

Meeting of Canada Post workers calls for establishment of Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee

Our reporter
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At a meeting organized on Sunday, April 14 with the support of the *World Socialist Web Site*, a group of Canada Post workers passed a resolution calling for the establishment of a Postal Workers Rank-and-file Committee. We urge all Canada Post workers and workers throughout the delivery sector to contact us by filling out the form at the bottom of this article to support the building of the committee, including by suggesting demands it should fight for.

The meeting unanimously endorsed the following resolution after extensive discussion:

“This meeting of Canada Post workers declares its support for the establishment of a Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee. Such a committee will be completely independent of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers’ bureaucratic apparatus, which divides and demobilizes us and enforces the dictates of management. By building the Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee, we can wrest control of our contract struggle from the CUPW and articulate demands to unite and defend the jobs and conditions of all workers at Canada Post. The independent mobilization of the rank-and-file is also crucial to waging a working class political struggle against the union, NDP-backed Trudeau government, which stands four-square behind Canada Post. This will require linking our struggle with those of all sections of workers, public and private, who are facing similar attacks across Canada and in other countries through the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees.”

The meeting was introduced by a postal worker from Ontario, who provided a brief summary of the state of affairs in the current bargaining round. Rural and suburban mail carriers (RSMCs) have been without a

contract since the end of December 2023, while the contract for urban postal workers expired on January 31. The worker detailed how Canada Post is making sweeping concessions’ demands at the bargaining table and making clear that it believes it can best enforce them in collaboration with the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW). For its part, CUPW acknowledges in sporadic bargaining updates that huge concessions are being demanded but is doing nothing to mobilize the approximately 50,000 postal workers it is bargaining on behalf of.

The worker explained that the attacks on Canada Post workers were being replicated in other countries. He pointed to the undermining of Royal Mail’s universal service obligation in Britain and the recent announcement of the closure of 200 UPS depots in the United States. Concluding his remarks, he urged workers to support the building of a rank-and-file committee as part of the IWA-RFC, which is providing the political leadership and organizational framework to unify rank-and-file committees created by workers in a broad range of economic sectors on a global scale.

One worker raised the issue of whether CUPW and the unions more generally could be reformed into organizations that would more militantly fight for workers’ demands. Socialist Equality Party (Canada) National Secretary Keith Jones explained that the degeneration of the union bureaucracies over the past four decades was the product of objective changes in the structure of world capitalism, in particular the globalization of production. The unions, rooted in the nation-state, have emerged more and more as appendages of the capitalist state and partners of corporate management, with whom they work to

impose concessions on the workers they claim to represent.

Jones stressed that previous attempts to “reform” the unions had failed, underscoring the unviable character of this approach. He reviewed the experience of CUPW president Mike Palecek, a former member of the pseudo-left Fightback group (since renamed the Revolutionary Communist Party) who was catapulted to the presidency in the aftermath of CUPW’s submission to the Harper Tory government’s 2011 strikebreaking law and the union’s subsequent acceptance of sweeping contract concessions, including two-tier wages and pension cuts. Palecek talked loudly about leading a more “militant” union that would take on the bosses. When he got his chance to lead a strike in 2018, he limited the postal workers to rotating strikes despite an overwhelming vote for an all-out walkout. As the Liberal Trudeau government imposed a back-to-work law, Palecek asserted that the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) was in “solidarity” with postal workers and would come to their aid. In the event, the CLC isolated the postal workers and helped thereby to enforce the strikebreaking law.

The worker also raised what he claimed was the low level of class consciousness among workers. Answering this question, WSWS writer Roger Jordan stressed that to the extent this was true, responsibility lay with the trade union leaderships and social-democratic NDP politicians, who systematically demobilized the working class over an entire historical period.

As an example of the rotten politics of the union bureaucracy, he reviewed Palecek’s prominent participation in the 2015 national “Anybody but Conservative” election campaign, which amounted to a get-out the vote campaign for the pro-war, pro-austerity Justin Trudeau-led Liberal government. Since Trudeau came to power, the unions and New Democratic Party have been key pillars of support as his government has waged war abroad, massively increased military spending, pursued a ruinous “profits before lives” response to the COVID-19 pandemic and worked with the Bank of Canada to impose inflation and high interest rate-driven real wage cuts on working people. He added that the long period in which the unions and New Democratic Party succeeded in suppressing the class struggle was coming to an end, as underscored by

a series of major struggles by workers across Canada over the past two years.

After further discussion, the worker voted with the others present in favour of the resolution. The meeting concluded with a strong appeal for all those present to distribute the resolution to their work colleagues and contact the committee with proposals for demands to be incorporated into its founding statement, which is currently in preparation. We urge all postal workers reading this article to join this struggle.



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