

Together in the foxhole



**Philip
Dine**

It was, eventually, one way or another, going to come to this—a battle to save six-day delivery for the American people and for the many businesses that rely on Saturday delivery.

With some well-intended members of Congress willing to accept a downsizing of the U.S. Postal Service out of a mistaken belief that this would return it to profitability, and with others intent on degrading the universal network precisely because they know very well what the consequences would be, it was inevitable that the battle would take place.

What we didn't know was that the effort would arise from outside Congress, led by the postmaster general. In a sense, that's not surprising, given his pattern of advocating cuts after cuts, his lack of any strategy to grow the business and his inability to develop a dynamic plan for the future.

Still, there's a supreme irony here. One of the most glaring weaknesses of the current PMG is his lack of leadership, of gumption for the fight, of a willingness to take a stand.

And yet, here he is, putting himself out there in extraordinary fashion—taking on Congress, practically daring lawmakers to stop him as he seeks to usurp their legal prerogatives and override their political will, betting the farm on what his lawyers apparently told him is a loop-hole in the law.

Finally, he's doing something bold—the shame is that he's doing it *to* the Postal Service instead of *for* it.

Be that as it may, here we are, the battle joined. It's a battle we'll fight on two fronts—in the halls of Congress, and out in the country. Two contiguous terrains, and on both, your efforts will be critical as we seek to get out the message. We have to let Americans know what's at stake and what the real options are, so they will instruct their representatives just what to do.

Every week, your efforts, from national business agents to branch officers, from state association presidents to rank-and-file letter carriers, have been more and more impressive—the message sharper, the initiative in communicating it increasingly evident.

I see it in the letters you write to newspapers big and small; in the radio and TV stories you bring to our attention, many of them involving, or prompted by, you or fellow let-

ter carriers; in the phone calls and e-mails and letters you send our way suggesting we respond to misleading news reports—or even, in some instances, the advance notice you provide of misleading reports under way that should be nipped in the bud, as recently occurred in Wisconsin.

I saw it—and greatly appreciated it—in your willingness to pitch in when we were utterly swamped with non-stop phone calls from reporters all over the country after the PMG announced his five-day gambit.

You know where else I see it? In the skeptical and challenging questions posed to the PMG, as he announced his bid to end six-day delivery, by a press corps that not so long ago rarely questioned anything he said or did. And, two days, later, in the stories about the USPS quarterly financial report written by reporters who until recently largely accepted the conventional wisdom of a Postal Service in decline because of the Internet—but whose stories this time around noted the role of the unique burden of pre-funding, and differentiated between the overall red ink and the operational side that produced a \$100 million profit.

These shifts did not occur because of a magical transformation within the journalistic ranks; they result from your unrelenting effort to get our story into the national conversation, to rebut myth with fact, to let people know why the fight to save the Postal Service is their fight.

We are, indeed, in the battle we had long anticipated. And in our collective foxholes, we have the best of America: each other.

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