

Letter from the Editor

Going on eight months at the NALC, seven editions of *The Postal Record* (post-convention was a double issue) and six letters from the editor, I've had the opportunity to draw a few conclusions.

For starters, this is an inspiring place to work, one where the daily activities truly matter. Why? Because the NALC is advancing the interests of some of America's finest public servants while also fighting for what's right for the country and its economy, right for our local residents and businesses, and right in terms of common sense.

Moreover, this is an organization at the top of its game. Exercising the editor's prerogative, I'm going to single out the folks I work with in the Communications and Media Relations Department. Mike Shea, Joe Conway, Rick Hodges and Jenessa Kildall bring diverse backgrounds to their varying tasks; what they share are talent, dedication to this union's mission and members, and an instinctive sense of team play. A number of you have written or called to compliment the magazine, whether design, lead articles or Branch Items; now you know where the credit goes.

And yet, our union is in—and is in for—one hell of a fight. We are part of the largest federal civilian workforce at a time of mounting concern about public spending as well as anti-government fervor. On top of that, the Postal Service faces a fiscal crisis. Our situation involves nuances and complexities—pre-funding obligations, pension surpluses stemming from actuarial miscalculations—that don't lend themselves to the sound bites in style nowadays.

We face adversaries willing to oversimplify and mislead to advance their ideological goals, something facilitated by a fragmented media often more interested in inflaming than explaining.

Despite all this, I am optimistic that we will emerge from these challenges not just victorious, but stronger and more unified than ever. That optimism is based on three factors.

We have the issues on our side. As the nation's only universal communications network, the USPS is well positioned to adapt to an evolving society, indeed to help move that evolution along. The Postal Service has done remarkably well despite the recession and Inter-


net competition, largely because of letter carriers' productivity. As the nation's most trusted federal employees, we will play a major role in helping the Postal Service expand its services and boost its customer base.

Our issues aren't widely known, but they shatter the conventional wisdom and so, once heard, they resonate. One small example: A while back, a Midwestern radio station asked to have President Rolando on a Sunday program it was billing as "Is the USPS America's worst-run business?" The Communications Department gave the host our view about the real financial situation. Within minutes, he called back to say he'd revised his promos to local media as follows: "Is the USPS actually the best-run business in America, and no one knows it?"

That change in outlook didn't result from any Shakespearean eloquence on our part; it reflects the power of the NALC's position. To paraphrase President Rolando's well-received speech at February's Martin Luther King commemoration in Cincinnati: If you give Americans the facts and a little encouragement, they'll do the right thing.

Second, our leaders are highly focused on our agenda and united in its pursuit, aided by the fact that to a person they practiced our common craft. That provides a depth of knowledge and insight unmatched within the labor movement.

Most important, I'm optimistic because of you. As I noted in the first of these columns, I observed at the Anaheim convention—a grand three days after joining the staff—our delegates' energy and seriousness of purpose. Subsequently, I've heard from many members on a variety of topics. Sometimes it's as mundane as not getting your *Postal Record* on time—"Hey, I delivered two magazines this week on my route, so I know the new edition is out; where's mine?"—but even there, the sense of engagement and the desire to stay informed are striking.

These days, your calls and letters often address the turmoil in Wisconsin. Your drive to protect the rights of other workers, your understanding of how that relates to our own well-being, and your passion in all this, only reinforce my certainty that the NALC will be a formidable adversary for anyone who takes us on. 



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