

## Talk to your people



**Mack I.  
Julion**

**I**f there is one lesson that we can take away from everything that has transpired this year, particularly with our government, it is how delicate our democracy is. We live in the greatest country in the world not only because of our form of government, but because of the brave men and women who protect us. The freedom and democracy we enjoy comes with a price, and as the saying goes, freedom is not free. There are those who paid the ultimate price and others who volunteered to do so. That's why every chance I get, I take the time to salute those who serve and show my appreciation for their service to our country.

Especially in these uncertain times, we can't take our democracy for granted because, as we see, the enemies to our independence are both foreign and domestic. So, to all our veterans: *Thank you, and happy Veterans Day!*

As a steward and local branch president, I would often have conversations with my management counterpart in the spirit of cooperation. The goal was to alleviate discipline and the filing of so many grievances. At some point, they would always justify their actions as a response to something the letter carrier *isn't* doing. They then would seek my assistance in getting my co-workers to comply with their "flavor of the month." They would insist that they are only "doing their job" and then say that if you "talk to your people," a lot of the of the workroom floor confrontations would cease. Usually, they refer to attendance or uniform violations, although sometimes, they may even cite work habits or failure to meet *unreasonable* expectations. They point out the cost to our employer and our mutual interest in maintaining a profitable and functioning Postal Service.

It is then that I remind them, likewise, that the violation of our contractual provisions by their people also is costly to our employer. In fact, it is more costly than the union time spent protecting our members from unwarranted discipline. I point out the cost to our employer of having to pay penalties and escalating remedies for repetitive contractual violations by their management team.

I would then suggest to them that they need to *talk to their people* about these violations, which are labeled as "non-compliance" with our national or local agree-

ments. These are not union or letter carriers' rules in our contracts, but rather mutually agreed-upon workplace policies by both the Postal Service and the union. When they don't abide by these rules, they are the ones not complying with the contract. And non-compliance is, and will be, costly to our employer. Sometimes they become very costly because remedies escalate. They don't and won't de-escalate! Just like progressive discipline, the objective is to deter future violations.

In this regard, it is not the union costing the Postal Service money, rather it is self-inflicted by rogue management personnel who are oblivious to the cost. As I have stated before, it doesn't cost the perpetrating supervisor anything to violate the contract because there is no accountability. Our new postmaster general (PMG), David Steiner, will surely at some point notice this financial burden if he hasn't already. I am equally confident that those around him will point the finger at "the money-hungry unions."

My advice for him would be the same as I shared with the previous PMG, Louis DeJoy, and the current deputy PMG, Doug Tulino, when I had the opportunity: "You need to talk to your people!" Postal management can always stop the escalating remedies by not violating the contract. They say coming to work on time in postal uniform isn't hard. I say adhering to our contracts isn't hard either; it is their job!

Finally, as we enter our holiday seasons with a spirit of gratitude, we embrace all that we are thankful for. Despite our challenges, we must continue to enter our "workplace" with thanksgiving and praise. Of course, we are blessed to have our families, but also our ability to provide, because of our jobs and the union that protects us. We all know from where our blessings flow, but we should also acknowledge our retirees, whose shoulders we stand on. The Postal Reform Act of 1970 and the strike that preceded it looms large now. So, a special shout-out and *thank you* to our retirees.

The picture below is from a group in Gary, IN, of Hammond Branch 580, and their president, Catherine Bodnar. I was honored to attend their event and promised I would put this picture in my article. Happy Thanksgiving to all!

