



What, me worry?

Alfred E. Neuman, the face of *Mad* magazine, always had the opinion of “What, me worry?” whenever things did not seem to be going as hoped or planned. I almost wish I could take that attitude when dealing with the USPS and its “Damn the torpedoes; full steam ahead!” approach to the current Postal Service mess.

Now, do not get me wrong. Things do need to be addressed, and some corrections need to be made. But, you don’t tear the house down because the kitchen sink is dripping. Common sense would be to address the problem and prevent it from continuing to be a financial drain.

The current postmaster general (or whoever is calling the shots) is taking the position that to fix the financial drip, we should eliminate the majority of our processing plants and get rid of the assets (personnel and property) of the company. The closest that I can get to that rationale would be to eliminate the bridges because our highways need repair. Granted, you will not need the bridges if the roads are gone. But, if you consider the idea behind the roads and bridges in the first place, that does not fix the problem. It only eliminates the opportunity to use the roads.

Let’s envision the USPS with most of the employees (roads) gone. The buildings (bridges) that we use to get our product from Point A to Point B are gone. Even if we still get the product, we cannot provide the service. This is evident by the USPS changing its delivery time standards.

While Alfred E. Newman may see no need to worry, the discussions and, in some instances, proposed actions by our elected representatives give me cause for worry and a lot of concern. The proposals to fix what was not broken by those being attacked is nothing but an attack on our many years of slow but steady improvements in our pay and benefits. A list for some of the proposed “solutions” or “answers” to the USPS and the federal debt are:

- New COLA formulas that would have the effect of cutting future COLAs.
- Increase the retirement age for federal retirement.
- Retirement calculation on high-5 instead of high-3

earnings years. (It is estimated that this would cut annuity by approximately 3.5 percent.)

- Increase employees’ retirement contributions. (You would pay more into the plan, but would also get less because of the prior point above.)
- Increase employees’ contributions to health benefits. (This is geared toward active letter carriers, since the USPS pays more than other federal agencies toward our health benefits.)
- Remove the FERS retirement supplement for future workers. (This supplement is 30 to 35 percent of regular FERS retirees’ monthly income until age 62. This would mean these workers would have to work longer.)
- Cut some of the matching funds for the FERS employees’ TSP accounts. (In addition to working longer and paying more for your retirement, this would mean less available at retirement, since TSP was designed to be one-third of your retirement income.)
- Proposals for lower compensation benefits payable to those who are injured at work.

So, while I cannot attest to Alfred E.’s “no worry” approach, I can join him in being *mad*.

Retiree COLAs—The projected cost of living adjustment for CSRS federal retirees currently stands at 3.5 percent after the release of the August numbers. The final increase will be determined after the release of the September index. Watch your December *Postal Record* for the final numbers.

2012 health benefit costs—The premiums for the Federal Employees Health Benefit Plan have been released. The NALC plan had a very minimal increase for retirees. With the projected increase from our COLA and such a small increase in health benefits, our retirees hopefully can see a little relief in sight.

In regard to health benefits, I urge each active and retired member to take a close look at your union health plan. It does not receive top ratings for nothing. It is the best that your union dollars can buy. Support your union, yourself and your family by joining this year. You won’t regret it. ☒