

Protesters disrupt airport mail facility in Portland

Calling themselves “postal protectors,” 10 people blocked the entrance to the Portland Air Cargo Center (U.S. Postal Service) June 15, disrupting several morning mail runs. The 10 were among 40 demonstrators chanting, picketing and holding banners that read “Stop Privatization of the People’s Postal Service” and “Save Family Wage, Union Jobs.”

“Postal truckers, mail handlers and mail processing clerks are losing their jobs to profiteering, private corporations,” said Jamie Partridge, a retired member of Letter Carriers Branch 82, and one of those who blocked the entrance. “We intend to disrupt this attack on our communities.”

The protesters are members and supporters of Portland Communities and Postal Workers United (PCPWU), which has been fighting cuts and closures to the postal service for the past year. In May of 2012, 10 activists were arrested occupying Portland’s University Station post office, which has since been closed. In April, five protesters went to jail for a civil disobedience action at the Salem mail processing plant, which is now being dismantled with mail processing machines moving to Portland.

Postal mail handlers and processing clerks are losing their jobs in Salem as the work is being subcontracted to a low-wage, non-postal, nonunion corporation in Portland.

At the same time, Portland postal truckers are being put on standby



“Postal protectors” block the entrance to the Portland Air Cargo Center June 15, disrupting several mail runs by the U.S. Postal Service. The protesters are members and supporters of Portland Communities and Postal Workers Union, which is fighting cuts and closures to the postal service.

while a low-wage, non-postal, nonunion trucking company takes their work.

“This privatization and union-busting is being carried out in the name of a phony financial emergency,” said Rev. John Schwiebert, who was part of the June 15 blockade. “The security, safety, and timely delivery of the mail are all at risk. Rural communities, seniors and the disabled, small businesses and low-income communities are hit the hardest. Postal management needs to stop and reverse these closures, cuts, and subcontracts which are sending our beloved postal service into a death spiral.”

PCPWU and postal unions say the

“financial emergency” is phony. Since 2006 the USPS has been forced to spend nearly 10 percent of its budget pre-funding retiree health benefits 75 years in advance. No other U.S. agency or private business faces such a crushing financial burden. Not only would the postal service have been profitable without the mandate, the USPS has also over-paid tens of billions into two pension funds.

In the past year, the postmaster general has closed 30 percent of mail processing plants, reduced hours by 25 to 75 percent in half of post offices, put 30 percent of post offices up for sale, subcontracted trucking and mail handling, eliminated tens of thousands of family wage postal jobs, and delayed mail delivery.

Postal workers have seen their

wages cut by 25 percent for new hires. Bottom tier postal support employees (truckers and clerks) and mail handler assistants now make less in wages and benefits than the non-postal, non-union sub-contract workers, PCPWU said.

The agenda of corporate America, their friends in Congress and in postal management, according to the CPWU, is to cripple the USPS, to soften it up for union busting and privatization. The USPS is a \$65 billion annual business with over \$100 billion surplus in its pension and retiree health benefit funds, over 30,000 post offices and 200,000 vehicles. Postal activists claim that America is being confronted with a huge transfer of public wealth to for-profit, private corporations.

Maritime unions formalize Maritime Labor Alliance

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Leaders from the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU), the American Radio Association, the Inland-boatmen’s Union (IBU), the International Longshoremen’s Association (ILA), the International Organization of Masters, Mates & Pilots (MM&P) and the Marine Engineers’ Beneficial Association (MEBA) met in Washington, D.C., June 6 to formalize the Maritime Labor Alliance.

Participants unanimously appointed MM&P President Don Marcus as president of the Alliance, which was

formed in 2012 to protect maritime unions’ jurisdiction. MEBA President Mike Jewell was tapped secretary-treasurer.

The Alliance’s Executive Committee will be comprised of ILWU President Bob McEllrath, ARA President John Radcliffe, IBU President Alan Cote, and ILA President Harold Daggett.

“The members of the Maritime Labor Alliance are united and speak with one voice,” Marcus said. “Our respective memberships, whether shore side or at sea, are stronger together under

the Alliance.”

Marcus said the existing structures that the unions work within “aren’t sufficient.”

“We will work more closely together to promote the economic viability of U.S. ports and the United States-flag shipping industry. Our jobs depend on it. It cannot be business as usual,” he said.

ILA’s Daggett views the Maritime Labor Alliance “as a powerful labor force that will protect maritime unions’ jurisdiction and make certain all maritime voices are heard and respected.”

Attempt by House GOP to repeal Davis-Bacon proviso goes down

WASHINGTON, D.C. (PAI) — Another attempt by House Republicans to repeal federal Davis-Bacon Act requirements went down in flames on June 4.

The Davis-Bacon Act requires contractors to pay area prevailing wages on federally-funded construction projects. The law prevents fly-by-night contractors from low-balling bids and exploiting workers.

U.S. Rep. Steve King (R-Iowa) tried to attach an amendment to the 2014 military construction and veterans Affairs appropriations bill (H.R. 2216) to exempt all military construction projects from the Davis-Bacon Act.

The motion failed 231-192, with 36 Republicans joining 195 Democrats in opposition.

King has made a name for himself as one of the GOP’s outstanding haters of unions. King is a Tea Party favorite and a contender for the seat of U.S. Sen. Tom Harkin (D-Iowa), who is retiring next year.

King tried unsuccessfully to kill Davis-Bacon last year, too.

National AFL-CIO Building Trades President Sean McGarvey lauded the

lawmakers for keeping Davis-Bacon and said King’s defeat should signal House GOP leaders to stop future tries. McGarvey called the votes to kill Davis-Bacon “a waste of time.”

“Even within what is widely considered to be the most conservative House of Representatives in a generation, the amendment was defeated by a decisive vote,” McGarvey said. “Notably, 36 Republicans voted ‘no,’ reaffirming the fact that a significant number of conservatives recognize the utility of ensuring that federal construction projects do not become the vehicle through which local community standards are undermined by ‘low-road’ contractors that seek competitive advantage through the deployment of a low-wage, low-skill, easily exploited workforce.”

H.R. 2216 was approved by the House on a vote of 421-4.

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