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Volume Four

Marie Penington, Editor

November 27, 1990

Local 2505 Expands

The McAlester District became a part of Local 2505 effective 11/5/90. Employees voted by a 90 plus percentage to be represented by Local 2505 and AFGE. Local 2505 now includes the Ardmore, Enid, McAlester, Oklahoma City and Tulsa districts. The Local currently has about 235 bargaining unit members with about 55% of this number union members.

The Muskogee District is currently unrepresented, but an election is scheduled for 12/12/90. The Lawton District is in the National Federation of Federal Employee union (NFFE). NFFE represents about 2000 Social Security Field Office employees primarily in the Atlanta Region. AFGE has a petition pending with the Federal Labor Relations Authority requesting an opportunity for the NFFE represented districts to vote for AFGE representation. A hearing on the petition was held 11/15/90, and, as of this writing, the decision has not been made.

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GREENING

LIFE IN HELL

YOUR WORKING-DAY EMOTION CHECKLIST

9:00 AM <input type="checkbox"/> PURE GLOUMINESS	9:05 AM <input type="checkbox"/> CAFFEINE JOLT-DRAMA	9:29 AM <input type="checkbox"/> EARLY-MORNING STUPORATION	9:45 AM <input type="checkbox"/> SPLITTING HEADACHE #1	10:04 AM <input type="checkbox"/> MOMENTARY PANIC ATTACK	10:31 AM <input type="checkbox"/> CAFFEINE OVERDOSE	10:37 AM <input type="checkbox"/> PERVERTED DAYDREAMS	10:42 AM <input type="checkbox"/> MID-MORNING NUMBNESS
10:52 AM <input type="checkbox"/> SUDDEN FIT OF HOSTILITY	11:03 AM <input type="checkbox"/> LINGERING SULKINESS	11:09 AM <input type="checkbox"/> PRETENDING TO WORK	11:33 AM <input type="checkbox"/> REDUCED FLIRTATION WITH CO-WORKER	11:35 AM <input type="checkbox"/> TEMPORARY DEMENTIA	11:57 AM <input type="checkbox"/> "HEAD IN A VISE" FEELING	12:00 PM <input type="checkbox"/> JOYLESS LUNCH-EATING	12:09 PM <input type="checkbox"/> MIRTHLESS JOKE-TELLING
12:23 PM <input type="checkbox"/> BELCHING DISCONTENT	12:35 PM <input type="checkbox"/> SUDDEN AWARENESS OF ONE'S SULKINESS	12:47 PM <input type="checkbox"/> WAVES OF NAUSEA	1:00 PM <input type="checkbox"/> RESENTMENT OF OTDREAS	1:19 PM <input type="checkbox"/> EARLY AFTER-NOON CATATONIA	1:25 PM <input type="checkbox"/> SPLITTING HEADACHE #2	1:42 PM <input type="checkbox"/> GRAWING OF THE BOWELS	1:51 PM <input type="checkbox"/> THAT "NO WAY OUT" FEELING
2:06 PM <input type="checkbox"/> STRANGE TRANCE-LIKE STARE	2:30 PM <input type="checkbox"/> URGE TO MURDER BOSS	2:44 PM <input type="checkbox"/> FOOLING AROUND AT THE COPY MACHINE	2:55 PM <input type="checkbox"/> WHINING TO THE PERSON NEXT TO YOU	2:59 PM <input type="checkbox"/> UNREALISTIC PLANS TO QUIT THIS Lousy JOB	3:04 PM <input type="checkbox"/> MID-AFTER-NOON TORPOR	3:14 PM <input type="checkbox"/> EVEN MORE PERVERTED DAYDREAMS	3:36 PM <input type="checkbox"/> EMOTIONAL DEADNESS
3:47 PM <input type="checkbox"/> WAITING THE LACK	3:59 PM <input type="checkbox"/> WORRYING ABOUT SQUIRTY	4:01 PM <input type="checkbox"/> SPLITTING HEADACHE #3	4:09 PM <input type="checkbox"/> FEAR OF GETTING FIRED	4:25 PM <input type="checkbox"/> LOTTERY FANTASIES	4:33 PM <input type="checkbox"/> CONTEMPLATING TV TONIGHT	4:59 PM <input type="checkbox"/> UNCONTROLLABLE JUMPINESS	5:00 PM <input type="checkbox"/> TEMPORARY PERKINESS

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Spandex Vs Tie

In a recent development at the Albuquerque NM TSC, management has staked out a new ground of combat, dress codes. As we are all aware, there is no dress code at SSA.

Albuquerque staked out certain items as prohibited: shorts, tub tops, muscle shirts, halter tops, spandex, T-shirts (without covering dress coats), or jeans (without dress shirts). They have gone to war over blouses which are not tucked in, as well. Fridays are the exception, on that day (Grub Day) T-shirts and jeans may be worn together!

Does this remind you of your High School days? What puzzles us are several things. Why are there different rules for FRIDAY that makes clothing illegal on other days suddenly acceptable? We aren't aware that TSR's do anything different on FRIDAY than they do on other days of the week. The other matter that puzzles us is why the TSC located in the same building as the DOC has different clothing requirements? Neither group interviews the public face-to-face! Is management in the Albuquerque TSC convinced that the public can see TSR's through the phone lines? Are they now NOTED FUTURISTS who can predict the Agency's next move in the 800 number game?

We think that in a kinder, gentler agency dress codes are inappropriate, especially for those who never see the public. After all, TSR's like the rest of us are underpaid and overworked.

Management needs to stop thinking of themselves as school teachers with complete authority and begin to treat employees as co-workers. Cooperation, not subjugation, is the new style of management.

SOLIDARITY

Woman rejects lottery prize of car made at non-union plant

Risingsun, Ohio--Pamela Richards has become a folk hero at the auto parts plant where she works after refusing to accept a car made at a non-union plant on a televised Ohio Lottery game show.

"My union members are proud of me," Richards, a member of United Auto Workers Local 1435, said Wednesday. "They're proud I stuck with my union and didn't take the car."

Richards was one of four contestants competing for cash and Ohio-made prizes on "Cash Explosion Double Play," which was videotaped Friday and broadcast Saturday night.

When her turn came to choose from 24 boxes containing cash and prizes, she choose one that said she had won an Honda Accord, worth \$17,600.

She had the choice to either accept the car and end her participation or take the cash prize in the same box and continue.

"I don't want that Honda. I am union," she said, accepting instead the optional prize of \$1,000.

Overall, she finished last among the four contestants with winnings of \$6,400.

Her comment, however, never was broadcast. She said she was shocked to discover that censors deleted her reason for turning down the car.

"I didn't slam Honda. I just wanted to get across that I'm proud to be a union member," said Richards, who has worked 23 years at Toledo Precision Machining, a Chrysler Corp. subsidiary.

The UAW has been trying for years to organize employees at the Japanese automaker's U.S. plants in Marysville.

Bob Kowalczyk, marketing director for the Ohio Lottery Commission, said "offensive" comments are deleted from the audio portion of the programs, and Richards' statement was deemed offensive.

But in this case, the censors may have overacted, he said.

Reprinted from the Grand Rapids Press, Thursday, August 9, 1990.

JUMPIN' JUNKIE

Toad licking is newest high, DEA says

San Francisco--Licking toads will not give you warts or produce a fairy prince but it might get you high.

It isn't exactly an epidemic, but the Drug Enforcement Administration says toad licking is the latest way to hallucinate.

"It sounds like a fairy tale gone wrong, doesn't it?" said Robert K. Sager, chief of the DEA's laboratory in San Francisco. "Now, I don't think this is going to be a great problem because people don't go around licking toads as a habit."

The culprit: the Cane toad.

"They're beautiful toads," Sager said. "People like them."

The Cane toad, which can grow to the size of a dinner plate, produces a toxin called bufotenine, which the toad secretes to ward off predators. When licked raw, or cooked, the toxin acts as a hallucinogen.

In the Southwest recently, several dogs have died after eating Cane toads, and the DEA has had bufotenine turn up at its research labs from time to time after drug arrests.

The green-and-red toads produce the same toxin that is found in amanita mushrooms, cohoba seeds and other plants. Indians in South America have used the toxin for its mind-altering qualities for years in religious ceremonies, and some tribes have used it in blowguns to kill dinner.

Bufotenine is considered a controlled, dangerous substance and is therefore illegal. However, it is not against the law to own a Cane toad, a favorite of aquarium aficionados.

The toad was imported to Australia from Hawaii in 1935 to kill the Gray-back beetle, which was destroying sugar cane in Queensland. The toad adapted beautifully, multiplied in the millions and ate everything -- except the beetle.

Last fall, officials in Brisbane announced an elaborate plan to eradicate the poisonous toads, which today pose a major threat to the continent's fauna and wildlife.

In recent years, toad licking has become popular in the Australian outback, prompting Queensland's government to classify the toad slime as an illegal substance.

"That's how this whole cycle started -- a lack of dope in the Australian outback," said Sager. "There, they are killing the toads, drying the skins and making tea. Yummy, huh?"

Reprinted from The Grand Rapids Press, Tuesday, January 30, 1990.

National Contract Provisions On Leave Approval

There are a couple of significant improvements in the new National Agreement concerning your right to have leave approved about which you should be aware.

One provision involves the entitlement of an expectant mother to leave for maternity reasons. Article 31, Section 8 grants an expectant mother the right to have up to 180 days leave approved upon her request. Local management does not have the option of approving the leave in increments of lesser amounts. The prior contract stated that the expectant mother "may" have up to 180 days of leave approved. There were problems with some local management abusing their discretion under this permissive language. This abuse included such actions as approving leave in shorter increments, telling the new mother to resign if she wanted more time off and harassing new mothers to terminate their previously approved leave and return to work. These abusive practices probably occurred because certain management officials placed their "production statistics" above the employees welfare. Union negotiators felt that these abuses could be remedied only by eliminating management discretion in this area.

Article 31, Section 9 of the National Agreement "General Leave Policies and Practices" is a new provision. This deals with the time frames in which Supervisors must act on leave requests. The prior contract assumed that Supervisors would act on leave requests without undue delay. Unfortunately, this was too frequently not the case; therefore, Union negotiators insisted on language in the new contract to address this problem. Basically, requests for extended leave submitted in February and August of each year must be acted on within 10 work days after the end of the month in which they are submitted. All other requests must be acted on in a timely manner.

You should keep in mind the above provisions are entitlements under the contract. If you have problems with non-compliance in these areas, contact your Union representative.

Administrative Leave For Tardiness Due To Extenuating Circumstances

Bad weather will soon be upon us. The following is being republished as a reminder of your rights in event that you are unable to reach your office on time due to bad weather. It is important that you follow the steps outlined if you believe you are entitled to have administrative leave approved.

Authority: Personnel Manual For Supervisors (PMS) \$630-1, Appendix N, Dec. D 6. (This is enforceable under Article 24, Sec. 2 of the National Agreement.)

This issue usually arises during the winter when weather conditions prevent employees from reporting to work on time. However, the above references also apply to other unforeseeable events that create situations where it is not reasonably possible for employees to reach their duty station on time.

In order to protect your right to administrative leave, it is imperative that you follow the correct procedures. If you initially request annual leave, it is unlikely that you can later get it changed to administrative leave. This is true even though your Supervisor greets you with an annual leave slip for you to sign. It is your responsibility to raise the issue of entitlement to administrative leave. That is, your Supervisor has no obligation to initiate the action to accord you this benefit. The following steps should be taken to protect your rights to administrative leave.

1. Prepare a SF-71 to request administrative leave and a detailed narrative to explain the circumstances that prevented you from reporting to work on time.
2. Submit the SF-71 and narrative to the Supervisor. The Supervisor must either approve or deny the request timely. You are not required to submit a annual leave request unless the Supervisor denies the administrative leave request.
3. If the Supervisor denies the administrative leave, you should submit a SF-71 for annual leave. The Supervisor's denial may be grieved with either an individual grievance (Art. 24, Sec. 9) or a Union filed grievance (Art. 24, Sec. 10). Usually a Sec. 10 grievance will be used if more than one employee is affected.

Additional Points

1. It is not possible to win relief on the basis that the Agency should have closed the office. The Union has arbitrated this issue and lost it. It was ruled that the Agency has the right under the law to decide whether the office will be open or closed.
2. Relief must be based solely on the employee's own individual circumstances that prevented him/her from reporting to work on time. The fact that certain employees qualify for administrative leave does not mean that other employees in the same office should also be entitled to have administrative leave approved. The fact that an employee reports to work is prima facie proof he/she was reasonably able to do so. This is true even though that employee believes he/she made a greater effort than other employees who did not report.
4. A denial cannot be sustained based on an arbitrary Agency decision to not approve over a certain number of hours for each employee.

IF NTEU Comes Around

Over the next few months, you will probably encounter people who identify themselves as representatives of NTEU. The following is to give you some background on what this is all about. NTEU stands for the "National Treasury Employees Union." It is essentially a Treasury Department based organization, but it does hold exclusive recognition in the SSA Regional Offices and parts of the Customs and Immigration Services. The NTEU leadership decided a few years ago to challenge AFGE's exclusive recognition in SSA. In order to do this, they have to get signatures from at least 30% of the employees represented by AFGE in SSA and file a petition with the Federal Labor Relations Authority (FLRA) for an exclusive representative election.

The window for filing a petition for an election starts 60 days prior to the expiration of the Union-Agency contract and continues until they reach an agreement on a new one. Our current AFGE-SSA national contract expires Jan. 25, 1993. The NTEU leadership originally planned to make this challenge when our last contract expired June 11, 1988. However, they changed their plans when they concluded that they lacked the capability to be successful. Instead, they decided to prepare for a challenge when the current AFGE-SSA contract expires Jan. 25, 1993. It appears they are trying to get employees names and addresses for their mailing lists.

NTEU evolved as a substantially different type of organization from AFGE. It is essentially run from its National Office while AFGE is structured as a federation, and individual locals have a high degree of autonomy. In other words, NTEU is very much an up and down controlled organization much along the lines of a federal agency. The current NTEU President, Robert M. Tobias, runs a very tight ship. If a local official does not "toe the line", the employees in that local are essentially out of representation and services.

Legislative action is a very important function of any federal sector union because Congress is the ultimate employer. NTEU does not have a program of legislative "nuts and bolts" activities like AFGE. They rarely have inperson testimony or lobbyists who work with appropriate committees. NTEU's legislative efforts are frequently limited to submitting written testimony for the record. For example, NTEU was totally absent from the legislative activities designed to defeat former Commissioner Hardy's agenda to close field offices. Also, NTEU was only proclaiming its support for a change in the method of setting federal employees pay while AFGE lobbyists were working with the appropriate Congressional committees on provisions of the 1990 Federal Employees Comparability Act. If you end up on NTEU's mailing list, be aware of the claims in the material that you receive. It will be very likely that NTEU leadership will be taking credit for accomplishments in which they had little or no involvement.

An SSA Office Scene

FRANK & ERNEST

