

CUPW capitulates to government-management jobs massacre at Canada Post with ‘agreement in principle’

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We encourage all postal workers to contact the Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee at canadapostworkersrfc@gmail.com or by filling out the form at the end of this article.

Friday evening’s announcement by the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) that it has reached an “agreement in principle” with Canada Post management and terminated all remaining labour action is a groveling capitulation and colossal betrayal. Working hand-in-hand with the Liberal government and Canada Post management, the union bureaucracy is consciously facilitating the dismantling of Canada Post and destruction of tens of thousands of jobs.

Postal workers must immediately move to countermand this sellout through the formation of independent rank-and-file committees at every postal sorting plant and depot across Canada, under the leadership of the Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee (PWRFC). As PWRFC member Daniel Berkley put it in comments to the *World Socialist Web Site*: “The employer and the government have been very clear what their ‘principles’ for a ‘profitable,’ ‘sustainable’ Canada Post are, and they are in irreconcilable conflict with the needs of the public and postal workers for good jobs and the utilization of new technologies to improve services and workers’ lives. The union would rather keep the government and the corporation satisfied than defend the basic needs of its own membership. We’re undercut and done dirty at every turn. That is why we must build the PWRFC in every workplace and reach out to all logistics workers.”

The deal—which involves both the Urban and RSMC bargaining units—was struck in total secrecy. The union, moreover, is refusing to provide the membership with a single concrete detail of its contents. Nonetheless, CUPW has halted all remaining job action during Canada Post’s most profitable period of the year as the winter holiday shopping season kicks into high-gear.

The union has conceded that the actual language of the tentative agreements for the two bargaining units may require weeks, even months, to finalize; yet insists workers should trust that these still to be written contracts will somehow protect their interests while management proceeds with layoffs, closures and the use of AI to increase workloads. Canada Post, meanwhile, continues to expand the operations of its parcel-handling Purolator subsidiary and to push forward with the “Amazonification” of postal operations—developments that will accelerate job cuts and speedup.

Canada Post and CUPW confirmed Friday that “all strike or lockout activities are suspended” while lawyers formalize the “agreement in principle,” and that no details will be released until tentative contracts are concluded.

Management and the Carney Liberal government know exactly what the “agreement” contains; postal workers, whose livelihoods are being bartered away, are on the other hand being deliberately kept in the dark by CUPW.

Toronto CUPW Local 626 president Mark Lubinski made clear the bureaucracy’s enthusiasm for this rotten arrangement, telling CBC News the end of rotating strikes was “great news for Canadians.” He admitted he has not seen any details and expects several months of secret drafting before workers are allowed to vote on a tentative agreement.

Employment lawyer Sundeep Gokhale put the matter more bluntly, telling CTV that no agreement in fact exists. The announced deal is “unusual” precisely because there is no concrete contract: “They’ve said, ‘conceptually, we’ve agreed on the big picture issues. But now we’re going to put pen to paper,’” calling it “an agreement to ultimately get to a tentative agreement.” Gokhale added that Canada Post “didn’t move off” its fundamental demands, including the elimination of rural and suburban outlets and the expansion of community mailboxes, and is positioned to embed these measures in the still to be hammered-out “collective agreements.”

The onslaught on postal workers is being orchestrated by the Liberal government. In September, Government Transformation Minister Joel Lightbound ordered Canada Post to present a “transformational plan” to the government within 45 days. The Crown corporation did so on November 10, saying it was now waiting for the government’s approval.

The public, postal workers and even the union are barred from knowing the plan’s contents until Ottawa approves it. The essentials, however, are already known: ending daily door-to-door delivery for four million addresses, converting neighbourhoods to community mailboxes, closing hundreds of rural and suburban post offices, cutting letter-delivery days, eliminating job security for permanent employees, and—as Canada Post CEO Doug Ettinger confirmed last week—engineering the loss of 30,000 positions through attrition by 2035.

The assault on Canada Post workers forms a key component of the Carney government’s wider “Canada Strong” agenda to impose the full burden of military rearmament for world war and the enrichment of the financial oligarchy on the backs of the working class. The Carney government’s first budget—pushed through parliament last week with the assistance of the New Democrats, Greens and the trade union bureaucracy—marked a massive turn toward austerity and military rearmament. Tens of billions are being redirected to corporate

tax incentives, big-business subsidies, rearmament and the rapid expansion of Canada's military-industrial base through deep cuts to public services and tens of thousands of public-sector job cuts.

Carney and the financial elite view the dismantling of the public postal service as the testing ground for this program. By targeting one of the most visible public utilities and one of the most militant sections of the working class, the Liberals aim to demonstrate that no public service, no job and no collective agreement will stand in the way of their drive to impose "fiscal sustainability," enhance "competitiveness" and prepare Canadian imperialism for confrontation in a world hurtling toward wider war.

Postal workers have repeatedly demonstrated their readiness to fight back. Lightbound's September 25 restructuring announcement sparked spontaneous walkouts in Atlantic Canada and other regions, forcing the CUPW leadership—under enormous pressure from below—to reluctantly sanction a national strike.

As soon as it felt able to scuttle the strike, CUPW unilaterally brought a halt to the national walkout and instituted toothless "rotating walkouts," which invariably avoided large urban areas and only affected a tiny fraction of mail delivery. It continued closed-door bargaining with management even as the government insisted the restructuring of Canada Post—from the lifting of the moratorium on rural post office closures and the ending of all home-letter delivery to the elimination of tens of thousands of jobs—was non-negotiable.

CUPW was able to carry through its sellout of the postal workers Friday because, notwithstanding workers' courage and militancy, they have yet to take the struggle into their own hands and lack an understanding of the necessary strategy to fight what is at bottom a political struggle.

The corporate and political establishment have made clear that postal workers are expected to absorb the costs of decades of intentional underfunding, competition from courier giants and the state's rearmament binge.

The *Globe and Mail*, speaking for Bay Street, celebrated CUPW's capitulation in a recent editorial, declaring the union appears to have "acceded to reality" and insisted that if workers resist, Ottawa "will need to take further action." This is a straightforward warning that the government must stand ready to impose its restructuring by force if it feels the union bureaucracy cannot keep the rank and file in line.

Postal workers are in a powerful position to respond to this class war, but to do so they must break the stranglehold imposed on them by the union bureaucracy. They must appeal for support from broader sections of the working class, all of whom confront similar attacks on their jobs, living conditions, public services, and right to strike. The basis for such a common fight is the rejection of capitalism's prioritization of corporate profitability over everything else, and the insistence that the social needs of the vast majority, working people, must take precedence. This means fighting for a mass industrial and political mobilization of the working class for workers' political power.

The recent Air Canada flight attendants' struggle underscores that postal workers would win enthusiastic support if they oriented to the working class. Some 10,500 flight attendants courageously defied a government strikebreaking order in August in a fight over unpaid labour and unbearable workloads. But the lack of rank-and-file organization independent of the union bureaucracy and the absence of a clear political perspective to guide the strike in the direction of a mass worker-led counteroffensive against capitalist austerity and war gave the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) enough

breathing space to sabotage the strike in the dead of night. The flight attendants were arbitrarily denied the right to vote on large parts of the "agreement" cooked up by CUPE and Air Canada, and even those elements that were put to a vote were immediately turned over to binding arbitration by the union bureaucracy after a 99 percent "No" vote by the rank and file.

The PWRFC insists that postal workers confront not only Canada Post but the big business Carney government, and the entire political establishment, including the NDP and the corporatist union leaderships. CUPW's strategy confines workers to a dead end. The fight must be taken out of the hands of the union bureaucracy and entrusted to democratic rank-and-file committees.

These committees must:

- Demand the immediate publication of the full transformation plan, all annexes, the CUPW-Canada Post "agreement in principle" and all draft contract language;

- Oppose any agreement that destroys jobs, undermines public service or intensifies exploitation;

- Organize mass meetings to overturn CUPW's shutdown of strike action;

- Coordinate nationally through the Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee;

- Reach out to workers at Purolator, Amazon and others across the broader logistics, transportation and public-sector network across North America;

- Link the struggle to the growing international movement against austerity and war through the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees.

The struggle at Canada Post raises fundamental political questions about the defence of public services, the right to strike and the use of new technologies like AI in the interests of the working class. Meeting these challenges requires a socialist perspective and the unified mobilization of the international working class.

Postal workers who agree with this perspective should contact the Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee at canadapostworkersrfc@gmail.com or through the form below.



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