

Keep Postal Service in public hands

The service is the most trusted public agency and should not be privatized

BY MARK DIMONDSTEIN

During a tense week recently, pipe bombs mailed to former President Barack Obama, actor Robert De Niro, the offices of CNN and at least a dozen other targets dominated the news. These overtly political acts of domestic terrorism originated in South Florida and were intended to maim and kill. Fortunately, none of the identified 16 package bombs detonated.

As the country held its collective breath, there were three aspects of this story that got little coverage.

First, these criminal acts put tens of thousands of postal workers in harm's way.

Second, despite the threat of injury or death, 500,000 dedicated postal workers continued to carry out their mission contained in the 1970 Postal Reorganization Act: "The Postal Service shall have as its basic function the obligation to provide postal services to bind the nation together . . ." Postal employees continued to serve cus-

tomers at retail windows, sort letters and packages, drive mail trucks and deliver mail daily to 157 million addresses.

Third, in many cases it was conscientious and alert postal workers who identified suspicious packages and took action to protect not just their safety, but also that of their co-workers and the public. The leaders of the four postal unions and postal management cooperated to ensure that workers were on high alert and vigilant, helping lead to a positive outcome.

It's little wonder that the Postal Service remains the most trusted federal agency. It does not use a dime of taxpayer money for its operations and is the anchor of the e-commerce revolution. A recent poll by the Pew Research Center shows that 88 percent of the population has a favorable view of the Postal Service.

Yet, in its June 21 report, "Delivering Government Solutions in the 21st Century," the White House Office of Management and Budget announced its intent to privatize the Postal Service



American Postal Workers Union president Mark Dimondstein speaks at an Oct. 8 rally against a plan to sell the Postal Service.

and sell it to the highest bidder. If allowed to move forward, this would enrich some Wall Street investors and a few powerful corporations. For the rest of us, the "99 percent," it would result in diminished postal services and higher prices.

In addition to this proposal, add a soon-to-be-released report from a task force on the future of the post office. There is little doubt that this task force, of which OMB is an integral part,

will make proposals harmful to the Postal Service and detrimental to the rights and benefits of those who move the mail.

These plans demonize and degrade postal workers' contributions and are part of an attempt to convince the public to support postal privatization. The privatizers want to drown out the quiet, unsung postal workers' heroism in the recent moment of crisis. They ignore the real-life stories of how the Postal Ser-

vice and postal workers are on the front lines in returning normalcy to our communities after devastation such as from hurricanes in Florida, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, flooding in Texas and North Carolina, fires in California and volcanic eruptions in Hawaii.

We are all postal customers and undoubtedly appreciate the outstanding efforts of dedicated postal workers in the face of these recent crimes. But our appreciation is not enough to defeat the efforts of those who would destroy the Postal Service and loot the public good for private gain. Join the effort to guarantee that the postal service remains owned by, and in the service of, the people.

Ask your member of Congress to co-sponsor House Resolution 993 and Senate Resolution 633, opposing privatization of the Postal Service. Let's ensure that the postal eagle, symbolizing its public ownership, is never sacrificed on the altar of private profit, replaced by the culture of corporate greed.

Mark Dimondstein is president of the American Postal Workers Union, AFL-CIO. He wrote this for *The Miami Herald*.



A view of Long Island City, where Amazon plans to set up a headquarters that could employ 25,000 or more.

Unhappy with tax breaks for Amazon

When politicians with no business experience and a self-serving political agenda negotiate business transactions, the result is an unnecessary giveaway of up to \$2.8 billion to Amazon ["The Amazon impact," *News*, Nov. 14].

I believe Amazon's decision to locate a new headquarters in Long Island City was going to happen with or without incentives from New York City and New York State, and the economic package was just the icing on the cake.

This giveaway could have been used for many other needed things, including updat-

ing the infrastructure in Long Island City to accommodate such a significant impact to the area, and/or lowering our taxes, to name a few.

Businesses that will sell buildings to Amazon will get top dollar because they are run by experienced people.

Perhaps former Mayor Bloomberg, a brilliant businessman, or another New York business person now residing in Washington, would have negotiated a better deal for the people of New York.

Leo Farrell,
St. James

With the Metropolitan Transportation Authority's fare hikes having been disclosed, New Yorkers now see how Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo sealed the Amazon-Long Island City deal, on the backs of commuters.

Glenn Tyranski,
Huntington

How very generous of Gov.

Andrew M. Cuomo to offer these incentives to Amazon. Perhaps Cuomo should look into his New York Rising program and victims of superstorm Sandy.

Some have received letters saying they were overpaid by the government and should send money back. Grants were determined by New York Rising representatives and inspectors. The money was used accordingly. The inspectors approved the repairs when they were done. Many homes are still being repaired. It is very traumatic to have this extra burden. Are Sandy victims paying toward the Amazon deal?

Barbara Welch,
Deer Park

Let New Yorkers vote on Albany pay raises

Taxpayers deserve an honest, full-time, functioning state government, and it is they who should be making the call on a

pay raise for Albany lawmakers. Are we not the employers, and they the employees?

The lack of accountability and transparency in governing, and the rush of actions in a few hurried and chaotic months, are unacceptable.

A base salary of \$79,500 with additional stipends for part-time work is more than fair for the lack of quality work. No one is forcing anyone to run or continue to run for office.

First implement the ethics reforms outlined in the editorial ["No ethics reforms, no pay raises," Nov. 21]. Pass much-needed campaign-finance reform. Then let lawmakers present their case for a raise — and let the people vote on it.

Tony Giametta,
Oceanside

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