

# POSTAL NEWS

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## **1. Dutch to open mail market on April 1, TNT slips**

Fri Feb 20, 2009 3:11pm EST

AMSTERDAM, Feb 20 (Reuters) - The Dutch government plans to open up its mail market on April 1, ending Dutch mail company TNT's (TNT.AS: Quote, Profile, Research, Stock Buzz) partial monopoly, and TNT said on Friday it had already included the impact in its forecasts.

The move will open up the last part of the Dutch mail market, in letters of up to 50 grams in the Netherlands, which was estimated to be worth about 1 billion euros (\$1.3 billion) in 2007.

Shares in TNT, Europe's second largest mail and express group after Deutsche Post (DPWGn.DE: Quote, Profile, Research, Stock Buzz), closed down 4.3 percent at 12.64 euros in line with DJ Stoxx industrial goods and services index , which lost 4.5 percent.

Until now, TNT has held the monopoly on the market, while competing with Dutch mail company Sandd and Deutsche Post unit Selekt Mail for other items.

"By ending this monopoly, the choice for companies and non-profit organisations increases, they can send post more cheaply and it creates more chances for new companies," the Dutch cabinet said in a statement.

The Dutch government postponed the decision to open the sector in November until TNT had held more talks on workplace conditions with competitors.

"TNT is prepared for full liberalisation and has included the impact in the volume prognoses given at the recent publication of the annual results 2008," TNT said in a statement.

TNT cut its dividend on Monday after reporting a quarterly profit drop due to a sharp volume decline at its international express delivery unit and it expected an increasing rate of decline of addressed volumes in the Netherlands. [ID:nLG081731]

The government has always had two pre-conditions for any decision to liberalise its domestic market; that labour conditions are adequate and that there is no impediment to competition in neighbouring Germany, where TNT is active.

The cabinet said on Friday that progress on meeting the pre-conditions, such as labour agreements with unions and the ending of a tax advantage for Deutsche Post in Germany, had made it possible to come to the decision for full liberalisation.

The Dutch senate still has to discuss the cabinet's proposal, the government said.

Under European Union regulations, the market must be fully liberalised by the start of 2011. (\$1=.7952 Euro) (Reporting by Catherine Hornby; editing by Simon Jessop and David Cowell)

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From The Times  
February 23, 2009

## **2. Postal union CWU set for vote to sever links with Labour**

Christine Buckley, Industrial Editor

The postal workers' union will ballot to sever links with Labour in the next few weeks unless plans to sell a stake in Royal Mail are scrapped, The Times has learnt.

The move comes as a Bill to sell part of the state-owned group is to be launched in Parliament imminently, much earlier than had been expected.

The Communication Workers Union (CWU) has a conference pledge to ballot on cutting funds to Labour if the organisation moves out of full public ownership. Billy Hayes, the CWU general secretary, said that the union had to hold a ballot before the end of March.

The action comes as political tension over the sale plans, put forward by Lord Mandelson, the Business Secretary, is running high, threatening the biggest rebellion of the Brown Government. A Commons motion opposing the sale has been signed by 139 Labour MPs. Even if only a proportion of those MPs voted against the Bill, the Government would have to rely on the support of the Conservatives for it to become law. Even that support could vanish if the Bill, which could be introduced in the House of Lords first, is modified significantly.

It had been expected that legislation would be prepared by Easter, but the Bill has been largely written and will go to Parliament very soon.

The CWU is one of Labour's largest funders, typically providing about £1 million a year in affiliation fees and local-level funding.

In an interview with The Times, Mr Hayes said: "If our members vote not to give money to the Labour Party, then it would be goodbye. I've been in the party 33 years. It feels a bit like being in an abusive relationship and it comes to that point when you just go.

"There is the old Jack Jones line [about the relationship between the unions and Labour] about murder maybe, divorce never. But as far as I can see there weren't as many divorces in those days. I don't want it to happen, but if we have a ballot I won't be running round the country to say stay in the Labour Party. Why should I?"

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## **3. Delivery problems: The mail woes of a Mount Greenwood carrier**

February 22, 2009

BY GUY TRIDGELL

Lester Sexton once packed his U.S. Postal Service van to the roof each day with letters, cards in colorful envelopes, magazines, junk mail, out-of-town newspapers, government checks and virtually anything else that could be sent with a stamp.

If Sexton covers just the floor of the van's cargo area these days, he's surprised.

"It definitely was a harder job 10, 20 years ago," said Sexton, a mail carrier at Chicago's Mount Greenwood post office. "There was a time when I could only use a cart on my route. Over Christmas, I was shoulder-carrying a bag."

The U.S. Postal Service is going through the biggest drop in mail volume in its 234-year history, a 10-billion item decrease from last year. The projections for this year are worse: a 12-billion item plunge from 2008.

Nationwide, the amount of mail has declined 4.5 percent. In Chicago and the suburbs, the rate is closer to 5 percent.

If the trend doesn't change soon, you'll see less of Sexton and his co-workers in your neighborhood.

To cut back on costs, the postal service might eliminate one of the six days of the week when a mail carrier visits your home. Also under consideration is the closing of post offices.

A peek into Sexton's daily routine tells you why the drastic measures are being discussed.

When he started as a carrier in 1971, every address on his route got some combination of magazines that included Look, Life, National Geographic, Time and Reader's Digest. Now there are just a smattering of addresses that might get one magazine.

"Newsweek used to be another big one," Sexton said. "Now I only have two people on my route who get Newsweek."

"I used to deliver 150 or more Social Security checks. I think 90 percent of those are direct deposit now."

E-cards replaced the rainbow of envelopes that filled his cart around holidays.

Weekly shoppers packed with local advertising dried up with the rise of Craigslist.

The blizzard of tax forms that hit every January also moved online.

TV Guides went away when cable and satellite providers started offering on-screen programming.

Letters written by hand are beyond passe.

About five years ago, the postal service went through a revival, thanks to the boom in Internet shopping, eBay and Netflix. A surge in prescription drugs sent through the mail also helped.

But those gains were not nearly enough to offset the steep decline in other areas.

"The companies that have been hardest hit by the recession were some of our biggest mailers," said Mark V. Reynolds, the postal service spokesman for the Chicago area.

"Banks, credit card companies, the housing industry. They started cutting back. And one of the things they cut back was how much mail they sent."

It's hard to spot the struggles amid the morning bustle at the Mount Greenwood station at 111th Street and Homan Avenue.

Inside the concrete walls, a cacophony of carriers get ready for their routes in individualized sorting stations. Workers push wheeled orange carts filled with packages. In the lobby, waiting customers chat about neighbors and family.

But everyone who has a hand in delivering the mail knows that downsizing service always means one thing: Eventually it will trickle down to someone's job. The average unionized postal worker makes about \$67,000 a year.

Sexton - who has personalized the worn metal partitions of his sorting station with copies of baseball cards for his beloved Cincinnati Reds, a magnetic calendar from a local funeral home and photos of deer congregating in his Palos Hills yard - feels the anxiety.

"One thing I have noticed is the station is louder," he said. "I think people are letting off stress."

He cares deeply about the job he walked into after leaving the military 38 years ago. The postal service put his son through college and got him through the death of his first wife. Sexton, 60, said he could have retired five years ago, but have stuck around because he loves the routine. And walking a route keeps him fit and trim.

His concern for the postal service extends to the thick rubber bands used to bundle mail. While other carriers won't think twice about discarding them, Sexton will reuse rubber bands until they break.

Before departing on his appointed rounds to the 400 or so addresses surrounding Ridge Country Club in the city's West Beverly neighborhood, Sexton slid on a red-white-and-blue hat with the postal service's eagle emblem to guard against the winter chill.

"A lot of us have worries and concerns. We are nervous. It's a good job," Sexton said.

"I have seen a lot of changes, that's for sure."

The biggest ones sound like they are due to arrive any day.

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drop in the mail

The volume of mail delivered by the U.S. Postal Service is on the decline.

Pieces mailed through the years:

1999 - 202 billion

2000 - 208 billion

2001 - 208 billion

2002 - 203 billion

2003 - 202 billion

2004 - 206 billion

2005 - 212 billion

2006 - 213 billion

2007 - 212 billion

2008 - 202 billion

2009 (projected) - 190 billion

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#### **4. Inquiry urged over union funds**

By L.M. SIXEL Copyright 2009 Houston Chronicle

Feb. 20, 2009, 11:10PM

Federal prosecutors have asked fraud investigators from the Labor Department and Postal Service to examine allegations that a former postal union official in Houston embezzled union funds.

Ed Gallagher, deputy criminal chief for major offenders of the U.S. Attorney's Office in Houston, said he asked the two inspectors general to investigate whether the details laid out in a lawsuit recently filed by the American Postal Workers Union could be criminal violations.

The union accuses its former regional coordinator, Frankie Sanders, of submitting thousands of dollars worth of receipts for non-existent hotel stays, including one in New Orleans that at the time was closed because of Hurricane Katrina damage.

Sanders, who lives in Houston and works for the Postal Service, said the lawsuit is "totally politically motivated" by some union officers.

Sanders said he incurred the charges and stayed at the hotels in which he submitted receipts. The hotel in New Orleans was closed to the public but allowed people such as school officials and others who were already in New Orleans to stay, he said. The lawsuit, filed earlier this month in federal court in Houston, also accuses Sanders of improperly withdrawing \$50,000, mostly in checks written to “cash,” from a union bank account, and later submitting fraudulent construction company invoices to conceal the withdrawals. The withdrawals were allegedly made after Sanders was designated as the trustee overseeing the damaged New Orleans union local’s office. The construction agreement to repair the office did not specify what work was to be done or the rates the company charged, according to the lawsuit. And it specified that all payments were to be made in cash.

No further comments

While he has seen a copy of the lawsuit, Sanders said he is in the process of hiring a lawyer. Until he does, he said, he doesn’t want to comment any further.

“The lawsuit is not politically motivated, the lawsuit speaks for itself, and we trust the court system to do the right thing,” said Terry Stapleton, secretary-treasurer of the American Postal Workers Union in Washington, D.C.

Representing 262,000

The union represents 262,000 postal employees who work for the Postal Service as well as private mail companies.

Dan Mihalko, a spokesman for the office of inspector general for the Postal Service, said he isn’t aware of the matter, but he added that it takes a few days for a case to get entered into the computer system.

The Labor Department’s office of inspector general doesn’t make comments unless a public filing or action occurs, according to a spokeswoman

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