



As Santa's "elves", including Ben Poe (above), decorated the windows of Portland's Main Post Office downtown on Nov. 30 with balloons and signs, grinchy postal managers came out and tore them down. Despite high-fives from postal customers lining up to kick-off the Christmas mailing season, the "elves" were banished from the property.

'No closures, no cuts' message greets holiday postal customers

As the Christmas mailing season picks up, postal customers at Portland's Main Post Office downtown were greeted Nov. 30 by holiday-themed balloons, streamers and signs decorating the front windows — "Save Santa's Post Office!" "We Wish You 6-Day Delivery and a Happy New Year" and "Deck the Mails with More Mail Carriers." Postal "elves" in Santa hats also were there agitating about irregular, late, and after dark delivery in the Portland area.

"Santa's worried that the lame duck will cripple the postal eagle," smiled Jamie Partridge, a retired member of the National Association of Letter Carriers (NALC) Branch 82-turned elf. "Just when little Virginias all over the country are depending on the post office to prove there is a Santa, the lame-duck Congress is preparing to gut the service."

Retiring U.S. Sen. Joe Lieberman (I-Conn.), announced recently that he's ready to eliminate Saturday delivery, just as he entered secret negotiations with U.S. Rep. Darrell Issa (R-Calif.), who insists on also eliminating door-to-door mail delivery, while closing half the mail processing plants and

post offices nationwide.

A five-year hiring freeze on career positions has left 114 letter carrier vacancies in Portland, according to Branch 82. The union is calling on the United States Postal Service to restore service by filling those vacancies and promoting transitional employees to career positions. The shortage, the union says, has resulted in irregular, late, and after dark delivery.

"Santa's helpers, the letter carriers, need flashlights, headlamps, and even Rudolph's red nose to guide their deliveries these days," Partridge joked.

Postal worker unions argue that a 2006 Congressional mandate which forces the postal service to pre-fund retiree health benefits 75 years in advance is sending the service into a death spiral. Not only would the postal service have been profitable without the mandate, they say the USPS has also overpaid tens of billions into two pension funds.

"Not the Internet, not private competition, not labor costs, not the recession — Congress is responsible for the postal mess" Partridge said. "Corporate interests, working through their friends in Congress want to undermine the USPS, bust the unions then privatize it."

"Issa is clearly the Scrooge of the Year, while Lieberman is coming in a close second," Partridge said.

Portland Communities and Postal Workers United sponsored the Nov. 30 job action. The group is comprised of activists and retirees from NALC, the American Postal Workers Union, and the National Postal Mail Handlers Union, as well as other community groups.

...Union Label shopping

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living wage for musicians. For \$16 to \$43, you can see AFM Local 99 members in the Oregon Symphony perform Comfort and Joy, a Dec. 23 matinee of classical Christmas favorites.

9) BLADES. For the family hunter or fisher, knives made by Gerber Legendary Blades make a sharp-looking gift, and they're made in Southwest Portland by members of Machinists District Lodge W24. [Some Gerber knives are imported, but if it says Made in Portland on the blade, it's union-made.]

10) AUTOMOTIVE. At In and Out Auto Care in Gladstone, Oregon, a standard full-service oil change, \$29.95, is provided by members of Machinists District Lodge W24. All-purpose gift certificates for any amount fit neatly in a stocking, and can be used for tune-ups, maintenance, or repairs. Visit inandoutautocare.com or call 503-786-0700.

Last but not least ...

HOLIDAY CARDS: Who knew? American Greetings holiday cards are U.S.-made by union Teamsters. What's more, you can buy them from a UFCW member for \$2.99 at Fred Meyer, and have them delivered anywhere in the United States for 45 cents by a member of the National Association of Letter Carriers. Drop by the post office or online at usps.com for holiday-themed forever stamps.

STOCKING SWEETS: Fill up

your stockings with Seattle-made Almond Roca or San Francisco-made Ghirardelli chocolates, both produced by members of the Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco and Grain Millers.

GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP: When you run out of room for out-of-town relatives, the Portland metro area's four

unionized hotels are surprisingly affordable, and they support family wages and benefits for members of UNITE HERE Local 9: Downtown Hilton Hotel and Executive Tower, The Benson Hotel, Paramount, and the Vancouver Hilton & Convention Center (\$101 a night)

'Unionmade' isn't, so AFL-CIO demands that it stop the fakery

What happens when a company acknowledges its clothing is not union-made but names itself "Unionmade" anyway? Count on union members proud of their reputation for quality work to say, "Give it up."

In a letter dated Nov. 29, the national AFL-CIO demanded that the apparel retailer Unionmade — which also has a logo suspiciously like the historic AFL-CIO "handshake" logo — stop its trademark infringement and unfair competition.

The federation told the company to immediately stop using the logo (including not selling items showing it and removing the sign from stores and online sites) and change the store name so it "does not deceive the public into thinking that they are purchasing items that are actually made by union workers...."

Hamilton Nolan at Gawker.com recently covered Unionmade's deceptive

presentation of its products. When pushed, Nolan wrote, Unionmade admitted "some of the brands we carry are union made, many are not." In a September Huffington Post column, professor Peter Dreier at Occidental College described his discovery of the not-union-made phenomenon and his interview with Unionmade's Todd Barket:

"So isn't the store's name, Unionmade, a bit misleading?"

"It had nothing to do with unions," Barket said. "I'm surprised that people took the name literally."

The AFL-CIO's cease and desist letter to Barket spells out the problem with the company's name this way:

"The AFL-CIO finds your use of the UNIONMADE mark highly misleading as the dictionary definition and understanding amongst the public is that 'union-made' means 'produced by workers belonging to a labor union.'"

...Talks at TriMet off to a bumpy start

(From Page 1)

provisions could be illegal. Five days later an administrative law judge with the Oregon Employment Relations Board (ERB) ruled that TriMet had, in fact, retaliated against the union when it canceled raises and implemented reduced health insurance benefits in January 2011.

Historically, labor contracts are extended until a new deal is reached. Such was the case with the 2009 contract between ATU and TriMet. That all changed after the union filed an unfair labor practice (ULP) complaint alleging that TriMet's final contract offer was illegal because it contained language that had never before been presented at the bargaining table.

[In September 2011, ERB ruled in favor of ATU and ordered TriMet to submit a revised final offer. TriMet lost on appeal. TriMet was ordered to re-submit two more final offers before it was accepted by ERB.]

Hansen called the judge's retaliation ruling of July 2012 a vindication. "This decision may result in a complete gutting of the recent interest arbitration decision because the arbitrator awarded the very proposal that was ruled illegal," he said.

In August, Local 757 filed a nine-

count ULP charge challenging the arbitrator's binding award. In September 2012, TriMet filed a ULP charge against the union for obstructing implementation of the binding arbitration award.

A hearing is scheduled for Jan. 8, 2013.

To avoid further shenanigans, Local 757 wants all upcoming bargaining sessions open to the public and to the media. TriMet's initial response to the union's request was "no." Hansen said the transit agency changed its position somewhat, informing him on Nov. 26 that TriMet would allow a few members of the press to attend — but only those TriMet considered "bona fide" media.

"TriMet has no objection to bona fide members of the press, unaffiliated with either party, being allowed to attend negotiation sessions and cover the story," Stedman wrote to Hansen. "TriMet would not agree to bloggers or affiliated members of the press."

At the same time, TriMet also asked for the names of all union-side participants so that they could be screened by TriMet's security personnel prior to bargaining sessions.

In response, Hansen wrote: "Absent an explanation and a very good reason, the union cannot agree to have your security guard screen people who attend

this session. Additionally, the union also will not agree that TriMet can decide who is a 'bona fide' member of the press."

In a Nov. 28 press release, TriMet spokeswoman Mary Fetsch said the agency "is committed to transparency and, as a part of negotiated ground rules, will propose to invite members of the press to attend, even though all previous negotiations with past contracts have been closed sessions."

Hansen said the union "made a commitment to our members, riders, rider advocacy groups, community stakeholders, the media and citizens of the community that they will have full access to the process in these upcoming negotiations. We intend to honor that commitment."

Meantime, TriMet informed the ATU and its union workforce that until a new contract is approved, the imposed contract will not be extended and employees will not receive previously-scheduled cost-of-living increases and must pay increases in their health care premiums.

Moreover, active and retired members of Local 757 employed at TriMet voted Nov. 30 to pay a special assessment dedicated to contract negotiations. The assessment, which ranges from \$5 to \$25 a month, begins Jan. 1, 2013.

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