisdictional battles with the APWU and the Postal Service. Seen in that light, the National Union has made consistent progress during the past four years.

With regard to the RI-399 arbitration docket, cases are moving forward, both Nationally and Regionally, albeit at a slow pace. At the National level, Arbitrator Joseph Sharnoff ruled that the Postal Service properly assigned the mail handler craft as the primary craft to load and sweep mail on the Small Parcel and Bundle Sorter (SPBS). The award not only ruled in favor of the NPMHU, but also agreed with several important principles and arguments that have been made on behalf of Mail Handlers, including a favorable standard of review that should be of benefit to the NPMHU in future cases.

Perhaps of greater long-term significance, the National Union has prevailed upon the Postal Service to make several extremely favorable craft determinations at the National level, thereby awarding what will prove to be thousands of jobs to employees represented by the NPMHU. Our string of successes in this area date back many years, with the most recent examples including the determination that the mail handler craft is the primary craft for the Flat Sequencing System (FSS) and for the Integrated Tray Converter position (ITC Groomer) on the FSS. A less favorable position was issued by the Postal Service with