Postal Service Is Under Attack

Here’s how it’s happening.

On Jan. 5, 2015, overnight delivery of first-class mail was virtually eliminated.

All mail throughout the country is being delayed.

More than 140 mail processing facilities have closed since 2012, and 82 more are scheduled to close in 2015.

Retail work is being sent to Staples, at more than 1,500 stores throughout the country.

Door delivery is being eliminated in most new housing developments.

Chronic understaffing frustrates customers and slows the mail.

Six-day delivery is under constant threat.

$5 billion a year is transferred from USPS to the Federal treasury thanks to a provision in the 2006 Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act, which requires the Postal Service to make payments no other public or private entity must make. The USPS is required to fully pre-fund future retiree health benefits 75 years in advance over a 10-year period - at a cost of approximately $5.5 billion per year. The Postal Service’s “losses” are the result of the pre-funding requirement.

If not for that requirement, the Postal Service would have done quite well financially over the last few years. Based on its operations, it had a surplus of $1.1 billion in the first quarter of fiscal year 2015, $1.4 billion in fiscal year 2014 and $600 million in fiscal year 2013.

If the pre-funding mandate were lifted the future of the Postal Service would be bright!

Pay More, Get Less Postal Employee Retirements in the Crosshairs

This month, the House and Senate Budget Committees released their budgets for Fiscal Year 2016 and both contain severe hardship for federal and postal employees. Among other harmful provisions, these recently unveiled budget bills call for significant increases in the amount federal and postal employees must pay into their retirements.

Under plans endorsed in the FY2016 congressional budgets, up to 6% of a postal worker’s wages would go towards retirement payments – reducing wages by thousands of dollars each year for the same benefits. In recent years, employee contributions under FERS have risen from 0.8% all the way to 4.4%, with further increases now being considered.

“This is a blatant pay cut for postal workers,” said APWU Legislative and Political Director John Marcotte, “Congress can’t continue to balance the federal budget on employees’ backs.”

Over the past five years, lawmakers have already cut federal and postal workers pay and benefits by $159 billion – and now they want more. While workers have seen budget after budget diminish their livelihoods in the name of austerity, these congressional proposals ask nothing of the wealthiest Americans. Instead, the budget proposals advanced by House and Senate Republicans preserve and protect big tax cuts for America’s richest few.

While the House and Senate budgets seek to increase employee retirement contributions, another new piece of legislation aims to cut the amount we receive in retirement benefits. H.R. 1230, introduced by Rep. Bruce Westerman (R-AK), would “tweak” the way the federal retirement system calculates annuities.

Rather than average the highest three years of an employee’s salary, H.R. 1230 would take the average of the five highest years. The net effect would be big cuts in how much federal and postal employees receive in retirement benefits.

According to the Congressional Budget Office, over ten years, the bill would take over $3 billion out of the pockets of retired workers.

APWU stands strong with its sisters and brothers in the face of congressional attacks.

“These pay and benefit cuts are the latest disrespect heaped upon the good working-class folks in federal and postal employment,” said APWU President Mark Dimondstein, “we reject these ugly attempts to turn ‘public service’ into dirty words and public servants into piggy banks.”

From APWU eTeam News Update
Did You Know?

If it were a private-sector company, the U.S. Postal Service would rank 43rd in the Fortune 500, with revenue of $67.8 billion in fiscal year 2014.

In 2014, the USPS delivered more than 155 billion pieces of mail to 153.9 million addresses.

In the first month of fiscal year 2015, letter volume increased by 7 percent and package volume increased by nearly 14 percent over the previous year.

The Postal Service processed 34.4 million changes of address in 2014 and forwarded mail at no cost to customers.

How much did all this cost taxpayers?

Zero!

That’s right, the U.S. Postal Service is self-supporting; its revenue is generated by the sale of postage and services.

Does it Matter?

Does it matter if the U.S. Postal Service privatizes its operations?

You bet it does!

As an independent agency of the federal government, the Postal Service is accountable to the American people. Under federal law, the Postal Service has an obligation to serve the entire nation.

The Postal Reorganization Act says:

“The Postal Service shall have as its basic function the obligation to provide postal services to bind the Nation together.”

“It shall provide prompt, reliable, and efficient services to patrons in all areas and shall render postal services to all communities.”
APWU Stands Firm with Allies – No TPP and No Fast Track

In the coming weeks, Congress is expected to consider a wrongheaded bill to "Fast Track" passage of the international trade deal known as Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). TPP would be the largest trade deal in history, including countries from the United States to Chile to Japan and Vietnam, covering 40% of the world economy. Fast Track legislation (also called Trade Promotion Authority, or TPA) is supported by the White House and most congressional Republicans and would make it significantly easier to pass the Trans-Pacific Partnership into law.

This week, APWU President Mark Dimondstein joined union presidents from across the country in issuing a letter declaring their firm opposition to Fast Track legislation for the Trans-Pacific Partnership.

"These deals, written largely by and for the world's largest corporations, don't create jobs," the union leaders wrote. Instead, they "make it easier for firms to invest offshore and increase corporate influence over the global economy."

Last July, delegates to the APWU National Convention adopted a resolution against Fast Track and TPP.

5 Major APWU Victories

First is the POStPlan award.

Second is the Article 1.6b Global Settlement.

Third and fourth are the two MOU’s on filling vacancies in the Clerk/MVS/Maintenance crafts.

Fifth was the Maintenance Craft Line H settlement.

POStPlan settlement results in 4,647 offices being upgraded to Level 18, and ALL employees in these offices must be “career” employees, and Postmasters can only do 15 hours of clerk work per week, which resulted in a net increase of over 45,000 hours of clerk work per week.

4,300 offices become 6 hour offices and must be filled only with full-time bids.

6,832 offices are becoming 4 hour offices staffed by PSE level 6 employees which are all eligible to APWU members.

The Article 1.6b settlement requires payments to clerks when postmasters work beyond their limitations to be paid automatically without even filing a grievance and one provision states explicitly all time the supervisor or Postmaster spends staffing the window during the day will be counted towards the permissible bargaining unit work limits applies to all time the supervisor or postmaster is covering the window, which, in the absence of a clerk, includes all time the window is open.

$56 million dollars have been set aside for making restitution for violations.

The Line H settlement in Maintenance bottom line means if the PS fails to perform all of the cleaning based on the LDC 38 work hours at the end of the fiscal year employees will be paid for the shortfall at the overtime rate of pay.

All of these settlements are great, but each one requires that each member KNOW THE CONTRACT and report violations to your stewards.
Tri-State Convention 2015
Hosted by Mississippi Postal Workers Union

Hollywood Casino
711 Hollywood Blvd
Bay St. Louis, MS  39520

May 18th through 22nd - 2015
Check in May 17th

Room rate $89.00 per night + 9% tax
Suites are not available for group rate but are available
130 rooms have been blocked
Cut off for room reservations is April 17, 2015
Individual room cancellations need 72 hours notice prior
to the May 18th date

Group rate # is APW0517
1 (800) 946-2442 for reservations

TriState Registration is $35.00 per delegate
State Registration is $40.00 per delegate

Free WiFi throughout the facilities

DUES! DUES! DUES!
THEY ARE DUE!!!!!!!

The revenues of Mississippi Postal Workers
Union will be derived by per capita tax of nine
($9.00) dollars per year for each Member-at-
Large, and each Local assessed ten ($10.00)
dollars per year per member with the
limitation that no Local shall be required to
pay more than $3,500.00 per year. Dues are
payable in advance.

Tri-State Copa Draw Down
Tickets $20.00
50/50

MS POSTAL WORKERS UNION
P O BOX 17343
HATTIESBURG MS 39404-7343
(601)912-2158
On January 5, 2015 Overnight Delivery of First Class Mail has ended throughout the country: unless there is congressional action, a ruling by the Postal Board of Governors, or PMG action to reverse the changes.

Postal Mail Processing Center is Slated for Closure on __________ which will cause delay of mail, loss of good living wage jobs in our community, and also cause an adverse economic impact to the communities that depend on good service. The cut in service will cause hardships for the public and small businesses, destroying jobs, and breaking down the efficient and affordable delivery network by driving away mail and revenue.

On January 5, the USPS lowered the “service standards” to virtually eliminate overnight delivery – including first-class mail from one address to another within the same city or town as well as the many towns serviced by the Postal Processing Center.

All mail (medicine, online purchases, local newspapers, newsletters of community and religious organizations, bill payments, letters and invitations) throughout the country will be delayed.

Our entire community will lose business opportunities associated with e-commerce, which relies on the speedy delivery of goods ordered online.

Although 170 House members and 51 Senators called for a one year moratorium on the reduction in service and the closures of the mail processing centers, Congress failed to pass the necessary legislation in December 2014.

We need the public to send a message to the Postmaster General, the Postal Board of Governors, the President of the United States and Congress: Rescind the new “Changes in Standards” that occurred on January 5, 2015

and rescind the 82 closures scheduled for 2015

Postal Board of Governors
475 L’Enfant Plaza SW
Washington, DC 20260
Phone: 202-268-4800

Postmaster General
475 L’Enfant Plaza SW
Washington, DC 20260
Phone: 202-268-4264

Congressional Members
Capital Hill Switchboard
Phone: 202-224-3121

President of the United States
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20500
Phone: 202-456-1414

Say hello to Tracy Hudson. She has a big smile because she is one of the PSE’s from Hattiesburg that was recently converted to a PTF career position. This picture was taken on her last night in Hattiesburg. I understand her new position as a career employee is on the DAY shift! Congratulations, Tracy; and good luck!
TENNESSEE
MISSISSIPPI
ALABAMA

TRI-STATE TRAINING SEMINAR 2015

MAY 18 – MAY 20, 2015

REGISTRATION FORM

PLEASE PRINT

NAME AND ADDRESS OF LOCAL/STATE UNION

___________________________________________  
___________________________________________
___________________________________________

ATTENDING DELEGATES AND TITLE

1.___________________________________________  8.___________________________________________
2.___________________________________________  9.___________________________________________
3.___________________________________________ 10.___________________________________________
4.___________________________________________ 11.___________________________________________
5.___________________________________________ 12.___________________________________________
6.___________________________________________ 13.___________________________________________
7.___________________________________________ 14.___________________________________________

MAKE CHECK PAYABLE TO: MS COAST AREA LOCAL

MAIL TO:  MS Postal Workers Union

Attn: Patricia Lampley, Secretary/Treasury

P O Box 17343

Hattiesburg MS 39404

MUST BE RECEIVED BY APRIL 30, 2015
In this book, Rosenfeld, Associate Professor of Sociology at the University of Washington, is not as interested in the causes of labor’s decline; as he is in the consequences. He says in the Introduction, “the importance of Big Labor to the polity and economy in the mid-twentieth century helped launch a rich and extensive literature investigating the causes of labor’s decline. No comparable effort exists to explain the broad consequences of labor’s loss in the United States. This book fills that gap.”

He uses data from the Current Population Survey, the American National Election Studies, and the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Services to empirically identify four main consequences of the decline in labor unions.

Rosenfeld estimates that about a third of the rise in income inequality since the 1970s is due to unions decline, and the consequence is unions no longer equalize incomes.

Unions no longer counteract racial inequality. According to Rosenfeld’s investigations, since unions fell into sharp decline in the private sector in the 1970s, the private-sector wage gap between blacks and whites has grown.

Unions no longer play a big role in assimilating immigrants. He points out that while immigrants have played a role in union organizing in the past when workers were needed in the manufacturing sector, the most recent wave of immigrants have been largely Hispanics who have mostly taken low-wage jobs in service sectors that are not easily or efficiently organized.

In titling the final chapter, “The Past as Prologue”, I expected him to make comparisons with the history of the growth of unions in the early 20th century to the possible revitalization of unions in the 21st century; but he offers no such optimistic speculation. On the contrary, after emphasizing the political, social and economic differences between the two periods, and how these differences make it improbable for unions to grow he ends by saying, “At the very least, we need to be clear about what we have lost, and why we have lost it.”

In summary, I recommend this book, even though it paints a dreary picture for union activism. The decline in union activity is not only a loss for individual workers, but as Rosenfeld proves, also a loss for society as a whole. I think knowledge of the consequences he has identified can be useful to the union activist in giving well-documented reasons for advocating for labor rights in the bigger political sphere.

Unions no longer give lower income Americans a political voice. Rosenfeld states, “No political party will advocate on behalf of the economic interests of the working and middle class without a constituency pressing for pro-labor legislation.

The question of unions’ political impact therefore speaks to whether non-elites have a vital political voice in this contemporary era of nearly unprecedented economic inequality.”

By Tim Eaton
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. Send submissions and change of address information to:

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