



Support postal workers against job cuts, forced relocation, overwork, and reduction to five-day delivery!

Employers all over the country are using the recession to slash their workforce, overwork the remaining workers, and cut our wages. Postal management is doing the same to postal workers across the country. In the last decade, 170,000 postal jobs have been lost. Now, during the recession, postal management wants to "excess" more workers (cut even more jobs). It even wants to cut back mail service to five-day delivery in order to eliminate thousands upon thousands of more jobs.

That's why postal workers picketed in front of the GWY postal facility on Fort Street on March 31. That's why postal workers will hold a rally in front of the Highland Park post office on Wednesday, April 14. And it's why more actions can be expected in the future.

At the March 31st picket, over a hundred workers took part at one time or other in this spirited event over a two-hour period. Slogans rang out over and over again, such as "Six-day delivery, save our jobs!", "They say cutback, we say fightback!" and "The workers, united, will never be defeated!" This militant and successful picket had finally been called, after repeated demands for over a year by some militant workers at union meetings, by the APWU-Detroit District. But work for it was done mainly by rank-and-file workers, who braved the sneers of union officials who said it was premature.

Detroit postal workers are under attack

Through years of struggle we have won some contractual guarantees against layoffs. But postal management is making a mockery of this by insisting that workers move at short notice to other facilities. Dozens of workers from the Fort Street facility are being moved, some of them to faraway cities, even Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania or Des Moines, Iowa. We are given the ultimatum: either move, or lose your job. And once we move, there's no guarantee we won't be asked to move a second time.

There is no concern about what this means for our lives and those of our children, and many families are faced with separation as now spouses will have to work in different cities. Even when both spouses work for the post office, management thinks nothing of assigning jobs in different cities. When executives are moved, they get lavish compensation, and the post office has even bought their houses for \$1.5 million. But when workers are moved, we face financial ruin, with only minor compensation which may not even cover brokers' fees and closing costs when one tries to sell one's house, to say nothing of the loss we face when our mortgages are underwater.

While telling us that they don't have any more work for us, they are subjecting us to overwork and speedup. At the Fort Street facility, they have removed job classifications from many of us, and made us into "standby room" workers. They then send us back to do the very jobs that supposedly didn't exist, often assigning overtime as well. The point of this insanity is to make us insecure, to take away our work rules and work us to the bone, and to force older workers to quit.

Meanwhile at local postal stations all across Detroit, they have extended the routes of carriers year after year. And they have forced job combinations on clerks and mail handlers. The job cuts and relocations aren't just taking place at one or two facilities, but all across the country. They affect not just clerks, but letter carriers and mail handlers. This is an attack on all postal workers.

Postal workers of all crafts!
Come join the protest rally
Wednesday, April 14, 11am-12 pm
Highland Park Post Office
13215 Woodward Avenue

As the work has intensified, the toll of injuries has grown. The post office is supposed to find suitable work for injured workers, but management has made a mockery of this contract provision as well. They have instituted a national program to deny injured workers their jobs, which postal management calls "National Reassessment Program". Injured workers who have been working the same job for years are suddenly told, "We no longer have any work available for you", as management seeks to force them out of the postal service.

Postal management acts just like a private employer

Why is postal management doing this? Some people think that because the post office is a government agency, it doesn't act like a profit-mad capitalist company. But although the post office is a public service, it is run as a business. And today the business people and the different branches of government are united in forcing cutbacks on workers.

Oh yes, there's a great recession going on. But the recession doesn't hit us all alike. The banks have been bailed out, and the financiers are making record profits once again. The big corporations have seen much of their stock recover in value. But auto workers, teachers, city workers in Detroit and elsewhere, service workers, and others are seeing their jobs lost, their wages cuts, their benefits slashed. The government-managed postal system is doing the same to postal workers in order to stay in line with capitalist practice.

We are not losing jobs because there isn't work to be done. If there were a lack of work, we wouldn't be faced with overwork. It's not because we aren't productive. We work harder and move more mail per worker than ever before.

No, we are losing jobs as part of a campaign to drive down the conditions of all workers. And we are also losing jobs in the privatization drive. In postal, as in auto and in government work and elsewhere, subcontracting and privatization is used to take away our jobs and apply pressure to cut the wages of the remaining jobs.

Just as the cutting of auto workers' wages depressed wages and working conditions for all workers, so the attack on postal workers -- if it is allowed to continue -- will help depress wages and conditions for all workers. There are postal workers in towns and cities all across the country. Employers everywhere will take notice of what happens to postal workers, and it will affect other workers. In attacking us, postal management is serving the interests of CEOs and rich financiers everywhere.

The anti-worker drive is also threatening the quality of mail service

Nor does management care about the public. The privatization of the post office won't only mean taking away our jobs, but cutting back service to the public. They have a national plan to slash the number of postal stations across the country. And they are even talking about moving to five-day delivery--which would mean letters wouldn't arrive at all during the weekend.

Postal work used to serve as a stabilizing factor for many communities. Removing not just postal stations, but postal workers from our communities will have a negative impact on many working class communities. Just as the collapse of the auto factories and other industries has hurt working class neighborhoods, so will the privatization of the post office.

Rank-and-file workers unite!

It's time for postal workers of all crafts -- whether in the American Postal Workers Union, the National Postal Mail Handlers Union, or the National Association of Letter Carriers -- to unite to defend our jobs. Today a worker in one craft may be assigned tomorrow to a job in another craft. And healthy and injured workers must unite, as the flood of new assignments and the increase of overwork brings the threat of injury to more and more workers.

All over the country, postal workers are angry about what's going on. In the last few years, protests and informational pickets have taken place from California to Pennsylvania, from Flor-

ida to Ohio, and even in Washington D.C.

And now information pickets and protest events have begun here in Detroit. The first ones have been called by the APWU-Detroit District, but workers of all crafts should come. True, many workers won't be able to come because of their work hours or other commitments, but there are other ways to participate, such as talking to coworkers and neighbors, and forming networks to prepare for future struggle.

But we can't rely on the union leadership to carry out this campaign. We must carry it out ourselves. While the APWU has carried out a number of pickets around the country, the protests have been sporadic and uncoordinated. Moreover, at the April 11th meeting of the APWU-Detroit District, it was announced that William Burrus, national president of the APWU, demands that the issue be restricted to talking about service cuts. And indeed, we do care about providing good service to the public. But there's also the issue of job losses, forced relocation, and overwork.

In Detroit as well as nationally, the APWU has dragged its feet on protests and pickets. That's why it's only now, after so many jobs have already been lost, that protests are being organized here. That's why it took heated discussions at the APWU-Detroit District membership meetings, again and again, for well over a year, until the first informational picket was authorized. And still, many union officials agree with William Burrus and are telling us to talk mainly about service cuts.

These same union officials usually also tell us to put our faith in grievances, and in begging the politicians. Well, we've filed grievances year after year, and management just keeps violating the contract anyway. The union officials have begged the politicians, and tried to keep postal workers from criticizing them, and it hasn't worked. If some politicians are to do anything at all for us, they had better be afraid of what workers will think of them otherwise. It looks like the union leaders are afraid of embarrassing postal management, when they should be denouncing postal management for treating us like dogs.

So it's time for rank-and-file postal workers to make their voice heard. We must ensure that pickets and protests not only take place, but tell the public about what is happening in the post office. We must not be afraid of other workers, as many union officials tell us to be, but unite with other workers in a fight against the capitalist drive to impoverish us. We must network among ourselves, and we must prepare for the coming contract talks, because postal management will be asking for major concessions. We must be prepared for mass struggle.

This is going to be a long, hard fight. The March 31 picket was a great start, but we are going to have to follow up on it, bring postal workers from more facilities and stations into action, and link up with other workers in our communities. Our struggle is part of the struggle of all workers to survive the recession and maintain our living conditions.

Fight job cuts, forced relocation, and overwork!

Preserve six-day delivery!

Unite across craft lines!

Defeat postal management's anti-worker campaign! []