

# APWU

## A Brief History



# You can't know where you are going if you don't know where you have been



Beginning with the formation of the General Postal Union in 1874, postal unions have struggled to improve working conditions for our members.

## The Labor Movement has Accomplished SO MUCH for Working Families



Unions have long been part of our nation's history, fighting for better pay, safer working conditions, health care, retirement benefits, education and civic participation.

Some accomplishments of the labor movement are:

- The weekend!**
- 5-day workweek**
- 8- hour workday**
- Paid Vacation**
- Sick Leave**
- Overtime pay**
- Pensions**
- Workplace safety**

- Collective bargaining**
- Child labor laws**
- Equal pay laws**
- Americans with Disabilities Act**
- Wrongful termination Laws**
- Right to strike**
- And many more...**

# The Labor Movement has Accomplished so Much!

Unions have brought together diverse voices; our struggles have elevated the working conditions and standard of living of all who labor.

In the APWU, our involvement has created an inclusive union where all people are respected, celebrated, and united to achieve a common goal. Our constitution embraces all, regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, age, geographic/ economic background, education or different thinking and communication styles.

## Early Postal Unions

### **PRIOR TO 1970:**

- We had no say about wages or working conditions.
- We had no bargaining rights.
- A major focus of union activity was lobbying Congress.
- There were many postal unions, with separate organizations for clerks, mechanics, letter carriers, special delivery messengers, and drivers, to name a few.



# The Early Years

## POSTAL WORKERS WERE BOUND BY THE TAFT-HARTLEY ACT OF 1947

Passed in 1947, the Taft-Hartley Act is officially known as the Labor-Management Relations Act.

Among unionists, it is known as a “slave labor” act, because it prohibited the closed shop (where employees must become union members before they are hired), outlawed general strikes and secondary boycotts, prevented unions from giving money to political campaigns, and allowed for the president of the United States to seek an 80-day injunction against striking workers.

## The Stage was Set



- In 1970, postal employees’ pay was set by Congress.
- Full-time postal employees earned roughly \$6,200 annually. Workers with 21 years of service averaged just \$8,440.
- From 1967 until 1969, postal workers received no pay raises.
- Many postal workers qualified for welfare.
- Strikes by postal workers and other federal employees were illegal.

# The Great Postal Strike

In March 1970, the Senate Post Office Committee finally announced a small pay raise for postal employees, but the meager increase didn't even keep pace with inflation.

Simultaneously, Congress approved a 41% pay raise for themselves.

Congress' action triggered the Great Postal Strike.

The strike began on March 18, 1970, and lasted just eight days. More than 200,000 picketing workers fought for a living wage.

The strike disrupted mail service and brought business correspondence to a halt.

The public clamored for a resolution.



## WHAT THE STRIKE ACCOMPLISHED

As a result of the strike, the *Postal Reorganization Act* was signed into law on August 12, 1970.

The law granted unions the right to negotiate with management over wages, benefits and working conditions.

It also took the responsibility of setting postal rates out of the hands of Congress by establishing the Postal Rate Commission.

The first contract signed after the strike raised the starting postal salary to \$8,488.



## THE APWU IS BORN

On July 1, 1971, five postal unions joined together to create the *American Postal Workers Union*.

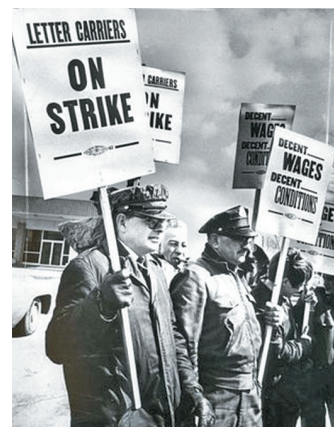
**United Federation of Postal Clerks**

**National Postal Union**

**National Association of Post Office & General Maintenance Employees**

**National Federation of Motor Vehicle Employees**

**National Association of Special Delivery Messengers**



# Collective Bargaining



Collective bargaining affects more than wages and benefits.

- Union teachers bargain for smaller classes.
- Union nurses bargain for better patient care.
- We'll be bargaining to save America's Postal Service.



**Article 23 of the United Nations**  
***The Universal Declaration of Human Rights***  
***"Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests."***  
—Adopted in 1948

Collective Bargaining is considered a fundamental human right.

It is a benefit to the economy and society as a whole because it empowers its citizens.

Aside from compensation, Collective Bargaining allows for:

- Fair performance-rating systems
- Whistleblower protection
- Upward mobility
- Proper training and mentoring
- Career advancement opportunities
- The ability to hold the employer accountable



*"The reason why collective bargaining is recognized as an international human right is that the compromises resulting from a process in which workers have an autonomous voice reflect principles of dignity, equality, and democracy consistent with human rights principles"*

~Statement issued by Human Rights Watch  
on February 26, 2011

# What are the Motives

*behind closing Post Offices  
and reducing services?*

*It's a step towards privatization.*

## IT'S A STEP TOWARDS PRIVATIZATION.

"Privatization is a concept in which wealthy elites seek to turn everything that was historically considered part of the public domain into an activity or resource that can provide the billionaire class with an opportunity to extract profit."

~Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine*

## SONGS RELATED TO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING & LABOR UNIONS:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=duXkLD4W9wk>

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7eQqm\\_W68-A](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7eQqm_W68-A)



