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American Federation of Teachers Joins ‘Don’t Buy Staples’ Campaign

Staples, USPS Use Trickery to Try to Derail Boycott

AFSCME, SEIU, Firefighters, UNITE HERE, Also Endorse ‘Don’t Buy’

When the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) voted to join the ‘Don’t Buy Staples’ movement on July 12, it struck fear into the hearts of Staples bosses and USPS management.



AFT President Randi Weingarten Speaking at a Staples Rally

So much so that just two days later Staples and the USPS resorted to trickery to try to derail the boycott. They announced they are terminating the no-bid deal and replacing it with an “approved shipper” program.

The problem? “It’s a ruse,” said APWU President Mark Dimondstein. “Staples and the USPS are changing the name of the program, without addressing the fundamental concerns of postal workers and postal customers.

A USPS spokesperson confirmed the APWU’s assertion, telling the *Boston Globe*, “We look forward to continuing the partnership, whether it’s called Retail Partner Expansion or approved shipper.”

“Staples and the USPS have made it clear: They intend to continue to privatize postal retail operations, replace living-wage Postal Service jobs with low-wage Staples jobs, and compromise the safety and security of the mail,” the union president said.

“If it looks like a duck, walks like a duck and quacks like a duck, it’s a duck,” he added. “This duck may

have a few less feathers, but it’s still a duck.

“This attempt at trickery shows that the ‘Don’t Buy Staples’ movement is having an effect. We intend to keep up the pressure until Staples gets out of the mail business,” Dimondstein said.

“The announcement that Staples and the USPS are abandoning the no-bid deal is just ‘spin.’ They hope to convince boycott supporters that the battle is over,” he said. “It’s not.”

Teachers Incite Fear

Why did the vote by AFT members incite such fear? School supplies account for roughly one-third of Staples’ revenue, according to published reports.

And public school teachers spent more than \$1.3 billion out of their own pockets on school supplies and educational products in the 2009-2010 school year, according to research released in 2010 by the National School Supply and Equipment Association (NSSEA).

Speaking at an AFT rally in Los Angeles after adopting the ‘Don’t Buy Staples’ resolution, AFT President Randi Weingarten said, “Postal workers are the most amazing public servants. Who does Staples really want and need to come into its stores every single day? Teachers. The best way we can help is if we say to Staples: ‘You do this to the postal workers, and we aren’t buying supplies in your stores.’”

Noting that both postal workers and school employees are facing the imminent threat of privatization, APWU President Mark Dimondstein said, “It’s hard to privatize public services that people support, so the strategy of the privatizers is to defund, demoralize, demonize and dismantle.”

“We appreciate the tremendous support we have received from the AFT and from so many others in the labor movement, most recently the AFL-CIO, AFSCME, SEIU, the International Association of Firefighters, and UNITE HERE,” Dimondstein said. “This is the true meaning of solidarity.”