

US postal workers discuss how to fight privatization at USPS Workers Rank-and-File Committee meeting

Our reporter
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US postal workers and their supporters from across the country, as well as delegates from Canada and Britain, met Sunday afternoon to discuss the strategy to fight the impending privatization of the United States Postal Service (USPS). The meeting was well attended, with over 100 registering in advance.

The meeting, sponsored by the USPS Workers Rank-and-File Committee, discussed the program from the committee's recent statement in response to the appointment of David Steiner, a member of the Fedex Board of Directors, as new Postmaster General.

The appointment, the committee warned, was a "declaration of all-out war against more than 600,000 postal workers. His top priority will be to destroy USPS and privatize whatever can make money for Fedex and other huge corporations." Emphasizing the need for independence from the Democrats and the trade union bureaucrats, the statement called for "mass action, including a general strike," to "force a stop to Trump's conspiracies."

WSWS reporter Tom Hall opened the meeting Sunday:

To call [the appointment of Steiner] a conflict of interest would essentially be to cheapen the meaning of the phrase. For all intents and purposes, once Steiner takes office, the post office will essentially be a subsidiary of FedEx.

"Trump's attacks on the post office are only a component part of his wide-reaching plan to establish a presidential dictatorship," Hall warned. Steiner "is only the latest in a series of billionaires and superwealthy individuals who are playing direct roles in this government—including, of course, Trump himself, as well as Elon Musk."

Hall noted that "the attack on the post office, however, has been a bipartisan venture for decades." He pointed in particular to the Delivering for America restructuring, begun under Trump's first term and continued under Biden, which is eliminating tens of thousands of jobs and consolidating local offices and routes to prepare USPS for privatization.

He said:

We know that we have to organize this [opposition] from below. We cannot wait for permission from the union bureaucracy, which is openly collaborating with the Trump administration, or the Democratic Party, which is doing nothing to oppose Trump. [This is] because they are far more afraid of a mass movement from

below, especially from the working class, than they are even of fascism.

Pointing to the sellout contracts being imposed by the National Association of Letter Carriers (NALC) and the National Rural Letter Carriers' Association (NRLCA), Hall called on workers to build a network of rank-and-file committees as an alternative organization to transfer power to workers themselves.

He urged:

Reach out to workers in your facility or area whom you trust to hold joint discussions that exclude managers as well as union officials. Begin discussing a joint strategy, prepare a statement declaring what your demands are and reach out to the USPS Workers Rank-and-File Committee to begin coordinating joint actions on a national scale.

In turn, this work will be coordinated on a world scale through the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC).

Following his remarks, a city carrier and leading member of the USPS RFC spoke. She called the appointment of Steiner "sabotage from within" and said:

The only way we can survive this is through worker solidarity. With the total numbers we have in our workforce, we can succeed.

"Basically, we have two forces working against us—Steiner, and then ... our own union," she added. While imposing contracts with wage increases between 1.3 and 1.5 percent, "[President Brian] Renfroe from NALC received a 19 percent pay increase this year. [President Don] Maston from the Rural received a 14 percent pay increase this year."

"We must really fight, but no one is standing up to lead or organizing the masses." But "through these [meetings], I believe is our best way we can get the ideas of the workers." Workers could not "wait for a special [NALC] convention," as some have advocated, which she said would be bureaucratically controlled by Renfroe's "minions."

Instead, she said:

We need all new [organizations] from the top to the bottom that are going to be in line with the workers ... who are going to take what we're saying without the secrecy of what's going on in these contract negotiations.

The meeting also heard contributions from sister committees across the world.

Dave Edwards, a Royal Mail worker, brought greetings from the UK Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee. Royal Mail workers are fighting similar attacks, he explained:

The leaders of our union, the Communication Workers Union, have openly celebrated the £3.6 billion takeover of Royal Mail by billionaire Daniel Kretinsky.

The takeover, he warned, "is a green light to turbocharge the destruction of the mail services, eliminate jobs and slash conditions." But the CWU "helped Kretinsky draft a framework agreement, which is nothing more than a blueprint for automation, mass sell-offs and Amazon-style exploitation ... The union headquarters have waged a PR campaign to represent the billionaire asset strippers as saviors, to the disgust and anger of postal workers."

The bureaucrats even agreed "to actually attach heart monitors to delivery workers to measure fatigue, in other words, to see how far we can be pushed before we collapse. We [the committee] called it out."

"Our role as watchdogs of the rank and file is essential," he explained. "It informs, it organizes, and builds resistance." Connecting this to the broader fight against dictatorship he added: "You are at the sharp end, but Trump is setting a global trend." Labour Prime Minister Keir Starmer "apes Trump on every single issue," from privatization to the "outlawing ... of opposition to mass murder in Gaza." "The government has also conducted a scabbing operation against 350 garbage workers in Birmingham," he said.

He concluded:

We cannot stand by when our free speech and basic rights are shredded. We need a strategy to defend this, through mass collective action of the working class.

The International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) provides a way forward, a common strategy, not just words of solidarity. Through the IWA-RFC, American and British workers can deepen up our collaboration.

I welcome this meeting as a turning point in our fight. We will no longer be divided, silenced or sacrificed for a profit. We are part of the international working class.

Daniel, a member of the Canadian Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee, also spoke.

The Canada Post Corporation, backed by the Liberal government and the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW), are all adamant that [AI and automation] must be used to make the post office competitive.

Reviewing the experience of the national postal strike last year, he said

that

there was little to no communication throughout the strike [from CUPW]. This paved the way for the government's undemocratic strike ban in December.

Since then, a government inquiry

was assembled to justify all of the corporations' demands, including phasing out door-to-door delivery, reducing the frequency of mail delivery and increasing part-time and seasonal employment.

Their contract expires again this Thursday, he added, with either a strike, lockout or arbitration likely. He said:

The corporation has previously threatened that there would be major changes needed to return to financial self-sustainability.

Daniel rejected the nationalist divisions between US and Canada:

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 behind our own ruling classes on the basis of reactionary nationalism [supported] by the treacherous union bureaucracies.

Will Lehman, a Mack Trucks worker and socialist playing a leading role in rank-and-file committees in the auto industry, also spoke. He said:

The point was raised before about how these rank-and-file committees are used to spread information.

The IWA-RFC has launched an investigation into the death of Ronald Adams, a worker at Stellantis, who passed away [on the job]. Essentially, the UAW and Stellantis are both working hand in hand to cover up information about his death. It's been around six weeks now, where his widow has not heard any information from the UAW about what's going on and about what led to his death.

He urged postal workers:

Spread the word about what's going on and help build [these committees] against the attacks on workers ... both in the US and internationally. The attacks on us anywhere need to be fought by workers everywhere.



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