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Postal workers march to save the mail in 50 states



By Mark Gruenberg

Chanting “Whose post office? The people’s post office!” and “The U.S. Mail is not for sale!” more than 100 Postal Workers and their union allies marched through downtown Washington on April 24, protesting the U.S. Postal Service’s scheme to run postal services out of Staples stores. The demonstration was one of more than 56, in every state in the U.S., on a National Day of Action that the Postal Workers (APWU) and other postal unions called to campaign against the Staples scheme. The Staples plan is a cog in Postmaster General Patrick Donahoe’s current campaign to cut costs by firing full-time union workers and giving postal jobs to part-time minimum-wage no-benefits non-union workers toiling at Staples stores.

Donahoe’s Staples “pilot project,” which postal workers call privatization, is part of his plan to cut costs by trashing workers and reducing service. Donahoe wants to fire 100,000 employees, let another 100,000 go by attrition, eliminate Saturday service, kill door-to-door service, close USPS sorting centers and shutter or cut hours at 13,000 post offices. He also wants to transfer the remaining full-time workers to a new, untried, USPS-run health care plan. All this has led the nation’s postal unions - APWU, the Letter Carriers, the Rural Letter Carriers, and the Mail Handlers,

a Laborers Sector - into an unprecedented alliance to mobilize their members and the public to stop his plans and substitute better alternatives.

The 56+ demonstrations are the alliance’s second joint effort, following an April 14 joint letter from the unions to lawmakers calling President Obama’s budget proposals for the U.S. Postal Service unacceptable. Many of Obama’s USPS budget plans track Donahoe’s recommendations.

Union members and leaders in the D.C. dem-

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onstration made it clear they had little taste for the Postal Service’s plan, which would throw hundreds of thousands of minority-group members, veterans, or both, out of middle-class jobs.

“We have a rat in the house and it’s spelled S-t-a-p-l-e-s,” Metropolitan Washington Cen-

The Staples “pilot project,” is part of a plan to cut costs by trashing workers.

tral Labor Council President Jocelyn Williams told the D.C. crowd at its destination, one of two downtown Staples stores. Members of the Letter Carriers, the Mail Handlers/Laborers, AFGE, the Office and Professional Employees, SEIU, The Newspaper Guild-CWA, IBEW and the Teachers also marched. Their support, along with backing from the rest of organized labor, gratifies Mark Dimondstein, the new, activist president of APWU.

“Only together will we rise; Separately, we will fall,” he said. “This is a fight against the Wall Street privatizers and the postmaster general who works with them.” And Dimondstein warned the nation: “Do not be seduced by convenience” of mail handling at Staples stores.

“We’re here to say no to outsourcing,” added Letter Carriers Executive Vice President Tim O’Malley. “We should put trained APWU postal clerks in private establishments, just as they were in Sears Roebuck stores when I was in Philadelphia.”

“This is not just about Postal Service workers. It is about America and it is about survival of the middle class,” added Williams, who helped pay for

his college expenses by toiling four years as a seasonal Thanksgiving-to-Christmas postal worker.

“We are going to fight this contracting-out of vital postal services,” said AFGE President J. David Cox. “I want the Post Office to be processing all of the mail.”

“We’ll stop this ill-advised scheme by the postmaster general,” Mail Handlers President John Hegarty told the crowd.

While Donahoe tries to shift postal services to Staples, he’s silent on union-suggested moves to increase USPS revenues, such as expanding its business to include postal banking, notary public services, longer weekend hours, licensing and other services, Dimondstein said.

In their letter to lawmakers, Dimondstein, Letter Carriers President Fredric Rolando, Hegarty and Rural Letter Carriers President Jeannette Dwyer made those same points against Donahoe’s cost-cutting and congressional postal “reform” bills that mimic those moves.



Mark Gruenberg edits Press Associates Inc.

Youth and the XL pipeline

By PW Editorial

The time to act is now!

The Keystone pipeline proposal has hit a stop sign with Obama temporarily delaying a decision but it has deeper problems than right-of-way issues across the United States. After all, the controversial proposal for transporting Canada’s tar sands was never just about the pipeline. Just ask the thousand who rallied in front of the White House last week. However frustrated and angry over a lack of political action on climate change, millennials are not tolerating indecision. This 18-34 year old group in the United States is 74 million strong and when the worst happens will suffer the most from climate change. With little representation in Congress, where the average age is 60, they are looking to civil disobedience as a strategy to create the political will to address this threat. This will happen not only in our nation’s capitol but on the streets of major cities across the nation. The fight over Keystone is really about a generational shift in our energy paradigm and how we will sur-

vive the 21st century. It concerns the wealth and jobs that the fossil fuels industry creates, how it has weaved itself into all of our lives and pulled us into a formidable dependency. With a growing foreboding, however, we are sensing our carbon lifestyle may be lethal to future generations and if they are to survive it is incumbent on us to accelerate efforts to develop other energy sources. The world’s climate scientists essentially agree that if left unchecked, anthropogenic CO₂ will worsen extreme weather, raise sea levels and create mass extinctions from a profuse array of environmental changes. In moderation, fossil fuel usage might not have posed a serious threat, but we have moved well past that threshold. Our burning of fossil fuels produces around 33.4 billion metric tons of CO₂ per year and world energy needs are expected to rise about 40 percent over the next 20 years. The time act is now! The young generation allied with the environment and labor movements can make a difference.

Cowboys and Indians unite to fight XL pipeline

By Albert Bender

Cowboys and Indians fought on the same side last week in the nation's capital. The Cowboy and Indian Alliance marched on the Capitol in Washington for Earth Day through April 27 to protest the TransCanada Keystone XL Pipeline. The group set up a tipi camp outside the White House for the five-day duration of the protests.

The protest camp formally closed on April 27, with the message of "reject the Keystone XL." Saturday, April 26 has been designated as "a day of action." On that date everyone present will be asked to put his or her thumbprint mark on a tipi.

There were speakers from the tribal peoples, ranchers, farmers and refinery committee members who will be directly affected by the pipeline and its tar sands oil. The speakers have pledged to lead the resistance should KXL be approved at any point. The Alliance is inviting everyone to come to their tipi camp on the National Mall to put more public pressure on President Obama to eventually reject the Keystone Pipeline altogether.

The Alliance is a coalition of Native American Nations, ranchers and farmers who live along the route of the proposed pipeline. In what is a historic first in decades, Native peoples and white farmers and ranchers are united in common cause against a common enemy. This unity was prompted by realization of the deadly danger of tar sands oil to all human beings, irrespective of race or nationality.

When tar sands oil (also known as diluted bitumen or dilbit) spills it emits a smell that causes immediate physical sickness including dizziness, burning throats, headaches and watery eyes. Bitu-



men is the thickest, dirtiest of oil with the consistency of peanut butter. To move it through the pipelines it must be either diluted or heated to extremely high temperatures. Tar sands oil spills pose extremely difficult cleanup problems because of the drastic measures oil companies must use to transport this hazardous sludge toward faraway refineries. This is a main reason why the Cowboy and Indian Alliance is fighting so hard to stop TransCanada from obtaining White House approval.

In Nebraska there is a massive underground water supply - the Ogallala Aquifer - that is also a source of water for several other states in the region. If TransCanada ever succeeded in ramming the KXL Pipeline through this ecologically sensitive and vulnerable region, the water supply of millions of people would be frightfully jeopardized. An oil spill would ruin the entire region beyond repair and the Native nations, farmers and ranchers realize this all too well. That is why the Alliance has resolved to do everything in its power to stop the pipeline in its oil soaked tracks.

As of April 18th the White House announced a delay of the Pipeline decision: a delay is good, but what is needed is a Presidential rejection. At stake is the health and lives of millions. The KXL Pipeline must be defeated!

On April 18th the White House announced a delay of the pipeline decision.

Fundraiser held for VW workers

By A. J. Sorenson

On April 18, Chattanooga for Workers hosted a potluck fundraiser to help send some Volkswagen workers to Washington DC for a national speak out on the truth about working at Volkswagen, their experiences at the plant and the situations that lead up to their injuries. Also their experiences in the UAW organizing drive, and where they are now --unemployed because of their injuries. The fundraiser was held at St. Marks United Methodist Church, in North Chattanooga.

SEIU local 205 organizer Kate Sheets opened up for the event, and introduced the speakers. Guest speakers included two former employees who were fired after both men were injured on the job, labor journalist Mike Elk, Brian Merrit of Mercy Junction, Jared Story of Concerned Citizens for Justice and United Campus Workers, and Michael Gilliland of Chattanooga Organized for Action.

As part of this event, attendees broke out into groups to brainstorm on ways to advance their communities and work forces. After everyone got back together, Chris Brooks of Chattanooga for Workers and a Tennessee Education Association organizer collected and put into shape the ideas for further discussion and action.

The fundraiser was an idea created by Chattanooga for Workers and other thoughtful individuals who stand behind the unionization of Chattanooga Volkswagen workers, and the organization of communities and work places everywhere, something the group believes will help advance the everyday lives for workers.

Revela la AFL-CIO recomendaciones para acción

Por AFL-CIO en español

Desde el 17 de abril de 2013, la Federación Estadounidense del Trabajo y Congreso de Organizaciones Industriales (AFL-CIO, por sus siglas en inglés), la central gremial más grande de EE.UU., además de seguir con su energético apoyo por un proyecto de ley para una reforma migratoria inclusiva, ha estado urgiendo al gobierno de EE.UU que pare con las deportaciones innecesarias. En 21 de abril la AFL-CIO emitió una detallada declaración de política pública al Departamento de Seguridad Interna (DHS, por sus siglas en inglés) la cual entabla su caso sobre como parar con las deportaciones favorece a los trabajadores. A continuación los tres puntos más sobresalientes de las recomendaciones de la AFL-CIO:

1. El DHS deber dar un perdón decisivo con una autorización de trabajo a los individuos que son una prioridad menor para ser deportados o elegibles para discreción fiscal bajo las políticas existentes del DHS. Esto debería detener a los empleadores para que paren de utilizar "el juego de las deportaciones" que pone a un trabajador en contra otro.

2. El DHS debería reafirmar el papel principal del gobierno federal, el cual es determinar e implementar sus prioridades legales, por medio de la terminación de programas que efectivamente delegan estas prioridades a las autoridades policiales locales.

3. El DHS debería reformar el sistema de ejecución policial y de de-

portación para dejar de criminalizar a las comunidades de inmigrantes y asegurar que los individuos que son una baja prioridad para ser deportados o que son elegibles para discreción fiscal no sean deportados.

Esta declaración de política pública no solo ofrece recomendaciones, pero también da una fundación legal para nuestro continuo llamado para que el gobierno realice una acción ejecutiva que mitigue esta crisis de las deportaciones para millones de trabajadores. La AFL-CIO aplaude a los líderes políticos por apoyar energéticamente a este simple mensaje: La Cámara Baja debe votar por el proyecto de ley bipartidista que fue aprobado por una gran mayoría del Senado hace nueve meses. Desde que el Senado de Estados Unidos votó 68-32 en junio pasado por una legislación bipartidista que remedia esta prolongada crisis migratoria, Estados Unidos ha tenido que sufrir más de 250,000 deportaciones, y los republicanos de la Cámara Baja han tomado la decisión partidista al negar un simple voto a este proyecto de ley.

Mientras continuamos con esta campaña nacional para poder terminar con el obstruccionismo de los republicanos, también seguiremos abogando para que el gobierno utilice su poder ejecutivo para aliviar la crisis de las deportaciones que están afectando a millones de trabajadores.

De no ser así, tendrán que escuchar las repercusiones electorales no solo en el 2014, pero también en futuras elecciones.

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