

“Amazon can coordinate attacks on our industry across national borders, but our unions would never organize us internationally”

Canadian postal worker calls for unified struggle with American colleagues at USPS Rank-and-File Committee meeting

Daniel Berkley

20 May 2025

The following remarks were delivered by Daniel Berkley, a Canada Post worker and leading member of the Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee (PWRFC) to a meeting organized by the United States Postal Service Rank-and-File Committee called to organize opposition to the Trump administration’s drive to privatize the postal service. The PWRFC was set up ahead of last year’s month-long strike by 55,000 postal workers to seize control of the contract struggle from the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) bureaucracy.

On Monday, CUPW filed a 72-hour strike notice, meaning that postal workers could be on picket lines as soon as Thursday. However, the union bureaucracy has done absolutely nothing to mobilize postal workers for the impending job action, never mind sought to expand it to other sections of workers who confront the same ruling-class onslaught on their wages, jobs and social programs they rely on.

CUPW is determined to demobilize workers, leaving them defenceless in the face of a combined onslaught by Canada Post management, Mark Carney’s Liberal government and the whole of corporate Canada. All workers at Canada Post and throughout the delivery and logistics sectors must respond by building rank-and-file committees in every workplace in affiliation with the PWRFC and International Workers Alliance of Rank and File Committees (IWA-RFC) to wage a working-class counteroffensive against the ruling class agenda of capitalist austerity and imperialist war. To join this fight, fill out the form at the end of the article or email canadapostworkersrfc@gmail.com.

Good afternoon and good evening. My name is Daniel Berkley and I am a rural postal worker from Ontario, Canada. I have been following the struggle of USPS workers, because what is happening down there is also happening up here. The

Canada Post Corporation Act has come under direct attack and even our union has admitted that privatization of the postal service is on the agenda. Our struggles are very similar to yours and I would like to take this moment to say that I agree with what’s been said so far.

I would like to briefly respond to the second speaker, R. She mentioned that USPS lost Amazon parcels 2 or 3 weeks ago. We noticed the same thing over here at Canada Post. We postal workers assumed we lost the Amazon volume, so they could get ahead of a potential labour disruption this coming Thursday. Quite the coincidence that USPS and Canada Post lost their Amazon contract at the same time. Amazon can coordinate attacks on our industry across national borders, but our unions would never organize us internationally.

The big-business interests who aim to cut our wages and cut our workforce use the same playbook as in the US. Automation and AI, for example, could be used to make our jobs much easier, but the Canada Post Corporation, backed by the Liberal government and the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW), are all adamant that these new technologies must be used to make the post office competitive with Amazon and other gig-economy employers by cutting labour costs, instead of improving working conditions. AI is being used here to threaten workers with dynamic routing, adjusting our routes day-to-day to make sure we don’t have any light days. The unions are working to isolate groups of workers from each other, even as many of us are in major contract battles and all of us face similar attacks on our jobs.

Even our union, which falsely claims to represent us, puts profit interests above all else. Delivery workers here have always had weekends and holidays off, but before our strike vote was even tallied in October, our union agreed to major concessions, including weekend work. Even with these sneaky concessions framing our strike vote, postal workers voted over 95 percent to go out on strike to protect our jobs and working

conditions.

Predictably, our strike mandate did not mean much to the Canadian Union of Postal Workers. There was little to no communication throughout the strike, which paved the way for the government's undemocratic strike ban in December. Our return to work, demanded by the government, was enforced by the union, thereby empowering the government to directly intervene a second time with a \$1.034 billion loan. While the ink on that loan was still drying, the government intervened for a third time! A sham government commission called the Industrial Inquiry Commission, or the IIC, was assembled to justify all of the corporation's demands, including phasing out door-to-door delivery, reducing the frequency of mail delivery, and increasing part-time and seasonal employment.

Every postal worker paying attention knew right away that this commission was rigged from the start, but that did not stop our union from fully participating in this anti-worker performance. This past Thursday, the commission's report was published and it confirmed the expectations that it would be a pro-corporate, anti-worker document. Given the opportunity to maintain their dues base, the CUPW will police the implementation of the commission's recommendations, just like they policed our return to work.

This coming Thursday our collective agreements expire and the commission has outlined three distinct possibilities: Either the corporation can make an offer and force a vote, or the government can impose binding arbitration, or a strike/lockout may start on Friday. The corporation has previously threatened that there would be "major changes needed to... return to financial self-sustainability," including addressing "high labour costs and legacy regulatory measures."

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 behind 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.

Canada's previous Liberal Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, unceremoniously announced that he would step down soon after he ended our strike and the former central banker Mark

Carney has since been elected Canada's Prime Minister. Upon taking power, the new Liberal leader, Carney, has shifted politics sharply to the right. Developing the fight against Canadian nationalism means breaking from the union/Liberal/NDP alliance and advancing the independent political mobilization of workers.

To wage a successful struggle against our exploiters, we must ground our analysis in objective truths and we must redouble our efforts in building RFCs independent of the union bureaucracies. AI has the potential to dramatically improve the productive forces, and thereby dramatically improve the lives of workers.

Workers all over the world are subject to the same pressures, but the progressive potential of these novel technologies are being held back by greedy capitalist interests. 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. The PWRFC is affiliated with the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC), a truly independent and international form of workers' organization that matches the objective international nature of production.

The PWRFC (Canada) published its founding document last June and we put forward several demands which are even more relevant today, including:

- Full pension, full pay rate and full benefits to all employees!
- No more contracting out of jobs!
- Workers must have control over the introduction and development of all new technologies, so they are used to improve working conditions and service, not increasing worker exploitation!
- The postal service should not be run as a profit-making concern!

In solidarity from Canada, my name is Daniel Berkley. Thank you for your time.



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