

Communities and Postal Workers United (CPWU)

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

Service Standards Fall!



Mail is
being
delayed!

APWU launches contract campaign

On January 5th, the USPS began delaying mail, all across the country. Overnight first class mail in the same town was virtually eliminated. Tens of thousands of postal jobs have been or will be abolished or moved to a different shift or facility, as mail processing at night was drastically reduced. All this in anticipation of the closure (“consolidation”) of eighty-two mail plants during 2015, in thirty-seven states. Postal workers and communities are reeling as work lives are disrupted and pharmaceuticals, bills, checks, cards, letters, periodicals, parcels and supplies are delayed by days.

The four postal unions, joined recently by the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights (200 organizations), plus numerous community allies, have been waging a vigorous struggle in Congress to prevent the reduction in service standards and plant consolidations. Now the American Postal Workers Union has launched a collective bargaining contract campaign it calls *“Our Postal Service: Yesterday, Today, Forever – A Public Trust, A National Treasure”*. Much more than the usual attempt to regain and improve wages, benefits, and working conditions, the campaign will put restoring service standards, reversing consolidations, and postal banking on the negotiating table. Unlike previous contract campaigns, this effort will reach out to community allies for support in pressing postal management — to save stable, living wage, union jobs and to defend & improve the people’s postal service. Contract negotiations begin on February 19 and the current Collective Bargaining Agreement expires on May 20.

Excerpted from the Jan-Feb. American Postal Worker magazine: “Contract negotiations are always contentious, and 2015 will be no exception: Postal management is using a manufactured financial crisis to justify its disastrous “cut to survive” strategy, and many in Congress and on Wall Street are eager to dismantle the USPS so they can turn over the profitable pieces to their cronies in private industry.

“Despite the obstacles, I believe we can win a good contract,” said APWU President Mark Dimondstein.

“To be victorious, we will have to conduct our fight for a good contract very differently than we have in the past,” he said. “Negotiations will still go on at the bargaining table, but to be successful we must win support from the people of the country for our goals – good, stable postal jobs and a strong Postal Service that belongs to them. As postal workers, we understand that the demise of a strong, public Postal Service would mean the end of our jobs. But we must take that understanding a step further.

“We must make sure the people of the country realize that disman-



1/21/15 Town Hall meeting on Kokomo plant closure, set for 3/14

Planning for a Town Hall (<http://www.apwu.org/issues/fighting-consolidation>) “...Plan activities, notify those in attendance. Example: a sit-in at a Congressional members office that is not on board with saving the Plant...”

...tling the nation’s postal system doesn’t only harm postal workers,’ Dimondstein said. ‘It also robs the people of speedy delivery of their medicine, their online purchases, local newspapers, bill payments, letters and invitations. And it robs communities of a vital public service, secure jobs, a strong tax base, and important infrastructure.

‘We must make sure the people understand that our great national treasure has the potential to expand hours and services – to include postal banking, licenses and Internet services.

‘To win support, we will need the active involvement of all APWU members – not just stewards and officers,” he added.

‘We will ask all union members to speak out about the threat to the public Postal Service and how a contract that protects good jobs can also protect local post offices. We will ask members to take the message to community meetings, the places where they worship, and small business groups in their cities and towns.’

“In 2012, the Chicago Teachers Union defied the odds and won a strike by uniting the demands of teachers with the needs of the students and parents they served, Dimondstein observed.

‘We are not alone,’ he pointed out.

‘Walmart workers are rising up, and fast food workers are demanding a living wage,’ he added. ‘Our demands – like theirs – are just. And like the workers at McDonalds and Walmart, to win, we must take our case to the people of the country and ask for their support.’

‘We also must make sure that we are united within our own ranks,’ said Secretary-Treasurer Liz Powell, who is helping to lead the contract campaign. ‘We must make sure that more senior workers understand the importance of improving conditions for Postal Support Employees, and that new employees understand the importance of protecting retirement benefits. And we must strive together to end the three-tier pay structure that divides our workforce.’

“In the coming weeks and months, union activists across the country will call on their co-workers to get involved by joining Contract Action Teams, wearing stickers, buttons and T-shirts, and by spreading the word to neighbors, friends and associates.”

Ask your Representative:

Co-sponsor HR 54 which advocates recovery of delivery standards, HR 711, which supports retaining door delivery for businesses and residents, and HR 12 which backs 6-day delivery.

“To be victorious, we will have to conduct our fight very differently than we have in the past” - President Mark Dimondstein

“Black Lives Matter” – Secret to Defending the People’s Postal Service?

by Jamie Partridge, (from Feb. '15 B-Mike, NALC branch 82 news)

For the past six months, the nation has been rocked with protests, from Ferguson, Missouri to New York City to Portland, over the police killings of unarmed Black men. What does this have to do with saving the postal service? Bear with me.

For the past five years we’ve been struggling with understaffing, out-sourcing, cuts and closures of post offices and mail processing plants. Elimination of Saturday delivery and at-the-door delivery is now a much more serious threat, as we face a more anti-worker, pro-corporate Congress and postal management.

All our tactics to this point -- from letters, emails, phone calls, petitions, rallies, town halls, hearings, and marches – have only somewhat delayed, not detained the steady dismantling and privatizing of the USPS.

What has been the most successful tactic for defending and improving our jobs? Unquestionably the 1970 strike. In the largest wildcat strike in U.S. history, hundreds of thousands of impoverished postal workers risked job loss and jail, defied our national union leadership and, despite President Nixon calling out 25,000 National Guard to move the mail, we won. Huge wage and benefit increases. Collective bargaining rights. A real union.

What does this have to do with the “Black Lives Matter” movement today?

The confidence and combativeness of young Black people.

The postal service has long been a central institution in the Black community (see “*There’s Always Work At the Post Office*”, by Phil Rubio, a history of African Americans in the postal service), especially since the late 1960’s when the US government directed the Post Office to recruit from urban ghettos to quell the riots and uprisings. This influx of young, rebellious African Americans – the workforce became 21% Black – gave a big boost to the fightback against long festering postal worker grievances.

The 1970 strike emerged at a time of great social upheaval – the peak of the Black Power movement and the Vietnam anti-war movement – which had infected the postal worker ranks. There was also an upsurge of illegal public employee strikes – transit workers, teachers, sanitation workers – which inspired letter carriers and clerks.

We still have a large proportion of Black postal workers – in cities like Chicago and Washington DC it’s 70 – 80%. Worsening working conditions -- such as regular delivery in the dark, CCA’s working seven days a week, speed-up and overwork on the window and in the plants – and the job loss due to cuts and closures, has a disproportionate impact on Black families. Not to mention the fact that impoverished African American communities tend to be more postal-dependent, less internet-connected, and therefore more impacted by delay of the mail.

At the same time, we are seeing the Fight for Fifteen (\$15 per hour) surging across the country with fast-food workers, convenience store workers, home care workers, Walmart workers going on strike in ever increasing numbers. What’s the connection? These low-wage workers are twice as likely to be African American.

All of this is to suggest that the current rise of Black resistance to injustice may spill over into the postal struggle. I certainly hope so.



1970 postal strikers

Temporary victory: Buyer backs out, resistance continues Berkeley's historic Post Office still standing as part of our public commons

by Dave Welsh (written for the Feb. '15 issue of NALC Postal Record)

As a resident of the city of Berkeley, I can report that sustained community action has so far prevented our historic Post Office from being auctioned off. In the latest in a long series of temporary victories by post office defenders, the announced buyers withdrew their bid. Here’s what’s happening:

Berkeley Post Office Defense and a homeless advocacy group, First They Came for the Homeless, have been occupying post office steps and grounds with their tents 24/7 for over 10 rainy weeks (since Nov. 1st) – protecting the public commons.

Their signs say: “This Post Office is NOT FOR SALE” and “Welcome: Our Post Office Is Open - Let's Keep It That Way!” These same P.O. steps were the site of a similar 24/7 Tent City in August 2013 for 33 days and nights, until busted up by police.

A new city "zoning overlay" ordinance requires that the Post Office be used only for public or civic purposes. This could well restrict a potential buyer's ability to use the building for a profitmaking purpose, such as a hotel or upscale mall. This groundbreaking ordinance only exists because of a year-long citizens’ campaign to make it happen.

The people of Berkeley are aroused, organizing resistance to the sale. Crowds gather regularly on the Post Office steps for concerts and rallies to fight off the threat to dismantle and privatize the Postal Service. “This is community property,” they say, “paid for by the people and not available to be grabbed off by profiteers for private gain.”

Meanwhile the City of Berkeley is lead plaintiff in a legal challenge, citing numerous violations of law by the USPS in its attempt to sell off the people's Post Office. Next court date: March 19. The struggle, now in its third year, continues.

Keep up on the latest fightback!

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www.apwu.org

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