
A F G E - THE SSA WORKER'S UNION

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HURRICANE ANDREW DISASTER RELIEF

Following is a letter from AFGE National President John N. Sturdivant

This week the lives of hundreds, and perhaps thousands, of AFGE members and federal employees changed forever when Hurricane Andrew devastated parts of Florida, Louisiana and the Bahamas. Many lost their homes, their possessions, and their livelihood and face the prospect of starting over with nothing but their will to overcome this disaster.

These AFGE members and federal employees desperately need our help. Two AFGE entities have established special funds and mechanisms to get this badly-needed assistance to those who need it most in the areas ravaged by the hurricane.

-- The AFGE Fifth District has established a disaster relief fund to gather as much financial aid as possible to be distributed to AFGE members only. All donations to this fund will be placed in a separate account and distributed to those who have the most need, as determined by the Fifth District Executive Committee. Checks should be made payable to: AFGE Disaster Relief Fund and forwarded directly to the Fifth District Office at 510 Plaza Drive, Suite 2510, College Park, Georgia 30349.

The Fifth District is also asking for food and supplies needed by the storm victims to be sent to the stricken area through the AFL-CIO State Federation or AFL-CIO Labor Council. Suggested items are: paper goods, batteries, flashlights, portable radios, bedding, air mattresses, toiletries, clothes, shoes, baby food, diapers, baby wipes, towels, bottled water, canned and boxed food, utensils, matches, and tools. These items are only suggestions, any non-perishable donations are sorely needed.

-- AFGE's National Immigration and Naturalization Service Council has established a relief fund in conjunction with the INS management to help INS employees wiped out by the storm. So far, 65 employees are known to have been seriously affected by the hurricane, but local conditions prevent a full accounting and the numbers are expected to rise as more employees return to work.

The INS Council and five AFGE locals have already pledged \$10,000 to this important joint labor/management effort. Checks should be made out to the Hurricane Andrew Relief Fund and forwarded to: Hurricane Andrew Relief Fund, Mildred Williams, L-3123, P.O. Box 3192, Atlanta, Georgia 30302.

The INS Council also has arranged for supplies to be distributed to INS employees who are victims of the storm. Non-perishable items and supplies, as listed above, should be forwarded to: Edward Calejo, U.S. INS, Krome FIC 18201 Sw 12tn, Miami, Florida 33194.

This terrible storm has been devastating for those who were unfortunate enough to be in its path. Any help you can provide is important and will be greatly appreciated by those who are beginning the very difficult process of rebuilding their lives.

EDITORIAL

by Richard J Perry

Just as you can almost always count on running out of gas when you're as far as possible from a gas station, you can rely on the nation's newspapers and Tv around Labor Day to carry pieces about how unions have "outlived their usefulness."

Have they? Let's ask some questions, and then decide.

- * Would employers provide their workers with health insurance if unions weren't there to insist on it? Even if they did provide some kind of insurance, would it be as good as what the unions have won?
- * Without unions serving as the watchdog they are, would the government enforce the Occupational Safety and Health Act?
- * Without the protection offered workers by union contracts, would a lot of employees end up losing their jobs because they wouldn't allow themselves to be abused?
- * Would employees of huge corporations get the respect, dignity and security they have if they didn't have a union backing them up?
- * Without unions there to make sure the law is enforced, wouldn't a lot of employers try to cheat workers by paying less than the federal minimum wage, or refusing to pay overtime?
- * Without a union to turn to for help, wouldn't a lot a women be subjected to sexual harassment -- and be afraid to speak out for fear of being fired?

No, unions have not outlived their usefulness. They are needed today as much as ever. Until government truly watches out for the American people, until business takes the view that civilized behavior toward employees and consumers is more important than the bottom line, there will be a need for unions -- for the ability of workers to unite and speak as one. Count on it.

Reprinted courtesy of Union Labor & Service Trades Department, AFL-CIO.

"Now," said the teacher, "which boy can name five things that contain milk?"

"I can!" shouted a freckled-faced youngster. "Butter an' cheese an' ice cream an' two cows."

The Kleinknecht Encyclopedia

AFGE-SSA AGREEMENT ON UNIFORM REASSIGNMENT POLICY

Perhaps you will recall a notice concerning the Union membership vote on this Agreement was circulated in late June 1992. The union membership has voted to ratify this Agreement and Commissioner King has signed it. This Agreement will be implemented on September 14, 1992. Once this Agreement is implemented, employees will see a major change in the way selections for reassignments are made.

Basically, this Agreement takes away Management's authority to arbitrarily make selections for reassignments. Instead, selections will be the result of the process as provided in the Agreement. Also, Management must treat all employees selected for reassignment in a comparable manner. The major provisions of this Agreement is outlined below.

1. Standard procedures for advertising all vacancies to be filled by reassignment. SSA is prohibited from filling vacancies by reassignment unless they are first advertised.
2. Standard procedures to be followed in determining who will be selected if the number of qualified applicants exceed vacancies to be filled. In other words, this eliminates selection based upon management preference.
3. Qualifications must have been set and identified in writing (in advance).
4. Standard selection procedures to be followed in event the Agency finds it necessary to fill vacancies through involuntary reassignments. This prevents management from arbitrarily selecting less favored employees for forced relocation.
5. The only exceptions to the standard selection procedures will be hardship cases. All request for the hardship case exceptions must be approved by the President of the National Field Office Council. This will insure fair and uniform Agency application hardship criteria.
6. Adequate official time for employees to complete their relocation move. (i.e.: Employees will not be required to use their annual leave.)
7. Adequate official time for employees to prepare for work after they have reported to their duty station. (i.e.: unpack materials, set up new work area, etc.)
8. Payment of relocation expenses for all reassignments that resulted from applications that there were filled in response to advertised vacancies.

AFGE CRITICIZED HOUSE ACTION; URGES SENATE TO ADEQUATELY FUND SSA PROGRAMS

In floor action on July 28 the House set the SSA administrative appropriations at approximately \$1.5 million less than proposed by the Bush Administration. The cuts would have a drastic impact on SSA's disability program which is already experiencing large backlogs and long processing delays.

National President John N. Sturdivant issued a news release criticizing the House action and urging the Senate to adequately fund SSA programs. "Cutting the funding for the administration of vital Social Security programs at a time when staff cuts and increased backlogs have already severely hampered the agency's ability to service the American public is ludicrous."

Sturdivant noted that from the outset, the President's budget request for SSA operations was dangerously low. "Now the House has reduced that figure by some \$1.5 million, in effect, paralyzing programs that millions depend upon for their survival."

"AFGE urges the Senate to rectify this serious mistake and adequately fund Social Security programs before disabled and elderly Americans across the country are financially destroyed by this gross error," Sturdivant added.

Sturdivant noted that this recent House action further reinforces the need for SSA's administrative accounts to be taken off budget. Sturdivant urged SSA employees to contact their Congressional members and demand support for H.R. 2898 and S.2117, which call for the agency's administrative accounts to be removed from the budget cutting process.

LOCAL SCOOP

This is the third in our series of articles. Featured this time is Executive Vice President Robert R (Bob) Smith.

Born in Claremore, Ok around the end of WWII. Grew up in Okmulgee Ok. Graduated Okmulgee H.S. 1963, was such a good student that they tried to keep me for an extra year. Attended Univ. of Oklahoma (Harvard of the Southwest), got a B.A. in Area Studies in 1/68. Was commissioned as an Army Officer at the same time. In Army until 6/72. Back to OU in Graduate Business School. During this time was a manager of the Student Services Store on the OU campus for 2 years, and on the Board of Directors for 6 months.

Came on duty with SSA in the Chicago Region in 8/76, after a few months as Assistant Manager of a grocery in Norman, Ok. Was T-16 CR and CS in East St. Louis Illinois and Gary Indiana districts. Transferred to Dallas Region (Tulsa) in 3/83.

Currently married with one child (a son, 26).

Was president of the old Local 2387 before merger with 2505. Have been Administrative Officer for the Dallas Region since 10/84 and EVP of Local 2505 for three years.

Editor's note. Who will be next?

AMERICAN QUILTERS PROTEST CHINESE MADE REPRODUCTIONS

Remember the famous slogan of the Ladies' Home Journal, "Never underestimate the power of a woman?" In this case it's women quilters.

The Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. has quilters up in arms because original American quilts are being reproduced in China and offered for sale in U.S. catalogs.

The Smithsonian earns extra revenues by licensing the right to reproduce some of its collections. In July 1991 the Smithsonian signed a three-year contract with American Pacific, which employs 20,000 workers, giving them access and the Smithsonian name for the development and marketing of quilts. Four quilts were selected and American Pacific began making the reproductions in China, using American textiles for the applique, with Chinese-made backing and batting. The pieces were cut and sewn together by machine, then quilted by hand.

Quilters have no problem with the reproduction process but feel the work should not be sent offshore. "That's why there aren't any jobs here," said Viola Canady, a noted Washington quilter. "If it must be reproduced, it should be done right here in America." Each quilt takes over 50 hours of labor by three or four workers.

For over 200 years quilters have met to create and stitch American quilts, some with historical, religious or political themes woven in. The quilts have garnered enough recognition to be on display at the National Museum of American History. One of them, made in 1830 by Susan Strong of Frederick, Maryland, bears the design of the Great Seal of the United States. This is one of the quilts being made in China.

One local quilting instructor felt the reproductions were poorly constructed. She reported that the tag which indicates country of origin was inconspicuously placed in a side seam and could easily be snipped off. Others, reported The Washington Post, stated that this has in fact been done and the quilts were sold as family heirlooms.

Senator Albert Gore, Jr. (D-TN), who displays an Americana quilt in his office in support of the newly acclaimed National Quilting Day which takes place the third Saturday in March, said that "quilting is not a lost art. It is alive and well in our own country, in the hands of our own craftspeople."

Several quilting groups banded together on the first National Quilting Day in front of the American History Museum protesting these treasures being reproduced in China. They are also asking Congress to take steps to discourage the creation of jobs in China which has a record of human rights abuses and trade infractions.

Reprinted from Union Label and Service Trades Department, AFL-CIO.

POETRY CORNER

while looking back at my mistakes
I'm sure I'll fail to see
The opportunities ahead
A beckoning to me.

Agnes Wilkins Cross

WILL REPRESENTATIONAL ACTIVITIES COUNT AS QUALIFYING WORK EXPERIENCE?
(FLRA SAYS THAT IT DOES)

If a recent FLRA decision to issue a Complaint is sustained, Agencies will be required to give credit for time as a Union representative for promotion purposes. Jeffrey S Saul was a Claims Representative and long time Union representative in the Seattle Region. He applied for a Management Analyst position under the merit promotion process. He included his activities as a Union representative as qualifying job related experience. He was notified by the Regional Personal Office that SSA did not grant credit for union representational activities.

Jeffrey A Saul filed an Unfair Labor Practice Charge against the Agency with the FLRA. The Federal Sector Labor Management Relations Statutes prohibit discrimination against employees because of their Union representation activities. He charged that SSA's refusal to grant him credit constituted discrimination because of his Union representational activities. The FLRA agreed and issued a Complaint against SSA. The next step in the process is a hearing before an Administrative Law Judge which was scheduled for August 25, 1992; however, the decision will not be available until late September. If the FLRA's Complaint is upheld, Union representational activities could help improve your chances of promotion.
