Postal services into banking – as well as check-cashing places, which rip you off. Payday lenders who charge outra- geous interest loans, through their post offices. It is the only government entity that is now required to pay upfront for 75 years worth of project- ed retiree’s benefits. This is all due to a crisis discovered in 2002 that the USPS had overpaid up to $70 billion into one of its pension funds, and the federal government in 2006 mandated the USPS make payments of $5.4 bil- lion for ten years straight out of its current revenue into a Retirement Health Benefits Fund (RHBF) to offset this surplus. As the USPS Office of Inspector General once explained, this is like a credit card company say- ing, “You will charge a million dollars on your credit card during your life; please include the million dollars in your next payment.”

Punitive Campaign = Job Loss

The cumulative impact of this punitive campaign has been the loss of over 200,000 good paying civil ser- vice jobs. In response in Feb. 2015 a Grand Alliance was formed to save the USPS, bringing together 90+ organizations – labor unions, religious groups, consumer advocates, and farm organizations including Family Farm Defenders, Farm Aid, and the National Farmers Union. One of the latest tac- tics has been to outsourc USPS func- tions to nonunion “Big Box” retail chains like Staples, leading in 2017 to a nationwide series of coordinated protests in 50+ cities. The American Federation of Teachers (AFT) on July 12 endorse by the Grand Alliance boycott against Staples - school sup- plies are a key market for Staples, accounting for up to one-third of its sales. Given this massive grassroots pressure, the USPS ter- minated its deal with Staples, closing down the 540 “mini-post offices” already inside stores and nixing plans to expand them to all 1,600 locations.

Solidarity Rallies in Oct. 2018

In early Oct. 2018, there was another wave of pre-election solidarity rallies outside post offices in 100+ cities, proclaiming that the “US Mail Is Not For Sale.” When asked what her reaction was to the White House of Office Management and Budget (OMB)’s continued push to sell off the postal service, Japan’s Keiko, Legislative Grassroots Coordinator for the American Postal Workers Union (APWU) simply stated: “We won’t let the postal eagle be replaced by the vulture.” House Resolution 993 oppos- ing USPS privatization has been cosponsored by 230+ Congressional representatives (both Democrats and Reps) and will win us the claim more support among new incoming members. A viable robust postal serv- ice is not only critical to our nation’s economic health but also serves an important role in insuring equality and underpinning democracy.

“Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night stays these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds” - such is Herodotus’ description of the ancient Persian postal system. From 500 BC, that has become the unofficial creed of the USPS today. This holiday season, we should all take a moment to thank those tireless public servants who help keep this community together and resolve to protect and support their vital work into the future.

Senator Sanders Supports

VT Sen. Bernie Sanders has been a strong proponent of this new USPS role, stating “If you’re a person, it is, depending upon where you live, very difficult to find normal banking. Banks don’t want you. And we go to payday lenders who charge outra- geously high interest rates. You go to check-cashing places, which rip you off. And, yes, I think that the postal service, in fact, can play an important role in providing modest types of banking service to folks who need it.”

Other Senators such as Kristen Gillibrand (NY) and Elizabeth Warren (MA) support such efforts to expand postal services into banking - as well as restoration and early voting!

Privatization Pundits

The mass media often parrots the claim of privatization punditsthat the

2018 Solidarity Rally

"US Mail is Not for Sale"

USPs is in some deficit death spiral, but that is simply not true. Even for- mer Postal Regulation Commission Chair, Ruth Goldway, admitted that “The Postal Service has been a key cash cow for the federal government for the last 40 years.” That’s what the current fis- cal crisis is artificially contrived in the US is the only government entity that is now required to pay upfront for 75 years worth of project- ed retiree’s benefits. This is all due to a crisis discovered in 2002 that the USPS had overpaid up to $70 billion into one of its pension funds, and the federal government in 2006 mandated the USPS make payments of $5.4 bil- lion for ten years straight out of its current revenue into a Retirement Health Benefits Fund (RHBF) to offset this surplus. As the USPS Office of Inspector General once explained, this is like a credit card company say- ing, “You will charge a million dollars on your credit card during your life; please include the million dollars in your next payment.”

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It’s Time to Investigate

Corporate Concentration in Agriculture

By: Anthony Pahnke

Vice President of Family Farm Defenders

Assistant Professor of International Relations at San Francisco State University

Do consumers gain from the expan- sion of corporate control of the food chain? No. In 2012, Food and Water Watch issued a study on how con- centration in the pork, dairy industry and vegetable industries not only drives prices down for farmers, but also forces consumers to pay more than they should for what they should be buying on supermarket shelves.

According to the National Farmers Union, farmers receive just 30.14 of every food dollar with the vast major- ity of sales heading to marketing firms, retailers and processors. Concentration in agriculture — not just in dairy, but also in seeds, poultry and beef — prompted a series of workshops in 2010 between the Department of Justice and the United States Department of Agriculture to discuss the nature of competition — rather, the lack thereof — in agri- culture. From Wisconsin and Colorado, to Alabama and Washington, D.C., government officials heard stor- ies and collected testimony from farmers, processors, retailers and consumers about the impact of market transparency, anticompetitive mergers, and bid-rigging (when buyers of agricultural commodities agree to limit competition by agreeing on prices). The report issued after the workshops helped clarify central ele- ments in antitrust law, yet failed to provide a strategy for moving for- ward.

Now, during a time of record farm bankruptcies, is the time for the govern- ment to launch a serious, concert- ed investigation on food monopolies. Farmers and consumers are losing trade deals — not with the Chinese, but with the agribusiness industries that have become too powerful and too large.

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