

Canada Post workers denounce working conditions and CUPW complicity with management

Our reporters
9 April 2024

Comments from postal workers exposing the unbearable working conditions at Canada Post and the complicity of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) with management in enforcing them have continued to pour in to the *World Socialist Web Site*. Contract talks are ongoing for some 50,000 workers between CUPW and the employer, with Canada Post pushing for sweeping concessions on work rules and job security.

We strongly encourage all Canada Post workers to contact us by filling out the form at the end of this article to discuss the establishment of a Canada Post Rank-and-File Committee to take control of the contract struggle out of the hands of the CUPW bureaucrats and place power back where it belongs, with the rank and file on the shop floor.

One of the main demands advanced by the company in the talks is the introduction of “dynamic routing,” which would eliminate route ownership for postal workers and allow artificial intelligence (AI) to set new routes for workers on a daily basis. While such technology could be deployed to reduce workloads for all workers with no loss of pay, Canada Post management is determined to exploit it to boost corporate profits through “efficiency” improvements. Dynamic routing has been used internationally by the US Postal Service and Swiss Post among others, with the latter boasting cost reductions of 18 percent in weekend deliveries after its introduction.

Dynamic routing, which CUPW has allowed the company to trial in the Montreal area under the last collective agreement, is just one part of a sweeping cost-cutting drive by management. Canada Post announced plans earlier this year to sell its logistics division, which employed some 3,000 workers. The corporation is seeking to partner with e-commerce companies and other private-sector logistics firms by offering the services of low-paid,

highly exploited workers. As Ian Lee, a business professor at Carleton University in Ottawa, put it to CBC, “They’re going to have to work with [the union] because their cost structure is not even closely competitive with the independent gig delivery or even ... FedEx.”

Workers report to the WSWs that even before the proposed change, workloads are extremely demanding. One worker said, “I’ve been with Canada Post for 6 years. It used to be a great job but not any more. We are under so much pressure with workloads that keep growing everyday. They come up with new policies that we have to follow. They keep increasing the routes I walk every day. I walk about 25,000 steps, at the end of the day I’m exhausted. This does not include the weather conditions. We do not even make enough for all the labour we put in. I injured myself last month on the job. Nobody cares, all they care about is get the job done.”

Another worker added, “Conditions are deteriorating fast. Union is never around. CP is constantly cutting back and wages are dropping.” When asked why they were interested in building a rank-and-file committee, a worker simply replied, “Overworked, underpaid,” while another answered similarly, “Underpaid, discrimination from supervisor.”

Several workers also criticized vindictive practices by management. “We are given personal days, but if you use one and take a day off, more often than not Canada Post delays the mail,” said one worker. “When we return to our route, we have 2 or 3 or 4 days of mail to deliver. Our members across the country are being disciplined for not being able to finish a route and delaying the mail for not finishing, but CPC [Canada Post Corporation] is deliberately running short staffed and not caring about the delay of mail while our members are being suspended for the same thing.”

“I have been abused by management since I started... I have a diary from every day worked,” commented another. “I am at the moment going through favouritism at work now. Management taking sides. Also abuse from a co-worker. I’m very frustrated and ready to quit but I have 2 years until I’m at 20-year pension.”

There was general agreement that the CUPW bureaucracy was unable and unwilling to wage a genuine struggle to improve conditions. One worker explained, “I have been on disability leave for the last 30 months. I was not even called to work for a single day, despite being recommended for modified work by medical experts.

“CUPW is incapable of implementing article 54 to accommodate me. What is article 54 meant for? Now I have no income or benefits to support my family.” Article 54 of the collective agreement for urban postal workers includes provisions requiring the employer to make reasonable accommodations for workers who cannot perform their normal duties.

A worker angered by the collaboration between the union bureaucracy and management wrote, “As a postal worker I want to mention that our union is a puppet of the corporation. Both know how to snatch big chunks of amounts from our paycheques. It’s tyranny and dictatorship at the workplace. Shame on the postal union, shame.”

In 2018, Canada Post management succeeded in imposing a concessions-filled contract after Prime Minister Justin Trudeau’s Liberal government criminalized a series of rotating strikes called by CUPW. The rotating strikes were aimed at blocking an indefinite all-out strike by postal workers. Instead of fighting for active support from other sections of the working class facing similar attacks by big business, the CUPW bureaucracy spent time lauding the supposed support for the rotating strikes offered by the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC), Canada’s largest union federation and a key ally of the Trudeau government. Predictably, once the government imposed its back-to-work law, the CLC did not lift a finger to defend postal workers.

Then, in 2021, amid the initial outbreak and response to the COVID-19 pandemic, CUPW agreed in “good faith” to a two-year extension to the rotten contract. This was a slap in the face to workers, who faced a substantial increase in mail deliveries and continue to face the threat of infection on the job.

As one worker put it, “The fact that CUPW in good faith agreed to the contract they did during COVID should have been enough for this current contract negotiations to

be over and done with. The union should expose working conditions during COVID and how much B.S. was being pushed during that period. Instead the union sleeps with the corporation and will bend over to its rule. It’s unbelievable how much it’s all changing and the corporation acts as though they’re the ones who haven’t been wasting money.”

A worker from British Columbia added, “One of the reasons they gave for signing the two-year extension was that we were getting postal banking. But what was put forward was nothing resembling postal banking. It was just a partnership with TD to push loans. It didn’t meet any of our criteria for postal banking, but apparently this was a good reason to sign this contract.

“It didn’t last very long before the corporation, of course, shut it down. And then from our national executive, what we get is, ‘The members aren’t ready. We can’t resist legislation. We can’t do this or that. We need to take the next couple of years and organize our members.’ Which never happens. They don’t do anything of the sort, but the next contract they’re like, ‘We’re not ready yet. Not ready. Not ready. Not ready.’

“There was that moment in time when COVID was still going and we were on the front lines and we were considered heroes. Everyone understood it at that point. But the corporation with collusion by the union in my opinion effectively diffused that, and sent it to the wind.”

Remarking on the conflict between the interests of rank-and-file postal workers and the union tops, another worker stated, “I need our voice to be heard. I feel even the CUPW union isn’t doing enough to represent us.”



To contact the WSWs and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)