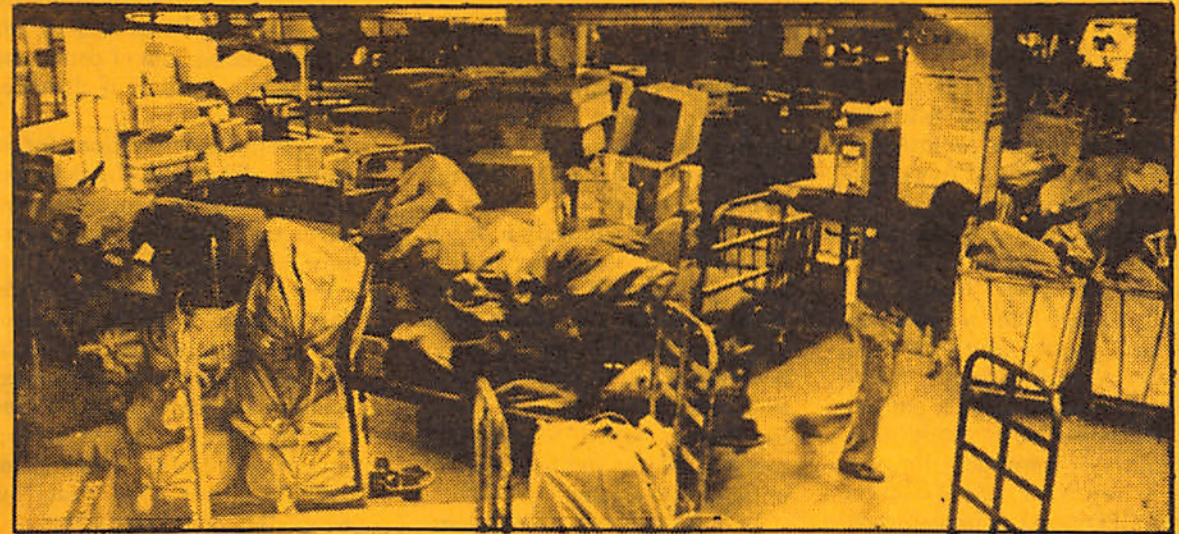


Excerpts from
GETTING TOGETHER
newspaper

**Postal workers get ready
for contract struggle**



Typical working conditions for postal workers, and getting worse all the time.

The present contract of 650,000 postal workers is due to expire on July 21, 1978. The upcoming contract has become a focus for organizing efforts by postal workers nationwide. They

are actively building a broad movement to fight for a better contract.

On the other side, the postal service is glorifying the workers' economic status and bragging

about their "high salaries" and "job security." The top postal union bureaucrats are warning workers not to expect much improvement this time, but that

continued

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“hopefully in the future we can go on the offensive.”

The truth of the matter is that workers have already gone on the offensive! In Florida, for instance, postal workers refused to work in a new postal facility. They demanded the removal of an elaborate security system with TV cameras and 2-way mirrors designed to spy on workers. In Chicago, workers who have been forced to work overtime for 2 years threatened to walk out unless the bosses immediately drop mandatory overtime. In the Bronx, New York, postal workers at the GPO raised an uproar when management tried to eliminate a whole shift, forcing workers to work at night and transferring others elsewhere — all without prior consultation of any type with the workers. At the largest Bulk Mail Center in the country in Secaucus, New Jersey, workers

have organized against speed-ups, overwork, shift changes and heavy surveillance and harassment.

Postal workers all across the country are raising the demand for a better contract. Some of the key issues include:

1. Stop the elimination of job positions. In recent years, the bosses introduced a nationwide reorganization to boost their profits. While this reorganization is supposed to “improve services” and “streamline” the system, it has mainly served to eliminate over 84,000 jobs and the speed-up of those who remain.

In past contract negotiations, workers won a no lay-off clause. This clause however has meant very little since the Postal Service has been by-passing the clause to eliminate actual job positions. They have closed down over 12,000 local branches, forcing workers to choose early retire-

ment or else travel long distances to work in hopes that workers will quit. They also stepped up harassment for “excessive” sick leave and “abusing” disability leave in a bold-faced attempt to get rid of more workers.

This is no different than an outright lay-off. Many workers have landed out in the streets with no job. For those who remain, they face increasing dangers of serious and fatal accidents as they try to make up for the work of those who have been forced out. Many have forced overtime of 50-60 hours a week for months at a time.

Workers are demanding the retention and enforcement of the no lay-off clause, as well as protection and increase of permanent jobs and elimination of all forced overtime.

2. Permanent positions for all workers. While the Postal Service has been cutting permanent positions, they have been hiring part-time and casual workers. These workers have no protection under the contract. They can be fired for no reason, get less pay, receive no benefits and only have a maximum of 180 days of work a year. The majority of casuals are oppressed nationality workers and are hired year after year, but never given permanent status.

Workers are demanding that the casual system be abolished at once and all postal workers be guaranteed permanent full-time positions.

3. Improve working conditions. The Postal Service is notorious for bad working condi-

tions. Everyday workers literally put their lives in the hands of the Postal Service and at the mercy of the greedy bosses.

Furthermore, with the recent speedups, workers are expected to cover more and more territory on their routes, sort mail whether by hand or machine at a faster rate, learn more than one mail scheme, and load and unload greater volumes of mail and do all this in cramped quarters.

Workers are demanding an end to these hazardous conditions. They are demanding better working conditions and an end to speedups and a reduction of weight limits.

4. Improvement of benefits. Another important concern is the general improvement of salaries and benefits. Workers are demanding a fully paid medical and dental package, the continuation of the retirement fund and a substantial increase in wages with full cost of living adjustment over the next years of the contract.

5. Eliminate the no-strike clause. A major section of the 1971 Postal Reorganization Act denied workers the right to strike. When workers lives are endangered due to unsafe working conditions or the bosses simply refuse their just demands, they should strike if all else fails. The right to strike cannot be taken away from postal workers!

Postal workers are also demanding the removal of the no-strike clause from the contract as it violates this basic right of the workers.

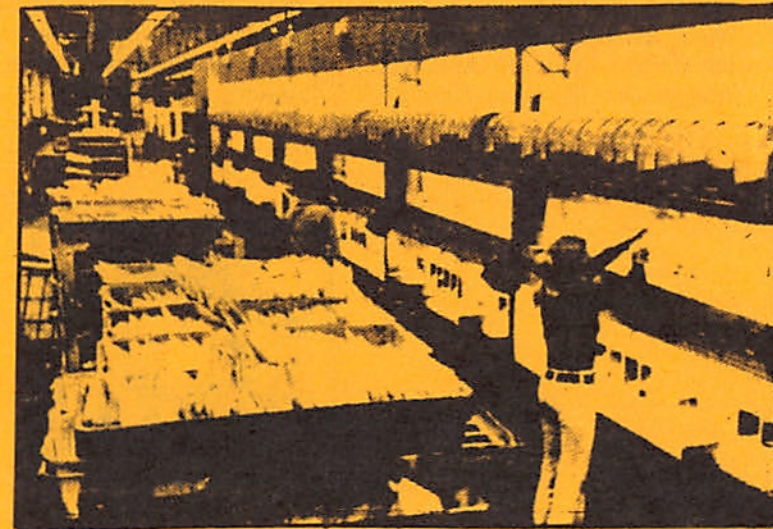
Unite in struggle

The demands of postal workers call for immediate attention. Workers should organize themselves now to fight around the issues that affect them on the job and raise them as part of the fight for a better contract.

Through the struggle, workers

jointly plan out actions in the unions and on the job.

These committees should take up immediate issues on the shop floor and also see themselves building greater unity among the workers in different job categories, crafts and different nationalities. They should develop mass and militant actions and rely



are realizing that they should rely upon the initiative of fellow rank and file. While not rejecting negotiations and established grievance procedures, they must not rely solely on these methods of struggle. These methods are usually dominated by the bosses and the postal union bureaucrats. They should utilize these methods in conjunction with broad campaigns among fellow workers. The formation of workers' groups, rank and file caucuses are important weapons to organize and

on the strength of the workers. They should link the struggles to the overall struggles of working and oppressed nationality people, and take up issues such as opposing the racist Bakke Decision.

Be vigilant against the union bureaucrats

A major obstacle in the upcoming contract battle are the heads of the four postal unions who have proven in the past that they are no “friends” of the workers. These bureaucrats are responsible for the present weak

contract. They brag about how hard they're working for the workers by running around in Congress getting votes on a piece of legislation. Meanwhile, tens of thousands of workers are losing their jobs or are facing speedups and deteriorating working conditions.

Because of the bureaucrats, many workers have refused to join the union. This weakens the union and thus the overall fighting strength of the workers. The struggle for the immediate de-

mands of postal workers goes hand in hand with the struggle against the trade union bureaucrats and for a union that truly fights in the workers' interests.

* * *

By keeping in mind the well-being of the majority, relying on the workers own efforts, exposing and isolating the union bureaucrats and building a strong fighting union, important victories for all postal workers in the upcoming contract battle will

surely be achieved.

In fighting to bring about immediate changes however, workers must look beyond the contract battle and see that the bosses will always try to take away any victories workers are able to force out of them.

Workers should therefore be vigilant, fight hard for immediate improvements and protect gains won, while recognizing that no fundamental changes are possible without ending this exploitative system.



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