



## Bargaining with management

**L**ast year, we wrote about the union's duty and obligation to make management live up to its responsibility for providing safe working conditions in all installations and to develop a safe workforce. We also discussed the real voice of the employee and how you are treated and that we need to work on the abuse to which we are subjected. In November, we touched on accident analysis and learning from our accidents and injuries to prevent the same from happening to another one of our brothers or sisters.

We also discussed the importance of meeting with management and addressing the concerns that we have for the purpose of finding a solution.

**In furtherance of this statement, we draw a few words from the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA), which, in part, provides that:**

The inequality of bargaining power between employees who do not possess full freedom of association or actual liberty of contract and employers who are organized in the corporate or other forms of ownership association substantially burdens and affects the flow of commerce, and tends to aggravate recurrent business depressions, by depressing wage rates and the purchasing power of wage earners in industry and by preventing the stabilization of competitive wage rates and working conditions within and between industries.

Experience has proved that protection by law of the right of employees to organize and bargain collectively safeguards commerce from injury, impairment, or interruption, and promotes the flow of commerce by removing certain recognized sources of industrial strife and unrest, by encouraging practices fundamental to the friendly adjustment of industrial disputes arising out of differences as to wages, hours, or other working conditions, and by restoring equality of bargaining power between employers and employees...It is declared to be the policy of the United States to eliminate the causes of certain substantial obstructions to the free flow of commerce and to mitigate and eliminate these obstructions when they have occurred by encouraging the practice and procedure of collective bargaining and by protecting the exercise by workers of full freedom of association, self-organization, and designation of representatives of their own choosing, for the purpose of negotiating the terms and conditions of their employment or other mutual aid or protection.

We are covered by the NLRA. We have the right and the

responsibility to meet with our employer and to address the concerns we have related to wages, hours and working conditions whenever such concerns arise. The NALC at the national level bargains over wages, hours and working conditions; however, you, the union representatives at the local level, can and should be "bargaining" on a regular and ongoing basis over working conditions.

**Our National Agreement recognizes our rights to bargain with the employer over labor management issues, including safety.** Employees outside of the umbrella of a collective-bargaining agreement wish they had the mechanisms and protections that we have and sometimes take for granted.

Article 17, Section 5-A of the National Agreement in part provides that:

The Union through its designated agents shall be entitled at the national, area, and local levels, and at such other intermediate levels as may be appropriate, to participate in regularly scheduled Joint Labor-Management Committee meetings for the purpose of discussing, exploring, and considering with management matters of mutual concern; provided neither party shall attempt to change, add to or vary the terms of this Collective Bargaining Agreement.

Article 14, Section 4, Local Safety Committee, states:

At each postal installation having 50 or more employees, a Joint Labor-Management Safety and Health Committee will be established. In installations having fewer than 50 employees, installation heads are encouraged to establish similar committees when requested by the Union. Where no Safety and Health Committee exists, safety and health items may be placed on the agenda and discussed at labor-management meetings....

**We have the right to meet with managers, and they have the obligation to honor our right.** We have the right to bargain over working conditions, whether they involve matters of safety or not. Exercise that right.

Your purpose should be to report your concerns; describe what the problem is and seek a solution. If you have a solution, pose the solution. If you are seeking the employer's assistance in finding a solution, bring that forward. Our goals should be to find solutions to the problems we face.

Bargaining collectively takes place every day in the workplace. Work through your union to make our conditions better. ☒