Imagine birthdays, Valentine's Day, special occasions of all kinds without the Post Office's stamp of approval and thumbs-up. Imagine America without Post Offices in its histories and small towns. More to the point, imagine playing Post Office with a new, for-profit corporation: Imagine having to kiss up to and keep any new avocational CEO stocked up with vacation homes, wingtips, private jets.

The right-wing crazies want to bring down this venerable public institution too, bringing on a trick-opening for for-profit delivery -- some say by virtually engineering a downfall by triggering a financial crisis, just to get a foot in the door. It's enough to make any American go postal, enough to make our first Postmaster General for 1775, Benjamin Franklin, twirl in his grave.

We've heard most of the arguments before: *There's been a drop in mail volume, e-mail's taken the place of handwritten letters, the internet now has the bill-paying traffic,*
and so on.

Time out: Take a breath, please, before riding lickety-split, Pony-Express-style, right off a cliff. Two points of view are cued up, ready to go, to help us all have a better-informed clue about this sort of stuff.

From "USA Today" comes an excellent article, revealing many clear, picture-postcard views of the lay of the land, saying the Post Office still delivers 40 percent of the world's mail, but is now in decline. This information does not push too hard on any envelope of believability, stating its case plainly: Only four percent of the mail comes from one household to another. Most of us go two months without mail from a person we know, where 15 years ago, it might have been only a two-week wait between letters.

Mostly, mail has become just one more advertising channel, choked with commercial messages and pleas. And, on top of all that, say critics, *it lost five billion dollars last year!*

Counter-balancing the full picture in first-class fashion, was a letter to the editor of "USA Today" from Fredric Rolando, president of the National Association of Letter Carriers. In that letter -- *no , we do not know if it was sent in via e-mail*

-- Rolando made crystal clear what usually gets absolutely lost in the rhetorical blizzard of icy critics and assorted flakes:

"Almost 90 percent of the red ink stems directly from a 2006 congressional mandate that the Postal Service pre-fund future retiree health benefits for the next 75 years and do so within a decade. This burden, borne by no other public agency or private firm, costs the Postal Service $5.5 billion annually." *So much for that 5-billion-dollar loss.*

Rolando continued: **"Also contributing is the worst economy in 80 years; mail volume always dips during a recession. The Internet, meanwhile, is a mixed bag; it presents challenges with people paying bills online, but also offers opportunities to deliver goods ordered online."**

He went on to point out first-quarter info showing a 200 million dollar, net operational profit delivering the mail, a seven-percent boost attributed to delivering all those online orders.

Rolando commented more on the Postal Service CFO's financial report, adding in his letter, **" [Of the] reported $3.3 billion in red ink... $3.1 billion of that [is] from the pre-funding fiasco. This artificial crisis, unrelated to the mail, is the elephant in the room that needs to be addressed."**

Losing a foundation stone of national infrastructure, Americana, and a daily way of life is simply not acceptable -- although right-wing crazies will do all they can to convince you it is, and keep trying to pull down and stamp out this publicly-spirited institution, too.

There is always the stink of propaganda and profit hanging thickly in the air around any and all pools of even partially-public money: It is a dank, burning-tractor-tire-smoke and scent of someone's cheap cigar, made from ancient iguanas -- although Rush and Fox will have you chomping at that cigar bit, and smelling toxic paranoia instead, before the day is done.

Now that you've read through a few thoughts, maybe you have some thoughts of your own -- who it is playing Post Office, and who it is wanting the Post Office to play possum, *but for*

keeps.

http://www.fair.org/blog/2012/02/17/postal-service-broke-letter-explains-what-usa-today-omitted/

http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/story/2012-02-08/postal-service-mail/53002066/1