



# DRAMATIC CHANGE /S COMING

BY JOHN GIBSON, EASTERN REGION VICE PRESIDENT, LOCAL 308 PRESIDENT

In the most recent National Postal Forum, Postmaster General Louis DeJoy described, in some detail, his vision of the future of the Postal Network and the United States Postal Service. The PMG's presentation can be viewed in its entirety at [about.usps.com/newsroom/national-releases](http://about.usps.com/newsroom/national-releases). During his hour-long keynote address, the underlying theme as presented by Mr. DeJoy was unmistakable. In the view of the PMG "dramatic change" to the entire network is not only required, but it is, in his view, the institution's only path to survival. The PMG is absolutely convinced that without these radical, historic changes, the Service, as we know it, is doomed. Louis is so committed to this version of the inevitable that he invoked the necessity of stating "dramatic change" nine times in the span of 73 seconds during his speech. We quote,

*"To overcome the significant consequences of the past, the Delivering for America plan sets forth the dramatic changes required to every aspect of our Postal environment. These dramatic changes must be done at a pace, and with a tenacity that is rarely seen, and rarely necessary, in government or private industry. We must implement dramatic change to continue to unwind the years of outdated bureaucratic policies and processes. We must implement dramatic change to correct for years of faulty business, operational and employment practices that have made it difficult, if not impossible, for our employees to serve effectively. We must implement dramatic change because we have a demanding and encumbered service obligation to the nation, and in order to fund that obligation we must find a way to compete in a modern world against well-managed and creative competitors. We must implement dramatic change because the time for more subtle or incremental change has long ago passed, necessitating the*

*transformational changes we need today. And finally, we must implement dramatic change because it is the desire of the American people for us to continue to serve for decades to come. And we cannot fulfill that desire without pursuing more dramatic change! The requirements to make dramatic change have been obvious and visible for a long time."*

Brothers and Sisters, as many of you already know, the ball is beginning to roll, and the changes the PMG described include the creation of several new types of mail processing facilities like the Regional Processing & Distribution Center (RP&DC). This is the mail processing centerpiece of DeJoy's revolutionary transformation. Local Processing Centers (LPC's) will feed the RP&DC's to some extent and the Sorting & Delivery Centers (S&DC's) will combine or aggregate neighboring carrier stations into a larger facility. This aggregation could potentially create an environment conducive to creating additional mail handler positions in these aggregated facilities.

The timing and full impact of all of these changes for mail handlers across the country is not yet known. The so-called first wave of this transformation has begun, and the focus of our National President and our Contract Administration Department is now trained on protecting the rights of mail handlers during a process that will be the most tumultuous we have ever experienced. These will be unpleasant times for many as we prepare for the worst from management and you should know that we do not support, approve of, or condone these historic changes and we fully intend to minimize the impact to those we represent to the fullest extent the collective bargaining agreement can muster.

To suggest that these will be challenging times is an understatement to be sure. It is expected that disruption to schedules, changes to work locations, and even excessing



from installation to installation will be the norm. It is not expected however that the total number of career mail handler positions will be reduced as a result of these changes. Undoubtedly there will be some pain during this transformation, but it is not unendurable as it is anticipated that this great Union and its membership may very well experience growth following this adversity and come out on the other end of this stronger and more potent than ever before.

Article 12 of our National Agreement will control much of what will transpire during the difficult months ahead with language requiring that “dislocation and inconvenience to employees in the regular work force shall be kept to a minimum, consistent with the needs of the service.” This is the guiding principle of, arguably, the most complex set of provisions within the contract. We can assure all mail handlers with the greatest of confidence that this National Union will lead and stand ready in our collective effort to hold the employer to account for any breach of the contract as the PMG’s plan rolls out across the country. As you may very well expect, abiding by this guiding principle, or any other contractual promise for that matter, is never easy for the employer. Of course, each Local Union with the scores of shop stewards and other representatives along with the invaluable assistance and guidance of our national leadership, including the Contract Administration Department, will be fully prepared to fend off any management advances in violation of the National Agreement. Many of the affronts to our binding contract in this regard will predictably occur on the local level where the employer does not always enjoy a full grasp of the contractual provisions at play and too often doesn’t really care to. Unfortunately, this is where the pain of their mistakes can be its sharpest and where our resulting frustrations are at their peak. This is where the inevitable battle to protect against unnecessary “dislocation

and inconvenience” begins and our commitment to this principle cannot waver. As a collective, we are infinitely stronger unified than we are divided; and I expect nothing less than an aggressive posture from this Union as we minimize the impact of these monumental changes to the lives of mail handlers while we seize the opportunity to become an even stronger force and continue to advance the interests of this membership.

To this end there are already significant protections and potential opportunities provided by the collective bargaining agreement under these difficult circumstances for many of those who may be impacted. We should all recognize that those who may be moved involuntarily from one installation to another must retain the seniority they earned in the losing facility. Those eligible mail handlers interested in a voluntary reassignment during this upheaval can receive priority consideration when requesting a voluntary reassignment to a desired location. This means adverse attendance and safety records, for example, could not be held against the employee and would not be disqualifying. It should be noted however, that voluntary reassignments would require a new period of seniority in the gaining installation. We encourage all to ask questions and discuss your concerns with your Local Union representatives when weighing your options.

Brothers and Sisters, there is no magic contractual bullet or wand that can be waved. Impacts will occur and your Union will enforce the rules to the fullest extent the contract will allow in order to minimize the inconvenience that will occur. What we won’t do is to bullshit you or pretend the DeJoy plan can be cancelled simply because we don’t like it. The truth isn’t always easy, but it is always necessary.

In Solidarity,  
John