

After one week on the picket line:

## Canada Post worker calls for broadening strike to other sections of the working class

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*We encourage all striking postal workers to contact the World Socialist Web Site with your comments and views on how to take forward your struggle by filling out the form at the end of this article.*

My name is Daniel Berkley, and I've been on strike with 55,000 colleagues at Canada Post for over a week. On Thursday, September 25, we began spontaneously walking off the job after Mark Carney's Liberal government announced a plan to scrap the postal service in its current form and destroy tens of thousands of jobs. We took a courageous stand, forcing the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) bureaucracy to call a national strike. But one week later, the urgent question we now face is, how can we win our struggle? What is the way forward?

We are faced first and foremost with a political struggle. It's not just Canada Post management that wants to slash jobs and undermine our rights, but also the government and all of corporate Canada. They all view the postal service as a test case for the shredding of all public services and imposition of penury on all workers to pay for the enrichment of the corporate oligarchy and military rearmament.

This is *not* a "normal" round of collective bargaining. The conditions exist for us to win powerful support from other sections of workers, because our fight is their fight. However, this support will not emerge automatically. We have to fight for it with an appeal that makes our strike the spearhead of a wider mass mobilization for the defence of all public services, jobs, and workers rights. The CUPW bureaucracy is bitterly hostile to this, so we must build our own organizations, rank-and-file committees controlled by the strikers ourselves, to take this message to autoworkers, other

delivery workers at Purolator and Amazon, public sector workers, and others.

The current course advocated by the CUPW leadership amounts to us waiting passively until the government orders us back to work. So long as the CUPW keeps us isolated from other workers, the government could drag out our strike, wearing us down over an extended period, before finally ordering us back to work. We'll be starved on strike pay, Canada Post will bleed money, and the government and big business will have a free hand to continue their attacks against us unabated.

The future of all Canadian public services is at risk, and the issues we are fighting for affect all workers! The right to strike, workers control over new technologies, and the gigification of jobs affects everyone. We must become the spearhead of a broader movement of the working class in defense of the right to strike, high quality public services, and good jobs. A week into our strike, we must urgently appeal to other sections of workers to broaden our movement against a government of capitalist austerity and imperialist war.

In the announcement that provoked our walkout, government minister Joël Lightbound announced that the government of Canada would accept all of the recommendations put forward by the Industrial Inquiry Commission (IIC). This commission, headed by William Kaplan, the same man who played a key role in shutting down the Air Canada strike, was rigged from the very start. The CUPW, eager to help enforce the government-dictated strike ban on us in December, fully participated in the IIC, and thereby helped justify the government's punishing use of Sections 107 and 108 of the Canada Labour Code. Their silence

throughout the flight attendants' struggle served to avoid key questions such as, "Why did the flight attendants defy, but not us?"

While the union conspired with the IIC in Ottawa throughout January and February, rank-and-file postal workers across Canada were muzzled and encouraged by the union to sit passively by. The bureaucrats told us to send useless letters and emails to MP offices to exert "pressure" on a government and political establishment hell-bent on savaging our livelihoods and decimating public services. An existential crisis was developing in the post office.

Now, that crisis has a definite form. The key recommendations the government, the employer, and the union discussed in the IIC meetings have a new name: "Phase 1" of a sweeping restructuring. The proposed attacks against the public and us, the rank-and-file workers, include the ending of home delivery, the end of 5-day per week mail delivery, the franchising of all Retail Postal Outlets (RPOs), and no more weekends and holidays off for new classifications of workers. New automation and AI technologies, with unprecedented progressive potential, will not be used to make our jobs easier without a loss in pay, and improve services. No, automation will instead be used to cut jobs, degrade working conditions, and overwork those who remain. Mass layoffs, up to 30,000 postal workers and more, have been discussed in the Canadian corporate press.

The ruling class has worked out its ruthless class war agenda, and we must advance our strategy for the working class. The current picket lines started from below, but more is required than spontaneous militancy. We pushed the CUPW leadership on the back-foot to force a strike, but they along with the allies atop the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) have now regrouped and pursue the same bankrupt policy of keeping us isolated from all other workers on the picket lines, while begging for talks with the pro-corporate government.

Workers should fight to give their militant hostility to the attacks on us organized expression through the building of rank-and-file strike committees at every depot, sorting facility, and other workplace. The rank and file can in this way unify our struggle with other sections of workers, mobilizing Purolator, Amazon, UPS and even United States Postal Service workers and

others on our side. They all face similar attacks on their working and living conditions. We can and must deepen our struggle, positioning ourselves as the lightning rod for a mass political and industrial mobilization of the working class in defense of all public services, the right to strike, and safe, well-paying jobs.

Postal workers who agree that a successful struggle can only be accomplished through the independent intervention of rank-and-file workers into this political fight should join and help build the Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee (PWRFC). Linking up with other workers throughout Canada and internationally is of decisive importance in the struggle to improve working conditions, which necessarily entails a fight against capitalist austerity, dictatorship and war.

This struggle must develop on the international arena, which is why the PWRFC is part of the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees. Only an international organization, basing itself on the objective conditions of a globalized economy, and rejecting the subordination of workers' lives and livelihoods to capitalist profit, will be able to defend working conditions and implement improvements in line with what new technologies make possible. The IWA-RFC provides the organizing framework and leadership needed to coordinate workers' struggles across national borders in a worker-led counteroffensive to put the social needs of the vast majority, including the right to a job, secure public services, and affordable housing and healthcare, before corporate profits. Fill out the form below to join us.



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