On August 22, 2003 NALC Business Agent Dale Hart and USPS District Manager Scott Tucker signed an agreement on route adjustments and reversions for the San Francisco District. On Wednesday September 10, there was a meeting of the District wide designees from management and the NALC regarding the implementation of this agreement. Both Ivars Lauersons, editor of The Voice and Tony Gallardo, President of NALC Branch 214 attended this meeting. Afterwards the editor asked the president some questions about this agreement. It is hoped that the interview, printed below, will serve to inform the members about this agreement.

IL: What is the agreement?
TG: Carriers should read the agreement itself in its entirety elsewhere in The Voice. It is not that long. However, in a nutshell, this agreement allows a route adjustment to occur without an inspection. The adjustment should be based on whatever input the carrier, management’s designee and the union’s designee mutually agree on. If any one of these three people disagree, this agreement does not apply. If these three people agree on the current length of the route, the method and means of adjustment, and the time frame in which the adjustment shall occur, the agreement shall be adhered to. If no agreement is reached then the assignment is not covered by this agreement.

The agreement also covers newly vacated letter carrier routes that management may consider for reversion. If the union and management agree on the reversion action and if there are adjacent assignments that have identified undertime, management and the union will meet with the carriers on those routes and attempt to reach agreement on an adjustment to bring those routes as close to 8 hours as possible. Again, a three way agreement is required.

IL: What is the purpose?
TG: The purpose is to adjust routes to as close to 8 hours as possible without the hassle and cost of a route inspection. The signatories to this agreement are sure that the carrier knows how long his or her route is and if the carrier gives an honest assessment, then the route adjustment will be fair. The signatories want to save carriers the hassle of a route count and save management the cost, while still insuring that routes are fairly adjusted.

IL: Who does it cover?
TG: This agreement covers all regular carrier routes in the San Francisco District where the letter carrier, the management designee, and the Union designee agree.

IL: Are we first?
TG: No. This exact agreement has been in place in the San Jose District since 6/7/02.

IL: What were the results there?
TG: I talked to Robert Madrid, President of Branch NALC Branch 1427 and Tony Cortese, President of NALC Branch 193. Due to the drastic reduction in volume, carriers have been carrying “pivots” to complete their 8-hour shifts. Tony Cortese says that the carriers in his Branch prefer knowing on a long-term basis what their 8-hour assignment is. They don’t like to pivot and prefer to have a permanent add on to their routes. San Jose District has reduced the number of routes by about 90 using this method. In some areas, where there is new growth, routes have been cut and new routes added. But overall, in most cases routes have been added to and the overall number of routes have been reduced (emphasis added).

IL: Is our Branch fully committed?
TG: Yes, providing the parties involved deal with each other honestly, and overburdened routes are also identified and cut. I understand that the Postal Service will try to capture undertime, add to routes and eliminate routes. However, in order for a true alternative to the route inspection process to work, it must deal fairly with both the overtime and undertime scenarios. This is a voluntary agreement. No one should be forced to participate. Nothing in this agreement is intended to deprive a carrier to the right to request and receive a special route inspection. This agreement is based on trust. If you are a letter carrier and you don’t trust the process, you can agree to disagree, and the process stops.

IL: How soon should we see anything on the floor?
TG: I don’t know. The Union and Management (continued on page 2)
Dear Brothers and Sisters,

This letter is a request to assist fellow Carrier Tom Tracy and his family. Tom, only 47 years old, has been diagnosed with terminal cancer. He has a prognosis of less than three months. Tom has been a NALC member for his entire 20 years of service. Tom and his wife, Vickie, have been married for 26 years and have four children. Your contributions will help meet the urgent needs that confront the Tracy family. Thank you for your consideration of this matter. Contributions can be sent to:

THE TOM TRACY FUND
C/O NALC/BANCH 540
CAMDEN, NJ MERGED
PO BOX 295
COLLINGSWOOD, NJ 08108

Sincerely,
Matt Carroll
President, Branch 540

Branch Officers

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Lili Buencamino ............................... Executive Vice-President
Bill Thornton .................................. Vice-President
John Beaumont ............................... Secretary-Treasurer
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LETTER

LEMMY and LAUERSONS (continued from page 1)
designees have had their initial meeting. The agreement is in place and the parties have been informed. In my opinion we shall soon see trilateral discussions in every station and installation in the San Francisco District.

IL: What would be specific procedures for carrier X?
TG: There is no specific procedure except what I have just described. If the parties don’t agree, nothing has changed. In that case, expect to have your route inspected and adjusted in the normal manner anytime within the next 4 years, starting immediately. Even if you agree to an adjustment in the manner spelled out in this agreement, both management and the letter carrier still retain the right to have the route undergo a 6 day count and inspection and an adjustment based on the inspection.

See text of Agreement on page 15.

T.V. 214 Schedule

SAN FRANCISCO, AT&T Cable Channel 29:
Every third Sunday of the month at 7:00 p.m.
October 13, 2003; November 16, 2003;
December 21, 2003

Gregory Fontanilla (2nd from right), retired April 2003, shown receiving certificate from station manager (not in picture). Lam (Johnny) Vuong (right) and rest of Sunset PCA Station look on.
Report on the state of the Branch

By Tony Gallardo, President

In the last 2 years, many changes and advances have occurred at Branch 214. In this report I will highlight some of them for review by the membership.

At the beginning of January 2002, Flex Time was restored in San Francisco. A new agreement was signed with uniform rules applied city wide, allowing most carriers in San Francisco more Flex Time than they had before it was taken away.

On June 11, 2003, Flex Time was restored to Mill Valley, with a memo which will place Flex Time in the next Local Memorandum in Mill Valley.

On September 11, 2003, the New OIC of San Leandro, Rick Martinez, signed an agreement implementing Flex Time in the San Leandro Main Office.

In September of 2002, Branch 214 had the First Annual Steward Appreciation Breakfast. This event is sure to become a regular annual event. Our second annual Steward Breakfast will be held on October 19, 2003.

Most of our Local Memorandums of Understanding were negotiated and signed for all cities except San Francisco in October of 2002. San Francisco refused to sign because they wanted to change the Full Time Collection drivers from Saturdays and Sundays off to rotating schedules.

Full Time Collection Drivers

The issue of the Full Time Collection Drivers keeping their weekends off went to Arbitration. The Branch successfully defended this position and the Full Time Collection Drivers kept their Saturdays and Sundays off. The San Francisco Local Memorandum was signed on May 20, 2003.

The Branch Building has been an ongoing project since December 5, 2001 when the final vote on the assessment for $3.00 per active carrier per pay period was passed. In December of 2002, Branch 214 moved into the building at 2310 Mason, which we now own in partnership with the Teachers’ Union, the United Educators of San Francisco. In the more than 112-year history of Branch 214 we have never before owned our office space.

Record grievances

In the year 2002, Branch 214 recorded 2,456 grievances filed. The Branch never before filed so many grievances in one year. Our previous record was in 1997 with 2226 grievances filed in that year. Most of our grievances were successful, in many cases accompanied by large monetary awards, but most importantly, the violations of the contract were stopped.

2002 also was the year when DOIS, the computer program was brought to bear on letter carriers. Computer generated bogus figures were used by brainwashed supervisors, to push carriers to deliver more than was realistically possible in 8 hours. The results were massive violations of the provisions of Article 8, as carriers who were not on the Overtime Desired List were forced to do overtime off of their assignments while the carriers on the Overtime Desired List were denied these overtime opportunities.

San Leandro heat

San Leandro was the first city to feel the heat. For 18 months, the Union generated hundreds of grievances despite management’s denial of steward time, denial of document requests, refusal to meet at Step A informal or Step A Formal. At the end of this struggle, the Union and the Contract remain intact. The violations have all but ceased. The District Manager, MPOO, Postmaster and SPO have all been replaced. The brave and tireless activists of San Leandro remain undefeated.

Novato had a similar crisis, with similar results. Here too, the struggle was long and arduous. Shop Stewards stepped forward and stuck it out through many months. Here, just like in San Leandro, violations of Article 8 were followed by refusal to give stewards time to investigate, refusal to turn over documents vital to the investigations, and refusal to meet in a timely manner at Steps A informal and A Formal. To date, The stewards and managers of Novato are still processing the grievance awards and the violations here too have been reduced from a torrent to a trickle.

Pacific Carrier Annex

Pacific Carrier Annex (PCA) in San Francisco with its multiple layers of problems was and remains a critical crux of our struggle for better and more humane working conditions. Here, the pressure cooker of conflict between management and the carriers over work load is compounded by the crumbling ruins of the building itself. Equipment continuously rolls over crumbling asbestos laden tiles, while the roof leaks and dissolves in the winter rains.

In February of 2003, the routes at Sunset in PCA were counted. Shortly after that, the Postal Service was finally persuaded to repair the building and remove the asbestos laden flooring. Management was at first hesitant about moving all of the carriers out during the asbestos abatement process. The Union insisted that all the carriers must be moved out. Management was persuaded, but the

(continued on page 11)
listen, he said, you ever seen a bunch of crabs in a bucket?
no, I told him.
well, what happens is that now and then one crab will climb up on top of the others and begin to climb toward the top of the bucket, then, just as he's about to escape another crab grabs him and pulls him back down.
really? I asked.
really, he said, and this job is just like that, none of the others want anybody to get out of here. that's just the way it is in the postal service!

"The great escape" by Charles Bukowski, from Sifting Through the Madness for the Word, the Line, the Way, published by Ecco Press, an excerpt.

I recently heard Garrison Keillor read these words by the great Beat poet, Charles Bukowski, who, by the way, wrote a book called “Post Office” which should be required reading by anyone who works at the Post Office who enjoys a good laugh.

But I was greatly struck by the crab pot analogy. I know where I work we talk about each other constantly, and in great jest, fun, and love we comment on each other's shortcomings on almost a daily basis and I am sure that I speak for all, that none would want it any other way.

But, occasionally, some of the conversations take another twist. An ugly twist. When people talk non-sarcastically about how lazy some people are. Or how some people are faking injuries to get out of work. And that is when the crab pot analogy comes into sharpest focus for me. This job is really taking a toll on much of the work force and the number of people falling under the knife or receiving medical limitations is sky-rocketing at a pace that I have never seen during my long tenure at the Postal Service.

Penny wise, pound foolish

I hope that I am not particularly touchy because this has been a very bad year for me personally. In July I had my Achilles tendon detached and reattached and after a very arduous rehabilitation I was returned to work on Limited Duty with the promise that an ergonomically supportive chair would be provided by management for my eight hours a day casing. Our now-retired Postmaster refused to provide that chair, stating, “If I got you a chair, I would have to buy 10 more!” So, to make a long story short, while casing mail for 8 hours a day on a carrier stool without back support at all, I suffered my second work-related injury to my back which was immediately accepted by the Department of Labor. I have been under medical care for that injury now for many months. The sad truth is that the dopy postmaster could have purchased a LOT of those chairs by now with the money the service has spent on my medical care.

Now, I am not writing this because I heard any particular talk about me, in fact, I personally could care less if anyone did. Maybe being close to retirement does that to a fella, but I have heard the talk about many of the others who are now suffering or have been injured. What I find particularly ironic is that some of those folks, acting like crabs, have some sort of medical limitations themselves and I think that this chatter is extremely harmful for solidarity.

The scab mentality

Now we must also discuss the ultimate crab, or should I say scab. We have had a darn good run of high union membership in the San Leandro Post Office for many years, much of that time at 100%. Some folks are now claiming to be in the process of dropping out and are saying things like they can get behind what the National Union is doing but they don’t like the local union. To me this is like saying that they don’t like how their local bus driver is driving the bus so they aren’t going to pay the fare anymore. Now, they just climb in the back door and miss the fare box. The bus company still has all the expenses of upkeep and fuel so they have to raise the fare to cover the lost revenues. The only difference now is the free-riders are letting the other passengers (their friends) pay the fare.

As far as I am concerned, quitting the union is the ultimate act of selfishness, where you put a couple of extra bucks in your pocket and let people who think you are a friend pay for your representation. In our office we have an honor system for snacks. To me a scab is exactly like the person who takes the cookies and doesn’t put any money in the cash can. It’s just not right, no matter what

(continued on page 5)
bogus excuse that can be conjured up for how it’s OK to not pay one’s fair share. It’s just not right.

Don’t mess with the contract
At least one of the potential future free riders says things like why don’t you allow management to violate the contract when all parties are happy about the outcome. What they fail to see is how playing games with the contract leads to situations that impair the steward’s ability to represent all of us. If the steward plays fast and loose with the rules, then their ability to represent everyone suffers because management will constantly ask for fast and loose compliance and quickly remind the steward of the time they did. This is why one of the first things a new steward is taught is to never, ever, allow the contract to be violated.

Perilous times in the Post Office
I really don’t think the average carrier has a clue to just how perilous these times actually are concerning our jobs and the future of the US Postal Service. The recently issued suggestions by President Bush’s commission on the future of the postal service is full of ideas that are detrimental to the collective future of both active and retired letter carriers. The last thing we need to be doing is acting like those crabs and pulling each other down at such a crucial time. Our future is dependent on collectively working to maintain what we have built up over more than 30 years of collective bargaining, and when this ship goes under there are no life boats. We will all sink this time.

50% of employees can retire in the next 8 to 10 years.

Branch leadership fails short
And finally, the last problem I wish to point out needing immediate attention in the NALC in general and Branch 214 in particular is the coming phenomenon of almost 50% of the employees in the Postal Service being eligible to retire in the next 8 to 10 years. There is an urgent need to recruit and cultivate the next generation of leadership for our branch. A good example of what needs to be done, theoretically, is the Oakland Raiders. A young team with a spattering of wily old veterans to bring the most out of the rookies. The carriers in my office are so lucky to have this exact combination. We have Valencia Baugh doing a fabulous job as she gains experience working with San Leandro’s Formal A representative Sue Garshol who has been doing the work of this union for over 20 years, I firmly believe that no other office in Branch 214 is represented as well as the carriers in my station but even here I hear crabs complaining about representation. I believe that one of the items whined about is justified, and that is the complaint about almost never seeing the Full-time Union Officers on our workroom floor.

I clearly remember, as if it was yesterday, the full-time officers from Branch 214 coming to our union meeting for San Leandro Branch 4130 and promising that by merging and having full-time officers there would be a new stronger presence on the work room floor. They also promised that we would have more tools to fight our abusive management than just the grievance procedure. Back then, without full-time officers, all we had was the grievance procedure. Although our stewards put up very stiff opposition to management’s abuses, we wanted more and were intrigued by the promises those officers made. Now it feels almost like a betrayal to hear the stewards say that they called the union office and were told to file a grievance concerning every little matter including things that, in the past, were solved with a phone call. It is also a little saddening to read The Voice and hear that the officers are so busy doing Formal A’s that they cannot make station visits. To me, this indicates a severe lack of vision and leadership as the Branch has been allowed to slip into this sad and desperate state. Clearly the old faces, in many ways, are not getting the job done. Maybe we are lucky that it’s election time in the local because an infusion of a couple of fresh new faces at the union office might be just the spark needed to get things back on the right track.

(See commentary on this article on the next page.)
Rebuttal by Tony Gallardo

Justifiable whining? Roland, give me a break.

The full time officers of Branch 214 have come to your office many times. I admit that the frequency of the visits has been much less than what you are used to. However, when the officers are overworked, as they have been these past 2 years, the officer visits tend to be concentrated on where the problems are.

San Leandro Main Office saw more of the officers than did the South because the Main Office needed more attention. Additionally, San Leandro has the most seasoned team of Union Activists in the Branch. The awesome teamwork and constant cycling in of new Alternate Stewards in San Leandro deserves praise. It also frees up officers to concentrate on other cities where there are no stewards or where the stewards need more help.

The other officers and I have made hundreds of phone calls to Postmasters, Station Managers, and Supervisors. As you well know, it doesn’t take long to figure out who responds to reason, and who requires the full wrath of the grievance procedure before the contractual violations cease. Your Postmaster, Wesley Tatum, along with his sadistic main office staff never responded favorably to any of our phone calls, e-mails, letters, faxes or station visits. They only responded after 18 long months and mountains of sustained grievances. Even then, it took the replacement of the District Manager, the MPOO, the Postmaster and the SPO before the San Leandro Main Office started to turn into a decent place to work. Now, finally, there is an OIC that does respond to communications other than the grievance procedure, and San Leandro Main Office now even has Flex Time. Imagine that!

So, please, spare us your whining about being betrayed by the lack of vision and leadership at Branch 214. We are doing just fine in that department.

Don’t get me wrong. I don’t mean to say that we shouldn’t continue to grow stronger and more effective, and yes, even to greatly increase the frequency of our station visits. These are clearly stated goals of this Union, and part of our vision. What this vision depends on is that more carriers in other parts of the Branch take on the example so clearly put forth in San Leandro. More carriers becoming active alternate stewards. More alternate stewards gaining experience and prowess, becoming full shop stewards. More Shop Stewards tightening up their skills and taking on the role of Step A Formal Designees. Having a vision is not enough. We must sustain the vision, and convince many members to increase their level of involvement.

So, quit whining and get involved. In your own office, your wife Sue Garshol is a great example of sustained excellence in the face of great adversity. She has also been known, at times, to give me stinging accurate and useful criticism, to my face. I accept that and I hope I am becoming a better leader for this. I am far from perfect, and given a chance, I do believe that each one of us, myself included has much to learn. But this is a collective endeavor. Together, our hard work will get us there. Whining is not enough.
Postal X-Files

The New George W. Bush Post Office

By Audrey A. Davis, Sunset

(Second in a series on privatization and the Postal Service)

President George W. Bush is using the excuse of fighting terrorism to take over and control just about anything he desires. Bush sent the Marines into Afghanistan to get a foothold in the Middle East. He then sent the Army into Iraq to get the oil. And now Bush has sent his Postal Commission into the Postal Service to get the unions.

Bush is giving himself the power to run the Postal Service. He will hand-pick the Board of Governors, hand-pick the Postal Regulatory Board and hand-pick the newly created Postal Network Optimization Commission (P-NOC).

The new Bush Post Office will go after the unions with everything they’ve got. Bush’s position is that the unions are incompatible with the war on terrorism.

Postal commission zeroes in on collective bargaining

The first target is collective bargaining, which is the cornerstone of all four unions. Collective bargaining is when the parties have equal power in negotiating a contract. In the past if we did not agree on a contract the dispute would go to neutral arbitrators who would listen to both sides and then make an independent decision. Under the new Bush Post Office we’ll have “interest arbitration” which would incorporate the “Last Best Final Offer” mechanism. That’s when the arbitrators choose between management’s last offer or the union’s last offer. There will be no compromise.

Collective bargaining will be even further destroyed by the Postal Regulatory Board placing a cap on wages and benefits based on comparing our wages with other workers. Bush’s Postal Commission says, “The comparability determination of the Postal Regulatory Board should be enforced as a cap on the total compensation of new employees.”

Honey, I shrunk the Post Office!

Downsizing and outsourcing will bring the total number of union employees down to a minimum. The Postal Commission stated, "Fortunately, the Postal Service will soon be presented with a unique attrition opportunity with some 47% of current career employees eligible for retirement by 2010." When nearly half of the current employees retire the new Bush Post Office will not replace them. The Commission also recommends that, "those Postal Service functions that can be performed better and at lower cost by the private sector be outsourced to the private sector." That means some of the work that clerks, mailhandlers and letter carriers currently do will be done by low-paid non-union workers. You can see how our jobs will be eliminated and never replaced.

Retiree benefits at risk

The new Bush Post Office plans to take benefits from retired postal employees. The Postal Commission suggests that "the Postal Service and its unions should have the flexibility to develop new plans that are separate and apart from existing Federal pension and retiree health care plans. However, it is doubtful that they are anxious to come up with better pension and health care plans.

A 70s flashback

The fringe benefits of current employees are at risk. The Commission wants to repeal the statute that forbids any agreement that "results in a program of fringe benefits which is less favorable to employees than fringe benefits in effect on July 1, 1971." Prior to 1971 postal employees’ wages and benefits were very poor. But after the impact of the 1970 postal strike workers benefits improved drastically. The new Bush Post Office wants to go back to the pre-1971 benefits program which would be devastating to current employees.

Closing post offices will not be helpful to the customers, but the new Bush Post Office doesn’t seem to mind. The Commission recommends that "existing statutes limiting the Postal Service’s flexibility with regard to the closing and disposition of post offices be repealed." This means they will be able to close down post offices at will.

Straight from our pockets to theirs

Finally the Commission states, "The Board of Directors be authorized to establish rates of pay for officers at levels competitive with the private sector, and that performance be considered by the new Board of Directors as a key component of the pay for senior executives." So while regular employees are getting pay cuts the bosses will be getting big pay raises in the new Bush Post Office.

Believe it or not.

My next article will discuss how we can fight to retain good union jobs.
About time

America issues a postage stamp to a labor leader

By John Beaumont, Secretary-Treasurer

It was almost ten years ago to the day that a few of us drove 300 miles down to the small San Joaquin Valley town of Delano, California. The reason for this excursion was to join almost 100 other fellow letter carriers from throughout California’s branches in our part to honor United Farm Worker (UFW) founder and organizer Cesar Estrada Chavez.

Honoring a labor hero

In the largest funeral of any labor leader in the history of the U.S. union members came in caravans from Florida to California to pay respect to a man whose silent strength led one of the largest strike-boycott efforts in our nation’s history. This would be the last time many of us would march by the side of the man who taught many of us to stand up for our rights through nonviolent protest and collective bargaining.

As we stood shoulder to shoulder following the plain pine coffin which held the body of Cesar Chavez, it seemed to us as if it were just yesterday that this charismatic labor leader worked with fellow UFW co-founder Dolores Huerta to organize a small group of farm workers into a union which grew to approximately 80,000 members prior to his untimely death.

Chavez’ legacy

Back in 1965 Cesar led a successful five-year strike-boycott against table and wine grapes that eventually rallied millions of supporters to the United Farm Workers. He forged a national support coalition of unions, church groups, students, minorities and consumers. This support and concern for the plight of America’s workers in the fields led to several more successful actions.

Voter power

Cesar was willing to sacrifice his own life so that the union would continue and that violence was not used. He was always working to organize families and teach them how to get involved in the political process. When I first met Cesar in 1984 it was during a voter registration drive down in East Los Angeles. Cesar knew the power of the polls and taught many of us how this action would strengthen the ability of working families to elect candidates who cared about their issues, a lesson our union has built upon in our successful political campaigns throughout California.

Stamp ceremonies

On April 23, 2003, several NALC members who were together down in Delano on that sad day 10 years earlier came together in Los Angeles to honor Cesar. This time it was during a ceremony by the USPS to issue a postage stamp in honor of UFW leader Cesar Chavez. Speaking at the ceremony were Governor Gray Davis, several congressional representatives, members from the Chavez family, and two labor unions (UFW & NALC). NALC Branch 411 President, and former UFW organizer, Jerry Ryan read a moving letter from our National President

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Working toward retirement

By Daniel SooHoo, PTR Collections

Working toward retirement is not a positive thought, but working and planning toward retirement has more of a positive punch to it. Since this is the first of many articles to be written by me on this subject, I will concentrate on information regarding retirement planning.

Yes, we all have goals in life. When I was a kid, I wanted to be a baseball player. Instead, I became a football player. When I was a young adult, I wanted to be a race-car driver. I became a Collection driver instead. About a month ago, on the way home, I have set another goal for myself: I plan to retire in January 2007. This goal is different from any other goal because I have been working and planning toward it.

Plan ahead

Six years ago, a co-worker mentioned that he had three more years until retirement. He also mentioned that if you don't plan it (a retirement date), you will not be ready when the time arrives. So I have been planning it for almost six years. And with a time-frame goal in mind, I thought of sharing good and positive information on CSRS and if I receive any FERS information, I will try to include that as well (sorry! no guarantee!).

Ask yourself

First question that comes to mind is "What is retirement?" People have told me that I am too young to retire.

If you don't plan a retirement date, you will not be ready when the time arrives.

To me retirement is just another phase of life. Some people are ready to retire. Many others aren't. The big question is "Will I have enough of a financial base (your pension check)?" In this day and age, the answer is "No!".

CSRS is a lot better than Social Security. All of you who are lucky enough to have CSRS and don't know it, it's time to add Thrift Saving Plan and savings bonds as supplements to your base. It's nice to have real estate (home, income property, etc.) and securities, if you are fortunate. But most of us do not have these.

Savings bonds

If you are living from paycheck to paycheck, work will keep you going. Twenty-five dollars will buy you a $50 savings bonds Series EE for your future. And the best thing is you will not see it. That's one of the things that helped give me some financial stability. Try it for at least 12 months. Or better yet, 24 months. And if you want to contact me for a strategy on savings bonds, please do. 'Til the next article.....!
Decision for a generation about the future

By Mike McAdoo, Parkside

On October 7, 2003, millions of Californians will cast votes in two decisions. The first is whether to recall the incumbent governor Gray Davis, and if so, who is to replace him with a plurality of votes cast. This is a monumental decision and should be subject to discussion and debate. It will affect the future of the Golden State as much as the Progressive Movement at the beginning of the 20th century when the present recall provision was placed in the State Constitution. This writer is offering an independent analysis of the 2003 Recall.

Losing jobs to illegal immigrants

Primarily, this recall is in effect a denunciation of the failure to address social policies and cultural conditions which have led to the dismal deficit figure of some $38 billion—larger than all the deficits of all the other 49 states combined. Californians have to decide whether out-of-control illegal, repeat, illegal immigrants is costing hundreds of thousands of legal, repeat, legal immigrants and citizens, including hundreds of thousands of unionists in agriculture and construction, opportunities for employment. If this trend continues, our youth will have fewer opportunities for entry-level jobs. For many years, unionists such as Cesar Chavez and other labor leaders reflected the concerns of the labor movement by opposing the neglect of the immigration laws. Much of the cost of our deficit can be attributed to this neglect.

The disintegration of the family unit

As well, the epidemic of out-of-wedlock birthrate is costing billions upon billions of dollars a year which, if welfare reform is not truly implemented and a commitment is not made to change the culture which degrades the institutions of family and marriage, would not only bankrupt California financially but also culturally. Survey after survey and study after study have demonstrated that where the family is degraded as the main social unit, poverty and chaos prevail. Young boys and girls need the mentoring that only a family-oriented society can provide and support. Government can help to nourish, but not replace, the family. Policies which take authority from the family generally tend to take away the ability of the parents to mentor children and provide society with stability. These policies have done little to improve society at large. This trend must be reversed in order to turn California around. Businesses provide jobs, and unions must make sure that labor benefits from not only economic activity but also ensure that the economic climate is family-friendly. A welfare state does not serve those missions.

I do not know whether to recommend the recall, and I am not going to recommend any one of the 135 or so replacement candidates should serve out the term of the current governor. I do have convictions about the direction of this state where my roots date back to the 19th century and I do have feelings about the direction which the 60s and 70s radicalism of political groups such as the Burton Machine, the San Francisco Labor Council and other such organizations have advocated. I ask my fellow Californians, whether they be first-generation or, like myself, multi-generation, to consider the future when the polls open on October 7, 2003.

Where the family is degraded as the main social unit, poverty and chaos prevail.
funds were delayed, causing at least 2 missed opportunities for obtaining alternative offices for the carriers. The work on the building and the adjustments on the routes were delayed from March 17, 2003 (52 days from the inspections) to May 17 then again to August 4. When a letter announcing yet another extension was delivered to the Branch from the San Francisco District, the Union strongly objected, pushing the dispute to a higher level.

**PEACE team**

Meanwhile, Branch 214 asked for the newly formed PEACE team to intervene in PCA to try and diffuse the toxic atmosphere of antagonism between Labor and Management at PCA. The PEACE team, a task force consisting of an equal number of management and Union members from the San Francisco District, has responded and is conducting its investigation.

Meanwhile, a new building was found to temporarily house all the carriers currently at PCA, and the route adjustment process has been restarted. The carriers will be moving to Building 649 in the Presidio. The tentative date of the move is October 13. The route adjustment process has also been restarted, and the routes will soon be adjusted. Thanks to the work of the Branch Officers, the Co-leaders of the route adjustment process, the PEACE team and the plethora of grievances filed by the embattled shop stewards, working conditions will soon be improving for the letter carriers of PCA.

In 2002, the Officers of Branch 214 noticed an alarming number of violations of the OWCP rules and regulations, which were resulting in unconscionable delays in the receipt of benefits to carriers who were being injured on the job.

**Injured workers**

In addition to filing many grievances and pursuing cases by phone and fax, Branch 214, in a collective effort with Branches 1427, 1280 and 183, convinced the District Manager to come together with us to form a joint training for stewards and supervisors on OWCP rules and regulations. A series of joint trainings were held in mid-2003 attended by management personnel and the Union stewards that they negotiate with. The trainings were conducted by Roger Collado of the San Francisco District for the USPS, and Ed White from the National Business Agent’s office for the NALC.

**Foreign uniforms**

At the beginning of 2003, a Uniform company called San Francisco Knitting Mills, (SFKM) was the first in the Nation to start manufacturing Postal Uniforms outside of the United States. Branches 214 was asked by our National President and by UNITE, the Union of Needle-trades, Industrial and Textile Employees to take action against San Francisco Knitting Mills. On Feb. 6, 2003 NALC Branch 214 along with members of Branches 1280, 1111, 1427, 183 and 193 responded along with the San Francisco Labor Council, the San Mateo Labor Council and the APWU. A demonstration was held at the SFKM headquarters in San Bruno. This was quickly followed by inspection of the shelves of local Uniform stores. The offending products were soon voluntarily pulled off the shelves by vendors and replaced with Union made products. The Postal Service also responded, announcing a new policy that all Uniform shirts and pants for letter carriers must be made in the USA.

These were just the highlights of what we have faced in the last 2 years. Those of you from offices that have not been mentioned in this report know that you also faced and overcame great challenges in the past 2 years. Our officers, shop stewards and alternate stewards have been kept extremely busy in every station and in every installation across the Branch.

**Future challenges**

We must prepare ourselves for the future, because the issues that lie ahead appear to be even more challenging than the ones we have already faced down. With the volume of mail dropping, some letter carriers are finishing their routes in less than 8 hours. The Postal Service is attempting to capture these work hours. Our Business Agent and the Postal Service’s District Manager have signed an agreement that allows routes to be adjusted without route inspections. (An interview concerning this document and the document itself both appear elsewhere in this issue.)

Assuring fair and accurate route adjustments and preventing any attempts at overburdening carriers will be one of the next challenges the Branch will have to face in the next few months.

**Presidential Commission**

Also, the Report of the Presidential Commission on the Postal Service is out, and some of the recommendations if applied, would be disastrous for the letter carriers. National President Bill Young is preparing a comprehensive response that will require the involvement of each and every member of each and every branch of the NALC. Whatever Congress chooses to move on within the next few months, we will have to be very vigilant and coordinated in our response.

Here are some of the issues at stake:

1) The sanctity of collective bargaining; there is a recommendation that a Postal Regulatory Board not at the bargaining table should have the final say on our wage and benefits.

(continued on page 14)
Still working hard

Support our retirees

By Tony Gallardo, President

Over the years it has been my privilege to work with an energetic enthusiastic optimistic and totally supportive community of people, the retirees of Branch 214.

There’s the legislative dynamo “retired” for more than 30 years who remains more active than any three people I know. A new retiree comes around regularly, volunteering around the office for our overworked officers. Another retiree carries the Branch banner into any demonstration wherever workers’ rights are being trampled.

Retirees volunteer for community service, including the NALC Food Drives. Some reward politicians who help us by getting involved in their campaigns. Others embarrass and shame politicians, when they work against our interests.

We active members owe a debt to these retirees who fought for the benefits some of us take for granted. Without these courageous and tireless activists, our lot would be bleak.

This is why it is important to respond decisively to the most insidious recommendation of the Presidential Postal Commission. By recommending making pensions and postal retirement health care plans subject to collective bargaining, they are viciously attacking our retirees. This recommendation if adopted would sever postal retirees from existing federal pension and retiree health care plans.

And let’s not forget that we too will be retired some day.

Our retirees have dedicated their lives to improving our pay, benefits, and working conditions. We, who have reaped the benefits of their struggle, must show them unwavering support. There is no doubt that they are entitled to the peace of mind of knowing that their pensions and health plans are secure. And let’s not forget that we too will be retired letter carriers some day. So, when the call for legislative action comes, be prepared. We must speak loudly and with one voice. Our retirees are treasured heroes to be honored, not old shoes to be discarded.

SAN FRANCISCO MAYORAL RACE

Supervisor Tom Ammiamo addresses Branch 214 union meeting Sept. 3, 2003 at the ILWU Hall in San Francisco. All mayoral candidates were invited to attend. Only Tom Ammiamo and Doug Comstock, representing Supervisor Angela Alioto, appeared. Most other candidates appeared at another scheduled event. Branch 214, after a debate, ended up without endorsing any candidate.
Those pesky bonuses

By Ivars Lauersons, Editor

The extra payment that management got on top of their salaries, that are commonly called bonuses, are technically called Economic Value Added (EVA) payments. It was started in 1995 and ended in 2002. Whether it actually added value to the post office is the subject of another article. So is the question of whether it rewarded merit.

At the request of our branch president, Tony Gallardo, we received a letter and information from Jo Ann Mitchell, Manager, Payroll Accounting in Washington, D.C. The letter says:

“This responds to your Freedom of Information Act request for payments made to employees assigned to the Oakland Performance Cluster which includes 940, 941, 943, 944 and 945.

“We are interpreting your request to mean FY 2001 Economic Value Added (EVA) payments made on December 14, 2001, and also the EVA Reserve Account Payout amount that was made on October 25, 2002.

“The enclosed report provides this information for the individuals and positions requested. Since the payment that is indicated on these reports, some employees may have had an adjustment to their EVA reserve payment. This process does not result in an updated report. This payout denotes the end of the EVA program.”

We print a partial list of the 2002 payments for the San Francisco Post Office. Information on payment in other cities of Branch 214 will appear in a future issue. As a point of information, the 2002 payment includes a payout of a reserve account and is nearly double the bonus figure for 2001. For example, Postmaster Rosemarie Fernandez received $11,486.80 in 2002, but only $5,657.68 in 2001.

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(The figures above do not show the cents in the payment.)
Governance by criminals

By Bob Yragui, retiree

Given the transparency of the Bush Administration and its lies, the unctuousness of its voice, and its unilateral contempt for any rule of law—whether Civil, International, Moral or Financial, then why don’t we make unto the Lord a not-so-joyful noise? It is not by accident or coincidence that the stock market of the past two years has lost roughly $6 trillion in value, the unemployment rate stands at its highest level in a decade and the current budget deficit of $450 billion is the highest level in the country’s history.

We see before us a government fitted to the specifications of not just any corporation—most of which preserve some sense of obligation to the public welfare and the common good—but an especially rapacious Corporation, more nearly resembling a criminal syndicate, intent upon looting the National Treasury. Who pays for their looting, burglary, and thievery? The taxpayer who is told nothing of these goings-on! The thundering silence of our news media and our nominally democratic politicians attests to the burglars and those who turn a blind eye (our politicians) to the rapacious criminality of Bush & Co.!

2) The security of our retirees; there is a recommendation that annuities and health plans for retirees be placed in collective bargaining. Retirees have earned the peace of mind of a predictable and secure retirement. This should not be placed in jeopardy every few years.

3) A pay-for-performance compensation program.
The report itself is 180 pages long. We don’t know which of the recommendation will be taken up by Congress or when. But we do know that the proposed changes if enacted would profoundly affect the lives of every Postal employee.

Full of potential risks

One thing is certain. For the Letter Carriers and the Union that represents them, the immediate future is full of potential risks to our livelihood as a craft and as a Union. If there were ever a time for each and every letter carrier to step forward and get involved, this is the time. Solidarity and commitment to our mutual and collective well being has never been more important. I am sure that each and every one of us will rise to the challenge.

This ends my report.
Respectfully submitted.
Tony Gallardo, President
San Francisco District/NALC Adjustment/Reversion Agreement

In order to facilitate possible full time letter carrier assignment reversions and letter carrier route adjustments in a cooperative manner, the San Francisco District of the United States Postal Service and the Office of Region #1 of the National Business Agent for the National Association of Letter Carriers [AFL-CIO] agree to the following:

Coverage of this agreement over any Post Office or Delivery Unit can only be done by mutual agreement between the San Francisco District Manager or his Designee and the National Business Agent or his Designee. The local Postmaster or his/her designee or the NALC Branch President or his/her designee may notify the other party of their desire to discuss adjustment of a letter carrier assignment(s). When such assignment is designated by either party, the incumbent letter carrier on the assignment, the NALC Branch President or his/her designee, the Delivery Supervisor covering such assignment, and the Postmaster or his/her designee will meet as soon as possible to discuss the workload, office time, street time, and adjustment of such assignment. All input, verbal or written, which either party believes to be pertinent will be discussed and considered. The goal of the parties will be to agree on the current length of the assignment, the method and means of adjustment, and the time frame by which an agreed to adjustment could take place. If no agreement is reached, that assignment will no longer be covered by this agreement, unless otherwise agreed to at a future date by the parties. Any agreement reached will be adhered to.

Supervisors and carriers will be encouraged to treat each other with respect for each other’s views, in keeping with the precepts of Sections 115.3 and 115.4 of the M-39 Handbook.

When a full time letter carrier duty assignment becomes vacant, it may be considered for reversion as provided by Article 41, Section 1. A. 1 of the National Agreement. If management considers such assignment for reversion, it will notify the appropriate NALC Branch of such consideration within five days of the vacancy. In such circumstance, management will review all current data for the assignment, including mail volume, auxiliary assistance, cartage of mail, undertime and overtime. If management believes that the data supports that reversion is warranted, i.e., either the data shows that the assignment does not consist of an average of eight hours or more of work per day or it cannot be adjusted to at least eight hours of work a day as possible, management will discuss the issue with the local union and they will consider all relevant data and contractual language, pertinent to that issue. If management and the Union agree

San Francisco District/NALC Adjustment/Reversion Agreement

on the reversion action, the assignment will be reverted. If the local parties cannot agree as to whether or not the data supports reversion, the applicable provisions of the National Agreement between the National Association of Letter Carriers [AFL-CIO] and the United States Postal Service will be adhered to.

If the full time assignment is reverted, it will become an auxiliary letter carrier position, if conditions warrant. If there are adjacent assignments that have identified undertime, management and the Union will meet with the carrier or carriers and attempt to reach agreement on an adjustment to bring those routes as close to eight hours as possible.

Nothing in this agreement is intended to deprive either management’s right to conduct six day count and inspections, pursuant to the National Agreement, nor to deprive a letter carrier the right to request and receive a special route inspection, in accordance with the National Agreement.

This agreement is intended to provide the NALC and Management with a means to make adjustments to letter carrier assignments with the least amount of disruption and acrimony and to facilitate information sharing and communication between the Union, Management, and Letter Carriers.

Either party may cancel this agreement for coverage over a specific Post Office(s) or delivery unit(s), provided it gives seven [7] days advance written notice to the other party. Such cancellation(s) will not be grievable. The efforts required by this agreement and this agreement itself will not be utilized or considered for any purpose whatsoever, excluding that which is expressed here-in, without mutual concurrence of the undersigned or designees.

Scott Tucker
District Manager, Customer Service and Sales
San Francisco District
United States Postal Service

Date

Dale P. Hart
National Business Agent
San Francisco Region #1
National Association of Letter Carriers
[AFL-CIO]