

Canada Post letter carrier speaks out against management harassment

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Some 50,000 postal workers at Canada Post are currently working without a contract. Around 42,000 members of the urban postal operators (UPO) bargaining unit and 8,000 rural and suburban mail carriers (RSMC) are being blocked from waging a genuine struggle against Canada Post's sweeping concessions demands by the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW). Despite both contracts having expired more than three months ago, CUPW has yet to even announce a strike ballot, let alone set a strike date.

The *World Socialist Web Site* has received numerous write-ins from angry postal workers determined to wage a fight against Canada Post's profit-driven management. In multiple discussions, they have outlined terrible working conditions, including unbearable workloads, workplace harassment and low wages and benefits. The following comments emerged from a discussion with a postal worker in Ontario that addressed many of these issues. We encourage other postal workers to speak out about working conditions and join the struggle to organize a rank-and-file committee independent of the CUPW bureaucracy by filling out the form at the end of this article.

Management harassment

When I transferred to the Pembroke depot, there was a preexisting conflict of interest to do with a supervisor in an intimate relationship with a subordinate, in breach of the employees' code of conduct. The subordinate in the relationship also behaved inappropriately, monitored everybody and reported back to her supervisor-boyfriend. When COVID hit and our letter carriers were forced off of work, she would be monitoring who was outside picketing versus the ones that were put off of work, and she would be taking notes on that ... and also on workers leaving before 9:15.

When I raised this issue that many of my colleagues had already expressed concerns about, I became a target. So when I brought up some of these facts and the conflict of interest with a union rep, CPC [Canada Post Corporation] tried to put it back on me like I was preventing that letter carrier from doing her job, when all along she was preventing everybody from doing their job. Everybody got targeted at one point.

Even the superintendent of that building, there's nepotism with him too, hiring his own family to do the repairs on the building. I even took a photo of his last name on a sign of the construction company doing the work. So I can understand why he's siding with the

supervisor even though it's wrong. He's protecting his own interests as well.

So I was brought into the office a second time. And normally what happens is that you get issued a 24-hour notice of investigation of interrogation, and they issue a letter saying that you're going to be questioned. But I never got this letter. I was pretty much dragged into the office with the superintendent in question for nepotism, my manager, and union reps who were not selected by me. They were given to me. I didn't even have a chance to look at my work folder. The first time we went into the office, I requested to see my work file and it was completely clean.

I got pulled into the office and they said, "We believe that you were trying to prevent said letter carrier from doing her job, and we've also witnessed some strange behavior. But instead of doing an investigation, we would rather you go see your family doctor and get cleared to go back to work."

The second false allegation was that somebody had seen me on the side of the highway in the middle of nowhere, and they were concerned about my wellbeing. What I was doing was cleaning up cans on the side of the highway after work hours to raise money for Mothers Against Drunk Drivers. There was an article in the newspaper *Pembroke Observer* about that campaign. And the third allegation was that I was talking about spiritual connections with birds. I have a pet pigeon, and he laid an egg on my late son's birthday. That's pretty spiritual for me. Well, what's wrong with that? If that makes somebody feel uncomfortable, then don't listen.

I have two written statements of support from my coworkers at Pembroke, saying that I was a good employee and I wasn't preventing anybody from doing their job.

Forced medical treatment

Now, I want you to keep in mind that this is during COVID and I'm also in Pembroke. There are no walk-in clinics, so I couldn't even see a walk-in clinic doctor because I don't have my own family doctor. The corporation hired a psychiatrist to have a discussion with me and I had my first appointment with a psychiatrist.

I had asked the regional union rep from Ottawa to come to Pembroke. He was on board and understood that there was a conflict of interest in that office and a lot of toxicity. So he was coming to that appointment with me just to confirm that there is a problem in the office and I wasn't making things up. Well, the psychiatrist just shut

us down and forced me on “medication before treatment” is what they called it.

He deemed that I had psychosis and then put me off on olanzapine [antipsychotic medication]. And obviously that medication was making me feel sick. It was making me depressed. And I had a lot of side effects from it. I even felt suicidal at one point because I felt I shouldn’t be on it in the first place. All I had done was bring up a concern that everybody else had at the depot as well.

But they decided to shut me up with anti-psychotic medicine. My union rep, Doug Thomas, had told me in the meeting that there is a problem in the Pembroke office. But the doctor said there wasn’t. They pretty much said that the issue was all in my head and I had to get back to work.

The psychiatrist was basing his opinion on a report from the previous depot I worked at where I experienced hostilities from some of my co-workers. I had just gotten to that office and I opened up to the wrong people because I’m such a friendly, bubbly person and I’m very open about my life ... I went through a lot of that office, too. And so they told me to go see a doctor.

I was given a psychiatrist there who said it’s all in my head but she was not really listening to what I was saying. I went through their treatment which was seeing a therapist who gave me cognitive behavioural therapy, and even she believed that it wasn’t in my head. But she had to go based on what the CPC psychiatrist said.

Moving forward to the Pembroke situation, the psychiatrist didn’t even do his own evaluation on me. He just based it off of his colleague. Doug Thomas knew what happened to me in North Bay and he came with me to the appointment with the psychiatrist to just reaffirm that there was a lot of toxicity at this office. And they shut it down saying that psychosis is a hard thing to diagnose and that if I don’t take the medication they would force injection on me.

I feel we used to have one of the strongest unions, but now the union is sleeping in bed with management. It’s awful. And there’s no representation whatsoever. A coworker of mine in Pembroke wrote me a character reference letter to back up my grievance, saying that I was one of the most positive individuals she had ever met:

At the time of her arrival, the Pembroke office was in the middle of dealing with a substantial conflict of interest revolving around an intimate relationship between a letter carrier and a supervisor. And although many individuals expressed concerns, [she] was the one that quickly became a target of hostility from both the letter carrier and management. Even though [she] faced a lot of unprofessional and unfriendly behaviour from individuals involved in the conflict of interest, she always kept a smile on her face and tried to never let the stress of the situation show. [She] is a very hard worker and took pride in doing her job well and in helping her customers however she could. You could tell from her excellent attitude she loved her job. She is compassionate, a very big heart. I was sad to see [her] leave Pembroke, but it was completely understandable why she felt she could not stay.

I transferred out of Pembroke because after I got back to work, I felt extremely uncomfortable working there now because of the conflict of interest and what had happened to me. I made sure to apply for a transfer.

Admail deliveries

A few years ago we lost one of our local newspapers called the *Northern Life*, which had a lot of the fliers inside. Now what they’ve done is that they’ve married all of those fliers together and put them into a plastic bag. We get paid 1.5 cents per bag of fliers when there are four or five fliers in the bag, and there are 4 or 5 sets of fliers in each bag. Then we’ll also have loose fliers that we have to deliver with those bag fliers that are 1.5 cents each.

We are getting ripped off as the letter carrier. It’s overburdening us. And all the corporation does is say they’re going to put in more grey boxes [boxes on the corner where the carriers load up their mail bags] for the overburden. No, that’s not fair.

Everybody’s going through awful working conditions and I feel for nurses big time.

It’s awful how management is, there’s so much favouritism at our office and I see certain people that are getting away with murder and other people that are struggling and trying to do their job, but they’re constantly bullied and it’s impacting their mental health.

Workers must oppose war

I don’t agree with war. Why should we be paying for that? I live in Sudbury. I don’t know if you know Sudbury’s background, but back in World War I, World War II, the Korean War, our mines were used to produce bullets and artillery for all sides. And the thing is that all of these miners from different nations were mining underground, fighting against each other on the other side. So, I don’t agree with war whatsoever.

One thing that I wish would change with our politics: We should be able to choose where our money goes with taxes. We know we’re getting taxed on our paychecks but I don’t support war. Why should I be taxed and give money to that? I want to put my money towards education or healthcare and we should be able to pay like X percent. It should be the power of the people instead of the power of the government.



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