

POSTAL NEWS

No. 20/2009

**Formulated by UNI-Japan Post in cooperation with UNI-Apro,
ASPEK Indonesia and SPPI**

- 1. Postal Department joins global money transferring Feb 9, 2009.**
- 2. Royal Mail Privatisation Opposition Intensifies. Feb 9, 2009.**
- 3. Falling numbers are adding up to Postal Service cuts Feb 7, 2009.**
- 4. Poland has just released what is possibly the prettiest stamp in Europe, for Valentines Day.. Feb 9, 2009.**

9 February 2009

1. Postal Department joins global money transferring

Shirley Wijesinghe

The Government has no intention to privatise the Postal Department but to improve its services through value addition, Posts and Telecommunication Minister Mahinda Wijesekera said.

Minister Wijesekera said the Postal Department draws Rs. 3,000 million annually from the Treasury for its functioning.

The changes are vital for earning profit.

He was speaking at the inaugural ceremony held recently to introduce Western Union Money Transfer Service at 637 post offices in Sri Lanka.

"We are extremely proud to join hands with Western Union, a global leader in money transferring services making a successful blend of values and ethics with modern infrastructure facilities," the Minister said.

Minister said the people working abroad could easily remit money to their families in Sri Lanka.

It is a great value addition which will empower us to cater to our huge customer network providing fast and reliable access in the money transferring network. Remittances from Sri Lankans working abroad continue to play a supporting role in strengthening Sri Lanka's economy and is a major source of foreign resources for the country.

According to the World Bank sources, Sri Lanka received U\$ 2.7 billion in 2007 making it the fourth largest remittance receiving country in South Asia, the Minister said.

He said the Sri Lanka Postal Service provides value added services such as communication services, bulk mail, dial services, fax, internet and E-mail and other utility services. The customer coverage of the Department is around 18 million.

There are 613 post offices, 3,440 sub post offices and over 500 agency post officers throughout the country.

2. Royal Mail Privatisation Opposition Intensifies

09 February 2009 by Steve Lawson - © Hellmail.co.uk

The Communication Workers Union and Lord Peter Mandelson are on a collision course over the proposed privatisation of Royal Mail, with the union threatening to withdraw its funding of the Labour Party if the government sells off part of the company to an investor. This is in addition to a growing revolt by Labour back-benchers. A new poll indicates that the union may have wider support for keeping Royal Mail in the public sector than realised.

According to the poll of 1,000 people, conducted by The Campaigns Company and On Net Communications, 75 per cent of those questioned disagreed with privatisation, 33 per cent strongly disagreeing, rising to 89 per cent when foreign ownership was mentioned. 58 per cent strongly disagreed, only 6 per cent of those polled were in favour of privatisation and this halved to 3 per cent when sale to a foreign company was mentioned.

CWU general secretary Billy Hayes said:

“The UK public is overwhelmingly opposed to government plans to privatise part of Royal Mail. This is a deeply unpopular move which would damage a trusted public service. We urge the government to take responsible action and respond to the justified concerns of UK citizens who do not want to see this valuable public asset carved up and sold off.”

Dave Ward, deputy general secretary, said:

“Royal Mail is a profitable public company with a dedicated workforce and unmatched public trust. Why would you gamble this away on an unpopular and unproven part sell-off?”

“A huge majority of the public is against this idea. It’s time MPs listened to their constituents and scrapped this disastrous plan.”

The CWU is to ballot union members on disaffiliation if the government pushes ahead with privatisation. With growing discontent amongst postal workers, all the signs are that Labour would lose an important source of funding.

The CWU is unhappy about moves to sell part of Royal Mail to another postal operator which the union says could see 50,000 jobs wiped out. If the CWU decides to disaffiliate from the party, other unions could follow suit, creating a serious financial crisis for Labour and a major split between government and trade unions. The general strike of the late 1920s was the last time the postal union cut its ties with Labour, a situation which lasted for 21 years.

A story leaked to the Mirror last week, suggested that Royal Mail is planning to cut its wage bill by £470 million in a secret project called 'Tiger' although Royal Mail denied allegations that it is to dump 16,000 jobs and that savings were about central costs and overheads, not front-line staff.

However, since mail deregulation, Royal Mail has been consistently under pressure from Postcomm to reduce operating costs rather than rely on price increases to keep it in the black. Most analysts we asked said that if privatisation is to go ahead, Royal Mail would be looking at ways to make the company as healthy as possible ahead of part-privatisation.

Despite showing a healthy profit in 2008, it is thought that a marked downturn in business due to the recession and a reduction in revenue from advertising products (ie D2D junk mail) is likely to have a major impact on Royal Mail's profitability this year and place greater strain on the Universal Service which Royal Mail says already runs at a substantial loss. With no sign of an easing of the recession, Royal Mail, in common with other operators is under pressure to cut its wage bill to minimise losses. The express delivery industry is being particularly hard-hit at the moment with many operators already shedding jobs.

However, the rift between the postal union and the government continues and there are unconfirmed reports that there could be a return to industrial action as the row over privatisation intensifies. CWU leader Billy Hayes said:

“The current government plans are a defining moment in the relationship between the unions and the government. The relationship will be severely strained towards breaking point. Coupled with planned job losses and office closures in Royal Mail, the government’s actions are placing a huge strain on the unions’ relationship with the Labour Party.” said Hayes.

The poll was based on 1,000 people who were each asked a series of questions by The Campaigns Company and On Net Communications.

1,000 people were polled by The Campaigns Company and On Net Communications. The questions asked were:

Did you know that the Government is considering selling a percentage of the Royal Mail to a private company yes or no?

Yes - 62%

No – 37%

Do you agree or disagree with the Government selling part of the Royal Mail to a private company? Would you:

Strongly agree - < 1%

Agree - 5%

Don't know or no opinion - 19%

Disagree - 42%

Strongly disagree – 33%

Do you agree or disagree with the Government selling a percentage of the Royal Mail to a foreign mail company? Would you:

Strongly agree - <1%

Agree - 2%

Don't know or no opinion - 8%

Disagree - 31%

Strongly disagree - 58%

© Hellmail.co.uk - Postal Industry News

000

Updated: 02/07/09 07:42 AM

Falling numbers are adding up to Postal Service cuts

By Dan Herbeck

News Staff Reporter

These are difficult times for the 7,574 people who sort and deliver mail in Western New York. Bone-chilling temperatures, icy sidewalks and deep snowbanks are just part of the problem.

Other challenges facing the U.S. Postal Service — both nationally and locally — are far more severe.

More people are using the Internet to pay bills and stay in touch with friends, so the volume of mail keeps dropping. The regional postal district handled 76 million fewer pieces of mail last year than it did in 2007 —about a 5.4 percent drop.

Nationwide, the Postal Service says it is in an “acute financial crisis,” with losses of \$2.8 billion last year and bigger losses expected this year.

Several measures are under way or are under study to save money.

- Under consideration is cutting mail delivery to five days each week, instead of six.

- The number of blue collection boxes has been decreased in recent years, and more boxes may be eliminated in the future, meaning postal customers will have fewer places to drop off their mail. There are currently about 3,300 boxes in Western New York.
- Managers are closely examining the routes and workloads of individual carriers, with an eye toward consolidating routes and ultimately cutting jobs.
- For this year, at least, salaries of postal officers and executives have been frozen at 2008 levels.
- No layoffs have been threatened, but jobs are being cut by attrition as people retire. About 3 percent of the region's postal jobs are being cut each year. Voluntary early retirement regulations have been relaxed, making it easier for workers to retire before age 55.

“Understanding that our old business model would be unsustainable in a new, wired world, the Postal Service embarked on a journey of transformational change,” U. S. Postmaster General John E. Potter recently told a U. S. Senate subcommittee. “The velocity of that change has increased every year as we continue to test the limits of what is possible.”

But some of the change is causing friction between postal workers and the managers who try to encourage, push and prod them into maximum efficiency.

In the past week, two Cheektowaga postal carriers were suspended and ordered off the job. Union officials said one of the carriers was suspended because a manager “spied” on him and determined he wasn’t walking fast enough while delivering mail.

The other carrier was suspended after getting into a workplace argument with a superior, the union said.

Rising tensions

“This is the worst I’ve seen things in a long time,” said Robert

J. McLennan, president of the Buffalo branch of the National Association of Letter Carriers. “Many of our carriers hate coming into work every day, because they have to walk on the snow and ice, and also have to fight with management.”

McLennan said many managers have made unreasonable requests of mail carriers this winter, telling them to save time by walking across lawns covered with deep snow rather than using sidewalks.

“Mail volume is down. Managers are trying to cut costs and maximize every carrier’s route. Everybody’s under a magnifying glass,” said Karen L. Mazurkiewicz, Western New York communications coordinator for the Postal Service.

Mazurkiewicz said she could not comment on specific personnel matters or suspensions, but she did acknowledge some problems.

“The stress and tension are out there,” she said. “I’m not going to try to ignore it.”

Mazurkiewicz noted that the Postal Service does not receive tax dollars and that its money comes entirely from what users pay for postage.

And like many other businesses, the Postal Service is hammered by the Internet. Instead of paying 41 cents for a stamp to mail a letter or bill payment, modern consumers can use the Internet to send e-mails or pay bills free.

Improving productivity

Aside from its role in delivering the daily mail, the Postal Service affects the region’s economy in other ways. It is one of Western New York’s biggest employers, with about

\$104 million paid out in annual salaries and benefits. Workers spend much of that money in the region.

On the local level, efforts to improve productivity have created some hard feelings between postal managers and workers.

“Managers are under pressure to increase productivity, and they put all that pressure on our carriers,” said McLennan, whose union represents 1,500 letter carriers.

Some managers have gone out for days with individual carriers, watching and taking notes on their every move, including how fast the carrier walks, how much time the carrier takes for lunch, and how much time the carrier spends talking to customers, McLennan said.

“They’re constantly pushing our people to the limit,” McLennan said. “A carrier was suspended in Cheektowaga last week because his supervisor hid in a parked car and counted how many steps he was taking. The carrier was told he was suspended because he was walking 80 paces a minute, instead of 100.

“I’ve had management people tell me that it should take no more time to deliver mail in the snow than it takes in good weather. Our people have been told to walk across people’s lawns, even if there are big snowbanks. They’re told to make a path past the snowbanks.”

Managers are pushing hard to find ways to improve efficiency, Mazurkiewicz said, but she said managers do not force carriers to walk on lawns covered with deep snow.

“We encourage our carriers to take every available shortcut for efficiency purposes, as long as it does not jeopardize safety,” she said. “If it is unsafe to walk across a lawn because of weather or other conditions . . . it is within [a carrier’s] discretion to alter delivery until the condition is corrected.”

Potter said the Postal Service has taken some extreme actions in recent years because the situation is so serious.

The number of pieces of mail dropped by 9 billion last year — a 4.5 percent decrease — and a larger decrease is forecast for this year, he said.

‘Acute financial crisis’

“Simply put, the Postal Service is in acute financial crisis,” he said. “[Mail volume] is falling faster and faster, outpacing the speed at which we can adjust operations. No one knows at what point mail volume will bottom out.”

That decrease and the huge expense of worker and retiree health benefits are major problems for the Postal Service, Potter told senators. Last year, retiree health benefit costs came to \$7.4 billion, he said.

Potter asked the Senate to allow the Postal Service to draw \$1.8 billion from its \$32 billion trust fund for future health benefits, instead of using operating funds.

Since 2002, the Postal Service has been engaged in a wide-ranging effort to improve the efficiency of all its operations, Potter said. The work force has been reduced by 120,000 jobs, and “strong productivity gains” saved 50 million work hours last year alone.

Polish Valentine Clover Stamp

09 February 2009 by Sarah Sharpe - © Hellmail.co.uk

3. Poland has just released what is possibly the prettiest stamp in Europe, for Valentines Day.

To Mark Saint Valentines Day, Polish Post has produced both a stamp and a postcard. The stamp, designed by artist Magdalena Blazkow is a synonym for happiness and prosperity - the clover leaf. This small work of art has been printed on fluorescent paper, with a circulation of 1,000,000 stamps.

The first day cover bears the date and heart-shaped leaves. In addition, the envelope has the words of George Sand: "There is only one happiness in life - to love and be loved. "

The first noted depiction of Saint Valentine was on a woodcut dated around 1493. It is thought that he was a Roman priest martyred during the reign of Claudius II, known as Claudius Gothicus. History has it that he was arrested and imprisoned upon being caught marrying Christian couples and otherwise aiding Christians who were at the time being persecuted by Claudius in Rome.

© Hellmail.co.uk (09 February 2009)

000

Collected by Chairul Anwar, Bandung, Indonesia.

E-mail address : chairulanwar49@operamail.com, uyungchairul@plasa.com.