

# Canada Post workers face political battle against management, Liberal government and CUPW leadership as contract expiration approaches

Our reporters, Daniel Berkley  
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*We encourage all Canada Post workers to participate in building the Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee and to sign up for the WSWS Postal Workers Newsletter by filling out the form at the end of this article or emailing [canadapostworkersrffc@gmail.com](mailto:canadapostworkersrffc@gmail.com).*

An arbitrarily imposed government strike ban on 55,000 Canada Post workers expires Thursday, May 22, amid intensified demands from the ruling class to slash postal workers' jobs and rights and make the Crown Corporation "profitable."

The ban was imposed last December by then Labour Minister Stephen MacKinnon as part of the federal Liberal government's criminalization of the month-long strike that postal workers had mounted to win real wage increases after decades of concessions, and to secure job security in the face of Canada Post's attempt to use AI and other new technologies to "Amazonify" the workforce.

The Liberal government under Prime Minister Mark Carney, backed by all of corporate Canada, is determined to inflict a major defeat on postal workers. They want to make an example of them in order to underscore to all workers that, under conditions of trade war with the US and the global spread of imperialist war, Canadian capitalism is determined to destroy what remains of public services and worker rights to free up money for the military and to swell the financial oligarchy's profits.

During the six months in which postal workers have been legally prohibited from taking any collective action to defend themselves, the leadership of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) has been colluding with Canada Post management and the Liberal government—first under Trudeau and now Carney—to ensure postal workers confront the ruling class onslaught on their jobs and rights with both arms tied behind their backs.

CUPW policed the return to work under MacKinnon's strike ban in December, which was enforced through a cooked-up, illegal reinterpretation of Section 107 of the pro-employer Canada Labour Code. Well aware that rank-and-file postal workers were strongly in favour of defying the Liberal government's strike ban, CUPW refused to organize union meetings where workers would have been able to debate the way forward and instead worked with the Canadian Labour Congress to impose the return to work as a *fait accompli*.

The ban also included a government-dictated extension of the contracts for urban and rural postal workers, which had expired close to a year prior to MacKinnon's intervention.

Canada Post Corporation (CPC) management and their corporate advisors took full advantage of the workers being legally bound and gagged. As part of the strike ban, MacKinnon established a so-called Industrial Inquiry Commission (IIC), under the chairmanship of seasoned

federal arbitrator William Kaplan, with a broad mandate to consider all issues related to the post office's operations and finances.

## Government's Industrial Inquiry Commission advocates massive attack on postal workers

The IIC's recommendations, detailed in a report publicly released last Friday, confirm the repeated warnings made by the *World Socialist Web Site* that the IIC was a conspiracy against postal workers from the start.

Before the report was even released, articles began appearing in the corporate media demanding the most far-reaching restructuring of the postal service. "Time to privatize Canada Post," declared *Maclean's* magazine in a May 13 comment. The *Globe and Mail*, the traditional mouthpiece of the Bay Street elite, published an editorial last week demanding a "revolution" at Canada Post, including wholesale privatization and the elimination of home letter delivery, to make sure it is "financially self-sustaining," i.e., able to turn a profit.

Kaplan's report reasserted, as the foundation of all Canada Post's operations, the principle—long accepted by the CUPW bureaucracy—that the post office must be run as a profit-making concern, rather than a public service. On this basis, it proposes a series of sweeping attacks on workers' rights and conditions that if implemented would rapidly result in massive job losses. Most of these have been taken directly from the list of demands made by Canada Post before the IIC or in the current contract negotiations.

They include:

- \*imposing "dynamic routing," whereby letter carriers' routes and work load are subject to daily modification, nationwide

- \*phasing out home mail delivery for individuals and families through a massive expansion of "community mail boxes"

- \*closing rural post offices and expanding Canada Post's use of privately-managed franchises

- \*creating a new category of part-time weekend workers, with reduced compensation and benefits

In conformity with Canada Post's demands, the IIC calls for eliminating so-called "trapped time"—that is full-time carriers' right to a full day's pay if they finish their route early due to greater experience or lower mail volumes.

The WSWS discussed the contents of the report with Daniel Berkley, a postal worker and leading member of the Postal Workers Rank-and-File

Committee (PWRFC), which was set up by Canada Post workers last year to seize control of their contract struggle from the hands of the CUPW bureaucracy. He explained,

“Trapped time” is an important concept to understand. UPO [Urban Postal Operations] routes are on an hourly-based rate, and RSMCs [Rural and Suburban Mail Carriers] routes are on a salary-based rate. But in both cases, if a mail carrier finishes their route in less time than the route is scheduled, that carrier still gets paid for the full day, and they can go home early or voluntarily take on more work at the overtime pay rate.

The big theme behind making Canada Post “profitable/efficient” is to eliminate trapped time. Regardless of a depot experiencing a heavy day or a light day, Kaplan’s goal is to have all full-time staff working a “full 8-hour day”, as defined by Canada Post’s “efficiency experts.” This can be accomplished by redefining ‘route ownership’ with dynamic routes that change daily, and replacing full-time staff with part-time and casual (read: seasonal) employees.

In what would represent a further massive attack on postal workers’ rights, Kaplan proposes to replace the full-time equivalent health and vacation benefits paid to part-time employees who work more than three hours a day, with shrunken “pro-rata” benefits.

The IIC report does not make any general recommendation about wages. However, the report endorses management’s claims that Canada Post is “effectively insolvent, or bankrupt,” and that massive restructuring of the post office’s operations at workers’ expense is required “to ensure its survival.”

Canada Post is pressing for a further cut in workers’ real wages, consisting of a 5% increase for 2024, retroactively paid out to postal workers when the strike was illegalized last December, followed by per annum increases of 2.5%, 2% and 2% respectively in the three ensuing years.

“Overall, this report repeats management’s claims hook, line and sinker, and dismisses, virtually from A to Z, the union’s analysis and proposals,” stated Berkley, who added:

Given the opportunity, the CUPW bureaucrats will police the implementation of these recommendations. By participating in the commission and telling workers they could use it to advance our struggle, they gave a veneer of credibility to what was obviously a fraudulent anti-worker process—one imposed upon us as part of the theft of our right to strike.

If the recommendations in this report are implemented, it will be the harbinger of an open assault on all Canadian workers, mirroring Trump’s attacks on American workers, Starmer’s attacks on UK workers, etc.

As Berkley correctly points out, CUPW participated enthusiastically in the IIC, which it touted as a democratic forum where workers could have their voice heard. CUPW President Jan Simpson lauded the Commission for providing a venue for “critical discussions about the future of Canada Post and the issues that matter to all of us.”

Keenly aware of the anger boiling among the rank and file, the union top brass has *now* discovered that the Commission was rigged in favour of the bosses. In a Friday press release, CUPW asserted that it was “no surprise” that Kaplan’s report backed all of management’s demands,

contemptuously brushing aside the fact that any workers who took what the union previously said about the IIC’s purpose at face value would have indeed found the outcome surprising. The union proceeded to pathetically assert, “We have also objected to the entire process, but we felt we had to participate to give voice to postal workers.”

This is a pack of lies. The “entire process” surrounding the IIC began with the demobilization of postal workers by means of the government’s draconian strike ban, which CUPW enforced without even asking the rank and file for its opinion. Then, Simpson and others trumpeted the IIC as a forum for workers to be heard.

The only “objection” to the “entire process” lodged by CUPW was a court filing against the constitutionality of the strike ban. This is a common sleight of hand employed by the union bureaucracy after it has collaborated in strangling the workers’ struggle following a government-imposed back-to-work order. Time and again, the unions have policed strike bans while asserting their determination to “fight” them in the courts. Such cases take years to decide, and even if the court finds the government violated workers’ rights, their rulings never compensate workers for the concessions that were illegally imposed on them.

Kaplan’s IIC report outlined three potential ways “forward” when postal workers’ contracts expire Thursday. Backed by the Canada Industrial Relations Board, the CPC could force a rank-and-file vote on its “final” contract offer. Alternatively, the government could impose binding arbitration. Finally, strike action could be taken by the workers or a lockout imposed by management. In the last case, Kaplan suggests the government commit not to “intervene.”

### **Postal workers must seize the conduct of their struggle from the CUPW bureaucrats**

Whatever developments take place in the coming days, the decisive thing for postal workers to recognize is that they must take their struggle into their own hands. To break out of the straitjacket imposed on them by the CUPW bureaucracy and mobilize the social power of the working class, they must build rank-and-file committees—affiliated with the PWRFC—in every Canada Post sorting plant, depot and post office.

This requires a political struggle directed against CUPW and the entire union bureaucracy’s alliance with the big business Liberal government and social-democratic New Democratic Party, and against the rigged, pro-employer “collective bargaining” framework on which it rests. Postal workers must fight to make their struggle the starting point for a broader counteroffensive of the entire working class, public and private sector, against capitalist austerity, state strike-breaking, and war, and for well-funded public services and good-paying, secure jobs.

The PWRFC fights for such a movement to be developed internationally, unifying postal workers and other sections of workers in Canada, the US, and beyond against the demands of the ruling elites in every country that workers pay for the cost of imperialist war and trade warfare.

To take forward the fight for this perspective, Berkley participated Sunday on behalf of the PWRFC in a meeting of the US Postal Service Rank-and-File Committee, which was organized to mobilize postal workers against the Trump administration’s drive to privatize USPS. Berkley told the meeting,

Postal and logistics workers across North America are suffering similar attacks on their working conditions. We’re seeing AI and surveillance technology, under the control of the ruling class,

subordinate workers to profit. We must expropriate these technologies, and bring them under the control of the working class. The ruling class will not give in easily to such demands, but the international working class, whose interests are objectively aligned through the process of production, represents a much larger and more powerful social force.

In Canada, the unions tell us to line up behind our Canadian bosses, who use Trump's trade war as an excuse to further exploit us. The tariff war, a precursor to a global military conflagration, can only be halted by the international unification of workers' struggles. We should not be lining up with our own ruling classes on the basis of reactionary nationalism. Unfettered by the treacherous union bureaucracies, we could unleash our collective social power to fight for credible demands to defend our jobs, and improve our wages and working conditions. This is why we are here today.

To wage a successful struggle against our exploiters, we must ground our analysis in objective truths, and we must redouble our efforts in building rank-and-file committees independent of the union bureaucracies.

An internationalist and socialist perspective must be fought for by workers to counteract the toxic nationalism spewed by the corporate media and the union officialdom. Postal workers across North America share the same objective class interests, and we must organize accordingly.



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