

My Turn

'There go all rural post offices'

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Help! Privatization is on the march and it's about to gobble up my Post Office in Arroyo Hondo.

Oh, it won't gobble it up in one big bite. No sir, privatization knows how to savor every bite.

First nibble off two hours a weekday, then nibble off Saturday delivery; next bite off window service and move postal boxes to the roadside.

It will save the juiciest part for last. In one big scrumptious bite it will shut the whole thing down! Yummm.

And what is more, privatization is expert in stealth methods. It acts in such ways that we are made to believe it is actually acting on our behalf, to help us out of a crisis. What am I rambling on about? What is privatization? It is taking something which belongs to the public and giving it to private enterprise.

Why is it scaring the bejeezes out of me? Because privatization is insatiable. It won't stop until it has gobbled up all of our social services.

Those services which we provide for ourselves by pooling our money in the form of taxes so we can get services which we would never be able to afford on our own such as our educational system, our road system, our post offices ...

You wonder, what has got me so upset. Let me explain. On Oct. 17 the United States Postal Service (USPS) sent a letter to every household in the Arroyo Hondo mail service area stating that our post office had been selected for "review." In other words, for possible closing.

A survey was included which gave us four options We were to choose the one we consider the best action to take: Reduce service hours from eight to six hours on weekdays; Close the post office and establish roadside mail boxes; Close post office and establish service at a local business; Close post office and relocate P.O. box service to a nearby post office.

Most of my neighbors that I talked to chose No. 1.

You may well ask, and many have, "So, the Postal Service is in financial trouble and it is trying to find ways to solve the problem. What's wrong with trying to find solutions? What does it hurt if our post office is open only six hours and not eight hours a day?"

Much has been said, written and printed about the financial troubles of the USPS for some time now. Actually, since 1971 when the USPS was reorganized as a quasi business operated by the US government.

Since 1971 it has been run solely on revenue gained from the sale of postage. Please note, it is not dependent on taxes and therefore has not added to the national deficit. In reality you might say it is a “nonprofit agency” since it was established to provide a service to Americans and not to produce a profit.

The problem is not that the USPS is in financial trouble but that it was forced into financial crisis deliberately. Why? Because it is what is called a “cash cow.”

In 2006 USPS annual revenue was \$72.7 billion. It is no wonder then, that it has been coveted by private corporations such as Fed EX and UPS for years.

How was this accomplished? Do you know about The Shock Doctrine that Naomi Klein wrote about? It is the method by which a crisis is deliberately created and then drastic measures are proposed to supposedly alleviate the crisis.

Do you know about the Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act which was passed by Congress on Dec. 9, 2006? It is a perfect example of what Naomi was talking about. It requires the USPS to prefund 75 years of health benefits for its employees and do it in 10 years. (Honestly, look up HR 6407 for yourselves.) That means that the USPS has had to pay \$5.5 billion yearly into the health benefit fund for persons who have not yet been hired let alone born. Not surprisingly the USPS financial problems started in 2007.

What is the solution proposed by conservative think tanks for the “crisis”? Privatize the United States Postal Service. Why am I upset? Because if a corporation takes over it will have the right to charge whatever it wants and if any post office proves not to be profitable it has the right to close it down. And there go all rural post offices.

See what I mean?

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