

ACTIVIST

NALC

A NEWSLETTER FOR BRANCH LEADERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LETTER CARRIERS
VOL. 12, NO. 3
SUMMER 1997

NALC part of changing labor movement

...involving members

NALC branch leaders know the importance of **organizing** letter carriers—getting people to join the union. Local leaders also know that the process doesn't stop when carriers sign up. Members must be informed and educated—and also inspired to participate in day-to-day union activities. The ability to **mobilize** members in this way is the hallmark of a truly effective branch.

Unions nationwide are beginning to recognize that mobilization of members may well be the key to organized labor's success. Getting members to turn out—to be part of union activities—builds union strength and effectiveness. The AFL-CIO is gearing up for new campaigns to mobilize union members within their communities (see the accompanying story, "...building Union Cities"). And NALC local leaders should also work to mobilize their

continued on page 2

...building Union Cities

Imagine living in a town where your union membership earns respect and admiration. Imagine that every time workers anywhere in town are treated badly—locked out, fired, laid off—a solid picket line of union members from all walks of life materializes within an hour to protest that employer's action. Imagine walking past playgrounds and new day-care centers built by employers as a result of family-oriented union contracts.

No, you're not over the rainbow or on the planet Vulcan. These kinds of scenes may soon be reality anywhere in America if unions join together in a new program, Union Cities, being promoted by the national AFL-CIO.

"Union Cities is really just a way of revisiting what local labor unions and central labor councils should be doing all along," says Northern Virginia Branch 3520 pres-

continued on page 10

INSIDE

Your contract:	
Limited-duty assignments	5
Compensation:	
Resources updated.....	7
Skills for leaders:	
Motivating volunteers	14



See page 3 for "USPS by the numbers," a new feature to appear in the NALC Activist showing facts and figures about USPS operations, employment and wages.

Involving members

continued from page 1

members to aid the branch.

But how can NALC branch leaders help members make that decisive step from passively paying dues and accepting union services to being committed, energetic participants in all facets of union activity? In an Fall 1994 *NALC Activist*, "Building the participative branch," NALC local leaders provided details of how they design branch programs and activities to encourage member participation. This story will look at the *reasons why* such programs work, particularly how branch leaders can increase feelings of commitment that lead to action.

Some recent studies of union member participation may provide clues to this process. This story will present some of the ideas that researchers have developed and show, with examples from earlier *NALC Activist* stories, how these ideas have worked in the real world.

Beliefs and action

People who study human behavior very often begin by making some basic observations that, once stated, seem very obvious. However, these statements are necessary because they provide the foundation for future research. Researchers at Pennsylvania State University, for example, began their study of why people participate in union activities with the basic assumption that **actions are based on beliefs**. Union members, therefore, will participate in an event only if they believe that their participation has meaning either to themselves or to other people that members care about.

At the same time, **successful actions strengthen beliefs**. A steward may be able to convince a member to

come to a union meeting by telling the member that something directly affecting the member's work will be discussed. The member begins to believe that the union has something to offer. If, at the meeting, the member does indeed learn something useful, then that member's belief in the value of the union will be strengthened and the member will be more

**Actions fuel beliefs,
and successful
actions strengthen
beliefs.**

likely to participate in another union activity—which will again strengthen the member's beliefs and lead to still more action, and on and on in a giant circle.

So the challenge for union leaders is how to get people to take that first step—to begin to believe in the value of union activities.

In times past, branch leaders might not even think about such an issue. People came into the letter carrier craft knowing about unions and what they have done for working people. Workers were predisposed to believe in the NALC and to value participation in union activities. Today, however, many workers may have little or no information about the history of organized labor and most likely have heard nothing but negative comments about unions.

One branch leader interviewed for a Winter 1994 *Activist* story, "Finding tomorrow's branch leaders," pointed

out that negative images of unions are indeed affecting today's letter carriers:

"You run into people who have some resistance to the values represented by the union, who gripe about the union telling them what to do," said Steven Wooding of Tacoma, Washington Branch 130. "You can find that attitude in people who are older as well as younger. And I've seen people really turn around in their thinking once they learn more about NALC."

Two kinds of beliefs

Paul Clark, professor of labor studies and head of the research team at Penn State that is studying union member participation, suggests that local union leaders make specific plans to influence union members' belief systems. Many NALC leaders may already be using some of Clark's strategies, intuitively understanding that beliefs do lead to action. However, researchers also recommend special planning sessions aimed at developing ways to build members' belief in the union.

ACTIVIST

**A NEWSLETTER FOR BRANCH LEADERS OF THE
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LETTER CARRIERS**

VOL. 12, NO. 3

SUMMER 1997

Published quarterly by:

National Association of
Letter Carriers
100 Indiana Ave., N.W.
Washington, DC 20001-2144

Vincent R. Sombrotto, *President*

Sue Dawson, *Editor*



© 1997

In making such plans, branch leaders must first recognize that there are two basic kinds of beliefs that will inspire people to take action. The first kind, called "behavioral," is what we all know as *acting in your own self-interest*. You choose to believe in an organization and then participate in that organization because you recognize some positive outcome for yourself.

The second kind of belief, called "normative," can be thought of as adopting beliefs of key people in your life—role models whose opinions you value. Peer pressure—doing something because everyone you know is doing it—is also a kind of normative belief. You want to fit in with the majority.

What works best, as Paul Clark and other researchers have discovered, is a strategy that simultaneously builds up *both* kinds of beliefs. Appeal to members' self-interests *and* provide strong role models who can influence beliefs by their example.

Although it may seem manipulative to appeal to members' self-interests, effective NALC branch leaders have known for years that people will more readily do something for the union if they believe the union does something for them.

In a story in the Spring 1995 *Activist*, "New member signups = NALC strength," one branch leader put it this way:

"You've got to start with concrete facts that mean something to each individual," said Phil Rosenfeld of Central Florida Branch 1091. "Health benefits, life insurance, the union credit card—these are good, strong programs with a lot of appeal to new carriers."

Such appeals to members' self-interests obviously can be especially effective in organizing campaigns. To mobilize people who are already members, however, branch leaders may need to find more creative appeals to self-interest. To get members to attend social functions, for example, branch leaders may want to stress elements such as fun and food. Athletic activities can bring members out, but make sure you're offering a really appealing activity, as does Akron, Ohio Branch 148 in this example from "Having fun, growing strong," in the Spring 1996 *Activist*.

"The absolute best way to get people together is to offer them something to do that's relaxing, with absolutely no stress or demand," says Anthony Heitic of Akron, Ohio Branch 148. Every summer, members of his branch from 10 stations all over the city come together to enjoy a golf outing. The event usually draws about 100 members, many of whom take advantage of the low-key social setting to reaffirm common bonds.

Even when the activity being promoted is more serious and less obviously "fun," appeals to members' self-interest

USPS

BY THE NUMBERS

Accounting Period 9 (May 1997)

<u>USPS Operations</u>	Number	Chg from SPLY*
Total mail volume year-to-date (YTD) (billions of pieces)	134.0	3.6%
Mail volume by class (YTD in billions)		
First-class	79.2	1.3%
Priority Mail	0.7	15.0%
Express Mail	0.1	6.0%
Periodicals	7.3	2.7%
Standard A (bulk)	54.2	7.0%
Standard B (parcels)	0.7	3.9%
International	0.3	-11.5%
Daily DPS letter mail volume (pieces)	112 million	49.5%
Percent of total letter mail	25.1%	—
City routes with DPS mail	104,523	26.2%
Percent of total	61.4%	—
Daily delivery points (millions)	128.8	1.4%
Percent city	75.6%	—
Percent rural	24.3%	—
City carrier routes	170,170	-1.0%
Rural carrier routes	58,267	5.4%
Net Income (\$millions, YTD)	\$ 1,339	-16.3%
Total Revenue	\$40,865	2.2
Total Expense	\$39,526	3.6
<u>Employment/Wages</u>		
City Carrier employment	239,049	-1.8%
Percent union members	91.5%	—
Percent career employees	98.2%	—
City carrier casual/TE employment		
Casuals	6,368	29.5%
Percent bargaining unit	2.7%	—
Transitionals	4,186	26.4%
Percent bargaining unit	1.7%	—
City carriers per delivery supervisor	20.3	-3.0%
Career USPS employment	760,488	-0.1%
City carrier avg. straight-time wage	\$16.90/hr.	2.9%
City carrier overtime ratio (overtime/total work hours)	10.0%	—
Ratio SPLY	9.1%	—

*SPLY = Same Period Last Year

This information compiled by the NALC Research Department from USPS Reports.

can generate a positive response. In a Spring 1990 *Activist* story, "Grassroots lobbying can build the union," Jimmy Kelly of Castroville, California Branch 269 described how he motivated members to lobby against a Congressional bill to place the Postal Service off-budget.

"I sent a letter to every carrier in the branch, timing it so that it reached them on the day that we got a pay raise. I pointed out in the letter how that raise—how all of our pay and benefits—are really tied to that off-budget bill. My philosophy is to take these issues that can seem abstract and unreal to a lot of people and link them with something that has a lot of meaning and power in their lives—like pay."

Setting examples

As branch leaders begin to consciously structure events and activities to appeal to members' self-interests, these leaders should also develop plans to influence beliefs by providing strong role models for carriers—people on the workroom floor who routinely express their own strong beliefs in the union's effectiveness. Although stewards are clearly the best role models, other union activists should also be encouraged to speak out and provide positive examples.

A story in the Fall 1993 *Activist*, "Stewards on the workroom floor: Role models for union activism," described a survey conducted by

Penn State's Clark and other researchers that revealed the importance of "informal socialization experiences" between members and stewards. Such experiences can range from a few minutes' conversation on the workroom floor to more formal standups and training conducted by

members' beliefs in the value of the union. After all, if the steward is clearly an important person, the union must be important, too.

In previous *Activist* stories, branch leaders around the country have described steward recognition programs that range from having stewards wear identify-

ing badges to providing specialized training. Each effort to distinguish and reward stewards pays off by boosting letter carriers' awareness and appreciation of their stewards. In many branches, members respond to their stewards by asking questions about the contract and "talking up" the union on the workroom floor. A Winter 1990 story,

"Everyday activism: Building the union on the workroom floor," noted such payoffs.

Of course all the efforts described above take time and commitment from branch leaders. It may seem much easier simply to accept members' dues and offer them information via the branch newsletter. But by making these conscious efforts to mobilize members, branch leaders not only build union strength for today, but also create a powerful tool to help win union battles in the years to come. Active, mobilized members pour strength and solidarity not only into their own union, but into the entire American labor movement. Working people everywhere will benefit whenever union members gather together in mutual support and solidarity. ■



the steward. Peoria, Illinois Branch 31 steward Randy Brown describes how she spends time every day making efforts to reach out to other carriers.

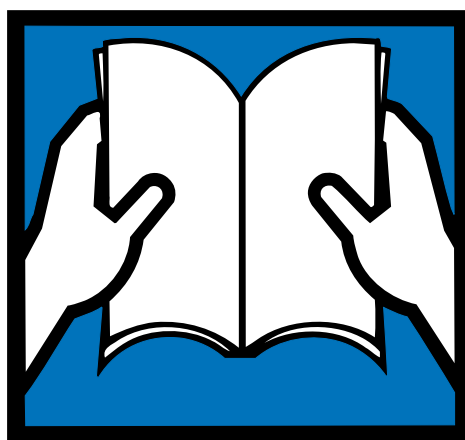
"I do a lot of things to kind of keep a watchful eye. I'm usually in the station a half-hour before my start time to talk with people. I'll try to find time to help someone out if they're new, to buzz over and give them a hand. And it's nothing unusual for me to call carriers at home in the evening if I've heard they've had a problem."

The dedication and effort shown by such stewards needs to be recognized and rewarded by branch leaders. By giving stewards a high profile in their stations, NALC local leaders help build members' respect and admiration of stewards—and strengthen

A case of wrongful assignment

It's always traumatic for letter carriers to sustain an on-the-job injury. In the beginning, there's the pain and stress of the injury itself. But the nightmare often continues even after the worst physical effects of the injury have passed. Too many times, carriers suffering a disability as a result of their injuries face another struggle when they are ready to return to work—the battle to get an appropriate limited-duty assignment.

The NALC has won protections for letter carriers seeking limited-duty assignments. As described in the *National Agreement* and the *Employee and Labor Relations Manual* (ELM), Postal Service management must follow a specific procedure in making limited duty assign-



ee's present craft or occupational group." A careful reading of this case will reveal the procedure for making appropriate limited-duty assignments and how to tell when management violates that procedure. With such knowledge, NALC stewards can help carriers fend off undesirable and inappropriate work assignments.

The facts

The situation leading to this case began in May 1992, when the carrier in question injured her back while working. She took a week off and returned to a limited-duty assignment for the next four months. She resumed her regular duties in September 1992. Her back problems returned, however, in August 1994 and she was again given limited-duty assignments.

In November 1995 she received a letter from the Postal Service saying that the Office of Workers' Compensation had informed the Postal Service that she had reached maximum recovery from her job-related injury and that OWCP also said that she could not perform the full duties of a city carrier. Therefore, Postal Service management gave her a new assignment as a part-time flexible modified distribution clerk. She would be guaranteed 40 hours of work per week except during a holiday week when she would only be paid for the hours she actually worked. She would also lose her seniority, which dated from May 1979, and become junior to the current junior PTF.

The grievant accepted this job offer but noted that her acceptance was "under protest." She stated that managers repeatedly told her that if she

medical limitations as defined by the employee's physician—ignoring the applicable provisions of the ELM and the National Agreement. It is irrelevant that the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs then endorses the Postal Service's recommended job assignment simply because OWCP agrees the job is within the employee's medical limitations. OWCP has no knowledge or interest in the Postal Service's obligations under the contract and the ELM. But these obligations do exist. Consequently, before sending a job offer along the bureaucratic trail to OWCP—which is at the same time the job assignment is presented to the employee—management must make sure that the job not only meets the medical limitations the employee's physician has set forth but **also** management's responsibilities in accordance with Article 13 of the National Agreement and Section 546.141 of the ELM.

The contractual and ELM requirements set forth management's obligations to **minimize disruption and change for the carrier**. As the ELM states, management must "make every effort...to reassign the concerned employee within the employ-

Management must minimize disruption for the carrier.

ments that is intended to minimize dislocation and change for the carrier. This procedure appears in Article 13 of the contract and Article 546.141 of the ELM (See "Know your contract" on page 7.)

A recent regional-level arbitration decision (C-16339), however, reveals management's tendency to ignore this specific procedure. As in this case, too often Postal Service injury compensation specialists make job assignments based solely on the carrier's

turned down the clerk's job she would be reported to OWCP as being uncooperative and would then lose her job.

NALC filed a grievance on her behalf stating that the terms of the job offer violated the *National Agreement*

The grievant signed under duress.

and in particular, the section of the ELM detailing the procedure management was to follow in making limited-duty assignments. The grievance progressed to arbitration.

NALC's position

At the arbitration hearing, the grievant testified that she was intimidated into accepting the clerk's position. She was the sole support of her young son and also her aging parents and could not risk the possibility of losing her job. The grievant also testified that other disabled letter carriers at her station had been kept in the carrier craft for as long as seven years even though they could not perform carrier duties.

The grievant's immediate supervisor also testified on her behalf, noting that the grievant had, until November 1995, ably performed such carrier work as she could, including casing almost every route in her zone. The supervisor stated that such work always existed in the grievant's station and that the grievant's disabilities could be easily accommodated without her having to take a job outside the carrier craft.

The union advocate noted that in all previous grievance meetings and discussions, management stated that an injury compensation specialist had made the determination to put the grievant in a clerk's job. The ELM, however, requires that management conduct a thorough analysis of all available and appropriate work before moving an employee out of his or her original craft. By blithely accepting the recommendation of someone unfamiliar with the job possibilities at the carrier's facility, management essentially ignored the requirements of the contract and the ELM to make "every effort...to reassign the concerned employee within the employee's present craft or occupational group."

Without any such consideration, the Postal Service forced the grievant to change her craft and lose her seniority, changed the hours she worked and forced her to work holidays because she no longer received holiday pay as a PTF clerk. The NALC asked that the grievant be returned to the letter carrier craft and that any pay she lost as a result of her change in status to a PTF clerk be restored to her,

USPS position

The Postal Service advocate confirmed that managers at the grievant's station had indeed followed the recommendation of an injury compensation specialist by offering the grievant a clerk's job. The postmaster testified that he routinely relied on such recommendations in cases in which OWCP had determined that employees had reached maximum medical improvement. He admitted that other carriers in the same facility were performing limited-duty work similar to that which the grievant had performed. In fact, one carrier had been on such an assignment since 1990.

A Postal Service injury compensation specialist testified that limited duty is a temporary accommodation for employees with on-the-job injuries. It was management's position that disabled employees should be assigned new jobs. Although it would be best

Installation heads must aid and assist employees.

to keep such employees within their original craft, this is not always possible. She also testified that in no instance would an employee be forced to accept any offer of limited duty. The employee can always appeal the assignment. Finally, the specialist gave as her opinion that it didn't matter that the grievant accepted the job under protest. Acceptance of a job is acceptance in all cases, and should be considered binding.

The Postal Service advocate also pointed to Article 3, the management rights clause of the *National Agreement*, which gives management the right to maintain the efficiency of its operations. The postmaster's testimony showed there were no jobs that the grievant could perform as a carrier; the injury compensation specialist's testimony revealed that her decision was neither arbitrary nor capricious, and finally, the grievant herself had accepted the position and should be required to continue in that work.

The arbitrator rules

In rendering his decision, the arbitrator first addressed the question of

whether an agreement signed under protest is a legally binding agreement. He reviewed the general principles of contract law, which are relevant because the letter of acceptance that the grievant signed was essentially a contract between herself and the Postal Service.

The arbitrator determined that although the job offer had many of the characteristics of a valid contract, it lacked one essential element: both parties must agree to the same thing, or have a "meeting of minds" about what the contract is. In common law, the presence of any elements such as fraud, mistake, duress or undue influence remove any possibility that the parties have such a meeting of minds.

The grievant's disabilities could have been accommodated.

What was clearly present when the grievant signed the job offer was duress, the arbitrator determined. Although the Postal Service and OWCP later stated that the grievant could have appealed the job assignment and was not forced in any way to sign the letter, the reality in the grievant's mind was that if she did not sign, she might lose her job. As the arbitrator wrote, "The grievant was faced with the full force and power of the United States Postal Service and the U.S. Department of

Know your contract

Language concerning management's responsibilities in finding appropriate limited duty assignments is found in Article 13 of the National Agreement and also in the Employee and Labor Relations Manual, Section 546.141. The arbitrator's decision in this case relied primarily on the following passages:

Article 13, Assignment of Ill or Injured Workforce Employees. Section 1, Introduction: B. The U.S. Postal Service and the union, recognizing their responsibility to aid and assist deserving full-time regular or part-time flexible employees who through illness or injury are unable to perform their regularly assigned duties, agree to the following provisions and conditions for reassignment to temporary or permanent light duty or other assignments. It will be the responsibility of each installation head to implement the provisions of this Agreement within the installation, after local negotiations.

Section 4, General Policy Procedures: A. Every effort shall be made to reassign the concerned employee within the employee's present craft or occupational group, even if such assignment reduces the num-

ber of hours or work for the supplemental work force.

After all efforts are exhausted in this area, consideration will be given to reassignment to another craft or occupational group within the same installation....

D. The reassignment of a full-time regular or part-time flexible employee under the provisions of the Article to an agreed-upon light duty temporary or permanent or other assignment within the office...will be the decision of the installation head who will be guided by the examining physician's report, employee's ability to reach the place of employment and ability to perform the duties involved....

ELM, Section 546.141. Obligation: When an employee has partially overcome the injury or disability, the USPS has the following obligation:

a. Current Employees...The USPS must make every effort toward assigning the employee to limited duty within the employee's craft; in the work facility to which the employee is regularly assigned; and during the hours when the employee regularly works; that work constitutes the limited duty to which the employee is assigned. ■

Labor's Office of Workers' Compensation Programs. The threat of the loss of her job was real...Thus, she signed under duress and, under recognized contract law, she is not bound by the agreement and she can void it."

The arbitrator then considered the union's argument that the Postal Service had violated the contract by summarily reassigning the grievant from the carrier craft to the clerk craft. As the arbitrator noted, the clear

intent of Article 13, Section 1.B. is that installation heads take full responsibility to "aid and assist" employees who have suffered illness or injury. As Article 13.4.A states, "every effort shall be made to reassign the concerned employee within the employee's present craft."

An earlier arbitration decision, issued in December 1989 by Arbitrator P. M. Williams, further clarifies the meaning of this language. Arbitrator Williams wrote that the

clear implication of Article 13.4.A is that “USPS officials will exercise the utmost of good faith” before assigning an employee to another craft.

In the instant case, the postmaster had testified that no carrier work existed at the grievant’s station. However, the grievant and her immediate supervisor testified that work was indeed available, and that other carriers had been performing that work, some for years. The arbitrator wrote, “It would stand to reason that an office with 90-plus carrier routes and over a hundred mail carriers would have no difficulty in accom-

It is the steward’s job to monitor all offers of limited-duty assignments.

modating an employee with a job-related disability.”

In this case, despite the clear implications of the contract, the installation head had obviously made no effort to fulfill his contractual responsibility to find appropriate work for the grievant. The arbitrator ruled, therefore, that the grievant should be returned to the carrier craft. Her seniority should be restored and should include the time she spent in the clerk craft. If the postmaster maintains that no appropriate carrier job exists, he cannot simply state that as a fact but rather must show that such work doesn’t exist.

Note to stewards

This case highlights a situation that occurs far too frequently when carriers request limited duty assignments. The contract requires that management make every effort to provide assignments that are as close as possible to the work the carrier was doing before the injury. The proper procedure, therefore, is for management to review the carrier’s medical limitations as defined by the carrier’s doctor, and for a Postal Service injury compensation specialist to propose an appropriate assignment within those limits. Management should inform OWCP of the assignment at the same time that the assignment is offered to the carrier.

More often than not, however, management passes the buck and blame to OWCP, submitting the carrier’s medical limitations along with a assignment description to a person completely unfamiliar with the scope of letter carrier work. OWCP then determines if the assignment is within the employee’s medical limitations and management offers that job to the carrier.

For carriers recovering from traumatic injury, the struggle to achieve an appropriate job assignment can seem overwhelming. These carriers may assume that because OWCP approves a job assignment, it must be the only job available. The truth, however, is that **management must make a good-faith effort to keep the injured carrier within the same craft, work schedule and location.**

Also, as this case brings out, neither the contract nor the ELM places time limits on how long a carrier can work a limited duty assignment although management has written into the EL-505 (Injury Compensation Handbook) a one-year restriction on limited duty—a restriction that is currently being grieved by

the NALC along with other provisions of the Handbook. Testimony in this case revealed that some carriers had been working limited duty assignments for seven years or more.

Management must make a good faith effort to keep the injured carrier within the same craft, work schedule and location.

Recovery from the effects of injury may take years; it’s important to remember that if such a recovery takes place, the carrier can return to regular carrier work.

It’s the steward’s job to monitor carefully all offers of limited duty assignments and to investigate thoroughly any such offers that require a carrier to change craft, location or hours. Stewards should also be alert to any management attempts to place a time limit on any limited duty assignment.

Remember that carriers who are recovering from injury or illness are often confused and exhausted by the reams of red tape they have already confronted. When NALC stewards take the lead on pursuing the issue of an appropriate job, they act to ensure fair treatment for all carriers—and that may be the best “medicine” of all. ■

COMPENSATION

Using OWCP resources: The '90s version

NALC stewards and other local leaders are most likely well aware of the maze of rules and procedures surrounding letter carrier claims for compensation for on-the-job injuries or illness. Although such rules and procedures can be complicated, there are specific tools to help stewards find the information they need to assist carriers having problems with OWCP claims.

Some new resources have recently become available that can expedite such efforts. If you have access to the Internet, you can tap into several Web sites providing essential reference information. In addition, OWCP has updated and revised *Injury Compensation for Federal Employees*, its basic handbook for employing agency personnel. And the standard reference tools, including NALC's *Injury Compensation Manual*, are still available.

Here's a quick guide to current resources providing information and guidance about handling OWCP claims and problems.

- **World Wide Web (WWW) pages:** There are a number of government home pages that provide ways to access information about OWCP claims. The most comprehensive source of information is the home page for the Federal Employees Compensation Act (FECA). One direct way to access this page is with the address (URL) in the box below. This is a cumbersome address and WWW experts may be able to find a shortcut through other government pages. However, once you reach the FECA home page you can "book-mark" it and therefore never have to type the whole address again.



The FECA home page lists an index of information about OWCP claims, procedures and cases that is available to the public. The index is constantly revised and updated, so it's worth a periodic check. As of mid-June, the index contained the following items:

- District office addresses and telephone contacts.
- An introduction to the FECA program.
- Agency timeliness in submitting injury notices. This new item is a set of tables showing by agency the percent of employees' notices of injury or illness (Form CA-1 or CA-2) submitted to OWCP within 10 work days (or 14 calendar days), as required by OWCP's regulations. NALC officers may be interested in learning that USPS comes in with slightly more than 50 percent of claims processed

in a timely way—the highest rate for any federal agency, although obviously inadequate.

- The contents of the pamphlet, *When Injured at Work* (Pamphlet CA-11).

- *Questions and Answers about the Federal Employees' Compensation Act* (Pamphlet CA-550).

- The handbook for employing agency personnel, *Injury Compensation for Federal Employees* (Publication CA-810).

- A listing of blank OWCP forms that can be downloaded and printed if the user has appropriate software.

- A resource library that includes the text of all FECA laws and regulations, program procedures, and text of decisions of the Employees' Compensation Appeals Board.

Also included is an index to all the bulletins, circulars and transmittals OWCP has issued since 1986.

One great advantage of having computer access to all this information is that you can conduct on-line searches for sections of the law, OWCP regulations, and previous ECAB decisions that may be relevant to the claim you are handling. Newcomers to Web-browser-type search engines may need to access the "help" files available concerning this search process.

Generally, you can search for specific words or strings of words in the

To access OWCP information on the World Wide Web, use the following "address" (URL):

http://www.dol.gov/esa/public/owcp_org.htm

From this home page, click on "Division of Federal Employees Compensation" to reach the information described in the above story.

available text. Once located, this information can be downloaded to your own computer. After downloading the text you need, you can either print out the text for others to read or incorporate the text into your own documents supporting the OWCP claim you are handling.

Tried and true

Although computers provide speed and convenience in locating relevant OWCP material, you can still get necessary information from the low-tech world of conventional printed documents. These include NALC's *Injury Compensation Manual*, first printed

in 1982 and periodically revised and updated. You can order your own copy for \$35 from NALC Supply Department, 100 Indiana Avenue, N.W., Washington, DC 20001.

In addition to NALC's manual, you can obtain general information on the FECA plus copies of OWCP publications by writing the Technical Assistance Advisor at your nearest OWCP district office and asking for an "OWCP Technical Assistance Kit" and copies of both Publication CA-550, *Questions and Answers About the FECA*, and Publication CA-810, *Injury Compensation for Federal Employees*, OWCP's handbook for employing agency personnel.

Finally, NALC stewards and local leaders should be familiar with Section 540 of the *Employee and Labor Relations Manual* (ELM) dealing with injury compensation. This section of the ELM includes the Postal Service's detailed procedures for day-to-day application of the law and OWCP's official rules. It also reflects management's agreements with NALC, such as the procedure for assigning limited duty to current employees who have partially overcome compensable disability. NALC leaders who do not have a copy of the ELM should obtain a copy from local management. ■

Union cities

continued from page 1

ident Bob McCeney, who is also president of the Northern Virginia Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO.

The traditional role of CLCs across the country has been to bring together local union leaders in meetings and other joint programs for mutual aid and assistance. Several *NALC Activist* stories have highlighted some of these programs and the roles that NALC branch leaders have taken within CLCs (for example, "Change in the wind: New strength in local labor councils," Winter 1996; "Working with local labor councils," Summer 1989; "NALC and Central Labor Bodies," Spring 1987.).

Today, the AFL-CIO is making sea-changes in its approach to CLCs, looking to expand and strengthen the work of such bodies as part of a program of far-reaching change aimed at revitalizing the American labor movement.

The original idea to use CLCs as

vehicles for these kinds of changes came from the CLCs themselves. More than 200 leaders of CLCs, including NALC's Bob McCeney and other NALC activists, met last year in Denver, Colorado to discuss what the labor movement should look like at the CLC level.

Union cities expands and strengthens CLCs.

"We developed a resolution for all CLCs to adopt that was a strategy for building strength and involvement of our members," McCeney explains.

The result: Union Cities, a proposal to rebuild union effectiveness from the bottom up.

The 200-plus CLCs around the country are encouraged to adopt the Union Cities initiative and begin working to achieve Union City status. These CLCs would commit to eight specific steps (see box on page 13). The CLCs that have joined the Union Cities program resolve to work together to educate and motivate their members, defend the right of workers to join unions, help organize new members and create a powerful new political voice that speaks for working families at all levels of government.

Once the steps are accomplished, the CLC earns the title, "Union City." Each year a special AFL-CIO committee will evaluate CLCs progress toward Union City goals. Perks for becoming an official Union City include wide publicity sponsored by the AFL-CIO, extra consideration for AFL-CIO resources—including AFL-CIO meetings and conventions,

advertising and media campaigns, investments from union pension funds and programs such as "Union Summer" and "America Needs a Raise."

To Bob McCeney and other NALC branch leaders who are embracing the Union Cities concept, the true reward of such an effort is the enhanced strength and solidarity of all working people in their communities. "We're all in this together," says Springfield, Massachusetts Branch 46 president Jon Weissman, who is directing part of the Springfield CLC's Union Cities program. "It's not so much a question of what will we—the NALC—get out of participating in a thing like this—but rather, what's going to happen to us all if we don't participate?"

Eight steps

"At first glance, some of the eight steps to Union Cities may seem irrelevant to NALC members," notes New Haven, Connecticut Branch 19 president Ed Halloran, also active in New Haven's CLC which has endorsed the Union Cities initiative. "But each of these steps is designed to build strength for all unions." For example, the first step asks local unions to commit more resources to organizing—the suggested figure is 30 percent. In NALC branches like New Haven, already highly organized, such a commitment would seem unnecessary.

"Yes, NALC branches are highly organized compared to many other unions," agrees Northern Virginia's Bob McCeney. "But rather than dismissing that step as meaningless, we can look at ways we can use our particular strength in that area to help other unions. Some of our local officers who are demons at organizing may be able to coach or train people from other unions, for example."

And because one step of the Union



Members of Branch 3520 march in July 4 parade. Branch president Bob McCeney (inset, right) speaks at CLC rally for striking hotel workers.

Cities commitment is already being fulfilled by NALC branches, those local unions can dedicate more energy and enthusiasm to some of the other steps. Branch 3520, for example, has been concentrating on Step 2, developing a rapid-response team—what the AFL-CIO calls Street Heat.

"We have a data base already of more than 500 members who can turn out on a few hours' notice to CLC-sponsored rallies and picket lines," McCeney says. Some of the activities of Branch 3520 members include walking a picket line with members of the Hotel and Restaurant Employees who were striking a hotel in Crystal City, Virginia; carrying union banners and signs in the annual Dale City, Virginia Fourth of July Parade ("the largest parade on the East Coast," McCeney notes); and demonstrating at a city council meeting in Alexandria, Virginia in support of a CLC proposal to raise city workers' salaries.

"What we are doing here is building a community of interest," McCeney says. "Although some of these issues may not affect us directly, they may affect our family members and friends. And at the same time we're educating other local unions about our own issues." Northern Virginia CLC members turned out in force to support the branch's informational picketing of the Merrifield, Virginia postal facility. Other unions in the CLC also contribute heavily to NALC's annual May food drive, which this year netted more than 2 million pounds of food.

Natural talents

Many aspects of the Union Cities program, as Bob McCeney has noted, are already part of the day-to-day activities of NALC branches. For example, Step 3, focusing on building political power and community coali-

tions, has long been a key branch activity. (NALC branch achievements in this area have been highlighted in such *NALC Activist* stories as “Political action: Maximizing branch resources,” in the Summer 1996 issue; “Bring politics close to home,” Fall 1993; and “Grassroots lobbying can build the union,” Spring 1990.)

Letter carriers lead the way by staffing phone banks and letter-writing campaigns.

“One of our greatest strengths is our political savvy,” says Springfield, Massachusetts Branch 46 president Jon Weissman. “Since the very beginnings of the NALC, we’ve been the experts at communicating with and motivating politicians. Now that talent fits right into the Union Cities program.”

Letter carriers are leading the way in many CLCs by staffing phone banks and letter-writing campaigns. “One thing we are good at is politics—we like to talk,” notes New

Haven’s Ed Halloran. Halloran, who has served at the Democratic National Convention as a member of the Rules Committee, agrees with Bob McCeney’s appraisal of NALC members as “the best phone-bank volunteers, very persuasive, very convincing.”

Again, the involvement of NALC members in CLC political efforts is an effective way that branches can reach out to other unions. “The give and take between local unions in a community is really obvious when you talk about political activity,” notes Northern Virginia’s McCeney. For example, he has urged Branch 3520 members to urge politicians to vote for increases in the minimum wage.

This issue may have no direct effect on letter carriers, who are already above the minimum. “But when you raise the minimum wage, you raise respect for all workers,” McCeney says. “We befriend people who may be less fortunate than the average letter carrier, but these people are our powerful allies when we need strength to win our own battles with Congress.”

Right for economic justice

AFL-CIO promoters of Union Cities caution that success will not be easy or quick. As every NALC leader knows, the plight of American workers is severe in many areas. In introducing the Union Cities initiative, AFL-CIO president John Sweeney has written, “We don’t have to tell you what stagnant

wages, decreasing health insurance coverage and pension coverage have done to our country. American workers and their families are hurting as they haven’t since the Great Depression.

“Layoffs, downsizing and outsourcing have become the code words of a society more concerned with piling up wealth for a privileged few, rather than raising living standards for everyone.”

From this starting point, the Union Cities initiative faces a long and challenging struggle.

American workers have sat back and taken it for too long.

But national AFL-CIO leaders and NALC branch leaders agree that the challenge must be met, and met vigorously.

“American workers have sat back and taken it for too long,” says Northern Virginia’s McCeney. “Union Cities gives a plan and specific strategies for fighting back, for winning a decent and rewarding life for all American workers.” ■

Eight steps to 'Union City'

The Union Cities initiative described in the accompanying story involves eight steps. When central labor councils and the local unions in their jurisdiction resolve to become Union Cities, they commit to fulfilling each of these steps. What follows is a description of the steps, including the commitment to be made by the CLC and the predicted result.

1. Organizing for change, changing to organize.

Commitment: Promote organizing as the entire labor movement's top priority and get half of local unions to sign up for the AFL-CIO "Changing to Organize" program.

Result: A significant nationwide shift of leadership, money and staff into organizing. The AFL-CIO is setting the pace by devoting 30 percent of its budget to organizing.

2. Mobilizing against anti-union employers.

Commitment: Recruit and activate at least one percent of union members in the area for Street Heat, AFL-CIO's new solidarity and rapid response team.

Result: When anti-union employers violate workers' rights to organize, the AFL-CIO solidarity and rapid response team responds with rallies, demonstrations, and economic, legal and public pressures to restore those rights and help the workers organize.

3. Building political power and community coalitions.

Commitment: Organize grassroots lobbying/political action committees to work on local, state and national issues, build community alliances and

support political candidates who champion working families.

Result: The AFL-CIO is transformed from a Washington-based policy-making body into a grassroots lobbying and election machine, with local unions engaged in lobbying on

One percent of members become 'street heat.'

working-family issues and other community issues, sponsoring and supporting political candidates at every level, then holding them accountable.

4. Promoting economic growth, protecting our communities.

Commitment: Organize community allies in support of economic development strategies that establish worker and family-friendly community standards for local industries and public investment.

Result: Creation of meaningful jobs that pay a living wage and growth that helps, rather than damages, workers and their families.

5. Educating union members in pocketbook economics.

Commitment: Sponsor the new AFL-CIO Economics Education program for at least a majority of local unions in the geographic area.

Result: Union leaders, activists and members gain a new framework for judging politicians and making decisions on issues, as well as knowledge and power to help them motivate and activate workers during political campaigns and union organizing drives.

6. Generating support for the right to organize.

Commitment: Persuade city or town council and county bodies to pass resolutions supporting the right of workers to organize and insist that political candidates do likewise as a condition of endorsement.

Result: Political and community support are generated for organizing campaigns as elected officials and the general public are educated on the need for labor law reform.

7. Making sure our leadership mirrors faces of our members.

Commitment: Work to make sure that all official CLC bodies—executive board, officers, delegate bodies—are as diverse as the membership represented by affiliated local unions.

Result: Greater solidarity and strength are created by including all union members—regardless of sex, color or creed—in the governance of the CLC.

8. Encouraging all local unions to increase their membership.

Commitment: Reach an annual membership growth rate in the CLC jurisdiction of three percent by the year 2000.

Result: More strength and support for local, state and national political and legislative actions. ■

One-minute skills for branch leaders

As every NALC branch leader knows, time—or more accurately, lack of time—is the biggest enemy. Branch leaders continually seek shortcuts and quicker ways to get jobs done.

One of the best ways to gain more time is, of course, to spread the work around. Chances are that every branch has at least a few dedicated souls who are willing to help out. But like all resources, these volunteers need to be replenished and restored from time to time. They may be willing to work, but they are also eager to receive recognition and appreciation for the work they do.

But how, in the frantic rush of day-to-day union activities, can branch leaders nurture their volunteers—on top of everything else? The key is to develop **positive communication skills**.

Ken Blanchard, author of *The One-Minute Manager*, has some pointed advice that, although originally aimed at managers in business, applies equally well to leaders in all organizations. As Blanchard puts it, “The changing role of leadership requires that leaders make a greater use of influence through personal power instead of positional power.

Personal power means having power *with* people, instead of power *over* people.” As today’s branch leaders know, people cannot be “made” to perform. Rather, leaders must find ways to get people to *want* to perform.

The three skills Blanchard cites as most necessary to today’s leaders are **being specific, enhancing self-**

ple many times hesitate to volunteer because the tasks are unspecified.

For example, don’t ask someone to “chair the organizing committee” and let it go at that. Instead, spell out exactly what the job requires, being sure to include your best estimate of how much time each task will take. Say, for example, “It would be great if you could talk to these five non-

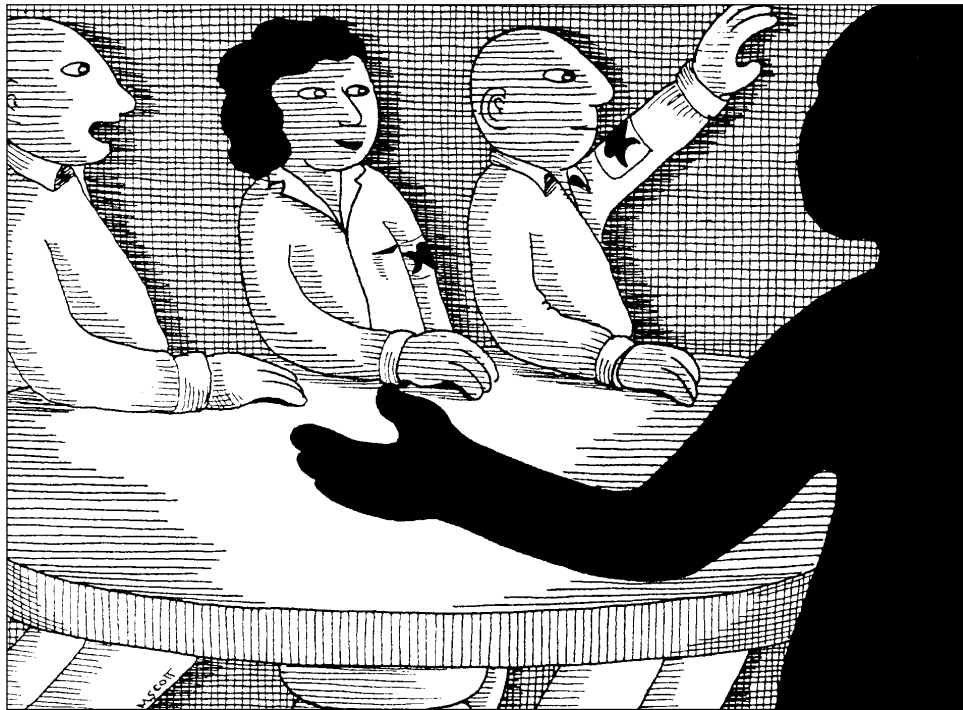
members (list names) once a month and bring them up to date on what happened at the union meeting. That job should take no more than about five minutes per person, once a month.”

The key is to get down to the nitty-gritty of each task as you assign it. You can also ask the volunteer for ideas about how to accomplish a

task. By focusing on specifics, you can firm up the branch’s larger goals and get workable action plans in place to reach those goals.

Ken Blanchard’s second suggestion for “one-minute leaders” is aimed at helping people feel good about the work they do. The first rule is to avoid at all costs actions or statements that may damage a volunteer’s self-esteem.

For example, your branch treasurer may be consistently late in getting to



esteem and effectively listening.

Each skill is important in motivating and directing the volunteer efforts of other union members.

On target

Being specific, as Blanchard sees it, is giving directions that are precise and being clear about what is to be done and the results to be achieved. This advice is particularly appropriate in the local union setting, where peo-

branch meetings, but the treasurer's reports are always clear and to the point. You might be tempted to say, as the treasurer scoots in late once again, "Well, what a surprise! Our treasurer has finally decided to appear." Blanchard labels these kinds of comments "eroders," actions or words that wear away feelings of self-worth and satisfaction in performance.

Instead of using eroders, focus on something that a person does well, and communicate your appreciation and respect genuinely. Tell your treasurer, in front of everyone at the meeting, that the financial reports are exceptionally clear and easy to understand.

Lookin' good

Again, be specific in your praise. If you go around saying things like, "I

Focus on something a person does well and communicate your appreciation.

really appreciate your work," or "Thanks for all your effort," branch volunteers may wonder if elections are coming up soon. Such general remarks often fail to sound sincere.

Two ears, one mouth

The third skill that Ken Blanchard recommends cultivating is the art of listening. You may think you do too

much of that already, but chances are you listen to other people with only half an ear. Most of your attention is on what you're going to say after they stop talking.

To make people feel appreciated and truly understood, you must focus on exactly what they are saying. One simple way to let people know that you hear and understand them is to reflect back what they just said. For example, another officer could be telling you about a problem with a manager. Instead of tuning out because you think you've heard it all before, truly listen and then, when the officer is through speaking, say something like, "So, you believe that the supervisor is issuing discipline for really trivial things, and you see that carriers' morale is at rock-bottom."

Many times this approach, which may feel "gimmicky" as you first try it, will magically work to reduce the time spent on complaints. People say the same thing over and over because they sense they are not being listened to; demonstrate that you are actively listening and the conversation may quickly move on to resolving problems.

Effective listening also helps people feel understood and supported. By letting people talk and then reflecting back their concerns, you show how you feel about branch volunteers. You value and respect them, and in turn your volunteers will respect you and perhaps work even harder to make branch activities succeed.

Each of these skills is simple. None should take a tremendous amount of time to perform. And by working on being specific, building self-esteem and listening, you are also working to build a stronger, more effective branch. The payoff will more than compensate for the effort, as the energy you invest in other people comes back to you and the branch in multiple ways.

People problems

Finally, Ken Blanchard offers key suggestions to leaders who face any kind of conflict within their organization. Again, his ideas are aimed at managers, but apply equally well to volunteer groups.

"Conflict is the result of rational people seeing the world differently," he writes.

"To best resolve a disagreement, don't dwell on who is right. Rather,

To help people feel understood, focus on exactly what they are saying.

try to understand why the other person sees the situation as he or she does." Ask questions instead of placing blame, he suggests.

Typical questions that can help leaders resolve conflict include "What do we have in common?" and "If we were to agree in the future, what would it look like?" These questions are designed to open up options for discussion that can bring people together. Questions about blame and responsibility will only push people farther apart.

As Blanchard notes, using any of these techniques efficiently requires taking a step backward. Disengage emotions and apply rational thought. You will serve not only the union better, but also your own peace of mind—and blood pressure! ■

Regional Training Seminars

Listed below are regional training and educational seminars scheduled to begin before October 15.

For more information, contact your national business agent.

Atlanta Region (Florida, Georgia, North Carolina and South Carolina)

July 13, South Carolina W.I.N. Workshop, Branch 3902 Union Hall, Charleston, SC.

September 5-7, Region 9 Rap Session, Desoto Hilton, Savannah, GA.

October 24-25, North Carolina State Association Training Seminar, Sheraton Hotel, New Bern, NC.

October 24-26, Florida State Association Training Seminar, Holiday Inn, Ft. Walton Beach, FL.
National Business Agent Matthew Rose, (305) 964-2116.

Denver Region (Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Oklahoma and Wyoming)

September 13-14, Regional Rap Session, Little America Motel, Cheyenne, WY.

National Business Agent Paul Davis, (501) 847-4011.

KIM Region (Indiana, Kentucky and Michigan)

October 12-13, K-I-M October Seminar, Executive West, Louisville, KY.

National Business Agent Ron Brown, (810) 589-1779.

Minneapolis Region (Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wisconsin)

September 6-7, South Dakota Station Association Fall Training Seminar, Best Western Ramkota Inn/River Center, Pierre, SD.

National Business Agent Barry Weiner, (612) 378-3035.

St. Louis Region (Iowa, Kansas, Missouri and Nebraska)

Sept. 27-28, Nebraska State Fall Training Seminar, Grand Island, NE.

October 5-7, Iowa State Fall Training Seminar, Amana, IA.

National Business Agent Joe Miller, (314) 872-0227.

ACTIVIST
NALC
A NEWSLETTER FOR BRANCH LEADERS OF THE
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LETTER CARRIERS



Non-Profit
U.S. Postage
PAID
Washington, D.C.
PERMIT NO. 2255