

# POSTAL NEWS

No. 108/2009

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

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## **1. Postal strike looms as workers fight job cuts**

By Brian Groom, Business and Employment Editor

Published: June 2 2009 03:00 | Last updated: June 2 2009 03:00

Postal workers in London have voted 9-1 in favour of striking over jobs and cost savings, threatening disruption to mail at a time when the political dispute over the part-privatisation of Royal Mail is coming to a head.

The Communication Workers Union said its members in the capital had overwhelmingly backed strikes over "arbitrary" cuts, although it held back from naming any strike dates and said it hoped for progress in talks with Royal Mail.

The move comes as CWU members prepare to debate disaffiliation from the Labour party at the union's annual conference in Bournemouth next week. A motion from the Coventry branch says the CWU "cannot continue to support a political party whose government continues to ignore the interest of our members". Similar motions have been submitted by other branches.

Union officials, however, appear hopeful that the government's plan to sell a 30 per cent stake in Royal Mail can be defeated in the Commons, in spite of the insistence by Lord Mandelson, the business secretary, that he and the cabinet are "not for turning". The CWU says managers across the UK are making cost cuts of 10 per cent not linked to previous agreements on modernisation. It wants a new national agreement on the issue.

But Royal Mail said: "The changes Royal Mail needs to make in London as mail volumes fall by 10 per cent a year are covered by a national agreement signed by the CWU in 2007 - in the presence of the TUC - and which have already been successfully implemented in operational units throughout the rest of the country.

"Royal Mail is fully honouring that agreement, which also protects full-time jobs for all those who want to continue working full time for Royal Mail, and we call on the union - which only last month said that the 'pace of modernisation needs to be stepped up' - to do the same."

Martin Walsh, the CWU's London spokesman, said: "We're fighting against unacceptable attacks on jobs and services in Royal Mail at a time when the company is performing well. Strike action is a last resort for our members, who can ill afford to lose wages. We hope that Royal Mail will take notice of the strong feelings of their staff and enter into negotiations with the CWU to take a different approach to these cuts. As the proposals stand, this has nothing whatsoever to do with modernisation; it is about the destruction of postal services to the public."

In a 65 per cent turnout postal workers in London voted by 91 per cent in favour of striking. Royal Mail's national workforce has fallen from nearly 230,000 to 176,000 since 2002.

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## **2. Rising costs make mass mailing efforts less popular**

by Betty Beard - May. 30, 2009 12:00 AM

The Arizona Republic

Direct marketers, the companies that mail advertisements to homes and businesses, generally have relied on what they call "spray and pray" to reach potential customers. They mail thousands of letters, postcards and fliers, and prayed some recipients would read them. It didn't matter that most of it was considered junk and thrown away, unopened, as long as even a small percentage responded.

But with postal costs having climbed about 30 percent during the past decade and with people paying more attention to electronic mail than paper, the direct-mail industry is undergoing a transformation. The deep recession has only exacerbated a two-year decline in business.

The amount of money spent on direct mail in this country fell about 3 percent in 2008 and is expected to sink another 9 percent to 10 percent this year, to \$51.8 billion, said the Direct Marketing Association, a trade group, and the Winterberry Group, a consulting company. Both are based in New York.

Ramesh Lakshmi-Ratan, DMA's executive vice president, blames the economic, consumer-credit and mortgage crises for the downturn, as well as marketers "exploring new ways of integrating across different channels."

Some of the biggest mailers, such as banks that used to send out credit-card applications en masse; as well as mortgage companies, have been hurt the hardest in the recession.

In a white paper published about the industry in February, the Winterberry Group said, "Direct mail has seen its influence as a high-volume, mass-oriented response driver all but vanish. Skyrocketing costs have critically wounded industries (including the catalog, credit-card and not-for-profit sectors) that long depended on the mail as a source of new revenues."

Lakshmi-Ratan predicts that while the industry goes through a "structural resetting," it will thrive because of its ability to target prospects and track results.

The direct-mail industry is broad and includes a wide range of businesses, including printers, letter shops and fulfillment houses that take and fill orders.

The drop in direct mail also hurts the U.S. Postal Service.

### **Industry responds**

The industry for years has been moving from mass mailings toward targeted ads. A pool-supply company, for example, would send coupons not to every homeowner, but only to those who own pools.

Full-service direct-mail companies such as AmazingMail .com Inc. in Scottsdale, and World Marketing Inc. in Tempe, can access databases that help companies target people by different demographics and buying habits.

"I think that's the future of where this industry is going to go," said Maher Amoura, vice president of World Marketing. He said, "I don't think you will ever see those days of banks dropping millions of credit-card mails again."

Direct-mail companies and the businesses that use them are now attempting to integrate traditional mail services with electronic and digital communication.

Electronic communication is likely to change the industry for good, said Chris Lynde, president and chief executive officer of AmazingMail.com Inc. He said that when the economy recovers, the volume of paper direct mail may not return to its former level because more services will switch to digital.

AmazingMail has a system that Lynde believes gives marketers what they need today. It starts direct-mail campaigns by sending prospective customers a large, glossy postcard printed in a Phoenix plant. The postcard gives consumers a variety of ways to respond, including e-mailing, text-messaging or by phone.

Lynde believes that making initial contact with a postcard is still the most effective because so many people are on do-not-call registries or block unwanted e-mails with filters.

"What we recommend to our clients is they always lead with a postcard and give their customers the opportunity to voice how they would like to be communicated with," Lynde said.

And unlike letters that are probably often ripped up unopened, a well-designed postcard can be more enticing. Marketers don't have to resort to tricks, such as making a letter look like it contains a check.

Non-profits switch, too

Non-profits, which have often used mass mailings to find new members and donations, or to notify people about fundraisers or other events, are changing, too.

The Valley of the Sun YMCA, for example, used to spend about \$500,000 a year in targeted mailings to inform about 50,000 households in the Phoenix area about its swimming lessons and programs, said Leann Knox, vice president of membership and marketing.

Because of rising postal costs and environmental concerns, it began posting its programs in April on [valleymca.org](http://valleymca.org).

"We are definitely putting direct mail down to a minimum, and we're trying to go green," Knox said.

Goodwill of Central Arizona has always been conservative in using direct mail, reserving it for grand openings of stores or collection centers, said spokeswoman Chandra Stewart.

Now, Goodwill is taking advantage of the Internet to offer a service it couldn't afford to do by mail: a newsletter e-mailed to those who sign up.

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### **3. Time to tidy up your mailboxes, says postal service**

BY JUSTIN L. MACK • [JMACK@JCONLINE.COM](mailto:JMACK@JCONLINE.COM) • JUNE 1, 2009

The U.S. Postal Service is asking Hoosiers to start their spring cleaning by inspecting and repairing their mailboxes.

"Repairing suburban and rural mailboxes improves the appearance of our community," said Kim Yates, an Indiana postal service spokeswoman.

The effort is part of an annual request by the postal service because of the wear and tear that occurs to mailboxes.

"This is especially important after the effects of the winter," Yates said.

Dave Kuehnert, Lafayette's acting postmaster, said some of the typical activities that may need to be done include replacing loose hinges on a mailbox door, repainting the mailbox that may have rusted or started peeling, remounting a mailbox post if loosened, and replacing or adding house numbers.

Along with routine maintenance, Kuehnert said safety is a top priority.

"Old rusty mailboxes can be a hazard for customers and carriers alike," he said.

"If it gets to the point where it's falling off the post or the box is unsecured, we bring the mail back to the post office and notify the customer."

Any homeowner that plans to install a new mailbox or replace a worn one should use postal service-approved traditional, contemporary or locking mailboxes, Kuehnert said.

Customers may use a custom-built mailbox, but they should consult with the postal service to make sure it conforms to guidelines applying to flag, size, strength and quality of construction.

"Most people just paint their boxes, but we also ask that you consider remounting the mailbox post if it has loosened or replacing or adding house numbers," said Kuehnert.

Aaron Price of West Lafayette said now that he knows about the postal service's efforts, he will keep his mailbox in working order.

"The door on ours doesn't always lock so we need to get that fixed," he said. "I just want to make sure I keep getting all my mail."

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#### **4. 50 years later, mail man still on job**

BY BEN PIPER • MAY 30, 2009

PETAL - When Ford Weatherford took a part-time job in 1959, he didn't realize it was the start of a 50-year career with the postal service.

Weatherford, 68, of Petal celebrated his 50th anniversary working as a mail carrier this month. He started working with the United States Postal Service by substituting when other workers called in sick.

But calling in sick is one thing Weatherford doesn't do often. He said he has piled up nearly two years of sick days over the years.

"I've just been healthy and haven't been sick to where I've had to take time off, it's just been a blessing," he said. "A lot of it has to do with what your idea of sick is. The only time my daddy didn't go to work was when he was in the hospital for something."

Eunice Weatherford, 66, is Ford's wife of nearly 50 years. She said he spends early mornings working out at the Family YMCA on Hillcrest Loop before heading in to work.

She said she can't imagine her husband slowing down or retiring anytime soon.

"He's talked about retirement a couple times, so maybe I can talk him into it," she said, laughing.

Mrs. Weatherford said she can only remember one time when Ford left work early - when he had a kidney stone.

Kara Drane, Forrest County planning director, is Ford's youngest of three daughters. She said he does more than work his route.

"I'm very proud of my father and the work that he has done," she said. "I felt like he did more than just delivered mail... he looked out for people."

Ford always has delivered mail for the post office in Petal. He said he can remember ice storms and terrible conditions when it seemed impossible to deliver anything.

"We have to go regardless of the weather," he said. "When hurricanes have come through, though, and there's too many trees down to get the mail out, and there's no power at work, so you can't see, there's not much you can do then."

Susan Roberts, Ford's oldest daughter, said she couldn't imagine her father retiring. Roberts lives in Petal but isn't on her father's route.

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