

NTEU's Acting Vice President, H. Dwight Cornett, Greets The New IRS Commissioner, Doug Shulman!



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By Hansford (Dwight) Cornett
Acting Vice President, Chapter 73

It was a very eventful day for our new commissioner. He visited many areas of the campus and squeezed in a small lunch. Starting his rain filled day, Commissioner Doug Shulman attended a meet-n-greet with the Directors, CAS Director and CAS Deputy Director. Elaine, Rita and Sue Allen provided refreshments and lunch options. Sue Allen, also the tour guide, walked with the Commissioner and his entourage for a meeting with a cross section of managers in room 51. The meeting was followed by a demo in the Data Conversion Operations SCRIPTS DT area where Rick Goins, Peggy Bogadi and Pam Walker met with him. He then proceeded to the Paper Imaging Network (PIN) unit where he witnessed another short demo. When this demo ended Sue Allen walked him to the Gateway West Lobby where he was met by Renee Mitchell.

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NTEU finds possible job opportunities for members

No conflict of interest

By Hansford (Dwight) Cornett,
Acting Vice President, NTEU73
& Stephen Cornett,
NTEU73 Steward

Working for IAP

A recent response from management stated clearly that seasonal employees being laid off at the IRS **can work for IAP** without causing a conflict of interest. IAP is the outside contractor that is now performing Files functions. They are located in the IRRC building with SOI and Innocent Spouse on Industrial Road in Florence, KY. So next time you get laid off, apply with IAP and see what happens.

Employees are reminded to check with management to see if they are required to complete the Outside Employment form.

There are many rumors floating around regarding an upcoming furlough. The fact is, many employees are already furloughed.

Many people have been told that IAP in Florence is hiring IRS employees. Some are already working there as temporary employees. After some research and a few phone calls, Stephen Cornett found out the following; IAP does NOT hire anyone walking in and asking for an application for employment.

The only way to apply, or even find out if they are hiring, is to go to the IAP web site www.iapws.com. Once you get to the web site, go to the career section and submit or create your resume. It was also mentioned that people applying on this site, which are IRS employees at present, will be grouped with all IRS employees for the Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky area. Someone will review the list of applicants, along with their resume, and will then call that individual if they are currently hiring and make an appointment to interview for hire.

The Force

“NTEU73’s Hard Hitting Newsletter”

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“To Organize Employees to Work Together To Ensure That Every Federal Employee Is Treated With Dignity and Respect.”

Close to Heaven

By Heather Phillips,
NTEU73 Steward

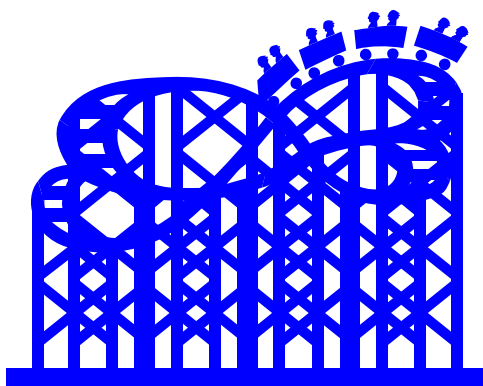
It was a warm sunny May afternoon. It was a perfect day. It was the start of the Memorial Day weekend. Members, family and friends gathered in Ross Ohio at Stricker's Grove for NTEU 73 annual family picnic. The DJ was serenading the crowd with his music. The smile on each child's face illuminated an already bright day. That was as close to heaven as we can get on this earth. As midday grew into the afternoon, the crowd swelled. Debbie Stricker, the park manager, estimated the crowd at its peak as around 2,000 fun seekers.

Stricker's Grove can bring out the child inside the adult. It is infectious; no one escapes. This day was no exception. Adults and kids alike lined up at the various rides awaiting their turn to escape

into the world of thrills. The most popular were the Tornado, the adult roller coaster and the Teddy Bear, the children's roller coaster. The other rides such as the Scrambler, the Train, the Flying Scooters and the Merry-go-round were also popular. The miniature golf course was never at a loss for a foursome, as were the arcade games buzzing with activity. There was something for everyone.

The food was aplenty. Cotton candy, popcorn snow cones were not only in every child's hand, but also most of the adults. Those that wanted something more substantial to eat, hot dogs, metts, brats, hamburgers, cheeseburgers and French fries were again this year available for purchase. New this year was chicken tenders and funnel cakes. Soft serve ice cream and soft drinks were also in demand.

The day wound down, but the spirit and the fun did not. People dancing and enjoying each other's company continued. No one talked about tomorrow or the next day; it was just now, the moment, the fun. As previously noted it was as close to heaven as you can get.



Writers Wanted

Do you have writing skills?

Do you have information that is newsworthy?

Submit your article to **The Force**.

If your article is accepted, we will print it with or without your name attached; your choice.

Email your submission to NTEU73mailbox@aol.com or bring it to the Union office. Identify it as "article for The Force" **The Force** reserves the right to edit all articles it prints.

NTEU73 Union Office Hours

Fourth Street Office

Monday—Friday 6:00 A.M.—1:00 A.M.
(859) 669-5370

Gateway Center Office Room 511

Monday—Friday 6:00 A.M.—4:00 P.M. & 7:30 P.M.—11:00 P.M.
(859) 669-5700

Industrial Road Retention Center

Monday—Friday 12:30 P.M.—2:30 P.M.
(859) 669-5024

Not a Union member?

**Missing out on all the benefits Union membership brings?
Join Today!**

The Vegas Connection

By Heather Phillips,
NTEU73 Training Coordinator

Each year NTEU 73 sends a limited number of stewards to National Training. This year was no exception. Nineteen Chapter 73 stewards left Northern Kentucky/Greater Cincinnati Airport bright and early Tuesday May 13th. It was so inspiring seeing all those glazed over faces in search of a cup of coffee. As the flight progressed each steward stirred to life like a morning glory to the first stream of sunlight. By the time the plane touched down at McCarran International Airport everyone was ready to go; chomping at the bit to get started.

On Wednesday, Colleen Kelley gave an inspiring address to all the stewards in attendance. She spoke about the last 70 years and

the next 70 years; about the challenges we had faced and the challenges that we still have to face. She cited the importance of growth in membership to our success as a union. Colleen also recognized all the chapters at 70% or better membership. Chapter 73 was one of the chapters recognized. As we stood, one could see the pride swelling in each of us. That session ended with each of us avowing to work harder to promote NTEU goals in the workplace.



The rest of the week was all business. We had classes that encompass oral replies, litigation, negotiations, grievance handling, FMLA issues, legislative, communications, EEO, formal meetings and much more. At the end of each day, was that tired feeling that comes with hard work. But each steward took solace in the fact that this hard work was necessary in order to provide better service to our membership and to help other stewards with their growth. It was an opportunity to discuss our issues with National leaders, to seek their counsel and to tap into their experience.

On Saturday morning bright and early we left Las Vegas. Again there was that glazed look searching for that cup of coffee, but there was more. There was that contentment that comes with a job well done.

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Commissioner Meeting with NTEU

At about 10:45 a.m., Commissioner Shulman met with Acting Vice President Hansford (Dwight) Cornett for a briefing of some of the employee's and the union's issues with management as a whole. Some of the main issues covered were:

- Both wanted the same things and that was to sit down and communicate.
- We agreed employees need to feel safer and better about their jobs and be justly rewarded for their accomplishments.
- We spoke of how cooperation is deteriorating between management and NTEU. We also discussed how management has pulled out of all partnerships, which makes it extremely hard on the employees and has made it hard to discuss anything at upper levels. Communication is nearly impossible in both Accounts Management and Compliance.
- Accounts Management and Compliance directors nearly refuse to hear grievances, even 1-step which was negotiated specifically to ensure the directors could be aware of the appraisal actions taken by their managers.
- Disclosure Errors; How a single error on the first day of the reporting period could not be improved upon. It was pointed out that there is actually a law that prohibits exact numbers such as this and it is unfair to place such restraints on hard working employees. It was explained these actions leave no room for improvement even though no other errors were received the rest of the year.
- EQRS was negotiated as a non evaluative Trends and Patterns training aide, but it is being illegally used to evaluate employees. This indicates significant disparate treatment of employees throughout the evaluative process. New employees without previous appraisals are being rated as all 3's even though they may have 100% in most aspects of their jobs. Most recently management's deception is trying to point out that 100% means they are just doing their job at a 3 rating level.
 - * CSR's were misinformed about how long they would be on the phone and on paper which has caused low morale.
- Leave Issues:
 - * Employees denied leave without reason or justification
 - * Leave requested months in advance is not authorized even when dates requested are critical
 - * Approval of leave is being delayed until the last minute
 - * School and other children's events, such as graduation are ignored at all levels
- Management and Labor Relations meet employees and NTEU with a hard line attitude even when they are aware they are wrong and have interpreted the National Agreement with an entirely differently outlook in the past. This was not so prevalent when partnering was in effect; however, now these issues are progressively getting worse.
- NTEU pointed out that employees do not mind doing their jobs if they feel comfortable and safe and know they will be properly rewarded for their efforts. The commissioner asked how NTEU officials locally were placed in office. It was explained that NTEU officials are voted into office every 3 years by the membership and all of the stewards are volunteers and most often worked cases at home because they are passionate about helping employees.
- Informed the commissioner that we have approximately 150 grievances in effect and 47 arbitration cases. In a typical week each office writes about 10-12 new formal grievances; many of which are similar in nature.

Commissioner Shulman mentioned we just kept writing grievances even though management or LR had "given in a little." I informed him that I was not aware of any of these instances and that the only time I witnessed management ever giving in was when the National Agreement "made them do so."

The commissioner also commented on my reputation stating he was informed from Washington to here that I am a good guy who stands up for the employees.

Continued on page 4...Focus Group Meeting With Employees

Focus Group Meeting With Employees

Around 12:45 to 1:30 the commissioner held a focus group meeting with approximately 20-25 selected employee representatives from each of the operations.

After introducing himself, he recommended a laid back "honest dialog" where he could get the feel of each employee bringing up an issue. Each employee was asked how many years of service they had followed by why they stayed here. Employees having 7 years of service to 42 years of service all stated they loved their jobs and being around and working with the other people. He thought this was admirable and further stated he felt the IRS was one of the most important offices of the government.

Many issues were identified and basically verified from each of the operations. These are not in any particular order:

- Equipment needs, paper supplies, pens, toner, warranties, fax machines, printers
- SWFT and CIS were pointed out as very good systems and training was good; however, the practical use of these systems after training was limited because CSR's were on the phones so much they rarely used them.
- Why IRS had to cope with everything not covered in the Mail Room outsourcing.
- IRRC building in Florence doesn't have guards onsite even though there are about 350 employees there.

NTEU emphasized some similar issues:

- SWFT - Printers specifically, so everyone could utilize the new process.
- Fax machines to eliminate CSR's from standing in lines waiting for faxes.
- Files/Mail Room contracting out - poor services provided now, why aren't contractor costs more accountable after contracts are issued.
- CSR's are now faced with many more aspects to their job than when the jobs were established. Fully trained CSR's are now required to operate PPS, EIN, ASPECT, CIS, DI, SWFT, IDRS and any new processes that come along, yet no one reviews these positions to see if they should be higher graded. When CSR positions were started at GS-8 many of these processes were not required of them, yet they remain a GS-8.

Commissioner Doug Shulman's honest responses to the group ended with a one-on-one most important issue from each employee present:

- Training, although thought to be much better now than in the past years, not enough time is given off the phones to place new processes into practical use while training is fresh in the minds of the employees.
- Enforcement = Tax Refund crimes need additional funding to return more revenues.
- Communications at all levels, especially between operations and departments. The example used was CIS.
- CIS is used in Accounts Management, however, Exam and CI now see this option listed in their cases and can be reviewed and/or printed to assist in their jobs. The problem is none of these areas have been officially notified of this new process nor have they been instructed on how to use it.
- Background investigation work needs improvement and faster service.
- Quality Time sharing work tactics between different operations affected.
- Workload Reassessments.
- Focus smarter not harder to save where you can.
- Keep IRS in the public eye and disprove the bad image.
- Immigration continuously states they are not used to the large influx and Green Card processing. It even seems they are overwhelmed already. The IRS is used to processing millions of records quickly with a very high quality. Why can't the IRS work with Immigration to partner up on this process since we're used to the large volumes?

The meeting ended on a very good note. Commissioner Shulman at some point in the Focus Group stated

- **Even "when budgets are low, I still need to INVEST IN THE FUTURE or play catch up; and playing catch up is not something I want to do.**
- **"I am not convinced contractors are better than hard working government workers."**

Overall our new commissioner had a very eventful day before departing for the airport around 1:30.

Bed Bugs, Bed Bugs, Bed Bugs Club Members ONLY!

By Hansford (Dwight) Cornett
Acting Vice President, NTEU73

Yes there is an exclusive club, the Bed Bugs only Club, ran and organized by management. As a member of this elite club you're entitled to "be suspended without pay" and allowed to use "your own annual leave" (if you have any) if you identify a Bed Bug under their new Policy on Bed Bugs. A policy that NTEU has not been briefed on nor has NTEU been given the opportunity to negotiate this policy for Impact and Implementation (I&I).

A 4th street employee recently located a Bed Bug and, following managements New Policy, taped it to a paper and turned it in to management. The employee was rewarded with an immediate suspension without pay; however, the employee was able to use annual leave. After several confrontations back and forth with NTEU representation over what constituted proof that the employee's residence was treated, management allowed the employee to return to work. At the end of the day, however, the employee was suspended again until it was proven the entire building had been treated. This proof was provided and the employee was again allowed to return to work.

By the end of this day, management again not knowing what they wanted as proof suspended the employee again and informed the employee to communicate only via phone. Management stated clearly they would contact the employee to let them know what kind of proof they needed to allow the employee to return to work. That was at 4pm on a Thursday of one week and management did not contact the employee until Friday of the next week. On Thursday, however, the employee brought in a new computer generated homemade document with the name of the apartment owners that said basically the same thing the previous document stated. By COB on Friday, management determined this proof was satisfactory and they contacted the employee to return to work on the Tuesday after the holiday. Yes that was 6 days after they suspended the employee and the employee was never informed of what was needed as proof of treatment by a 3rd party to return to work. How gracious management was in this case! This was a prime example of management's reign of terror on our employees here at the Cincinnati campus.

This was with NTEU fighting every step of the way for the employee. Management was informed they cannot request specific items that are beyond the employees control, such as what a 3rd party landlord must provide, so the employee can return to work. The question now is it only took 6 days for this employee to be allowed to return to work and this employee is a Member. What would have happened to this employee or the next employee if NTEU were not there to represent this employee and member! Are you next? Well you could be even if you don't have Bed Bugs and someone walks by you and you turn it in. You could be next! Is 6 days enough, or will your Bed Bug Exclusive Club membership, entitle you to 7 or 10 days or more off? Hope you have the annual leave to cover it. Can you afford it?

NTEU and your president Jackie Huff are aggressively fighting this practice for the good of all members. NTEU could use your help. JOIN TODAY! Don't be the next one on the chopping block without any representation!

NTEU Swapper !!!Buying, Selling or Trading!!!

By Hansford (Dwight) Cornett
Acting Vice President, NTEU73

NTEU web enhancements at "NTEU73.org".

Do you have items for sale or are you looking for something specific to buy? Do you have a house or apartment for rent? Are you selling a house? Well if you do, you can now list these items at the NTEU SWAPPER. Just one more member benefit. When you access the web site you will find an email address where you can send the details. As the site grows, there will be search features added for various groups. Send yours today and let NTEU know how it works for you.

NTEU 73 Annual Family Picnic

Photos by Michael Murphy, NTEU73 Photographer

