

**National Business Agent's Report**  
**Mike Weir**  
**May 2010**

I had the distinct pleasure of being present at the National Postal Museum in Washington, DC on March 20, 2010. The museum, which is part of the Smithsonian Institution, hosted a presentation commemorating the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1970 Postal Strike. A distinguished panel, including NALC President-Emeritus Vincent R. Sombrotto, APWU President William Burrus and retired NALC director of legislative and political affairs George B. Gould, reflected upon the strike from their unique perspectives as engaged participants and/or knowledgeable observers. As always, I was amazed at President Sombrotto's detailed memory of events and his ability to eloquently articulate that knowledge. Of course, I have always recognized the importance of the strike as the springboard for everything NALC has been able to achieve for letter carriers in collective bargaining and at interest arbitration. What really struck me in this presentation was the courage of the letter carriers and clerks who joined the picket lines, knowing that a strike was illegal but willing to put everything on the line to achieve their goals. Failure would have meant the loss of their jobs and even more financial hardship for their families. But the spark that began in New York on March 17, 1970 when Branch 36, at President Sombrotto's urging, voted to strike soon ignited across the country and resulted in more than 200,000 postal employees taking up the cause. And eight days later when the dust had settled, agreements were reached and legislation enacted which ultimately established the Postal Service and created the good middle-class jobs, wages and benefits of which all of us are the beneficiaries. We owe a huge debt of gratitude to these heroes.

The environment in 1970 was very different from today. At that time, letter carriers were making much less than the average working family wage, most carriers had to work a second job to make ends meet and, in New York, many carriers were on welfare or receiving some sort of government assistance. The public supported the letter carriers' efforts to improve their standard of living. Today, the unemployment rate in our country is pushing 10% while letter carriers have good middle-class jobs, wages and benefits. People are looking for work, and our enemies are looking for any excuse to break the union and further shrink the middle class. Still, we can strike a blow for protecting the legacy that was bequeathed to us by those brave strikers in 1970. This is our opportunity to stand up and be heard on the issue of preserving the Postal Service as a viable

institution for the American public and as a bastion of good middle class jobs for us and for future generations of letter carriers.

Postmaster General (PMG) Potter and his gang of reactionary yes-men are spinning their tale of woe, cleverly marketing their message that the sky is falling and that they are the only ones with the solution to save the day. They are arrogantly proceeding as though 5-day delivery is a done deal. Their website is providing bogus information to the public, and management is sending out equally unreliable doublespeak to every postal employee. **DO NOT BE DECEIVED!** Congress has not authorized the elimination of 6-day delivery. In fact, during last month's lobbying trip on the Hill, senators and representatives were nearly unanimous in their opposition to cutting service. Instead, they were in agreement with the union on the need to give us access to the 75 billion dollar surplus in the CSRS pension fund as the first step toward addressing the current financial crisis. Even the PMG himself, in sworn testimony before Congress, agreed that if the pension over-funding issue were resolved, there would be no need to cut service. He is on record, and we are going to hold him to it! The reality is: even though we have been in the midst of one of the worst recessions in eighty years, if the Postal Service had not been required to make these onerous payments to pre-fund retiree health care, we would have turned a profit over the past two to three years. And, the bottom-line is: the Postal Service is not on the verge of financial collapse as management's ten-year projections of 238 billion dollar losses would imply.

Whether we receive the pension surplus as a lump sum, which is unlikely, or it is dispersed incrementally, to handle our annual obligations, we would have the breathing room we need to assess mail volume growth as the economy recovers and to explore new sources of revenue growth by more fully utilizing our "last mile delivery network." So, let's not climb up on the ledges just yet. We **can** save the Postal Service; and we **will** save the Postal Service, regardless of what management may say or do. Get the real facts from the NALC website, the NALC Bulletin, the April issue of the Postal Record and the letter which President Rolando mailed to every letter carrier. Stay informed, sign up as an e-Activist (on the NALC website) and be prepared to respond when President Rolando sends out a call for action. It's our turn now; let's do the strikers proud.

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