

Communities and Postal Workers United (CPWU)

Spring 2018 -- *No Closures! No Cuts! No Delay of the Mail!* - www.cpwunited.com

KEY WEST POSTAL WORKERS PROTEST CUTS AND DELAYS

KEY WEST, Fla. (AP, 2/20/2018) — U.S. Postal Service workers and American Postal Workers Local 620 union members are protesting staffing shortages resulting in mail delays and an overextended workforce.

The Key West Citizen reports Monday's protesters collected signatures near two different USPS offices in Key West while waving signs reading "Cutting Service Is Not The Answer" and "Keep High Delivery Standards," among other phrases.

The newspaper reports protesters say the harm caused by lowering service standards in 2015 and closing 80 distribution centers needs to be addressed by the U.S. Postmaster General and the USPS Board of Governors. Union President Omayra Cruz says offices across the country are increasingly short staffed, causing long lines, late nights, unsent mail and unopened offices.



Members of the Florida Keys Area American Postal Workers Union (Feb. 19, 2018)

WEST VIRGINIA SCHOOL STRIKE INSPIRES LABOR MOVEMENT – RESEMBLES '70 POSTAL STRIKE

After A Nine Day Strike, Workers Won All their Demands Including a Pay Raise, a Freeze on Any Health Insurance Premium Increase and Governor Veto of Anti-Worker Legislation

(*excerpts from APWU WEB NEWS ARTICLE #26-2018, 03/14/2018*) - It was an inspirational show of solidarity. Education workers across all 55 counties in West Virginia – about 34,000 workers in total – said 'enough is enough.' Members of [three unions] went out on strike from Feb. 22 – Mar. 6. Together, they were victorious.

The strike was reminiscent of postal workers' own strike.

"In the 1970 postal strike, militant postal workers carried out similar unlawful but needed job actions," said [APWU] President Mark Dimondstein. "These too were propelled from the 'rank and file.' The most important event of our postal labor history laid the basis for the many subsequent gains in our union contracts and postal workers' rights and benefits."

For the workers, it did not matter what union they belonged to, be it the NEA, AFT, or WVSSPA, or what job they

performed, whether it was teacher, bus driver, cafeteria worker, custodian or clerical worker. They went on strike together.

The hashtags #55United and #55Strong spread on social media like wildfire, highlighting that the strike included every county in the state. Education in West Virginia was on hold until the state government heard and met with the strikers.

Another factor in the workers' success was the tremendous support from students, parents, community groups, and even school superintendents

The strike was mobilized at the grassroots level – a truly 'bottom up' action. Together, the workers stood up for their rights 'in the streets.' They took huge risks, putting themselves in each other's hands, and did not listen to any voices telling them to 'play it safe.'

The workers' actions have also inspired educators throughout the country. Right now, teachers in Kentucky, Arizona and Oklahoma are publicly demanding that their state legislators address their frustrations over pay and benefits.

The strike's success shows how "workers can force whichever political wing of corporate power holds the reins to respond to workers' union action," said President Dimondstein. "Workers can build power when we mobilize and take ownership of our unions – and fight for our own destiny."

ASK YOUR REPRESENTATIVE:

Co-sponsor H.Res. 28, which supports retaining door delivery for businesses and residents, and H.Res. 31, which supports restoring service standards in effect as of July 1, 2012

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ST. LOUIS: USPS #MeToo Moment

A dozen postal workers claim they were bullied at work

The allegations range from verbal to physical abuse.
(excerpted from "5 on Your Side", Feb. 1, 2018)

ST. LOUIS – Last week, a St. Louis mail carrier shared her story of being bullied on the job. She said a supervisor threw a key at her.

"I thought about committing suicide because it had gotten that bad," she said.

After her story aired, 5 On Your Side got at least a dozen phone calls and e-mails from postal workers saying they're being bullied, too. The allegations range from verbal to physical abuse.

"It is now being exposed because one brave female came forward," one woman said.

"It reminded me of the Hollywood movement," another woman added. "It's like, 'Yes, we're having our 'me too' moment now at the Post Office.'"

Thursday, four USPS employees — three mail carriers and one mail clerk — came together to share their stories. They each work for different stations.

"A male supervisor told me that I was nothing," one woman said. "You are nothing here. You are nothing to us."

"I've been called an idiot, that I am a horrible carrier, I am a stupid person," another woman added.

The Postal Service's bullying policy is clear. It says, being yelled at, receiving discipline for trivial matters, and being put down, especially in front of others, are all forms of bullying.

"I was physically pushed by a supervisor," one woman said. "Then, I was physically pushed by a union rep."

"There's something called a Nutting truck," another woman added. "I had a man run one into my shoulder."

USPS says to take action against bullying by keeping a written account of the bullying incidents and sharing the information with a supervisor. Its policy also says to contact Human Resources.

However, the four women say, when they reported the bullying, things only got worse.

"I've made phone calls up the ladder and every phone call you make comes back down on your head," one woman said. "You are the problem and the next thing you know, you're the one that's off the clock."

Some say transferring is out of the question.

"I've tried to go to another station," one woman said. "They won't let me go."

"All we want, bottom line, is that contract that they want us to follow," another woman added, "we want them to follow that same contract because in there, it says, that we are to be treated with dignity and respect."



LOCKING OUT THE BOSS

(excerpted from a 2005 article by David Bleakney, Canadian Union of Postal Workers, National VP for Education, in the Troublemakers Handbook 2 by Labor Notes)

At Toronto's Postal Station E, the harassment was unbearable. Union leaders and supporters were constantly being disciplined. The employer routinely violated the contract. Several stewards had been fired in quick succession and it looked as if more firings were coming. And members complained the union was powerless...

A new approach was needed. Union leaders thought, if people aren't going to wildcat but they are really angry, why not fire the bosses so people can go to work in peace?...

The action to lock out the bosses was led by postal workers who were full-time officers. Shop steward Mike Skinner says, "We used full-time union people, such as activists in other unions like the Steelworkers and the Auto Workers. We also contacted members of the labor council, activists from the neighborhood, support groups, supportive customers, and OCAP (Ontario Coalition Against Poverty). We had supported OCAP in the past and they reciprocated on many occasions. That is what grassroots solidarity is about. And all of these were folks who had nothing to fear from our employer. They couldn't lose their jobs because they didn't work there..."

Locking out your boss isn't as hard as you might think. Skinner says, "The activists arrived at the station early in the morning, locked arms, and prevented the employer from entering the building. The supervisors were given a disciplinary notice of interview like the ones they give postal workers. It stated they were temporarily suspended pending further notice. Meanwhile, letter carriers were welcomed with smiles, coffee, and applause as the line opened to allow their entry." No letter carrier was engaged in the job action, which eliminated the possibility of discipline. It's hard to discipline workers for showing up on time to do their jobs.

Inside the station, a big banner over the work floor said "Harassment-Free Zone." A banner outside said "Postal workers fighting for good jobs and service for the community." A meeting was called on the floor to discuss the situation. A resolution firing the bosses for the day was put forward. It passed unanimously. The message was delivered to the supervisors.

For the first time in months letter carriers were able to work in peace. They helped each other sort up their walks. The carriers proudly marched out of the building together as a unified force, while their bosses cowered on the street...

The story gained national prominence and postal workers were presented as reasonable, hard-working, and dedicated. Management was portrayed as thugs...

In the end...the station manager was given a new non-supervisory position... "and with her gone, the others were less bold" says Skinner...