

Communities and Postal Workers United (CPWU)

Summer, 2015 -- *No Closures! No Cuts! No Delay of the Mail!* - www.cpwunited.com

Moratorium on Plant Closures!

Postal workers and their community allies were jubilant upon hearing of a national moratorium on mail processing plant closures. On May 22nd, the US Postal Service released an update on “network consolidation” which postponed the closure date of 50 plants, set to close in July, to a time “to be determined.”

A series of recent actions have shaken postal management. At the urging of postal unions, retiree associations, rural organizations, and small business interests, the entire Oregon congressional delegation demanded a face-to-face meeting with upper USPS administrators about mail plant closures and mail delay. That meeting took place on May 13th in Washington, DC. On May 14th, a national day of action called by the postal unions to stop the delay of mail and keep plants open included activities in over fifty cities. May 15th saw a march and rally of hundreds of postal supporters at the Eugene/Springfield plant. On May 22nd, the USPS backed off its scheduled closures.

Nearly half – 141 -- of the nation’s USPS mail processing and distribution centers were closed in 2012 – 2013 and another 30 closed in April of this year.

Activists are demanding that closed plants be re-opened and that service standards be reinstated. As of January 5th, the delivery of overnight, in-town first class mail has been eliminated nationwide. Two-to-three day service has become three-to-five day service. According to the USPS’ own data, even these new standards are only being met approximately 63% of the time (prior standards were being met 98%).

“These cuts cause hardships for customers – especially the elderly, disabled, rural, and small business customers--drive away business, and cause irreparable harm to the U. S. Postal Service,” said Rev. John Schwiebert, a leader of Portland Communities and Postal Workers United. He called the changes part of USPS management’s “flawed” strategy to sacrifice service without addressing the Postal Service’s manufactured debt crisis.

Postal management says these cuts and closures are necessary because the USPS is losing money. Critics claim that a 2006 Congressional mandate, which forces the U.S. Postal Service to prefund retiree health benefits 75 years in advance, has created a phony financial crisis. Although the USPS has claimed a “loss” every year since 2006, due primarily to the pre-fund mandate, the postal service has not made an actual payment toward prefunding since 2011. The USPS has generated an operating profit for the last six quarters.



Hundreds of Oregon letter carriers, clerks and allies protest scheduled closure of the Eugene/ Springfield mail processing plant (May 15, 2015)

July 26—Postal Heritage Day **ORGANIZE A CELEBRATION IN YOUR CITY!**

Activists across the country will be celebrating the 240th anniversary of the founding of the postal service — July 26, 1775.

Postal unions are calling on President Obama to declare July 26th Postal Heritage Day.

On that day, in 1775, the Second Continental Congress established the United States Post Office and appointed Benjamin Franklin the first Postmaster General. At the time, the thirteen colonies were already at war with Great Britain.

Here is a speech given by Ben Franklin (actually by an actor playing Ben Franklin, risen from the grave) last year at the Postal Heritage Day celebration in Portland, Oregon — “Good afternoon! I am pleased and proud to be among postal protectors to commemorate the founding of our great U.S. Post Office. We American revolutionaries in the Continental Congress established the postal service as a revolutionary network of post riders and post roads. I ordered surveys and created post routes from Maine to Florida. I even established overnight delivery between New York and Philadelphia, two hotbeds of revolutionary organizing. A full year before the Declaration of Independence, our post riders were binding the 13 colonies together, building the Committees of Correspondence, distributing revolutionary pamphlets and newspapers, inciting resistance to tyranny and oppression. Paul Revere, remember him? Paul Revere was a post rider who rode from Boston harbor out on his post route to spread the alarm, to warn that the British were coming.

Today we need another Benjamin Franklin, more Paul Reveres. We need a revolutionary Postmaster General who will fight for the postal service, against the tyranny of the privatizers, against the oppression of the union busters. We need revolutionary postal workers who will spread the alarm to every corner of this nation. We need a revolutionary Congress that will fight the tyranny of the 1%, that will fight the oppression of the corporate profiteers. We need a revolutionized postal service that will deliver 7 days a week. We need same day pick up and delivery. We need post offices that are open at night. We need post offices that provide banking services, one-stop government services, and internet access. We, the people, have a Constitutionally mandated post office which we must defend and revolutionize for our children and our children’s children. For life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness!”

Ask your Representative:

Co-sponsor HR 784 & H.Res 54 for recovery of delivery standards, H.Res. 28, which supports retaining door delivery for businesses and residents, and H.Res. 12 which backs 6-day delivery.

NLRB Strikes Major Blow to USPS-Staples Deal

07/01/2015 (American Postal Workers Union Web News—excerpt)

In a major blow to the Postal Service's deal with Staples, Region 5 of the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) has issued a complaint charging that the USPS illegally subcontracted work to the office-supply chain and ordering the agency to return the work that existed on July 31, 2014, to the APWU bargaining unit. A hearing is scheduled before an NLRB Administrative Law Judge on Aug. 17.

If the NLRB sustains the allegations in the complaint, it could effectively end Staples' foray into the mail business.

"In the meantime, the boycott of Staples and its online subsidiary, Quill.com, is still on," APWU President Mark Dimondstein declared. "Let's turn up the heat!"

The Postal Service violated the law when management entered into the deal with Staples without first bargaining with the union, the complaint alleges. The Postal Service also engaged in "bad faith bargaining" by refusing to provide the APWU with information and violated the subcontracting provisions of Article 32 of the Collective Bargaining Agreement, the complaint says.

"This ruling represents an important step forward in the battle against the privatization of our nation's public Postal Service," Dimondstein said.

"But it is not simply the result of strong legal arguments," he said. "Every APWU member and supporter who passed out flyers outside Staples stores can claim a piece of this achievement," he said. "Every person who organized their friends and neighbors to boycott Staples and warned them about the dangers of allowing a private company to take over the mail helped us get to this point."

The Saga Begins

The Staples saga began in the fall of 2013, when the Postal Service instituted a pilot program that placed mini-post offices in more than 80 Staples stores in four geographic areas of the country. The APWU demanded that the postal counters in Staples stores be staffed by postal employees.

When the Postal Service refused, the union launched a *Stop Staples* campaign, featuring rallies and protests outside Staples stores that were aimed at educating consumers about the secretive, no-bid deal. The APWU objects to the program because it "privatizes the retail operations of the public Postal Service; transfers living-wage, union jobs to low-wage jobs, and compromises the safety and security of the U.S. mail," the union wrote.

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Delay of the Mail !

The USPS is delaying mail, all across the country. Overnight first class mail in the same town was virtually eliminated on January 5th. Pharmaceuticals, bills, checks, cards, letters, periodicals, parcels and supplies are being delayed by days.

What can we do? Urge your Congressional Representative to sponsor HR 784 which would restore service standards and prevent plant closures.

Urge your Senators to meet face-to-face with the new Postmaster General to demand the recovery of reliable, accessible, efficient service.

And urge anyone who has experienced mail delays to file a complaint with the Postal Regulatory Commission – www.prc.gov/contact (under "message" go to "complaint"). Also go to the Office of the Inspector General - www.uspsoig.gov/comment/21614 - to comment on the "network consolidation"



Behind the Scenes, Corporations Influence Postal Policy

(This article first appeared in the May-June 2015 issue of The American Postal Worker magazine — excerpted)

In the last 10 years, more than 100,000 living-wage clerk craft jobs have been eliminated. Service standards have been reduced, lines at the windows have grown longer, and many cherished local post offices have been forced to close their doors or reduce their hours.

Many of the most significant changes that have negatively affected the Clerk Craft and the Postal Service are the result of recommendations made by a little-known group that operates behind the scenes at USPS headquarters – the Mailers Technical Advisory Committee, or MTAC...

Some of the mailing industry stakeholders on the committee include Pitney Bowes, FedEx, UPS, DHL, and Amazon....

Corporate Advisors to the PMG

The Postmaster's Advisory Committee (MTAC) is made up of approximately 150 appointees from the largest multi-national companies and mailing industry groups. These corporations and their associations are often comprised of former Postal Service executives, members of the Postal Regulatory Commission (PRC) and the USPS Board of Governors.

Such individuals have inside knowledge, personal connections and influence in the Postal Service. As a result, they are able to effectively lobby the Postal Service and Congress for changes that benefit their new corporate employers.

Similarly, there are many former corporate representatives now working in high-level management positions at the Postal Service. This revolving door of corporate representatives, along with the influence of big-business, helps promote changes that benefit corporations in the postal industry – often at the expense of postal workers and the public good.

The post office was established to bind the nation together through the creation of a nationwide, equal-access communication system. It was founded to cultivate a virtuous and informed citizenry, to support a free exchange of information, and to nurture one of the world's first democratic nations. It was not created by or for corporate interests. It is understandable that business interests have a seat at the table to put forth their needs and interests, but they should not have all the seats.

Keep up on the latest fightback!

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