

# Top Flight

Fall Edition

November 2011

## Threads of Disaster

The latest edition of the “Postal Worker” shouts from every page **APWU MEMBERS MUST TAKE ACTION!** There is urgency in that message that I haven’t witnessed in a long time.

In spite of the dire situation the Postal Service finds itself in, and in spite of the evidence of its determined demise, I hear on the workroom floor attitudes of dismissal. I hear “They (congress) won’t let the Postal Service go under” and so, no need to be alarmed.

It may turn out to be inevitable that Congress will save the Postal Service, but it is not inevitable that we workers will be a part of it.

The ‘Powers That Be’ seem bent on traveling a path which avoids solving the real problems of the Postal Service and instead, pursue an idealistic political path of using these legitimate economic problems as an excuse to squash Unions.

Corporatists hate Unions and here’s why. Unions represent democracy, and not just democracy in the idealistic romanticized versions; but democracy in ACTION. Corporatists are sorely afraid of democracy in action because it means their power structure, the power of corporations, the power of the rich over the middle class, the power of the 1% over the 99% will be threatened.

Corporatists are constantly complaining about the Union Bosses leading the unthinking ignorant union mobs. I’ve been a Union member for over 30 years and I have yet to run across a Union Boss! I resent being called a “mob” participant. As a Union member, I actually get to vote on who these so-called “bosses” are going to be, and my vote counts just as much as anybody else’s vote. I also get to vote on the actual issues and programs that these so-called bosses pursue.

Let’s compare a corporate stockholders meeting to a typical union convention. Now which is more democratic? In a stockholder’s meeting, sure they vote, but each person is able to have as many votes as his money can buy; whereas in a union, each person is entitled to one vote, no matter how much money you have.

*Continued on page 5*

**President's Letter**

It seems a shame that one Congressional Representative can hold a bill hostage in committee to keep it from coming to a vote before either House. I speak of H.R. 1351 which has been referred to the committee chaired by Darrell Issa. The subcommittee is chaired by Dennis Ross.

If this bill (which has 216 co-sponsors) was brought to a vote and passed it would remove or reduce the huge financial burden placed on the Postal Service by the Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act of 2006.

But, this bill is in conflict with Darrel Issa's own bill, H. R. 2309, which, if voted on and passed, would destroy the Postal Service as we know it. This bill had one co-sponsor and was pushed through the committee.

The U. S. Postal Service is the cornerstone to a trillion dollar industry which employs over 800,000 people. Not all these employees are Union members and therefore this is not a Union issue but an issue to every American citizen who rely on the mail system to work.

Sure, both the USPS and many in Congress state that one of the problems is electronic communications. They are right. Electronic communications in the business world is a way of eliminating even more jobs by having their customers pay their bills electronically.

The Postal Service is not asking for a "bail out" as Congressman Issa is implying. They merely desire access to the surplus of money paid to the Department of Treasury going back to 1970.

As it is, without Congressional action, over 200 jobs will be removed from the State of Mississippi to our neighboring states.

Please urge Congressman Steven Palazzo to co-sponsor H. R. 1351.

*Mark Cunningham, President MPWU*

***If a man tells you he loves America,  
yet hates labor, he is a liar.***

*Abraham Lincoln*

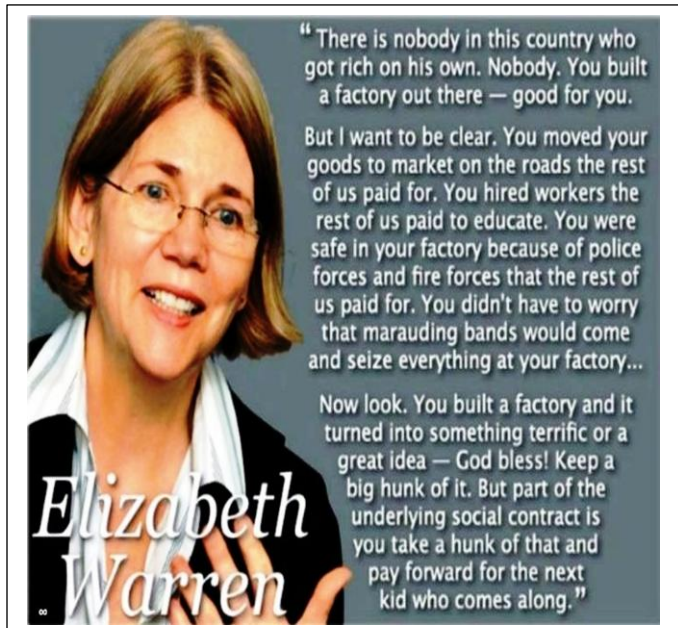


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## **SHOW ME THE LAW**

Here is a submission by Tommy Etheredge of Local 1311. I think it says about everything that could be said concerning the Postal Service trying to downgrade service standards.

U.S. Code, Title 39, Part 1, Chapter 1, Section 101 is titled Postal Policy and states as follows:

- (a) The United States Postal Service shall be operated as a basic and fundamental service provided to the people by the Government of the United States, authorized by the Constitution, created by Act of Congress, and supported by the people. The Postal Service shall have as its basic function the obligation to provide postal services to bind the Nation together through the personal, educational, literary, and business correspondence of the people. It shall provide prompt, reliable, and efficient services to patrons in all areas and shall render postal services to all communities. The costs of establishing and maintaining the Postal Service shall not be apportioned to impair the overall value of such service to the people.
- (b) The Postal Service shall provide a maximum degree of effective and regular postal services to rural areas, communities, and small towns where post offices are not self-sustaining. No small post office shall be closed solely for operating at a deficit, it being the specific intent of the Congress that effective postal services be insured to residents of both urban and rural communities.
- (c) As an employer, the Postal Service shall achieve and maintain compensation for its officers and employees comparable to the rates and types of compensation paid in the private sector of the economy of the United States. It shall place particular emphasis upon opportunities for career advancements of all officers and employees and the achievement of worthwhile and satisfying careers in the service of the United States.
- (d) Postal rates shall be established to apportion the costs of all postal operations to all users of the mail on a fair and equitable basis.
- (e) In determining all policies for postal services, the Postal Service shall give the highest consideration to the requirement for the most expeditious collection, transportation, and delivery of important letter mail.
- (f) In selecting modes of transportation, the Postal Service shall give highest consideration to the prompt and economical delivery of all mail. Modern methods of transporting mail by containerization and programs designed to achieve overnight transportation to the destination of important letter mail to all parts of the Nation shall be a primary goal of postal operations.
- (g) In planning and building new postal facilities, the Postal Service shall emphasize the need for facilities and equipment designed to create desirable working conditions for its officers and employees, a maximum degree of convenience for efficient postal services, proper access to existing and future air and surface transportation facilities, and control of costs to the Postal Service.

## You Are Under Attack

APWU President Cliff Guffey got the attention of delegates to the National Editors' Conference when he told us, "You are under attack". Speaking at the opening session of the Postal Press Association's Editors' Conference on Thursday, August 11, he added this dire warning: "and we are ill-prepared for the fight". He emphasized the need for action is immediate. Congress must take positive action when they return in September because the Postal Service is literally broke.

Mr. Guffey said Postal Employees were under attack by the same forces that are aligned against state public workers in Wisconsin, Ohio, Michigan and Florida. He said our immediate concern was H. R. 2309, a bill introduced by Rep. Darrel Issa, which according to the Center for American Progress has a hidden agenda of eliminating collective bargaining for postal employees.

Throughout his presentation Mr. Guffey stressed both the magnitude of the battle and the urgent need of individual employees to stand up and fight back by establishing a presence in the field with their congressional representatives. He said when he tries to talk to members of Congress they are telling him, "your people do not have a presence in the field", and he urged everyone to visit their members of Congress during the August recess period and ask our members of Congress to co-sponsor and support H. R. 1351 as the best answer to the Postal Service's financial problems.

He re-iterated that the Postal Service's financial problems are mainly caused by the requirement to pre-fund future retiree health care benefits and that absent this pre-funding burden, the Postal Service would have enjoyed a surplus of \$611 million in Fiscal Years 2007 through 2010, despite declining mail volume, and economy in chaos, and electronic diversion.

President Guffey told the delegates the national ad campaign that emphasized the Postal Service does not take any tax dollars has been a success in the goal of educating the public about the finances of the Postal Service, and he asked us to keep shining light on this positive message.

*Tim Eaton, Editor*



The **TOP FLIGHT** is the official publication of the Mississippi Postal Workers Union. The opinions and views expressed in this publication are those of the writer, and do not necessarily represent the opinions of the Editor or the Executive Board of the MPWU.

All submissions are welcome, but may be edited, when necessary, for space or clarity.

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## From the MS FEDS Director

Brothers and Sisters:

How would you like to belong to a great organization? This organization was created to show empathy for families of our fellow co-workers who have died because of illness, accidents or just old age.

When a loved one dies emergency situations arises and the insurance plans have not had the time to pay for the necessary expenses. A group of employees thought highly enough of their co-workers that they wanted to do something to help the families in emergencies. This, the death of a co-worker, counts as an emergency.

Believe me, some things the family is never prepared for and these funds come to be very useful in the event of death of a family member.

I, a member of the MS-FEDS, am asking that we as a Union come together and support the Fund that would help our fellow co-workers should the need arise. Please join this wonderful organization and show some support for the families.

**PLEASE SIGN UP AND JOIN THE MS FEDS  
BENEVOLENT ASSOCIATION!**

*From page 1, "Threads of Disaster"*

So, in the end this is what Corporatists hate about Unions. Unions represent "people power" and the Corporatists are vastly afraid of that. They bash every form of democracy, from minor protest movements to major ones like the Occupy Wall Street movement, but what they actually spend their money against is the Unions. This is because Unions are the epitome of democracy in action and we are organized into an effective structure that threatens their oligarchical rule.

Protest movements do not directly form a threat to the Corporatists because they do not have the infrastructure to cause immediate harm to the corporate structure; but Unions do have this ability, and so the Corporatists spend their time and money fighting the Unions that have the ability to really threaten their power.

That's why our voice has to be heard. Notice it is our collective voice that has to be heard. The time for discussion is over. We have to speak in one voice; we have to be united in action. We cannot afford to play their game of Divide and Rule, because if we do, they will divide us and rule us on their terms, not our terms. We will have no voice in the matter because all they will hear are 500,000 separate voices which to them will be an unintelligible murmur.

On the other hand, if we say the same thing at the same time, a clear message of power will be heard that cannot be silenced.

*Tim Eaton*

**Unions can no more live without  
democracy than a fish without  
water.**

*Lane Kirkland, 1980*



## ATTENTION ALL LOCALS OFFICERS

Please contact the TOP FLIGHT with contributions for your local's section for the next edition.

I need meeting times, birthday announcements, retirement announcements, new member announcements, pictures and stories.

**The TOP FLIGHT is YOUR newsletter.**

### **This is a thank-you letter to Representative Palazzo.**

I'm sure everyone is aware of the financial problems of the Postal Service. There's a big hole in the bottom of our bucket and we are not filling the bucket up quick enough to overcome what's leaking out the bottom.

The hole was drilled into the bottom of the bucket by Congress in 2006; requiring the Postal Service to pay \$5.5 billion to the Treasury to pre-pay 70 years of future retiree health benefits in 10 years.

What if your bank told you they were changing the rules and your 30 year mortgage now had to be paid back in 3 years? Think you could handle that?

Congress has a bill, HR 1351, with 226 bi-partisan cosponsors, which would plug the hole in the bottom of the bucket at no cost to the taxpayers, but since Congress is dragging their feet, nothing has been done to plug the hole.

The bucket is almost empty so the Postal Service is getting nervous.

They are resorting to breaking contracts with employees and contracts with customers. They want to close 200 plants, Hattiesburg being one of them. They want to ship Hattiesburg mail to Mobile. They want to outsource jobs to another state and make all of South Mississippi 3rd class customers.

We asked Rep Palazzo to help. We submitted letters and over 1600 names on petitions asking for his support of HR1351.

Mr. Palazzo responded recently that he would not support HR1351. He is supporting HR2309.

So, thank you Rep. Palazzo for sticking to your conservative principles of small government and supporting a bill that creates a new government bureaucracy. Thank you for supporting a bill that kills 200,000 middle income jobs. Thank you for supporting a bill that makes all your district 3rd class customers. Thank you for supporting a bill that out-sources jobs from your district to Alabama. Thanks a lot for supporting a bill that doesn't plug the hole but adds another hole in the bottom of the bucket.

Finally, I especially want to thank you for cutting taxes. If this bill, which you support, passes, 200,000 Postal Employees will become unemployed and therefore paying no income taxes.

Thanks a lot!

*Originally published as a letter to the editor by Tim Eaton in the Hattiesburg American.*

# Merry Christmas

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I certify that the members whose names appear above are members in good standing and area **Official Delegates** to the **Annual-TRI STATE SEMINAR**

**Signed,** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Title,** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Hattiesburg MS 39404-7343**

**Make Check payable to: MS POSTAL UNION**

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**United We Bargain  
Divided We Beg**

## President Mark Cunningham's comments at the Hattiesburg Public AMP Meeting

When the Postal Service refers to labor costs, they always include salary and benefits. In these cases the Postal Service will not save any labor costs because of provisions in our current contract. The impacted employees will merely be disbursed to stations within a 50 mile radius of Hattiesburg.

The Postal Service always over inflates labor cost by including benefits. Health care costs have been shifted more to the employees over the past two contracts. The Postal Service will include sick leave and annual leave in their equation which is unrealistic because no employee can draw an hourly salary and annual leave pay at the same time. Those that use their sick leave excessively are subject to discipline up to and including removal for using this benefit that is included in managements cost figures.

The Postal Service has too many irons in the fire. They are attempting to close way too many facilities at the same time and move mail into already overcrowded buildings. They still do not have permission to relax the Service Standards, yet they are moving forward and disrupting employees' lives, causing disruption of service to communities to satisfy their superiors.

*Mark Cunningham, President Mississippi Postal Workers Union, AFL-CIO*

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