

US postal workers fighting same issues as Canada Post strike, posing need for international movement

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The strike by over 50,000 Canada Post workers, now in its second week, is part of a global fight by postal workers around the world. In one country after the next, postal workers face massive job cuts and facility closures, with automation and artificial intelligence as a key weapon in the hands of management, with the ultimate aim of breaking up or privatizing postal services.

For centuries regarded as a basic government-provided service, post offices are being reorganized along profit lines. The aim is to reorganize the mail to either compete with, or be purchased by, private competitors such as Amazon, DHL and UPS. Deutsche Post in Germany and Royal Mail in Britain were already privatized years ago, with billionaire Daniel Kretinsky leading a bid to purchase Royal Mail and prepare even further cuts.

Canada Post, a Crown corporation, is the subject of similar proposals, including redrawing delivery routes by AI, replacing full-time postal workers with part-time and gig workers and breaking the system up into regional franchises. The trade union-backed Liberal Trudeau government is heavily involved in this restructuring process, having appointed a mediator to manage the talks. Labour Minister Steven MacKinnon intervened Wednesday with a statement after the mediator temporarily suspended talks, warning that he was “extremely frustrated” with the delay in finalizing a new sellout contract.

The global character of the attacks underscores the need for an international strategy to guide the working class. Postal workers have formed rank-and-file committees in five countries, including in Canada, to organize such a fight on a world scale. This must be connected to a fight to transfer power out of the hands of the sellout union bureaucrats, which are helping carry out “reforms” in every country, and into the hands of the workers.

The Canadian Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee is campaigning to make the strike “the spearhead of a worker-led counteroffensive in defence of fully-funded public services and workers’ rights, and against austerity and war.”

“Delivering for America”

A central strategic priority for Canada Post workers must be to link up with their brothers and sisters in the United States to build a continent-wide movement, and vice-versa. United States Postal Service workers are

facing virtually the same issues as in Canada. Last year, USPS workers founded their own Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee (US-PWRFC) to oppose these attacks and organize against the sellout union officials.

The American post office, while still a government agency, has been targeted for privatization going back to the Nixon administration. In 1970, workers rebelled against the first attempt to spin off the post office with a massive wildcat strike, in defiance of anti-labor laws covering federal employees and the inaction of the union apparatus.

This has now reached a new stage with the so-called “Delivering for America” (DFA) restructuring program. Its aim is to close thousands of local post offices and eliminate thousands of routes, shed tens of thousands of more than 500,000 USPS workers and consolidate USPS’ operations around a small number of highly automated distribution centers, restoring the post office to “profitability.”

DFA was introduced by current Postmaster General Louis DeJoy, a Trump ally appointed in 2020 but who enjoys bipartisan support from the Democrats. DeJoy, who owns \$30 million in stock from XPO Logistics, which holds contracts with USPS, has an obvious conflict of interest.

A member of the Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee said there is mass opposition to DFA:

In several places where DeJoy planned to move the Processing and Delivering Centers to points quite far from the original location, the residents have revolted. They are insisting the post offices are a public service, which existed before the Declaration of Independence was signed in 1776. Ben Franklin opened the first post office in Pennsylvania in 1775. Folks vowed that their post offices will not be taken from them.

DeJoy has had to hit pause a few times but promises to resume after January 25. Workers were assured that the NALC would watch every move carefully to see that it’s done right. Not a word is shared with the rank-and-file. We get no information about DFA anywhere.

These cuts will be greatly expanded under the second Trump administration, which has pledged savage cuts to the federal budget. Billionaire Elon Musk, appointed to co-chair the so-called “Department of Government Efficiency,” has pledged to slash \$2 trillion in spending every year, which can only be accomplished through wholesale dismantling of the post office and other public services.

Bound up with this are invasive new hi-tech monitoring systems such as TIAREAP for city carriers, and the RRECS compensation system for rural

carriers, designed to hound workers out of their jobs. These were introduced through memoranda worked out behind workers backs with the National Association of Letter Carriers (NALC) and the National Rural Letter Carriers Association (NRLCA).

TIAREAP, which automatically disciplines workers for supposed “stationary events” on their routes, played a major role in the heat-related death of Eugene Gates, a veteran carrier from Dallas, Texas. RRECS is essentially a system of industrial-scale wage theft. Two thirds of rural carriers have had their salaries cut since it was introduced two years ago, in many cases by \$10,000 or \$20,000 a year.

In rural areas, USPS also functions essentially as an Amazon delivery contractor. The post office illegally prioritizes Amazon packages over other forms of mail, while forcing massive levels of overwork.

For a worldwide fight against austerity, government repression and war!

The US-PWRFC member drew parallels between the role of the union bureaucrats in the US and Canada:

Management at Canada Post points to \$3 billion in losses since 2018 to justify low wage increases for workers, while the Trudeau government enriches the corporate elites with tax subsidies and invested tens of billions into rearming the military. Meanwhile, a strike ban looms large. The alternative, binding arbitration, will weaken the ability to fight for fair wages and safe working conditions. It appears the Canada Post is being primed for a private takeover.

The Canadian Union of Postal Workers’ response to massive cuts has been to allow collective bargaining to take its course. This has only made it more difficult for the rank-and-file members to finally strike. Now that they have struck, the union bureaucracy is working to isolate and ultimately strangle the strike. They do this to prevent the inevitable catalyst for a bigger working class challenge to capitalism, the criminalization of worker struggles, and war.

The similarities between the CUPW ordeal and the USPS current situation are worthy of note. Here in the US, we are dealing with a tentative agreement for city carriers in the National Association of Letter Carriers, that was released on October 19th. After 600 days of negotiating and promising an “historic” contract, the members got slapped with a proposal for 1.3 percent raise over the length of the contract. Additionally, they have retained the hated two-tier system. Office time is to be reduced from 33 to 20 minutes resulting in increased workloads and a loss of routes.

Safety measures are not given serious consideration in the contract. Like our Canadian brethren, USPS addresses excessive financial losses of \$6-9 billion. USPS fiscal year report shows \$11 billion investment for one-year treasury bonds.

Both Canadian and US postal workers are fighting against anti-worker governments who have routinely blocked strikes. The strike ban on the US railroads in 2022 was repeated in Canada earlier this year with bans against strikes on the railroads and the docks. As for postal workers, undemocratic laws ban all strikes by federal employees. If workers reject the sellout deals, they will have one imposed upon them through binding arbitration.

Rather than fighting against this entire illegitimate framework, the US unions defend it, because the threat of injunctions gives them leverage against an angry and rebellious rank and file. The same is true in Canada. As one Canadian PWRFC worker recently told a meeting of British postal workers:

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.

He concluded his remarks at that meeting by declaring:

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 ...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.

A crucial element in this global movement must be a fighting alliance between postal workers in the US and Canada. If you agree, join the Committee in your country by filling out the form below.



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