

“The union has dug our grave, and now they’re trying to throw us in the hole!”

Canada Post worker speaks out following government order imposing vote on rotten company offer

Daniel Berkley

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Canada’s Liberal government has ordered 55,000 postal workers to vote on Canada Post’s “best and final” contract offers, intervening yet again to bolster management in an 18-month-long contract dispute.

The votes on the separate offers to the Urban Postal Operations and Rural and Suburban Mail Carriers units will be administered by the Canada Industrial Relations Board (CIRB), an unelected body the government has repeatedly deployed over the past ten months to criminalize strikes using a patently illegal cooked-up reinterpretation of Section 107 of the Canada Labour Code.

It was the CIRB that last December legally enforced the Liberal government’s order to ban and break the postal workers’ militant month-long strike. Although there was mass rank-and-file sentiment for defiance, the bureaucrats who lead the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) summarily surrendered, without giving workers any say.

The Crown Corporation’s “final” offers represent a frontal attack on postal workers’ jobs and rights. They contain sweeping attacks on working conditions and wages with the aim of restructuring or “Amazonifying” Canada Post. Key rollbacks include the creation of new categories of part-time workers to enable seven-day-a-week delivery and the introduction of “dynamic routing” to impose far greater workloads on postal workers.

Daniel Berkley, a leading member of the Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee (PWRFC), wrote to the World Socialist Web Site to protest the government’s decision to impose a vote on management’s concession

filled “final” offers, as well as the union’s prior capitulatory proposal that postal workers’ contracts be determined through binding arbitration.

The PWRFC was established in June 2024 to wrest control of the contract fight out of the CUPW bureaucracy’s hands and put rank-and-file workers in charge. You can contact the PWRFC by filling out the form at the end of this article.

The Canadian Union of Postal Workers surrendered our right to strike last year, then proceeded to fully participate in the Liberal government’s rigged Industrial Inquiry Commission (IIC). Now, we’re on a totally useless “work to rule” strike, while other courier companies, including Canada Post-owned Purolator, soak up all our parcel volume.

The union has dug our grave, and now they’re trying to throw us in the hole!

Who gave CUPW the right to surrender our right to strike? Giving up our right to engage in job action—already extremely limited and under systematic attack, whether the Liberals or Conservatives hold office in Ottawa—is to surrender workers’ industrial power and condemn us to isolation.

It would ensure our defeat in the current struggle and weaken the working class across Canada, under conditions where the right-to-strike is under state assault. Following in the foot-steps of the Trudeau/Carney federal Liberal government’s “reinterpretation” of Section 107 to ban strikes at will, Quebec’s CAQ government has just passed a sweeping anti-strike law.

It is high-time for postal workers to draw a balance sheet.

Last October, we voted over 95% to strike. In December, there was broad support for defying the illegal strike-breaking order. We all knew the IIC was rigged from the first hearing in January, but the union promoted it as providing workers a “voice.”

In May, CUPW went crawling back to the government, begging them to end our contract struggle by imposing binding arbitration. This would mean a government mediator/arbitrator in the mould of William Kaplan, the one who headed the IIC, would dictate our contracts.

Ultimately, the government opted to force us to vote on Canada Post’s concessionary demands.

Clearly, we have to massively and emphatically vote “No”!

But that won’t be enough. If we reject the company’s terms of surrender, the government can always turn to binding arbitration, and use the pro-corporate terms developed by the IIC as the basis for the arbitrator’s ruling. Like the IIC, the arbitration process is totally rigged. A government-appointed official would determine our wages and working conditions and we would have no say in the matter, not even the right to vote “yes” or “no.”

The only way for us to prevent this outcome is by turning our fight into a broader counteroffensive by all workers against the bosses’ attacks.

The union is intent on giving up our right to strike, enabling Canada Post and the government to press forward with their plans to run the post office as a profit-making enterprise by slashing services to the public and using AI and other new technologies to squeeze more labour out of a dramatically reduced workforce.

CUPW President Jan Simpson, the National Executive Board and the rest of the CUPW apparatus are doing everything to take away our power and isolate us from other workers. We must resist this with a powerful appeal to all delivery workers and all workers throughout all sectors, public and private.

If our right to strike is surrendered and the attacks planned by Canada Post are imposed, it will set a benchmark for the ruling elite to implement similar attacks across the board. They want to do this to pay for war abroad and the enrichment of the oligarchy here at home.

Whether through acceptance of the corporation’s offer or through government arbitration, the imposition of powerful new AI technologies controlled by the bosses

will be used to “gigify” our jobs by going after so-called “trapped time” and using “dynamic routing” to adjust our routes daily. In Canada, this will set a dangerous precedent for other sections of workers who will also suffer under a regime of ever-increasing exploitation, enabled by AI technologies. In the United States Postal Service, PDTs make use of AI and surveillance technology to automatically write up disciplinary tickets. At Britain’s Royal Mail, workers are forced to wear heart rate monitors, ostensibly as a safety measure, but in reality to push workers to their physical limits. These attacks underscore why our struggle must be broadened to include all sections of the Canadian working class and beyond.

They also make clear why, despite everything the union has done to materially weaken us, we remain in a powerful position, if we widen the struggle and mobilize the social power of the working class.

Every worker has a stake in our struggle! The issues we are fighting over—defence of public services and the right to strike; against Amazon-style low-paid, precarious employment; and for workers’ control over the use of AI and other labour-saving technologies—are of vital importance to all workers.

The Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee (PWRFC), leading a network of rank-and-file committees based in every sorting centre and distribution hub, offers the only way for us to counter CUPW’s sabotage and mobilize workers’ power to defend our jobs and working conditions. We are linked up with the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWARFC), to enable us to broaden our struggle to include workers all over Canada and internationally.

I strongly urge all of my colleagues at Canada Post and throughout the delivery sector to contact the PWRFC and help strengthen our struggle. Above all, I appeal to all workers to join us in a fight in defence of public services and good-paying, secure jobs for all, rejecting the corporations’ and government’s insistence that our livelihoods be sacrificed to capitalist private profit.



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