Canada Post's latest "offer" marks a further escalation in the Liberal government-led war on striking postal workers

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The battle lines in the now nearly two-week-old national strike by 55,000 Canada Post workers continue to harden.

The Crown corporation presented provocative new offers last Friday, after weeks of delays, that translate the Liberal government's plans to restructure the post office at the expense of postal workers and the public into contract language.

The offers mark a dramatic escalation in the war that the Liberal government and Canada Post, with the full-throated support of corporate Canada, are waging on postal workers. They go far beyond the concessions-filled offers that urban and rural postal workers have decisively rejected over the past year, establishing the contractual framework to eliminate tens of thousands of full-time jobs.

Canada Post's proposals include a voluntary severance or early-departure buyout scheme aimed at those nearing retirement or eligible for pension—a mechanism to cull higher-paying full-time positions. They would give management the right to close as many as 493 rural and suburban postal stations and retail counters currently staffed by Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) members.

Most dangerously, the offer calls for the suspension, for the contract's duration, of Article 53 of the urban postal workers' contract, which provides "lifetime" job security for permanent workers.

Canada Post would be free to unilaterally reorganize positions, convert full-time jobs to part-time or casual status, and eliminate roles altogether. This effectively amounts to an end to permanent jobs, since management will insist any "reintroduction" of job guarantees be at its discretion and in conformity with its ongoing drive to make the post office a profitable rival of cheap-labour private couriers and package delivery companies.

Canada Post is also seeking sweeping changes to delivery operations, in line with the government's demand that it slash mail delivery from 5 to 3 days per week and replace all home letter delivery with "community" mail boxes.

Under its offers, management would have a free hand to consolidate routes, reduce mail frequency and increase tasks, through the imposition of "dynamic routing." Retail counter closures, consolidations and rollbacks of service are also all baked into the restructuring plan. In effect, the contract would enshrine a phased assault over several years, in a gutting operation aimed at transforming Canada Post into a bare-bones, highly exploitative "Amazonified" profit-driven logistics network. One focused on providing service to remote areas where the private companies refuse to deliver, because it would eat into their profit margins.

Adding insult to injury, Canada Post has withdrawn the small cash signing bonus it offered as a "sweetener" in the "final and best" offers that were put to postal workers in a government-forced vote last summer.

A baseline wage increase of 13.59 percent over 4 years is effectively mooted by the removal of job protections and the weakening of full-time status. The corporation asserts that its financial "realities" demand tougher concessions, claiming workers' demands would add "significant new costs" at a moment of crisis. Yet this crisis has been manufactured under a government policy that rejects operating the government-owned Crown corporation as a public service and insists Canada Post must live or die on its own revenue.

The sabotage of the CUPW bureaucrats

As the Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee explained in its founding statement issued in June 2024, it is evident that postal workers face a political struggle that requires mobilizing the full power of the working class in defence of public services and the right to strike and against the ruling class' agenda of austerity, rearmament and war.

But the CUPW apparatus has worked tirelessly to keep workers confined within the straitjacket of the pro-employer, state-regulated collective bargaining system, even as the Liberal government has repeatedly intervened on the side of management.

A month-long walkout which began in November 2024 was "paused" by the Liberal government under Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, which ordered workers back on the job with the connivance of CUPW under the draconian provisions of Section 107 of the Canada Labour Code. This was tied to the establishment of a rigged Industrial Inquiry Commission, headed by seasoned government mediator/arbitrator William Kaplan, which created the blueprint for the current government-management restructuring plan. CUPW falsely claimed the IIC would give workers a "voice," but the rank and file was all but shut out of the process.

Once workers regained the right to strike in May, CUPW limited postal workers to an ineffective overtime ban which was then replaced by a ban on the delivery of advertisement flyers. It was finally the action of rank-and-file workers that compelled the CUPW bureaucracy to sanction a nationwide strike.

With workers in Atlantic Canada and Manitoba spontaneously walking off the job in response to the September 25 announcement from Minister of Government Transformation Joël Lightbound that the Liberal government was directing Canada Post to implement the sweeping changes contained in the IIC's report, the CUPW leadership called the strike to retain control over the workers.

Prime Minister Mark Carney, the millionaire former governor of the Banks of Canada and England, has insisted on "significant changes" and declared the reported loss of $10 million a day at Canada Post as "intolerable." Behind such statements lies the government's goal of using

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the sweeping attacks on postal workers as a benchmark for a wider class war. The ruling class plans to direct tens of billions to the military, hand massive subsidies to corporations, and slash services—all in the name of 'austerity and investment."

CUPW's response to management's latest proposal has been entirely perfunctory and capitulatory. "We waited 45 days for offers that are worse than what we rejected in August," CUPW officials declared. "Canada Post must have known that there is no way we can accept these and is clearly wasting even more time."

Such remarks state the obvious but offer no way forward. The union seeks to draw a distinction between management and the government, as if the two were not operating in lockstep. Its refusal to acknowledge that the latest offer is a deliberate provocation, intended to escalate the war on postal workers, is yet another capitulation by the union apparatus.

After the forced vote earlier this year, Jobs and Families Minister Patty Hajdu declared that future proposals should be "ratifiable." That management has tabled something even worse underscores that Canada Post and the Liberals are moving together to break the strike. CUPW's appeals for "serious negotiations" amount to groveling before the government and big business.

The Liberals now hold two swords over the heads of postal workers. One is to illegalize the strike, either under Section 107 of the Canada Labour Code or through a parliamentary back-to-work law, running roughshod over the democratic right to strike and imposing a management-dictated contract. The second is to let the strike drag on, deliberately increasing pressure on workers, small businesses, and communities that rely on postal services in the weeks leading up to the fast approaching Christmas season.

Either approach depends on the isolation of postal workers by the CUPW bureaucracy, the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) and other corporatist labour organizations. Already, Unifor and the Teamsters are enabling strikebreaking by ensuring that Canada Post's subsidiary operations, such as parcel delivery service Purolator, continue running.

There is a consensus within the corporate elite: the postal system is to be stripped down, totally privatized and transformed into a leaner operation subordinated to corporate logistics and e-commerce giants. The *Globe and Mail* editorial board, the traditional voice of the capitalist ruling elite, has endorsed the government's assault, praising Carney for making "hard choices" to eliminate purported "inefficiencies" at Canada Post—that is, pushing to destroy thousands of jobs and dramatically curtail postal service.

Rank-and-file postal workers have made clear in comments to the *World Socialist Web Site* that they see through the maneuvers of management and the union. One worker in Ontario explained, "They don't want decent jobs and decent hours. They want us all to be gig workers. Carney just wants to eliminate all good jobs for everybody. … I was telling my co-worker recently, we need a revolution against this government. Enough is enough! They're taking our god damn jobs away." Another emphasized, "They say Canada Post should make money and that it should be a profitable business. But it's a public service!"

Such sentiments reveal the depth of anger developing among postal workers and the working class more broadly. In Alberta, 50,000 teachers began the largest education workers strike in the province's history Monday; in Ontario, 10,000 college support workers have been on strike for three weeks; and in British Columbia, over 17,000 of 34,000 BCGEU members are now walking picket lines in rotating strikes. The Canada Post walkout follows shortly on the heels of the defiance of a government back-to-work order by Air Canada flight attendants, which was ultimately sold out by the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE).

Workers must take the struggle into their own hands

The decisive question now confronting postal workers and the working class as a whole is how can they organize a counter-offensive to beat back the corporate/government onslaught on their jobs and living conditions—an onslaught that is being imposed with the connivance of the union bureaucracies?

The spontaneous walkouts that launched the Canada Post strike show that workers are prepared to take action independently of the union bureaucracy. The Liberals, management and the corporate elite are determined to impose their restructuring plan. CUPW, tied hand and foot to the government, offers only empty words and further isolation.

On Monday, it admitted in a statement for the first time that postal workers face a "political struggle." However, what the bureaucracy means by a "political struggle" has nothing to do with mobilizing workers against the class-war spearheaded by the Carney government on behalf of corporate Canada. Rather, their "political struggle" aims to salvage their corporatist partnership with the Liberals and big business at the expense of the postal workers.

To stop this outcome, workers must turn their determination to fight into an organized political mass mobilization. What is needed is a conscious political and organizational break with the union bureaucracy and the building of new organizations, democratically controlled rank-and-file committees in every workplace and neighborhood to connect workers' struggles across Canada and internationally.

Postal workers should join and build the Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee (PWRFC) to link up nationally, and coordinate solidarity with teachers, college staff, public sector workers and beyond.

Above all, postal workers, like all workers entering struggle, need a socialist program that rejects the prioritization of private profit over everything else. Only by fighting to end capitalism, the root cause of precarious employment, poverty wages, bumper profits for management and the drive to privatize public services, can postal workers defend their social rights. The rights to strike, to decent-paying, secure jobs and well-funded public services are of vital concern to all workers. So is establishing workers' control over AI (artificial intelligence) and other new technologies, so as to ensure they are used to better the lives of working people, not slash jobs, increase capitalist exploitation and build more lethal weapons of war.

To fight for the mobilization of all workers, postal workers should broaden their strike into an industrial and political movement for workers' power. This requires taking up the fight to build the Socialist Equality Party as the leadership workers need in the class battles ahead.

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