



Western PA. Postal Workers Solidarity Committee

A CHANGE IN TACTICS. STAPLES DEMONSTRATIONS END?

(By John P. Richards)

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It is undisputed that the effort to demonstrate at Staples stores throughout Western Pennsylvania going on three years, under the auspices of the Western PA Postal Solidarity Committee, was and is a fantastic success! The effort of the Committee reaching out to other labor unions, the Central Labor Councils of Beaver/Butler, Allegheny, and Westmoreland Counties, the Pittsburgh Mayor, the Allegheny County Executive, and the President of the county delegation, provided moral support and participants 'on the line'. Many thousands of leaflets were distributed to passing motorists, shopping center patrons, and potential Staples customers. (In this area, all Staples stores are in shopping centers.) Many Staples customers were turned away by our demonstrations. Staples managers were 'brought to their knees', totally frustrated in their unsuccessful attempts to intimidate demonstrators as various police departments kept the peace by advising Staples that we were within our rights to peacefully demonstrate at the stores based on the documents we provided.

With this backdrop, we as leaders of the effort, were stunned to learn that the mass demonstrations were to be augmented, with a handful of volunteers handing out leaflets at various stores for hours at a time. The claim is this method is more effective than mass demonstrations. Having motivated our demonstrators as we did, and it was far from an easy task, we are dubious that additional numbers of volunteers can be found for the new initiative. Moreover, the new method will draw only on Pittsburgh Metro members, obviously abandoning the Solidarity Committee's involvement. The facts are the Pittsburgh Metro Local had taken a very low level of involvement with the demonstration effort. Few of their officers even bothered to attend the demonstrations, and those that did were very spotty in their attendance. Rank and file members, retirees, and 'outside' unionists and supporters were clearly the nucleus of the effort. From our experience, it is unlikely that much if any support for the new program will come from rank and file, retirees, or 'outsiders'. One thing is for sure, and that is the mass demonstrations may be ended by stretching or diverting resources, not by our desire, but from micro managing from above. Nevertheless, if you are interested in volunteering for this new initiative, contact me at 724 947 9374.

All good things must come to an end someday. But this pulling the rug out from under us by national makes no sense. In closing, we cannot thank those that demonstrated with us enough for your effort. You are Union Heroes who are owed much by the fence sitters.

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