

CWA Local 4340

Mobilization 2008

July 17, 2008

The following segment of “CWA History – A Brief Review” is a perfect example of the importance of fair and unbiased representation. Also note some of the wages that the women and men in the telecommunications industry were fighting for, in some cases putting their life on the line for. Join me for Part VI.....

1941 – 1946: World War II and the National War Labor Board

In December 1941, following the attack on Pearl Harbor, the AFL and CIO voluntarily gave no-strike pledges to the federal government for the duration of the war. In January 1942, President Roosevelt created the National War Labor Board (NWLB). The NWLB was charged with settling all disputes between labor and management that threatened war production.

The NWLB and 12 Regional War Labor Boards were composed of an equal number of representatives from management, labor and the private sector. All of the labor representatives appointed to the Board came out of the AFL or CIO. This was of great concern to the NFTW that was not affiliated with the AFL or CIO and felt that the National War Labor Board and the Regional Boards would not effectively protect the interests of telephone workers and the wages of telephone workers would suffer greatly during the war.

The concerns of the NFTW were borne out by events. The average real wage of a telephone worker dropped from 83 cents an hour in 1939 to 70 cents an hour in 1943. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, telephone workers in 1939 occupied the twenty-second place on a list of average weekly earnings of workers in 123 industries; by early 1945 they had fallen to eighty-sixth place on the list.

At hearings before the NWLB, NFTW’s Ohio Federation presented a report revealing the starting and top rates of telephone operators in 17 Bell System companies. The report showed that in 1944, starting operator rates varied from a low of \$16 a week to a high of \$23 with top rates ranging from \$26 a week to \$34. A Wisconsin operator starting at \$16 a week could not reach the top rate of \$27 in less than 16 years!

As a result of these wage disparities, telephone unions brought numerous cases before the NWLB and the Regional Boards. Response to these appeals was exceedingly slow and by mid-1944, there were 85 cases filed by telephone unions still waiting to be ruled upon.

Do not, for one second, think that the next administration of this country is **NOT** critical to our survival as a Union. Our ability to represent and be represented effectively in the future depends upon the right decisions. Take the time to get educated and help us help each other. Do not stand on the sidelines and pretend you don’t matter!

For information on union and labor issues, go to the Local 4340 website at www.cwa4340.org or call to get involved. We can be reached at 216-635-4340 or via email at mobilize4340@aol.com.

Ready to Win,
CWA Local 4340
Mobilization Committee

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