

Letter from the Editor

As a reporter, I had two great beats—labor and defense—and the chance to cover some fascinating stories, including spending time with U.S. soldiers as the Army moved across the Kuwaiti desert toward Iraq, observing American officials combat illicit drug trafficking in Afghanistan and reporting on Eastern Europe's democratization after the Berlin Wall fell. I had inside views of the Teamsters' dramatic internal reform, the biggest strike by black workers in the history of Mississippi and the pivotal role labor played in the last presidential election.

But none of that was more riveting than watching you change the national debate about the U.S. Postal Service, by imparting information to tens of millions of Americans and their elected officials and thereby sparking a shift in attitudes around the country.

Only a few weeks ago, the accepted narrative was that the Postal Service has been losing billions of dollars a year delivering the mail because of the Internet, placing taxpayers on the hook and thus requiring that cuts be made. The rest was details—as in which service reductions made sense or whose post offices should be closed.

That wasn't only how the public saw it, but reporters as well. When journalists called seeking comments on the proposed cuts, and we provided context about the overall financial situation—no tax money for the past 30 years, the unique pre-funding mandate—they were startled, clearly hearing this for the first time.

That's changed dramatically. We now get calls on a regular basis asking about the congressional burdens, H.R. 1351 and the value of Saturday delivery. What has caused that shift in knowledge and instilled curiosity in folks who thought they knew the story?

You and your efforts have. We in the Communications and Media Relations Department can barely follow the numerous letters to the editor you write or keep up with your calls seeking advice on responding to a local news story. We are deluged with ideas about strengthening the message, and with requests to look over your ads for your local newspaper or edit a commentary submission. Whether active or retired, rank-and-file carriers to state presidents and beyond, from every corner of the country you are reshaping the debate.

President Rolando has set the tone. He misses no opportunity to get the message

out, whether to a big drive-time radio audience in southern California or a more-modest labor radio program in Cleveland. On one recent day alone, he was quoted extensively in a first-rate analysis of the Postal Service's "manufactured crisis" in the Huffington Post and also reached the 2.3 million listeners of National Public Radio's Diane Rehm Show. While visiting Buffalo, NY, to honor retirees, he generated outstanding TV and print reports about how to solve the Postal Service's financial problems; coverage facilitated by Branch 3 President Robert McLennan.

There's not been a single instance where we've asked a national business agent to quickly get someone on camera for a local TV newscast, where he or she hasn't come through. And always with good cheer. Region 15 NBA Larry Cirelli has put the same dogged determination into arranging access for a CNBC reporter to meet with New York City NALC officers as he has in getting information to a weekly suburban newspaper reporter or arranging a carrier interview for an NYU broadcast student reporting on the USPS for campus radio.

State presidents and local officers often have worked together to generate positive news coverage, as with Kansas State President Rod Holub and Salina Branch 486 President Brad Johnson in the Sunflower State.

A sign of the changed attitudes: The day I'm writing this, both a TV station and a newspaper in Grand Junction, CO, have called, wanting to tell the story of the pre-funding problem and the benefits of H.R. 1351. A couple of months ago, there weren't two reporters in the country talking like that—now, two in one day from one small town!

Much of the newfound awareness stems, of course, from the rallies our Legislative and Political Action Department put together on short notice, in coordination with our three sister postal unions. Observing up close the planning and effort that went into this, then seeing the results—in terms of the rallies and subsequent media interest—was impressive.

As I said, this has been one compelling story to watch. It's a story that you are writing. Sometimes in large numbers, sometimes a few minds at a time, you are moving the views of a nation. We face many obstacles, but we have momentum. Let's build on it. ☐



PHILIP DINE

EDITORIAL STAFF:

Managing Editor Philip Dine
Designer/Web Editor Mike Shea
Internet Communications Coordinator
Joe Conway
Writer/Editor Rick Hodges
Editorial Assistant Jenessa Kildall

The Postal Record (ISSN 0032-5376) is published monthly by the National Association of Letter Carriers. Periodicals postage paid at Washington, DC. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Membership Department, NALC, 100 Indiana Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20001-2144.

Subscription included in membership dues. First-class subscription available for \$20 per year (contact Membership Department).

© 2011 by the National Association of Letter Carriers.

Circulation: 287,000. Union-printed using soy-based inks.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS? Contact the Membership Department.

Follow us on the NALC Activist Alert Blog and on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube by going to NALC.org.

