



Oppose jobs cuts and forced relocation!

We Need Mass Action Now!

Postal workers need to get active to oppose management's harsh treatment. They're pushing us around like slaves, and what's needed now is revolt. We need pickets and demonstrations now, immediately, to publicize how we're being treated. Our union leaders act as if they're afraid to expose what management is doing, afraid to embarrass the postal service. But management deserves to be embarrassed! We need public exposure, and the way to get that is through public mass actions.

Management is using the recession as an excuse to force many workers out of their jobs and overwork the rest. Clerks and mail handlers are being shipped out of Detroit to Pittsburgh, Des Moines, Pontiac and other Michigan towns. This forced relocation splits postal workers' families, as many workers are forced to leave their spouse and children behind as they move to other cities. Workers with mortgages are facing financial ruin as they try to finance a new home in another city.

PMG Potter says five-day delivery is the solution to USPS budgetary woes. But this won't help. It will only eliminate one-sixth of letter carrier jobs, slow down delivery times, worsen service, drive more customers away from the postal service and increase the pressure for privatizing. Meantime clerks will be forced to take on intensified workloads, processing more mail in shorter time. Already clerks and mail handlers are forced to do two or three jobs to make up for workers who have been forced to retire or move. No, Potter is only interested in propping up the profits and bonuses of postal managers while serving the corporate mailers. All postal workers – letter carriers, clerks, mail handlers, custodians, mechanics, and truck drivers -- need to stand up against these attacks in a united struggle.

We need mass pickets now!

What are union leaders doing to stop management's attacks? Practically nothing. APWU is a large and wealthy union, but it has allowed management to wipe out tens of thousands of jobs without a peep. The local Detroit APWU has filed grievances and tried to go to court, but this has gotten nowhere. A few workers have

been returned to their clerk jobs after spending months as letter carriers, but in no way have they been "made whole" by the grievance process. Meanwhile management continues to excess more workers and eliminate more jobs. This shows that some other form of pressure is needed to back up the grievances.

The local APWU's former Boudreaux administration relied on contacts with politicians to put pressure on management. But Congressman Conyers and others failed to do anything. Conyers has managed to get special hearings to investigate NFL injuries, but apparently the injury to postal workers' careers doesn't bother him. Senator Levin responds to letters from postal workers by saying he understands the postal service is in financial difficulty, but that's all. The politicians do not respond unless forceful political pressure is put on them.

The new Ulmer administration says they are doing a lot of new things, but in fact they're relying on the grievance procedure just as Boudreaux did. Grievances are incredibly slow. The Boudreaux administration tried to get management to settle things a year ago through a class action grievance, but management refused and bumped it up the chain of grievance cases. It finally went to an arbitrator last August, but now it's been over six months, and the arbitrator has still not rendered a verdict! Federal judges refuse to issue an injunction, alleging they cannot concern themselves with any case in which the workers can be "made whole" through the collective bargaining/grievance procedure. But even if workers eventually win a cash settlement, can they be "made whole" if their marriage collapses? Can they be "made whole" for missing their children?

We need mass action to put pressure on management. This is recognized in other cities where APWU locals have organized public protests against the closing of facilities, excessing and relocation. There have been organized pickets in many cities including Industry, CA; Oxnard, CA; Panama City, FL; Racine, WI. There have also been public informational meetings, petitions, e-mail and postcard campaigns to politicians. These have been successful in getting notice of the workers'

struggle, and some local politicians have issued statements critical of USPS consolidation plans. In the long run we can't rely on capitalist politicians to stop management's campaign against postal workers, but such actions do gain publicity for our struggle, and they are a start in strengthening our resistance. This is important, as we face a long struggle including upcoming contract negotiations.

Here in Detroit some workers have spoken up in union meetings for public demonstrations, but these calls have been rejected by both Boudreaux and Ulmer. At the union meeting of February 7, Ulmer finally promised three pickets by the end of February. But nothing came of that promise. The mail handlers union has also not done anything. Clerks should get together, attend the March 14 union meeting and demand that action be taken. If Ulmer still refuses, workers should organize themselves and take to the streets anyway. With or without the union leaders' approval, we need organization and action.

We need public pressure to back up the grievances and legal cases that the unions are filing. We need to let working people see us standing up, make the media cover us and put our own words on TV. We need the mass action of postal workers of all crafts, united.

Mobilize support!

Some postal workers worry that other workers will not support us. Will we get support from other workers, many of whom are unemployed or struggling at low-wage jobs? But the fact is, other workers are also angry at their oppressors and love to see any section of the workforce rebelling. Everyone knows the rich have been making out like bandits during the recession, reveling in government bailouts while the workers are left high and dry. Any protest we can get going will act as a clarion call to others. And the sooner we get into motion, the better chance we have of forestalling management in its attempt to drive us further down. []

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