



## Fight the post office cutbacks!

In testimony to Congress and a news conference in early August, Postmaster General John Potter raised the possibility of closing hundreds of post offices across the country. Potter also repeated his call for cutting mail delivery to five days a week. But while Congress debates, Potter is launching pre-emptive strikes to implement his cutbacks: tours are being compressed, jobs eliminated, workers exceded, transferred or outright driven from the post office. Workloads are intensifying and service reduced.

Just look at the job cuts. PMG Potter brags that in the past ten years he has reduced the postal workforce from 803,000 to 630,000 while reducing the number of postal delivery routes from 167,000 to 155,000. For most of this decade mail volume was increasing every year. And even though mail volume has declined during the present depression, the number of delivery points serviced by letter carriers has continued to grow. Fewer workers are doing more and more work. Management is not simply "studying" the question, but actively implementing cutbacks.

### A budget crisis made by Congress

Management says it has no choice because mail volume and postal revenue, has dropped sharply. If there's problems, it takes it out on the workers, while profits always go somewhere else.

But the present hysteria about postal finances is due in large part to Congressional looting of the post office. In 2006 Congress passed a law mandating the post office to pre-fund its retiree health care benefits program. The politicians were just seeking a way to divert postal profits to the federal budget to finance continuing tax cuts for the rich. Now, however, revenues are down, and management is predicting a \$7 billion deficit for the coming year. Without these extra payments, the deficits would be only \$1.6-1.8 billion. As a matter of fact, PMG Potter recently told Congress that were it not for the pre-funded health care payments, the postal service would have turned a profit of \$400 million in the first of half of this year!

The depression may deepen, and the postal deficits may grow. But why should workers be punished for this, and the public see reduced service, while the rich continue to live in style off the labor of the working class? Postal delivery is a public service and deserves government support. Congress could cover these deficits, which are only a small part of the postal budget. It would be nothing compared to what Congress just handed over to the banks and insurance companies so that Wall St. sharks could continue handing out million-dollar bonuses to each other. Let's shift the burden of the depression onto the rich, rather than subsidizing the rich with cuts to our jobs and to our public services.

### A Democratic farce: Senate Bill 1507

After creating much of the postal budget crisis, Congress is now promising to somewhat reduce the burden for pre-paid future retiree health care benefits in House Bill 22 and Senate Bill 1507.

Both bills were proposed by Democrats and supported by postal worker unions. But a funny thing happened to S 1507 as it was being debated in committee. Republicans on the committee proposed an amendment mandating arbitrators to "consider the financial health of the post office" when making decisions about postal

workers' wages, working conditions, etc. The arbitration process, which is already tilted in management's favor, would be given a much bigger tilt, as both the unions and management realize.

This amendment would make a mockery of union contract negotiations. According to present law, postal unions are not allowed to strike; they are forced to accept binding arbitration. Arbitration is a sorry substitute for the right to strike, but this amendment would turn it into a complete farce. The Republicans wanted to turn a simple fix for the postal budget into a vicious Reaganite assault on unions and negotiations.

Trouble is, Democrats on the committee agreed with the Republicans and voted for the amendment. The committee chairman, Tom Carper (D-DE), the original sponsor of the bill, accepted the amendment, as did another Democrat, Joseph Liebermann (D-CT). Postal unions were upset by this and some announced their opposition to S 1507 in its present form. But if the bill fails, and the postal budget reaches a major crisis, it's worth bearing in mind this is largely a crisis stage-managed by the Reagan-Bush Republicans. And they are being helped by Senate Democrats eager to appease their Republican colleagues.

This shows that a fix for the budget is not necessarily a fix for postal workers. We don't want an auto industry-style bailout with wages and benefits slashed and the workforce decimated. Management is gearing up for the next round of contract talks by violating the contract right and left, finding ways to get around the no-layoff clause. If they have their way, the no-layoff clause will be eliminated entirely, along with a chunk of our wages and benefits. Postal workers face a difficult struggle even if the postal budget is balanced.

### What can we do? -- Discussion, organization, protest

We were told that we would save our jobs if we worked ourselves to death. But this is no time to be a hero on production. Look at the automation department at Fort St.: just recently in a "Postal Vision" video District Mgr. Nancy Rettinhouse was bragging that automation scores were "excellent" and at "historic" highs. Yet management then gave the back of their hand to automation workers, eliminating 140 jobs in automation and cancellation. PMG Potter himself admits that workers have been "doing their fair share". He said this as he announced plans to cut 50,000 jobs.

We should put our effort somewhere else. We need to get organized to protest postal management's cutback plans. Union leaders are trying to sow passivity, telling us that this is "not a good time" to protest. Their idea of political activity is limited to voting for Congressional Democrats who then turn around and sell us out. But we cannot afford to sit and watch as our livelihoods are taken away from us.

We need to organize and to stage loud protests. The public needs to know the truth, and only we can bring it to them. The working class public will respond with support if we demonstrate our opposition by distributing leaflets like this that expose management's schemes and the union leaders' passivity. This will help build for meetings, pickets, and workplace actions. This way we can build a movement that forcefully opposes the cutbacks.[]

## Solidarity with the anti-dictatorship struggle in Iran

Iran is gripped by a major crisis. Show trials, small protests, and political realignments continue to this day. Massive protests gripped the country in June in the wake of a corrupt election process in which the incumbent president, Mahmoud Ahmedinejad, was declared to have won by an overwhelming margin. The second-place finisher, Mir-Houssein Mousavi, was no friend of the people either, but a cruel former prime minister. But he had promised a bit more freedom. The regime responded to the protests with a reign of terror. But despite brutal repression and the outlawing of demonstrations, the Iranian people's struggle against the fundamentalist Islamic clerics running the country still simmers.

The June actions frightened the tyrannical regime. Hundreds of thousands, if not millions of people took to the streets of the capital, Tehran and elsewhere. The regime responded by gunning down, beating and imprisoning demonstrators. But the masses stood tall. They faced off against the regime's police and paramilitary goon squads. At times, demonstrators in their thousands charged the police and paramilitary gangs, forcing them to retreat, and seizing the streets from them for a time.

The dubious election results were the immediate spark. But they merely unleashed the anger that had been building from three decades of police-state repression of all opponents of the theocracy, the crushing of workers organizations, the brutal treatment of women and growing poverty. By their actions, the masses have shown that even the fiercest repression cannot keep them down. They have been driven down for 30 years, but now it's their oppressors who are feeling the ground shake under their feet.

### The religious dictatorship in Iran

The theocracy in Iran came to power by crushing all other forces who participated in the great revolution that overthrew the hated US-backed Shah in 1979. The Shah came to power in a US-backed coup in 1953 that deposed the democratically-elected government of Mossadegh. The workers and poor were the backbone of the anti-Shah struggle, but the revolution was hijacked by the Ayatollah Khomeini and his followers. Khomeini carried out a reign of terror against the masses, the left-wing activists, women and anyone else who didn't accept their rule and the strict religious codes imposed on the population.

Ahmedinejad became president in 2005, pretending to take on corrupt leaders and help the poor. Instead, he has cooperated in privatizing government enterprises, turning them over more and more to private capitalists and foreign imperialist corporations. Unemployment and rising prices are ravaging the masses. Ahmedinejad dealt with this by throwing a few crumbs of charity to the masses while crushing strikes and every effort of the workers and downtrodden to organize themselves. Thus, for example, Ahmadinejad arrested the leaders of a strike of 17,000 bus drivers in 2005 and arrested them again in 2006. In 2007 teachers protests were attacked by security forces and its leaders sent to prison.

Ahmedinejad also became notorious for promoting hatred of Jews, sponsoring a conference of deniers of Hitler's holocaust. By injecting anti-Semitism into the critique of Israel, he managed to make the Israeli Zionist leaders look like victims, not the vicious criminals who've crushed the Palestinian people for decades on end.

### Mousavi: an old enemy with new reform colors

The main rival to Ahmedinejad, Mir-Houssein Mousavi, is portrayed in the mainstream media as a kindly reform-minded gentleman. Actually, he has a notorious history. As the clerical regime's prime minister during the 80s, he helped bring death and destruction to the Iranian and Iraqi masses by pursuing the Iran-Iraq war. In 1988 he executed thousands of leftist political prisoners, dumping them in mass graves.

In the elections Mousavi posed as a reformer who would loosen the restrictions on women. But he was a champion of privatization and other free-market reforms that hasten the economic ruin of the masses. All told, Mousavi and Ahmedinejad shared the same general outlook. Following the elections, Mousavi posed as a bit of a protest leader, but soon enough he retreated, calling on the masses to tone down the actions.

### US policy: imperialism with a diplomatic touch

The Obama administration has condemned the regime's violence against the protestors but has not declared for either Ahmedinejad or Mousavi. This isn't because the US is suddenly against interfering in other countries' affairs, as Obama claims. No, just as under Bush, the US is waging war in Iraq and Afghanistan and meddling everywhere to one degree or another. The US remains an imperialist monster. Obama has maintained the anti-Iran sanctions and threats left over from Bush, but is also more amenable to diplomatic ties with the Iranian rulers. He does not want to cut off ties to the present government of Ahmedinejad, but wouldn't mind if Mousavi won either. Certain Republicans cry that Obama should condemn Iran more. They don't care about the Iranian people, but feel harsher rhetoric against Iran better serves US efforts to dominate the Middle East.

### Support the protests in Iran!

Workers here should support the struggle of the Iranian masses. We must oppose US bullying against Iran and US attempts to pose as a friend of the Iranian people. Liberation of the Iranian masses can only won by the masses themselves.

The present crisis of capitalism is taking its toll on workers of every country. Everywhere we look, the workers face both economic and political challenges. In Iran, capitalist exploitation is combined with the cruel dictate of the clerics. In the US, we must fight both against devastation from the depression and the overseas imperialist adventures of the government. In this way, we will build solidarity with the workers of Iran and other countries. And the Iranian workers will show workers everywhere that, no matter how invincible the tyranny may seem, the masses will eventually rise up to challenge it.[]

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