

Postal workers protest across US against threatened privatization of USPS

Tom Hall
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*Join the rank-and-file rebellion to save the Post Office!
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US postal workers and retirees took part in nationwide demonstrations Thursday against threats by Trump administration to privatize the US Postal Service. Already subject to years of corporate-style restructuring, last week the Postmaster General Louis DeJoy reached an agreement with Elon Musk and the Department of Government Efficiency to help slash spending and dismantle or defy legal requirements on pension financing, service mandates and other measures.

The demonstration was called by American Postal Workers Union (APWU), which covers clerks and workers inside sorting and distribution centers. Attendance ranged from a few dozen in places like Dallas, Texas, to a few hundred in lower Manhattan. Reporters from the WSWS distributed statement by the USPS Workers Rank-and-File Committee, “For a rank-and-file movement to save the Post Office and oppose dictatorship!”

The statement declared:

Extraordinary times require extraordinary measures. The only way to save the post office—and American democracy—is through the mass mobilization of the working class. The working class is the most powerful force on earth. If only we know how to use that power we can defeat the attacks by Trump and his handful of oligarchs and right-wingers.

It stressed that such a movement required a fight against union bureaucrats and the Democratic Party:

But in the face of the deepest attacks in the 250-year history of the post office, the union officials in [National Association of Letter Carriers (NALC)], the [National Rural Letter Carriers’ Association (NRLCA)] and APWU have not proposed, much less organized, a serious struggle against these attacks. Instead, they are offering their collaboration, with NALC even proposing to help find ways to close the funding gap in workers’ pension plans by moving the fund into the (rapidly declining) stock market!

This was shown by the fact that the unions have called separate rallies, with the NALC and NRLCA holding demonstrations Sunday. They are apparently making little effort to mobilize their entire 600,000-plus active membership, with only a small fraction of postal workers present at Thursday’s demonstration.

Nevertheless, a deep anger and concern over Trump’s bid for dictatorship was a constant at every rally Thursday. What Trump is doing “is horrible,” one retired postal worker in New York City said. “I think we should try everything we can to get him out. Because if you notice, he’s trying to dissolve all of the government jobs. Like, he has Musk cut Social Security. Then the IRS, he wanted to dismantle that.”

“If you think about that, that’s breaking down the whole structure of the United States. Because he wants to be in control of everything. He wants to be the mayor of New York. Anything that he wants to dip into, he figures he has that right. And he was the one that said that you should leave the things to the states. If you feel that way, then why are you jumping into the business of New York? So evidently, it’s only for what he wants.”

Another protester in New York City said, “I’m really upset with what’s going on now and we just got to make

the public aware, fully aware of what's going on and let them get them involved in our fight to save the Postal Service."

She concluded "[we need everyone together] collectively, because it's going to affect everybody. We're not a separate entity, everyone is involved in this, and we all need to fight together to win this fight."

In Pasadena, California, John told the WSWS: "I think almost every executive order has been, at the very least, illegal. They've been superseding the power that Congress is supposed to have. Congress has ceded its authority. That is, the Republicans have ceded their constitutional authority to a president who is unhinged."

John said he was angry with the Democrats for allowing Trump to get away with his policies. "The Democrats had a chance to filibuster that cloture vote [on the budget last Friday]. They didn't do it. They didn't get it done. There are some Democrats that I have supported financially who I will not be supporting anymore."

Dwayne, another postal worker from California, said the Democrats "always ask for a strong Republican Party. ... So yeah, I'm not going for them in Congress.

"I mean, I think it's extremely troubling that people are being deported simply because they're undocumented. People have a right to claim asylum in the United States, but they're being deported. And we don't even know whether or not they're undocumented or regular citizens. They're just deporting people because they're Hispanic."

John continued: "What we are doing [by protesting Trump] is not just rational, but it's ... keeping the United States in constitutional order, where people are not at each other's throats. Most Americans, if they knew that Project 2025 was actually going to be put in place, they'd be terrified. If they knew about that, they would be incredibly disliked. Not supportive in any way."

"Most people in America are workers," he noted, but "kids are being dragged into the workplace now. I mean, this is child labor. It's absolutely unconscionable. How could these states legalize child labor? We're literally taking a trip back to about 1880. Even here in Pasadena, teachers have lost their homes and are about to lose their jobs due to all these cuts. You know, there has to be a fightback."

In the New York City demonstration, WSWS reporters encountered several retirees who had taken part in the 1970 nationwide wildcat strike. The strike, the largest ever by federal workers and carried out in defiance of anti-strike laws, was triggered by President Richard Nixon's

plans to demote the post office from its cabinet-level position into an independent agency.

One described conditions in the late 1960s, which are not dissimilar to those faced by postal workers today. "If you got hurt, instead of them trying to help you, they tried to prove it was your fault. A worker lost his arm because they didn't have safety cut off control. His job was to clear the conveyor belts when they got stalled ... Somebody in another area saw it was off and didn't check clear and was able to turn it back on, and his arm got caught in it and he lost his arm.

"So when we went on strike we went on strike for all those things, better working conditions. We also wanted permanent tours" instead of having to bid for shifts every three months. "Because you would get a babysitter and you had to be to work at 2 p.m. and then three months later you'd be to work at midnight."

Another retiree said that during the 1970 strike, "they brought the military in to try to deliver the mail ... [but] they really couldn't handle it."

The strike was "very significant because we were low in salary, we had to ask Congress for raises at the time in order to get a raise. So by doing this act, [we made] people aware ... how low our salary was and the professional job that we were doing. ... Some people had to get welfare to support their family because the salary was so low. So by having a strike, we let the public know and the people know that it's very important that we get a raise to benefit the feed their families."

A maintenance mechanic in Washington D.C. told the WSWS, "people don't realize how important they are. Because without them speaking on our behalf we would even have no power anywhere. I mean, we got people gathering in Hawaii right now. We got people in the blistering cold of Alaska gathering up right now ... Come out here and join us too and show Trump, show Elon, man."



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