

Acknowledging your work



**Philip
Dine**

The past few letters from the editor have focused on how best to assure that our efforts to deliver our message are effective. They've been replete with analysis of how journalists function and with ideas and suggestions on how to use that information as we deal with the media.

This month you'll get a break from all the advice and theory.

The aim here is simpler—to acknowledge the extraordinary work you're doing to get the message out.

So let's get right to it—with a single example that speaks volumes.

The Sept. 4 edition of *Postal Facts* (a regular feature on NALC's website, with each entry chronicling recent

media coverage of postal issues, including our own voices) is nothing short of astonishing.

It begins with President Rolando appearing in five (not a typo) Wisconsin newspapers after one of them ran an item asking mail subscribers whether their newspapers arrived late. Our president seized the opportunity to put the slowing of the mail in a broader context. His commentary was published by that paper, then by four sister publications, meaning that the piece essentially blanketed communities throughout central Wisconsin. And the papers helped further by asking readers to let their local postmasters know about delays and by urging readers to communicate with their representatives in Washington—and providing contact information to do just that.

Then we read that Vice President Lew Drass was interviewed by *Government Executive* for a 10-year retrospective on Hurricane Katrina and the devastation it wrought on New Orleans. Check it out for yourself—and let me know if you don't think the region's former national business agent did us proud in the way he portrayed the role of letter carriers during this historic event.

Meanwhile, Idaho State President John Paige continued his relentless work getting out the message with letters in two Idaho newspapers. Kearney, NE Branch 312 President John Nickerson had a sharply worded letter/call to action in the *Grand Island Independent*. And Carmel, IN Branch 888 President Ronnie Roush weighed in with letters in three Indiana newspapers.

Not to be outdone, Sioux City, IA Branch 69 President Eddie Lofland had letters in five newspapers. What made Brother Lofland's contribution remarkable is that it included being published in the biggest newspapers in three states—Iowa (*Des Moines Register*), Nebraska (*Omaha World Herald*) and

South Dakota (Sioux Falls' *Argus Leader*). He effectively covered a large swath of the Plains States via the region's dominant media outlets.

Buffalo-Western New York Branch 3 President Emeritus Robert McLennan's letter ran in the *Buffalo News*, the state's biggest newspaper outside New York City.

And we'll mention only a couple of highlights for the rest of the past month: Director of City Delivery Brian Renfroe's interview on NBC's "Today" show, and President Rolando's letter in the *New York Daily News* (one of the largest U.S. newspapers).

I've been dealing with labor and with communications for more than three decades, most of it as a working journalist. Early on, a grouchy but smart copy editor taught me not to hype things; among other points, he urged all who'd listen (and he had a loud voice) to avoid using the word "unprecedented." There's very little actually new under the sun, he said, and calling something unprecedented is almost always grist for a subsequent correction. Somewhere, there's been more snow or more flooding; at some point there's been a worse economic collapse or a bigger crime wave.

So I'm careful on that score. But I have no hesitation in asserting this: What you are doing is unparalleled in today's labor movement. Nowhere else is a fully engaged union membership doing so much, from national and local leaders to rank-and-file members, to shape the public discussion.

Three factors, I think, make this possible. Our union's homogeneity, with a single craft and a single employer, means we share the same interests and concerns. Moreover, letter carriers are respected and trusted, which gives us an edge when we seek to communicate our views. But these advantages wouldn't matter if NALC members at all levels of the union weren't willing to put in the time and effort to get the message out. Fortunately, that hasn't even been a question.

So, the only thing I'd like to add to this appreciation for what you're doing is to ask you to keep it up, to get even more voices out there in the public arena, and to cover every part of the country with the truth about the U.S. Postal Service and the value of letter carriers.

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