

# As reports point to looming sellout agreement between Canada Post and CUPW, what way forward for postal workers?

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Several media reports indicate that the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) is close to reaching a sell-out agreement with Canada Post that would enforce sweeping attacks on our jobs and working conditions.

A new round of bargaining commenced on Monday, November 3, with CUPW releasing a statement that praised the assistance offered by a government-appointed mediator and proclaimed the union bureaucracy's readiness to "overcome the disagreements between the parties" and "secure ratifiable collective agreements at the bargaining table."

In a separate release, the union politely asked the pro-big business Liberal government, which has given its full backing to plans to eliminate two-thirds of the 55,000-strong workforce at Canada Post, "to ensure that any decisions... are made... with Union input." To secure its place at the table and protect its anti-worker corporatist ties with management and the government, CUPW is prepared to assist in the dismantling of the post office as a public service and the transformation of the fraction of the membership that remains into Amazon-style gig workers.

The latest developments pose urgent tasks for postal workers, and in fact all workers throughout the public sector across Canada. Former central banker and current Prime Minister Mark Carney has made it clear that his Liberal government views the destruction of Canada Post in its current form as a testing ground for the types of attacks the ruling class plans to mount against all workers to intensify worker-exploitation, further swell the fortunes of the financial oligarchy and make Canadian imperialism war-ready.

Postal workers must therefore immediately assert their independent class interests in opposition to the union bureaucracy as it seeks to serve as co-managers in the imposition of job cuts and the gutting of worker rights. To do this, we need our own organizations, rank-and-file committees—controlled by us and at every postal sorting-plant, depot and station—to broaden our struggle to other sections of workers and turn it into a political mass movement against capitalist austerity.

At every turn, the CUPW leadership has intervened to confine us to the state-rigged, pro-employer collective bargaining system. This is a key component of the union bureaucracy's strategy to systematically block all efforts to mobilize the Canadian and international working class in support of us. This policy of isolating our strike has been backed up by the entire trade union bureaucracy, led by the Canadian Labour Congress and Unifor, which are key partners of the very Liberal government that is spearheading the onslaught on us.

This fact was summed up by CUPW's response to Tuesday's federal

budget, which increases military spending by over \$80 billion over the next five years and contains plans to eliminate at least 40,000 public sector jobs. The CUPW leadership hailed Carney for pledging to "protect cherished public services like universal health care" and blandly offered, without proposing a single concrete action, "our support and solidarity to fellow workers impacted" by the government's plans to slash public sector jobs, services and social supports.

When the Liberal government unilaterally banned our strike last December, CUPW President Jan Simpson and the National Executive Board helped enforce the back-to-work order; and claimed the government's Industrial Inquiry Commission (IIC) presented an opportunity to have "our voices heard." Every postal worker could immediately see that the IIC was rigged in favour of management, and it predictably produced a blueprint for the destruction of tens of thousands of full-time jobs and an expansion of the use of AI technology to boost workers' already punishing workloads and corporate profits, instead of exploiting new technological capabilities to make our jobs easier with no loss of pay.

The union is hoping our memories are short, because the government and the corporation are drawing directly on the IIC's findings to attack us!

## A record of sabotage

CUPW has already shutdown our second national strike in less than a year and this time without the government even needing to issue a back-to-work order. The only reason Canada Post's operations were again shut down through strike action was because rank-and-file postal workers walked off the job spontaneously in response to Transformation Minister Joel Lightbound's September 25 announcement that the government was ordering management to immediately implement all of the IIC's proposals to radically restructure Canada Post at workers' expense.

Two weeks later—and once again without giving the rank and file any say—CUPW arbitrarily deescalated the strike to feckless rotating walkouts, which generally take place in tiny rural locations or impact only a fraction of mail deliveries, such as "unaddressed admail."

Many postal workers, having experienced the repeated betrayals of the CUPW leadership, don't see a protracted strike, waged in isolation and as a traditional collective bargaining struggle, as a solution.

The reality is, were rank-and-file postal workers to take the leadership of the struggle into our own hands and make a national strike the spearhead of an industrial and political counter-offensive of the working class, we

would rally mass support in Canada and internationally. This is because we are fighting over issues of vital importance to all workers:

- \*the defence of public services and the jobs and rights of the workers who administer them;

- \*the defence of the right to strike

- \*workers' control over AI and other new technologies to ensure they are used to improve public services and workers' lives, not maximize profits, increase surveillance of the workplace, and build more lethal weapons of war.

But at every point CUPW, the CLC and their NDP allies do everything to ensure our strike is isolated, and work to corral workers into making futile appeals to the government to change course, thus ensuring our sacrifice on the picketlines accomplishes nothing.

During the 2-week national strike in late September-early October, Canada Post workers set up pickets at Purolator, a 91 percent-owned subsidiary of the Crown corporation. But the CUPW did nothing to encourage workers at Purolator, who work on worse terms than we do, to join our national strike. It was just another way for CUPW to have us let off steam and express our anger over a clear conflict of interest. Canada Post CEO Doug Ettinger is on the board of directors of both corporations.

Purolator continues to soak up extra work made available by our strike, and the same is true of other logistics companies operating in Canada. These are the workers who most directly share a stake in our struggle, and these are the workers who should be first in line when we make appeals to join us in a broad working class counter-offensive.

When it comes to protecting and augmenting big business profits at the expense of workers, the interests of Canada Post and the Liberal government are one and the same.

Yet CUPW continues to try to claim the government has been duped by management into attacking us; just as they have claimed for years that workers could defend their interests by supporting the big business Liberals over the Conservatives. To this day—even as the Liberals impose the agenda of Pierre Poilievre and his far-right Conservatives—CUPW and the CLC promote the lie that the big business Liberals are the “lesser-evil,” if not a “progressive ally.”

The Carney government is demanding our employer quickly implement technologies and policies to cut tens of thousands of jobs, leaving whoever is left to pick up the slack. And what is CUPW's response? That we should send strongly-worded letters of protest or call our MP. These proposed actions are designed to divert the energy of postal workers into harmless channels, while at the same time propping up a widely unpopular Liberal government as it attacks all workers to pay for war and enriching Canada's oligarchs.

### **For a mass movement of workers against capitalist austerity and war**

A real counteroffensive would make our strike the catalyst of a broader mobilization of all workers, public and private sector alike, against social inequality, and in defense of all public services, the right to strike, and workers control over the use of new technologies.

Postal workers, and Canadian workers in general, have waited in vain for the union bureaucracies, led by the CLC, to come to our defence. Over the past four decades, the union bureaucracy has emerged as an arm of management and the state with a central role in ramming through one round of concessions after another on workers. In lockstep with the CLC, the CUPW leadership acts to subordinate the interests of postal workers to the interests of the Canadian ruling class.

The interests of these multi-millionaires and billionaires are hostile to our interests. Prime Minister Carney has made clear his intentions—cut

public services to fund the obscene profits and war appetite of the ruling elite.

Yet the CUPW officialdom is trying to gaslight us into believing that the interests of the big-business Liberal government align with our own. All we need to do is send more emails.

There is enormous opposition to the current state of affairs, but this opposition must be organized and infused with a socialist perspective! Without workers, nothing gets done. What is required is for us to transform our strike into a broader movement mobilizing the social power of the working class as a whole.

Our current struggle is part of intensifying working class opposition across Canada and internationally to the present social and political setup, characterized as it is by glaring social inequality, the destruction of public services and worker rights, an explosion of militarism and war, and a turn by the ruling class to dictatorial forms of rule. This opposition is expressed by the continued expansion of strike activity this year in Canada and the mass “No Kings” protests against Trump's drive to establish a fascist dictatorship in the United States. This political reality cuts through the CUPW's attempt to persuade postal workers that we're fighting an isolated struggle on our own.

The key is understanding that for workers to assert their class interests, we must break free of the corporatist trade union apparatuses, build new rank-and-file organizations under our control, and wage a political class struggle. The Liberal government has declared war on postal workers, and we must in turn wage a class war on them, by developing mass working class resistance against Carney's program of “austerity and investment” and developing a mass movement for workers' power.

The Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee (PWRFC), aligned with the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC), will not direct workers' justified anger towards hopeless appeals to a government on the offensive against us. In its August statement, the PWRFC argued that our strike “must become the launching pad for a renewed fight based on an entirely new strategy... against capitalist austerity and war... This requires the organization of a nation-wide fight against the Carney government's austerity program and the corporate restructuring of Canada Post.”

Fill out the form below to receive the PWRFC newsletter and join the fight to take the struggle against Canada Post, the Liberal government and corporate Canada into our own hands, and develop a movement for workers' power.



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Socialist Equality Party visit:

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