



We Will Not Be Destroyed! Stand Up to Postal Management's Attacks!

Postal management is stepping up its rampage against postal workers. Like private businesses, the USPS is using the continuing recession as an opportunity to force many workers out of their jobs and overwork the rest -- all in order to increase management's profits. Though it may be difficult, postal workers need to stand up against these attacks!

Postal management at the Detroit P & DC on Fort St. is shipping out most of the 1st class mail processing for the 481 and 482 areas (from Eight Mile Road south to the Ohio line) to a new facility in Pontiac. This will cost at least 200 jobs at Fort St., but only 19 Fort St. workers are being permitted to go to Pontiac. The other 180 or so will be told to relocate far beyond commuting distance, to such places as Pittsburgh, Des Moines, Sault Ste. Marie, Grand Rapids, etc., or face firing. A few have already been sent. In some units, this forced exodus has reached people with over 20 years of seniority!

This forced relocation strikes savage blows to postal workers' families, many of which hold two or more jobs and will be split up. (Even the ones where both spouses work for the postal service are being split up!)

And don't think that the postal service will seriously help relocated workers pay off their Detroit mortgages in a collapsed housing market. Far from it! Just last year the USPS bought a relocating executive's house for \$1.5 million but is only offering blue-collar workers chump-change help with brokers' fees and closing costs. Thus not only will many relocated workers have their families broken up but will face having their finances and financial futures destroyed. Even if you can sell your house in Detroit today -- a long shot at best -- the small amount you can get will often not pay off the mortgage or give you anything to start with in Pittsburgh, where housing prices are higher.

And if you walk away from the mortgage, your credit rating will be ruined, making you unable to buy a house in your new location and possibly even cause you to have trouble renting a decent apartment. The USPS big shots get millions while the workers get disaster!

Senior plant manager Jack Watson said of these moves, "It's business." Yes, indeed, it is capitalist business. For capitalist managers, the workers' lives mean nothing, except a means to produce profit. They make profits for years on end on the backs of our labor. And when their economic system goes into a tailspin, they throw us in the garbage like a squeezed orange. All this is inevitable, they say. But we workers have our own economic interests, our own lives to defend. So it is also inevitable that we must fight back. Either management satisfies its economic interests, and crushes us, or we stand up for the livelihood and dignity that should be ours.

Management's justification for moving mail to Pontiac, as with similar moves all over the country, is efficiency. But in this case, and no doubt elsewhere, this is a fraud. The move here will

add 40 or so miles traveling to nearly every letter every day. Even management knows these moves here and elsewhere may fail, but by then thousands of workers nationally will have been put through the wringer.

Why should the workers' lives be destroyed whenever management wants us to make a move? We the workers are the ones who have moved the mail throughout the years, earned the profits for the USPS year in and year out. As much as any manager, we need to be made whole when they want to move our services! If management needs us somewhere outside commuting distance, they should pay off mortgages, move spouses together, and in other ways make the move survivable. We are human beings just as much as they! In fact, it is our labor that has always carried them, not the other way around!

What are the union leaders doing about this situation? Clerks and mail handlers are being affected now in large numbers. The clerks' union, the APWU, is relying on grievances, but this excessing is largely permitted by the contract. Even if the long-delayed arbitrator's decision on the group of grievances filed by the former Boudreaux leadership last year reverses some of these moves, it will only be on procedural grounds and management will be able to carry out the same moves, provided it consults more with the union officials next time.

And the new Ullmer leadership is keeping a low profile, issuing very little literature and relying on individual grievances even though they stand little chance of stopping anything major. Both the Boudreaux and Ullmer leaderships have rejected calls by concerned workers in union meetings for mass public actions against the cutbacks and job losses. The Boudreaux leadership approached all the area Congressional representatives and other major local political leaders but found them unresponsive. (Democratic Rep. John Conyers even came to an APWU local meeting last year and promised his support, but when Boudreaux later told him we really needed it he wasn't interested in helping.) As for the mail handler's union, it has also not found a way to mount an effective answer.

Management's unprecedented attacks have met little resistance from the union leaders and this has helped demoralize the rank and file. But recently one form of resistance has emerged. Many workers in both crafts and unions have made copies of and mailed a letter of protest written by a rank-and-file clerk and addressed to President Obama, Senators Levin and Stabenow and Congressman Danny K. Davis of Chicago. This protest letter emerged from the workers themselves and not from the union leaderships (though one worker remarked that the leaderships should have started it). These are the politicians who have made all kinds of promises of support to workers during their election campaigns. It is good to send them a message, but *Workers' Voice* believes that a much stronger message is needed. These politicians were passive when Boudreaux approached them.

This letter is a good start but it is unlikely that it will get anything but more promises in return. We need to put our feet on the street, we need to march in public, let working people of the area see us standing up, make the media cover us and put our own words on TV. The only way to make a capitalist politician do anything for the workers is to put his or her feet to the fire! We need mass action, of postal workers of all crafts united!

Certain attacks may succeed, but the more the rank and file

organizes, the more it will be able to withstand future attacks that are bound to happen when contract talks open this year and management tries to drive us further down. Postal workers face, with other workers across the country, a long struggle against bearing the burden of the great recession. Postal workers of all crafts must unite, and we must not fear to appeal to other workers facing hard times. We need mass action of workers united if we are to achieve our demands. []

They Need Food and Medical Supplies, Not Bayonets Solidarity with the Haitian People

An earthquake hit Haiti on January 12, devastating large parts of the capital Port-au-Prince and other areas. There are perhaps 200,000 dead, and millions more homeless and destitute.

There has been a wave of sympathy around the world for the Haitian people. People are sending money; relief organizations are stepping up their work; and some governments have sent substantial aid.

But in the crucial first days after the earthquake, the US government focused on sending troops into Port-au-Prince. Although there were already 9,000 UN troops and police in Haiti, the Obama administration concentrated on "law and order" rather than bringing in supplies to for the destitute people. Planes with food, water, medical aid, and relief personnel were held back, while military supplies were given priority. Priority has also been given to establishing a shameful naval blockade of Haiti to keep desperate Haitians from fleeing to the US. Meanwhile it's taken a week before the US government started considering airdrops of food and water and alternate supply routes into Haiti besides the Port-au-Prince airport.

The result? The Associated Press reported that, in the horrible first week after the earthquake, the aid that arrived was "disorganized, disjointed and insufficient" (Jan. 20) Doctors without Borders and other aid groups complained that plane loads of their supplies were diverted from Haiti. And, with US and UN troops concentrating on "order", and with the US taking overall command of everything, those supplies that did make it to the airport were often left undistributed. Moreover, some aid groups complain that troops, in the name of ensuring their safety, held them back from their work. This is costing an increasing and untold number of lives, as many injured people went without treatment, and many people without food and water.

And the amount of aid is still vastly inadequate, and the supply of it uncoordinated. The Obama administration presented the troop buildup as simply a humanitarian gesture, and finally a Navy hospital ship arrived over a week later. But other countries brought in aid and even field hospitals from the first day after the quake, while the US government, just as in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina, put troops over aid. The Haitian masses are showing tremendous courage, resilience, and restraint while trying to survive without supplies, and yet, just as after Katrina, the news media seek to justify the military buildup by creating an exaggerated image of violence among the people.

But however slow in helping the survivors, the Obama administration and world agencies have jumped at the opportunity of the earthquake to restructure the Haitian economy. The

US government, the World Bank, American conservatives, Democrats like Bill Clinton, and others are seeking to accelerate the free-market reforms of the last two decades in Haiti. These reforms drove Haiti deeper into poverty and deregulation and powerlessness; they are responsible for a lot of the shoddy construction of the last couple of decades; and the privatization that took place under these reforms left the government unprepared to deal with emergencies. Nevertheless, the IMF, smelling blood, rushed after the earthquake to insist on a \$100 million loan tied to more "reforms", wage reductions, and austerity. Facing condemnation for its heartlessness, the IMF was forced to back down on the conditions for the loan, but the long-term plans for Haiti are still being worked out by the IMF, the World Bank, the UN, and the US government.

That's what imperialist relief puts emphasis on: troops and economic domination. We should demand a proper relief effect in Haiti: the Haitians need food, water, medicine, and medical facilities, not bayonets. They need help to deal with homelessness and reconstruction.

Moreover, there are going to be a lot more natural disasters around the world in the future. How many more times are we going to see people left to fend for themselves, while the Pentagon rushes to bring in troops and the capitalists make use of the occasion as another business opportunity? It's time to insist that there be proper preparations for relief operations that actually help people. And there has to be comprehensive economic planning to provide for people's livelihoods in the aftermath of the disasters. This planning cannot be left to the capitalist world agencies and the governments beholden to the corporations. Instead there must be an end to the heartless and brutal rule of neo-liberal free-marketism. The working class must get organized in its own right, if there is to be a change in the nature of disaster planning. []

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