

Letter of solidarity from US mail carrier to Canada Post strikers

15 June 2011

To my brother and sister Canadian postal workers,

First, as a 24-year-veteran mail carrier for the United States Postal Service, I wholeheartedly support your fight to defend your right to a decent life. Then, I would like to point out that here in the US there is virtually no reporting on your struggle. Other than the *World Socialist Web Site* and a couple of online aggregators of postal news, there is nothing. To their shame, I have to add to those turning a blind eye to your struggle the four postal unions affiliated with the USPS, including the one that (supposedly) represents me. In a survey of their respective web sites, none have anything to say about, much less extend material support for, your strike.

That is to be expected. Why? In the case of the American Postal Workers Union (APWU), the largest US postal union with more than 200,000 workers under its jurisdiction, it has just finished imposing a four-and-a-half-year contract on its members that accepts an unprecedented two-tier wage and benefit structure. This leaves new hires at a level that the historic 1970 postal strike—here in the US—was fought to overcome. It also includes a token wage increase that will be easily eaten up by inflation. In this situation, the contagion of an open conflict in defense of wages and benefits by fellow postal workers to our north—marches, demonstrations, strikes—cannot be communicated to the rank and file.

Under this contract, for the first time since 1970, new-hired workers will have no protection from layoffs. A lower starting wage that will never rise above the old contract's starting wage, and part-time work (although contractually called “full-time”) will create exactly what the post office demanded—a cheaper, more flexible work force.

In contrast to the postal strike of 1970, it was clear to the rank and file that in these contract negotiations no

section of the APWU was prepared to lead a struggle against these concession demands. The USPS is determined to claw back all the gains made by postal workers since 1970. Postmaster General Pat Donahoe boasted, “We’ve reduced headcount by 225,000 since the year 2000. There are very few labor unions in the world that wouldn’t be jumping up and down ranting and raving about that.”

The union bureaucracy, fearing for its lucrative positions, is itself determined to sacrifice all the gains won by postal workers in bitter struggle. No advance can be made by American postal workers through these out-lived organizations. Brothers and sisters, your situation is no different. The Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) has no intention of mobilizing an all-out struggle because, ultimately, it agrees with Canada Post. As the American Postal Workers Union has proved here with its contract—it agrees with the United States Postal Service.

A new road has to be opened up for this struggle to succeed. The formation of rank-and-file committees, outside of and against the CUPW, prepared to wage an industrial as well as political struggle against the Harper government, must be placed on the order of the day.

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