

“The urgent need to develop rank-and-file committees in every workplace and across national boundaries has never been clearer”

Daniel Berkley
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The following remarks were delivered at a Zoom meeting of Royal Mail workers on Sunday as a message of solidarity from the Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee at Canada Post.

The meeting of the Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee (UK) was held to discuss a fightback against the collusion of the Communication Workers Union with the brutal restructuring by Royal Mail, with the support of the Labour government, in preparation for the takeover bid of EP Group, the private equity firm owned by billionaire Daniel Kretinsky.

The fraternal greetings were brought by Daniel Berkley as part of the collaboration of the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees.

The contribution by Daniel, a rural postal worker at Canada Post, underscored the global character of the assault on postal workers and the need for a unified fightback against the union bureaucracy which in every country is aligned with the employers and governments to ramp up exploitation and destroy jobs, slash pay and eviscerate terms and conditions.

Hello, good afternoon and good evening. My name is Daniel Berkley, and I am a rural postal worker at the Canada Post Corporation. I am an active member of the Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee (Canada), and it is my pleasure to have the opportunity to contribute to this meeting.

I'm not here today as an individual. I am speaking as a rank-and-file delegate who represents the working-class interests of 55,000 Canadian postal workers whose current collective agreements were set to expire at the end of 2021 and beginning of 2022. Preparing a contribution for this meeting involved conversations

with our rank-and-file committee and speaking with co-workers in my depot. Unanimously, everyone asked me to send a message of fraternal greetings, and to do my best to make it clear that even though we are separated by geography the most advanced layers of the Canadian working class stand in solidarity with the struggles of Royal Mail workers across the pond.

Winning these advanced elements of postal workers into rank-and-file committees is not automatic just because we find ourselves in the midst of contract negotiations and our working conditions are becoming unbearable, which they are. These objective conditions give us the opportunity to grow the committees. However, every contact that we've won to the rank-and-file committee was the result of our correct socialist perspective and based on sometimes lengthy political conversations and clarifications.

Jumping back for a moment to 2021-2022 when our collective agreements were set to expire, our union had the opportunity to prepare for an all-out strike while our supposedly Liberal government's "profit before lives" pandemic policy was on full display. This pandemic policy of the ruling class was crudely outlined in 2020, when then Prime Minister Boris Johnson declared—and please excuse my language—"No more fucking lockdowns! Let the bodies pile high in their thousands!"

Since then, even basic public health measures to track and eliminate COVID have been globally abandoned so that massive corporations can continue to profiteer on the backs and lives of workers. The *World Socialist Web Site* remains the only publication that maintains a principled track record on this issue. Today, there are no mitigation measures in our workplaces, as the KP.3

variant circulates among students at the start of their new school year.

Instead of preparing for negotiations or strike action when our collective agreements expired at the beginning of 2022, the Canadian Union of Postal Workers or CUPW unilaterally acceded to collective agreement extensions of two years. These extensions have now expired, and we find ourselves in the middle of protracted contract negotiations. CUPW announced a strike vote that started last week and concludes on October 20.

A recent statement by the Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee (Canada) encourages workers to vote YES to strike while warning that “If the CUPW bureaucracy has its way, we will never go on strike, even if we deliver a unanimous strike vote.”

Even as “our” unions spout demagogic appeals to their respective postal workers, the fact remains “our” unions are aligned in a corporatist tripartite alliance with the government and with management. The cowardly union bureaucrats would never dream of defying a back-to-work order, which would require the broad mobilization of workers across industry and across geographic lines. Workers such as myself have experienced a series of contracts where we end up facing either Conservative or Liberal governments head on; CUPW dutifully plays its class role by immediately abandoning us at the all-powerful altar of profit.

Within the two-plus years since our collective agreements have expired, AI and automation have made an impact on our workplaces, whether that’s in a sortation plant, a retail space or a mail depot. Between the United States Postal Service, UPS and, of course, Royal Mail—I’m sure there are others—it’s become clear that these attacks on workers are being negotiated and enforced by various union bureaucracies who are more concerned with profitability than decent working conditions and wages.

The international working class share the same basic class interests, and our contract negotiations over here are connected to working conditions across the entire global economy.

New automation technologies like machine-sequenced mail and AI technologies like dynamic delivery have the potential to shorten our workweeks and make our jobs better, but this potential can only be realized with an independent movement of the

international working class. The implementation of automation and AI at Canada Post is having a huge impact on our workflow in select depots across the country and is soon to be expanded according to recent union updates.

I think it’s clear that we must break from the confines of our respective unions who use the full weight of their bureaucracies to demobilize us and isolate us.

The urgent need to develop rank-and-file committees in every workplace and across national boundaries has never been clearer, and this is exactly what we are doing in this meeting here today. This meeting has been organized by our brothers and sisters in the UK and it is affiliated with the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees. Articles posted to the *World Socialist Web Site* regarding postal workers’ struggles are receiving thousands of pageviews.

This meeting itself and our ability to reach more and more workers is an expression of the objective conditions forced upon the international working class. Globally, postal workers are facing increasing workloads, decreasing pay, and deteriorating workplace safety.

We are all in this together! Thank you once again for the opportunity to contribute to this meeting. If any questions come up that I can help with, I am happy to do so. Cheers.



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