

50,000 Canada Post workers face political battle against pro-austerity, warmongering Liberal government

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22 May 2024

Around 50,000 Canada Post workers have been labouring without a contract for over three months thanks to the connivance of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) with company management to block a struggle against the company's sweeping concession demands.

The fight that postal workers must wage is above all political, since the push by management to make Canada Post "profitable" at the expense of its workers is backed to the hilt by the Trudeau Liberal government and its trade union allies, including the CUPW bureaucracy.

In a calculated move to give its vast restructuring plans some legitimacy, Canada Post decided to announce massive financial losses in the midst of ongoing bargaining. The more than \$700 million lost in the past year and \$3 billion over the past six years are intended to intimidate workers into accepting attacks on wages, further increases to already unbearable workloads, a maintenance of the ruthless regime of management harassment that pervades mail sorting depots, the gutting of seniority rights, the elimination of job protection, and the use of new technologies to ratchet up exploitation. Canada Post management is threatening to end daily mail delivery, a proposal that the Liberal government has said it will consider.

Canada Post's losses are in fact small change compared to the vast sums the union-backed Liberal government is making available without batting an eyelid to rearm Canada's military and wage war around the world. Canadian imperialism's recent defence policy update includes a plan to increase defence spending from around \$32 billion currently to \$49 billion by the end of the decade—an increase that could write off Canada Post's losses for the past six years some six times over. Over \$10 billion has been made available to the fascistic Ukrainian regime in the form of weapons and financial guarantees as it sacrifices the lives of hundreds of thousands of Ukrainian workers to continue a war against Russia spearheaded by American imperialism with Canadian and European imperialist support.

Canada Post's "losses" are also dwarfed by the \$600 billion made available to Bay Street and corporate Canada at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic by the Liberal government and Bank of Canada in consultation with employer organizations, the Canadian Labour Congress, and its mouthpiece in the New Democratic Party (NDP).

The problem is not a lack of funds. Rather, it is that the corporatist tripartite alliance of Canada Post management, the CUPW bureaucracy, and Trudeau government agree that the crown corporation must be run as a profit-making concern. Ever since Canada Post was created as a crown corporation in 1981, the union bureaucracy has agreed that postal workers' jobs, wages and working conditions must be subordinated to Canada Post's bottom line. This has gone hand-in-hand with their repeated capitulation to and enforcement of anti-strike laws.

In 2011, CUPW bowed to the Harper Conservative government's back-to-work legislation then helped impose a five-year concessions-filled contract that included a two-tier pay and benefit regime. In 2015, left-talking CUPW president Mike Palecek stumped for the election of the Trudeau government, claiming that the "progressive" Liberals would be more worker-friendly. In 2018, after Palecek and the CUPW bureaucracy smothered a push by postal workers for an all-out strike and limited job action to toothless rotating strikes, the Trudeau government rammed through a back-to-work law that neither the CUPW nor the Canadian Labour Congress lifted a finger to oppose.

It is clear that the Trudeau Liberals will move to quickly criminalize any mobilization of postal workers in an all-out strike, especially if workers strive—as they must, if they are to prevail—to make it the spearhead of a broader working class mobilization against concessions, austerity, and war. This is a government that threatened to use the full force of the state to criminalize a strike by over 7,000 dockers last summer, accusing them of endangering the "national interest." The only reason that the Trudeau government did not have to deploy the police and courts to discipline the striking workers was that the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) did the government's dirty work by collaborating with the unelected Canada Industrial Relations Board to enforce a strike ban in all but name and impose corporate Canada's demands.

Immediately thereafter, Labour Minister Seamus O'Regan announced plans to prohibit strikes at the ports and in other critical economic sectors. Earlier this month, O'Regan made good on his threat, indefinitely banning a threatened strike by over 9,300 Canadian National Rail and Canada Pacific Kansas City rail workers. The strike ban goes hand-in-hand with the Liberal

government's leading role in criminalizing anti-genocide protests across the country, including by smearing participants opposed to Israel's slaughter of the Palestinians as "antisemites."

While it has been crushing workers' struggles and hiking military spending, Trudeau's Liberals have relied on the unstinting support of the New Democrats. The union-funded NDP secures the parliamentary majority necessary for the minority government to continue in office under a "confidence and supply" agreement. The support of the CLC, whose former President, Hassan Yussuff, was appointed by Trudeau to a lucrative position in the Senate for services rendered to the ruling class, has never wavered.

This lineup takes place because the material interests of those leading the unions, the CUPW included, correspond with the interests of big business, not the workers they claim to represent. They back austerity for public services, attacks on workers' pay and conditions, and the waging of imperialist war because they believe that these policies will protect their six-figure salaries and corporatist ties with business executives and the state.

CUPW provides a glaring example of this process. The CUPW bureaucracy argues that Canada Post's financial crisis can be overcome by increasing revenues so that it becomes more profitable. Therefore, it appeals to management to laden already overburdened postal workers with additional tasks, such as serving as bank tellers for a utopian postal banking scheme or retraining as community carers to pay visits to the elderly and other vulnerable people.

The well-paid CUPW officials are hostile to a struggle to secure the postal service as a fully funded public utility so as to guarantee good wages and secure jobs for all. They oppose it because such a struggle would necessitate mobilizing the support of public and private-sector workers, including rail workers recently robbed of their right to strike, autoworkers, healthcare workers, and educators, in a unified worker-led counter-offensive.

Workers could then fight for well-funded public services for all and end the looting of society's resources by the corporate elite and Canadian imperialism's war machine. This struggle must of necessity confront head on the political alliance between the union bureaucracy, Liberals, and NDP, which CUPW wants to defend at all costs.

The corporatist alliance stretches beyond Canada's borders. The Trudeau government cooperates closely with the Biden administration on the suppression of workers' struggles and the integration of the union bureaucracy into ruling-class policy making and implementation. Just this week, Trudeau met with US Vice President Kamala Harris on the sidelines of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) convention in Philadelphia. The meeting followed a roundtable organized at Biden's explicit request by the US ambassador in Canada in February involving O'Regan and several top union bureaucrats. These meetings, the contents of which are kept secret from workers and the public at large, enable politicians on both sides of the border to coordinate their efforts to smother workers' struggles, and advance a pro-war protectionist North American economic policy as the basis for fighting a global conflict against Canadian and US imperialism's rivals.

The response of Canada Post workers to this cross-border

conspiracy must be to establish their own links with powerful allies internationally. The same attacks on pay and conditions experienced by Canada Post workers are confronting US Postal Service (USPS) workers and logistics workers at UPS and other private providers. So-called "dynamic routing," which would abolish route ownership for Canada Post employees, has been enforced at USPS for years with the aim of saving hundreds of millions of dollars.

Postal workers must combine this international strategy with the fight to mobilize all sections of workers across Canada in defence of public services and the transformation of Canada Post into a fully funded public utility under workers' control. Postal workers must have the final say over how new technologies are deployed and operational procedures changed so that they can ease workloads, improve postal delivery, and protect pay and benefits for all. It is not new technology that threatens the livelihoods of postal workers, but the profit-driven interests of the ruling elite that currently determine its deployment.

A precondition for waging this fight is the establishment of workers' political and organizational independence from the nationalist, pro-capitalist CUPW bureaucracy. This can only take place through the building of rank-and-file committees at every Canada Post depot across the country. These committees will place control over the contract struggle in the hands of workers on the shop floor and create the conditions for postal workers to break out of the pro-employer "collective bargaining" straitjacket and appeal for a unified struggle with all workers against the Liberal/NDP/union alliance. Rank-and-file committees of postal workers can also develop their struggle into a global offensive of workers against capitalist austerity and war by joining the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees and adopting a socialist program to end the subordination of society's needs to the pursuit of corporate profit. We strongly appeal to all postal and logistics workers ready to conduct such a fight to fill out the form below.



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