

# Tune in to each other on the workroom floor



**Manuel L. Peralta Jr.**

**T**here is a problem on the workroom floor that calls for your assistance.

Years ago, as I walked through the doors of the post office for the first time, one of the first carriers who introduced himself and welcomed me to the station was the union steward. He was soon followed by a number of other carriers who did the same. I discovered that there was a strong union presence in my office, which in part was due to the fact that a number of the carriers in my station had become active in order to contribute to the union's effort to improve our working conditions or to protect the rights we had. They had run for office, and although they were not successful in their bids, they continued to care and they continued to contribute to improving our working conditions.

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In those days long gone, we spent up to three or four hours casing mail. Many times, we would receive “routing help” from carriers who were willing to pitch in and help others. We used to case our flats into a flat case and then put them in delivery order (routing flats) by hand. This was very helpful to the new employees or those not familiar with the route.

Shortly after I was hired, our shop steward moved on to another station, and I was asked to step forward to take his place. I was trained then certified as a steward, and I went to work protecting our National Agreement and the rights bargained therein. When I saw what I believed to be a violation, I would gather statements from other carriers and present our grievances.

In one situation, I noticed that the PTFs coming through the door at the end of the day were not clocking in from the street. I thought that this was rather odd, so I started to pay

close attention to it and decided to recruit other carriers to observe what was happening at the end of the day and keep a log of what they saw. They immediately volunteered to stand post and watch what was happening so that we had the evidence necessary to prove our case.

After a week, we requested time card records because we suspected that these PTFs were working off the clock.

We interviewed each of the PTFs and discovered that they had been told not to clock in at the end of the day. Management was hell-bent on making its numbers and had threatened the employees if they told anyone. We processed the grievance, and each of the PTFs received all the pay that they were entitled to.

We were successful in proving the truth of what happened because a number of letter carriers were willing to spend some time keeping an eye on each other and reporting what was happening to our new PTFs.

## **Today we are strangers on the workroom floor.**

We spend little time together in the office, and we are rushed to go out and deliver. We don't get to know each other, and we don't learn to care. We know strangers whom we meet on the Internet better than we know some of our neighbors and case mates. We don't talk much to each other, but we e-mail or text others who are someplace else.

We also spend time listening to the talking heads on a radio, many of whom poison our minds against unions and their value.

When something happens to another employee, we are just glad it did not happen to us, and we don't want to get involved. Management likes it when you look the other way and stay out of their business.

**We need you. We need your eyes and ears. We need you to report what is really happening. We need you to connect with your shop steward and the local union. We need you to keep our union strong and protect your rights long into the future.**

Re-ignite that sense of unity that we once had, and once you do, we will not be defeated.

## **March on Washington**

**Last month, in Washington, DC, we celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s famous “I have a Dream” speech. This celebration and all that will follow through the years remind us of the courage that it takes to make a change for the better in our society. It reminds us that every citizen can contribute to a change for the better and that when we band together, our voices will be heard.**

Many of the laws and federal regulations that we now take for granted may not have ever been dreamed of had it not been for that day.

Pitch in and make your future better.