

Communities and Postal Workers United (CPWU)

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

APWU leader speaks on The 2016 race for U.S. President

(This article first appeared in the September-October 2015 issue of The American Postal Worker magazine.)

It's amazing that presidential campaigns have become such big business that they never seem to cease. As soon as one ends, the next one begins, unleashing megabucks of corporate cash and contributions from super-wealthy donors, endless campaigning, TV ads that jam our screens, election-time campaign promises, and politicians of all stripes proclaiming that they are champions of the people.

Then, if events proceed as "normal," no matter who wins the election, the promises remain unfulfilled. Wall Street representatives once again dominate the new administration, a starvation-level minimum wage remains along with an ever-increasing number of low-wage jobs, pensions continue to disappear, voting rights are further suppressed, endless wars for profits are waged, while attacks on the "public good" intensify, and public postal services advance toward privatization.

So what do you think as we head into the 2016 presidential primaries and election? Are you tired of the same old "politics as usual" and the same old two-party, corporate-controlled political system? Would you like to see our union and the AFL-CIO chart a more independent political course, including helping to build a new labor-based third party? Do you think Democratic Party politicians take union support for granted? Do you wonder why even when "our" candidates win, we lose? Do you believe, like gyrocopter pilot and postal worker Doug Hughes, that big money must be removed from politics? Would you like to see unions focus more on issue-based referendums that allow voters themselves to cast ballots on issues such as raising the minimum wage?

In my view, the answer to all the above is "yes." When I travel to various conferences and conventions, I find many voicing similar concerns. Everywhere we turn, and no matter which party is in power, Corporate America is having their way at the expense of the rest of us, the 99%. Wall Street dominates the policies of our government and the corporate overlords laugh all the way to the bank.

Now don't misunderstand me. I am not talking about abstaining from elections and politics. On the contrary! Politics are important to workers and we should be fully engaged and involved. Legislation, good or bad, will have a huge impact on us. And there are many strong supporters of postal workers in Congress – mostly Democrats, but certainly some Republicans as well.

But let me give two examples that underscore that we are stuck in "tweedle-dum, tweedle-dee" politics.

In 2008, Democrats won the White House, the Senate and the House of Representatives. The Senate had a veto-proof majority. Yet legislation to raise the minimum wage to a living wage was not passed. Legislation guaranteeing paid sick leave was not passed. The Employee Free Choice Act, which was promised and which would have helped level the playing field for workers trying to organize unions, was not passed. Legislation to end the congressionally-manufactured pre-funding crisis that is strangling the Postal Service was not passed.

Six years into the Obama Administration, the Postal Board Gov-



Hundreds of Philadelphia postal workers and their allies march on Labor Day (photo APWU Nat'l)

ernors is made up of all appointees of former President George W. Bush, despite numerous vacancies since 2008. How can that be justified? This Board of Governors has led the charge in undermining and degrading public postal services.

Interestingly, this 2016 presidential election process already has a new wrinkle that creates some potential to break away from "business as usual." Independent "democratic socialist" Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders, now running in the Democratic Party primary, is generating real excitement among union members. While I personally prefer that Senator Sanders was running as an independent so as to help "Main Street" break from the two parties of Wall Street, nevertheless, his campaign is taking the country by storm...

(to read complete article, go to <http://www.apwu.org/news/deptdiv-news-article/2016-presidential-election-my-thoughts-how-about-yours>)

Arizona: customer survey used to push back on plant consolidation

The fight to save the Tucson P&DC/Cherrybell mail processing plant provides lessons for postal defenders everywhere. The results of a customer survey were presented by the Arizona Congressional Delegation to the Postmaster General. Shortly after release of the survey results, the USPS announced that consolidation plans are delayed until 2016.

At the initiative of the local APWU president, Connie Sadler-Nelson, the City of Tucson sent a survey to residential and business customers, asking about the impact of the partial consolidation of mail processing on their mail delivery. The Mayor, City Council and local business and community organizations promoted the campaign and received more than 1,700 replies.

The vast majority of respondents — 84% of individuals, 86% of businesses — reported a noticeable delay in their mail delivery since the beginning of 2015. Themes that emerged from the survey responses included:

- **Threats to Public Health:** many seniors and other vulnerable populations have to wait additional days for timely medicines,
- **Failing our Veterans:** many are experiencing delays in VA benefits and medications,
- **Negatively Impacting Local Businesses:** delays in receipts and payments have prevented small businesses from meeting their payrolls or forced them to use more costly delivery services to conduct transactions,
- **Creating Financial Instability for Non-Profits:** direct mail fundraising is harmed by delays in receipts,
- **Major Personal Disruptions:** many residents complained of mail delays beyond five days for the transmission of personal correspondence. The impact results in substantial personal disruptions ranging from late tax payments, bills, school transcripts and personal holiday cards. The extra time has affected all correspondence in the community.

Postmaster General Meets with Postal Protesters

Newly installed in January, 2015, PMG Megan Brennan has met with not only postal union representatives but Senators and Representatives, plus national and local community leaders. This is a welcome departure from the actions of her predecessor, PMG Patrick Donahoe, who refused to meet with concerned citizens. Local postal activists could be encouraged to take advantage of this new opportunity.

On August 13, a delegation representing six signatories to A Grand Alliance to Save Our Public Postal Service met with the Postmaster General, Megan Brennan at Postal Headquarters in Washington, D.C.

This meeting was a “historic first for the Alliance as it continues to build towards a vibrant public Postal Service for generations to come” ([agrandalliance.org/recent news](http://agrandalliance.org/recent-news)). The Grand Alliance delegates represented the National Council of Churches, the Alliance of Retired Americans, Public Citizen, the Center for Effective Government, the National Coalition on Black Civic Participation, and National Active and Retired Federal Employees. For more info on the Grand Alliance, go to www.agrandalliance.org.

On September 23, Brennan met with Portland representatives of Communities and Postal Workers United, after they had picketed outside a postal mailers’ conference where she was the keynote speaker. After passing out an “Open Letter to the PMG” to conference goers, protesters chanted “No Closures, No Cuts” and “Mail Delay, Not Okay!” and attempted to enter the conference. Despite the disruption, the PMG invited two protest leaders to present their petition and meet with her for ten minutes.

Despite the fact that Brennan seems willing to listen, and chose to delay some mail processing consolidations, her general direction continues her predecessors’ “shrink to survive” strategy of closures, cuts, and decline in service.

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.

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 and other community leaders 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”*



Des Moines Area local APWU rally for a Fair Contract: Good Jobs, Good Service ! (photo APWU Nat'l)

Mayor Busts Up Cluster Boxes

In the latest battle against Canada Post’s attempt to eliminate at-the-door delivery and substitute “community mailboxes”, a Canadian mayor staged a dramatic public attack on postal property, taking a jackhammer to the cement foundation meant to anchor new postal cluster boxes (known as CMBs in Canada).

Flanked by four other mayors, Montreal Mayor Denis Coderre said it was “totally disgraceful” that Canada Post was placing CMBs without consulting with local cities. Another mayor said existing community mailboxes on this territory have already presented a number of problems, among them vandalism, theft and messiness. Westmount Mayor Peter Trent said “It’s time to lift the corporate veil and say ‘No, Canada Post is owned by us, the citizens...it’s time to call a moratorium on this misguided policy...’”

Letter Carriers Check Up on Frail & Elderly; Enhance Postal Revenue

“Call and Check” is a new service, offered twice a week at low cost to the frail, isolated and elderly, including 5 minute check-ins, appointment reminders and prescription pick-up & drop-offs. The postal service on Jersey, an island nestled between England and France, sought ideas from postal workers on how to enhance revenue, given the decline in regular mail. “Call and Check” was what workers came up with.

Letter carriers are trained in basic first aid and how to spot irrational or confused behavior, signs of dehydration and signs of heart attack. To ensure safety, letter carriers do not enter people’s homes, nor do they provide any formal “care.” “Call and Check” is funded by the National Health Service, private insurance or families, depending on the individual.

Could such a program work in the U.S.? Time to start thinking “outside the mailbox.”

Seniors Win Mobile Post Office

The USPS will station a mobile post office once per month in front of the Whitman Houses Senior Center in New York City. Seniors had organized and persistently demanded more convenient postal retail access in the Fort Greene neighborhood. Local seniors can’t always get to the nearest post office. When they can, it’s not an easy trip and they have to wait in long lines.

Keep up on the latest fightback!

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