



## STAND TOGETHER FOR A JUST CAUSE

Article 19 of the Post-Dispatch contract protects Guild employees from discipline or discharge "without just cause" That provision has recently and blatantly been violated by company management with the unfair firing of a union activist. This is bad enough. But the fact is, the firing culminates a long string of egregious actions taken by the Post-Dispatch against Guild members in the last few months.

While the Guild staff and leadership work mostly behind the scenes to resolve differences with the Post-Dispatch, we decided it's time you knew the truth about what honest, hardworking Guild members are up against in the workplace. There are supervisors whose treatment of employees and work demands are unreasonable and border on harassment. And we've had enough of it.

Last week, one of our members, Al Arno, a shop steward and 28-year employee, was terminated in violation of the "just cause" provision of the contract. Al's infraction? In a moment of frustration and annoyance, he raised his voice when talking to some Lee employees.

That's all he did. Guild members in the office heard the exchange. He didn't threaten the Lee employees. He didn't curse. He didn't call them names. He didn't touch them or even move toward them. He raised his voice. Yet, the Lee people claimed they became afraid. The Post-Dispatch immediately suspended him. A few days later, the company held an investigative hearing. A few days after that, Al was fired.

According to the Human Resources department, Al's fate was decided by three people: Retail advertising director Norm Frain, advertising vice president Jen Wood and our new publisher, Kevin Mowbray. We don't know whether the vote was unanimous, but neither Wood nor Mowbray even attended the investigative hearing. This is troubling, especially with all the mitigating circumstances of this case: Al's car had been stolen and all week, his requests for an afternoon of personal leave to recover the vehicle from an impoundment lot (where charges were mounting) and take it to a repair shop had been denied. He had suffered chest pains from his stress. When he expressed his frustration in the office,

the company acted on statements made by the Lee representatives. If this is an example of how Lee intends to treat Post-Dispatch employees, all of us have reason to be afraid.

The unfair treatment of Al is just one of the many cases the Guild has had to deal with that show the company's disdain for and indifference to workers. Some problems have been resolved -- after meetings, grievances and protests. Other difficulties remain. They all reveal a lot about the company's attitude:

- Several of our ad salespeople have been off work on stress leave because the sales staff is being pushed to the limits, with ridiculous demands and outrageous threats. They are being told, "If you don't sell an ad, don't come back." Wood said to one group of salespeople: "I could get \$10,000 monkeys to do your jobs." (The Guild doubts this; the monkeys would crack under the stress and PETA would have to step in.) Some sales staff members have to take medication just to come to work and face what is for them a pressure-cooker atmosphere. (More on this in future No. 47s.)

- Newsroom employees' workloads have at least doubled because management doesn't want to hire union-level staff members, even though last year's buyout seriously slashed the workforce.

- News photographers have been told that they have to pay out of their pockets for any equipment that is accidentally damaged or stolen. One photographer has to use some of his own equipment at work. The Guild has protested this new policy and talks are ongoing.

- Newly hired employees have been told they aren't eligible to have holidays off until after their probationary period. This is NOT true. (Contact the Guild at 241-7046 if you have been told this.)

- Lee Enterprises adamantly refuses to provide medical insurance booklets so our members can have a better understanding of their benefits. Many members are confused about their coverage, thinking they have benefits they do not. Lee could help by providing the booklets, but doesn't.

- A pregnant Guild member was told by a Lee employee during health insurance enrollment time last year that she didn't have to sign up her newborn, because the infant would be automatic

She is appealing the denial, but at this point, her child isn't covered and she's on the hook for thousands of dollars. Even though Lee gave her the wrong information (we have witnesses), the company won't do the right thing by her now.

- A Guild member suffering a serious illness has been made to feel that her chemotherapy and radiation treatments were an inconvenience to management. She was given incorrect information about when she could and couldn't take vacation time to get treatments.

- The company was for months overcharging our part-time members for health insurance coverage. After the Guild protested, the company finally admitted its mistake. Meanwhile, the part-time employees were feeling the squeeze. Lee is auditing the accounts now to determine what money the employees will get back. It was Lee's responsibility to get it right so employees weren't burdened; the company failed.

### BE PREPARED

None of this conduct by the company is warranted. We wonder what's motivating Post supervisors. Instead of supporting and respecting their employees, they seem to want to harass workers to see what they can get away with.

Maybe this callous behavior is new Lee corporate policy. We don't know, but at this point, we think all of you might want to be prepared.

Let's not forget that our corporate parent has two standards for union and nonunion employees, even nonunion employees who aren't management. The company's lodge is off-limits to anyone in a union. Lee also puts \$100 into (nonunion) employees' flex spending accounts but not in ours.

Rest assured that our Guild is doing all it can to address these issues and protect our members. We will also strive -- through our network of stewards and the No. 47 -- to keep you even more informed on the challenges ahead.

Things could start to heat up. If that happens, take comfort in the fact that you belong to something that is bigger than any one person and that when we stand united, we are strong enough to beat back any assault on our union or our contract.

## A letter from our president

Dear Guild sisters and brothers,

At the Post-Dispatch, the transition from Pulitzer to Lee Enterprises has created myriad concerns for our membership, among them the reduction of the workforce, changes in benefits and the scaling back of the Human Resources department.

With the changes in management continuing at the Post-Dispatch, it is becoming more difficult to protect the process of progressive discipline as spelled out in our contract and to shield members from unreasonable and unfair management policies, as we hope this special issue of No. 47 shows.

Now, more than ever before, we need a strong voice in the workplace. The Guild can give us this voice if we are ready to use it.

The Guild will hold a Localwide meeting at noon Saturday to vote on revised Local bylaws and to nominate candidates for Local offices, the Post-Dispatch Unit chairmanship and Executive Board membership.

We are seeking nominations for all the leadership positions and we hope to attract new candidates from all areas of our membership. We welcome and encourage full participation in this process.

Anyone interested in one of these leadership positions should contact the Guild office (241-7046) and talk to Shannon Duffy, Mary Casey or Rodna King. The office will see to it that you're nominated if you can't be there.

This is our union. It can tackle the issues we believe are important. It gives us a powerful collective voice to bring about change and improvement. And we have had some successes.

At the Post-Dispatch unit, our stewards system was revitalized through recruiting, training and increased participation.

We got a new contract for our members at KDSK, and we've gained increased Local involvement from our members at the St. Louis Review and Unicom.

While we are growing in strength, our challenges also are expanding.

We must keep a unified force in the workplace to ensure our fair treatment. We can only do that with everyone's help and involvement. Come to the meeting Saturday if you can, and on that day and each day thereafter, please stand

**MEETING OF LOCAL 36047**  
■ Time: Noon on Saturday, Oct. 21  
■ Place: Boiler-makers Hall 1547 South Broadway St. Louis