We must be quiet as the grave, for you never know who is listening.

It wasn’t always like this. There was a time when there were good salaries and benefits, protections from brutal management, excellent service for our customers, and hope for an even brighter future.

That was back, back before the…

POSTAL APOCALYPSE
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It used to be just UPS and FedEx. Now there are delivery companies for every big box retailer, like Walmart. In addition to low-cost delivery companies that are out to make a fast buck, even though they deliver mail to the right addresses only half the time, are customers surprised anymore when one of the carriers throws away their mail, because the job is not worth the hassle and all pride is lost?

And forget rural America, with mail so slow now and the competition decimating it’s not worth delivering to them, they’ve been cut off. I’ve heard whispers of the horrors out there in the rural lands, where their medicine is, where their payroll is, and you can only shrug. How can you explain that mail has to go to a processing plant, when there’s a convenient access to the mailboxes, the delivery wars began, and now we must worry that the powerful entities who hoped to profit from the decay of the Postal Service, along with the competition deciding it’s not worth delivering to them, have their notice in time. Mail volume, and revenue, fell. Private delivery companies convinced Congress to pass another law funneling that money off to pay for their pet projects. Meanwhile, postal management took the opportunity to cut Saturday service. Businesses started pulling their mail out, wondering that people would get their notices in time. Mail volume, and revenue, fell. Private delivery companies convinced Congress to pass a bill to give them access to the mailbox. Not that there were many mailboxes left, they were replaced almost universally by clusterboxes. LaPS lost more volume to the competition, who cherry-picked the most lucrative high-income, urban deliveries, and so postal management needed to find more areas for cutting. Processes plants—outsourced abroad Tuesday mail delivery—eliminated post offices in small towns—boarded up or sold off Thursday mail delivery—eliminated. The cuts just kept on coming.

The cuts just kept on coming. It was not always like this. This used to be a good job for middle-class Americans. The nation’s veterans used to find solid jobs here after serving our country, but with so many cuts in workforce and pay, only those who can live on next to nothing can survive, the ones who are here were here to work second jobs or go on welfare to make ends meet.

And now here we are, the survivors, huddled like rats, we can only think of what we will do when they return to our routes, those who remain. Tell the story to others.
Federal law forbids the use of union members’ dues money for political purposes, so ever since the mid-1970s, NALC has made use of a political action fund known as COLCPE—the Committee on Letter Carrier Political Education—to solicit voluntary contributions from active and retired members to advance our cause on Capitol Hill.

“The money that’s collected for COLCPE goes to support candidates for public office who are on the record in support of letter carriers,” Rolando said. “It’s an important conduit that allows all members to get involved in the political process.”

COLCPE (pronounced COL-sep) supports in two ways candidates who support letter carriers.

With direct support, COLCPE helps such candidates fund their campaigns, helping them pay for costs of staff, advertisements, phone banks, literature and mailings. Printing and postage to reach voters costs money, but getting the word out to voters is even more expensive in the age of television and Internet advertising.

The average House district has more than 600,000 constituents. A candidate in a large state may have tens of millions of voters to reach. No candidate can talk to all of the voters in person. To compete, candidates must spend money on mailings, phone banks and advertising to get their message to the voters.

“As letter carriers, we want to give the biggest microphone to those candidates who support carrier issues,” President Rolando said.

The second way COLCPE helps is by supporting the release of letter carriers to work for AFL-CIO efforts to get out the vote for pro-labor candidates.

Released carriers primarily do direct voter outreach—contacting targeted voters by making phone calls and knocking on doors—to talk about what is at stake in an upcoming election.

“Letter carriers are natural campaigners,” Rolando said. “We know better than anyone how to go door-to-door, we’re not shy about talking to people and we have a lot of respect in the community. Voters listen.”

You don’t have to be released to help a campaign, Rolando added. “Contributing to COLCPE is the easiest and most important way to support the candidates who will stand up for us,” he said.

But the job isn’t done once the election is over. No matter who is in control of Congress or the White House, the union must stay engaged with the power brokers in Washington, to watch for and fend against bad legislation, and to help promote meaningful postal reform. That’s where you come in again, by becoming part of the e-Activist Network.

Open only to NALC members, the e-mail-based e-Activist Network allows messages from the union’s headquarters in Washington to reach your inbox in an instant, giving you the latest news from Capitol Hill and letting you know how you can take immediate action, if necessary.

“It’s on all of us to make sure congressional representatives know they work for the good of the American public,” Rolando said. “We must stay vigilant and remind them to maintain and improve the nation’s postal network for the good of our country.”

In this annual COLCPE issue of The Postal Record, we recognize the generosity of letter carriers who give a little extra to protect the jobs and way of life of all carriers. These supporters, both active and retired, donate to COLCPE in three ways:

Most choose the easiest way to provide steady support by signing up for a small deduction from their postal paycheck each pay period, such as $5 under the “Gimme 5” program. For less per day than the cost of a cup of coffee, a letter carrier can help ensure that COLCPE has a reliable source of funds to help guard his or her pay, benefits, collective-bargaining rights and job. These regular donors provide the bedrock financial support for COLCPE by ensuring a steady source of funds it can count on.

In addition to automatic payroll deduction, active or retired letter carriers can easily arrange for automatic deductions from a bank account, and retired members can contribute directly from their OPM annuities.

Carriers who made donations through automatic deductions in 2014 are recognized beginning on the next page of this issue.

Some carriers choose to send one-time donations by simply writing a check. Donors who made one-time contributions in 2014 are recognized beginning on page 80.

Letter carriers also give to COLCPE through group donations by participating in fundraising events held by branches, auxiliaries and state associations. Group donations in 2014 are shown on page 86.

“You insure your car, your home, your health,” Rolando said, “so try to think of COLCPE as job insurance.” For just a few dollars per pay period, he said, you can join the fight to protect your job and your benefits against the near-constant attacks against them.

For information on how to support COLCPE, call the NALC Government Affairs Department at 202-393-4695. Information on COLCPE and signing up for the e-Activist Network can be found at nalc.org.

Only by all of us working together can we hope to avoid a real postal apocalypse.