A political balance sheet of the Canada Post struggle—A corporate and state-led restructuring enforced by CUPW

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Daniel Berkley is a leading member of the Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee. We urge all postal workers to contact and help build the PWRFC by filling out the form at the end of this article.

Overcoming a militant rank and file, the federal Liberal government of Mark Carney and Canada Post Corporation (CPC) managed to impose sellout contracts on 55,000 postal workers earlier this year with the indispensable assistance of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) bureaucracy. These partners are now collaborating in the systematic dismantling of the Crown Corporation and its transformation into an Amazon-style exploiter of gig workers. Last week, the *Toronto Star* revealed how the corporation plans to eliminate home delivery neighbourhood by neighbourhood in Toronto as part of a nationwide drive to abolish it entirely by 2031.

Workers must draw the political lessons from the defeat of their nearly three-year-long struggle. To oppose the escalating government-management assault on their jobs and working conditions, they must fight to develop a general working-class industrial and political counter-offensive against the capitalists' class-war agenda.

Successive federal Liberal governments, first under Justin Trudeau and then the former central banker Mark Carney, were determined to deliver a body blow to postal workers to send a message to the entire working class. With corporate Canada fully committed to a massive rearmament program so Ottawa can pursue its imperialist interests in the rapidly intensifying violent redivision of the world, corporate Canada has tasked the federal government with the implementation of an across-the-board restructuring of public services—at the expense of the services they provide to working people and the workers who administer them. By imposing a defeat on postal workers, long one of the most militant sections of the working class, the financial oligarchy has set a benchmark for an escalation of the onslaught on jobs, wages, working conditions and benefits that is seen as essential to ensure Canadian capitalism's "competitiveness" and attract global investment.

The fact that the struggle at Canada Post was never merely a contract fight has been underlined again and again since 2023. In late 2024, Labour Minister Steven MacKinnon used his arbitrary powers drawn from a cooked-up "reinterpretation" of Section 107 of the Canada Labour Code to illegalize our strike. Fearing the widespread readiness among postal workers to defy the government's draconian strike ban, CUPW acted as chief enforcer of MacKinnon's back-to-work order. It sent us back to work, denying workers any opportunity whatsoever to democratically express their views on the way forward.

Then in September 2025, after postal workers decisively voted down the employers' "best and final" offers to the urban postal operations and rural and suburban mail carrier units, Minister of Government Transformation Joel Lightbound announced the ruling class's plan of attack with the "national transformation" plan that Canada Post is now working to enforce. In addition to ending home delivery, management is intent on eliminating two-thirds of the Crown Corporation's 55,000 jobs by 2035.

The government and Canada Post were subsequently able to kick-start the implementation of their restructuring plans through the imposition of concessions-filled contracts due to the assistance provided by their accomplices in the CUPW and Canadian Labour Congress bureaucracies.

The CUPW apparatus worked throughout to demobilize the rank and file. Workers were kept on a leash and straitjacketed in a pro-employer "collective bargaining" framework. This included sabotaging the second national strike in September-October 2025, which was launched the same day as Lightbound's provocative restructuring announcement largely outside of CUPW's control. The union bureaucrats' focus throughout was to preserve their corporatist ties with the Liberal government and Canada Post management at all costs, even the Amazonification of the postal service. The Canadian Labour Congress ensured that no other section of workers came to postal workers' defence, knowing full well that an appeal to defend public services and the right to strike would have met with a powerful response that the bureaucratic apparatuses would have struggled to control.

Postal workers established the Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee (PWRFC) to seize the contract fight from the hands of the CUPW bureaucrats and place power back on the shop floor. The PWRFC's 2024 founding statement bears quoting, because it spelled out from the outset that workers faced a political fight. It declared,

> CUPW and its partners in Canada Post management and the Liberal government want to keep our struggle confined to the pro-employer "collective bargaining" framework. But this will inevitably produce our defeat. The fight we face is first and foremost political, and not just because we work for a government-owned corporation and face the threat of an anti-democratic anti-strike law. All of big business and its media mouthpieces support the restructuring of Canada Post at our expense. Corporate executives and Trudeau government ministers view the "successful" restructuring of the postal service as setting a major precedent for an assault on all public services and the rights of all workers, public and private sector alike.

The government-spearheaded, CUPW-backed "Amazonification" of Canada Post is well underway

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Phase 1 of the national restructuring plan includes reducing service to approximately 136,000 homes in the coming months by forcing Community Mail Box (CMB) conversions: in Moncton and Riverview (New Brunswick); Sept-Îles, La Prairie and Candiac (Quebec); Ottawa and Etobicoke (Ontario); Winnipeg (Manitoba); and Abbotsford, Mission, and Vancouver (British Columbia). The conversions will cost the corporation approximately $1.4 billion, and that is just a down payment for the dismantling of Canada Post as a public service and the shredding of the rights of the workers who make it happen.

Corporate management and the government are exploiting new technologies to bolster their onslaught. Dynamic routing, an automated process whereby routes constantly change depending on demand, is being used to massively ratchet up workloads for each worker. The same is true of the deployment of new technologies in the sorting process and other areas of work. The fact that the bosses use these methods to boost profitability at our expense is not an argument against technological modernization, which could lighten our workloads and shorten the working day with no loss of pay if it was carried out under workers' control. Rather, it exposes the bankruptcy of corporate management and its insistence, shared by the CUPW bureaucrats, that Canada Post must be run as a profit-making concern.

This is the predictable outcome of CUPW's national-corporatism, which it defended throughout against all efforts by rank-and-file postal workers to respond to the class-war assault we face with militancy and a political struggle that broadened the fight to other sections of workers. When the majority of the CUPW national executive recommended the final sellout contracts earlier this year to the membership, one of their statements was headlined, "These agreements are the best we can get." National president Jan Simpson, who postured with four other executive members as opponents of the contracts that they had helped negotiate, summed up CUPW's perspective when she said, "We recognize the challenges our employer is facing, and our goal is not to simply make demands, but to work together toward solutions."

The contrast between the bureaucracy's collaboration with the restructuring of Canada Post by the ruling class and the striving of the rank and file toward a political struggle in opposition to this onslaught emerged again and again over the past three years. When the PWRFC was founded in April 2024, we demanded a strike vote in opposition to CUPW's delaying tactics. Voting finally started many months later and concluded with a 95 percent strike mandate.

The overwhelming support for a genuine struggle compelled the union to sanction the first national strike in November 2024, which lasted 32 days. Although it was clear from the very first day that we were in a fight against the government and that the Liberals would resort to a strike ban as soon as they felt it was possible, CUPW did nothing to prepare workers for government intervention and explain how they should defy it. Labour Minister MacKinnon's strike ban that CUPW enforced in flagrant violation of our readiness to fight included a prohibition on strike action for six months, which gave the bosses, government ministers and union bureaucrats time to consult on how best to ram through attacks against our opposition.

The sellout of our strike was immediately followed by the government's $1 billion loan to fund Canada Post's restructuring and the Industrial Inquiry Commission (IIC). CUPW hailed this state-controlled initiative as a great opportunity for us to have our voices heard democratically, conveniently passing over the fact that they had just helped silence our collective voice by crushing our strike. In reality, it was a rigged process with a predetermined outcome: to give legitimacy to Canada Post management's push to Amazonify the postal service.

As soon as the strike ban expired, workers were determined to relaunch the struggle, but CUPW intervened to cripple this initiative. They imposed a toothless overtime ban starting in May 2025. While our hands were tied by this token protest, the government initiated a forced vote on CPC's "best and final offers" in June, believing that they could bully us into accepting sweeping concessions. However, postal workers were adamant that our jobs would not be gigified, and we voted decisively to reject the offers.

Still the CUPW bureaucracy sought to constrain our opposition, first by a continuation of the overtime ban and then a ban on handling admail beginning in mid September. Lightbound's provocative declaration of government support for the destruction of Canada Post as a public service September 25 triggered spontaneous walkouts by workers in Atlantic Canada, which began spreading to other parts of the country. Facing a national strike organized from below, CUPW rapidly sanctioned the job action the better to remain in control of it and betray it at a later date.

That date came a mere two weeks later, when CUPW concluded—after working with the CLC to ensure postal workers remained isolated and fighting the combined forces of the government and Canada Post management alone—that it could take the next step in demobilizing our opposition. Without so much as a democratic vote, the CUPW leadership called off the national strike and replaced it with bogus "rotating strikes." These were conveniently confined to remote and small regions, ensuring they had virtually no impact on Canada Post's operations.

Even this excuse for non-action ultimately proved too much. With the Christmas rush and Canada Post's most profitable part of the year approaching and business demanding "certainty," CUPW announced it had reached agreements in principle. This proved to be another fraud.

The agreements were only confirmed in January, after the union had ensured that we worked through Canada Post's most important business period of the year. The voting process was then dragged out as long as possible, only beginning in April. In close coordination with the CLC and all its constituent member unions, CUPW aimed with this manoeuvre to further demoralize us by cutting us off from our closest allies throughout the working class. Their operation had the desired effect when a majority of postal workers reluctantly voted for the agreements in June in what amounted to a massive vote of no-confidence in CUPW's ability to conduct any struggle for our interests.

We must draw the political lessons to take our struggle forward

With the tripartite alliance of the government, management and CUPW bureaucracy ramming through concessions contracts, we have been thrown from the fire into the frying pan. Canada Post is implementing its transformation plan full throttle. This escalating assault on our jobs and working conditions means all of the political tasks posed during our contract struggle now assume even greater urgency.

Key political conclusions must be drawn by postal workers and the entire working class, who are confronting similar attacks on their jobs and conditions to pay for war and the enrichment of the oligarchs. Above all, rank-and-file militancy by itself is inadequate to defend workers' rights. It must be guided by a political program of class struggle based on the following lessons:

1. Our fight is not just a contract battle. It is a political struggle that pits us against the ruling elite's class-war agenda of austerity and imperialist war. The same government that finds unlimited billions to prosecute the NATO war in Ukraine and endorses the US-led war of extermination against Iran demands austerity at home as prices for everyday necessities are driven up by imperialist wars and trade conflicts.

We can only go forward by unifying our struggle with other sections of the working class, all of whom have a direct interest in protecting public services and the right to strike. This movement must be uncompromising

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in its opposition to war and austerity, and the capitalist political parties that enforce these policies.

2. The CUPW and the entire apparatus of pro-capitalist trade unions are not avenues through which we can advance our interests, but mechanisms for smothering worker opposition and imposing the dictates of big business. Union bureaucrats invariably respond to pressure from below not by giving a lead to strikes and mobilizing workers, but by strangling job action.

This is why the urgent task before us is the construction of rank-and-file committees in every depot and mail sorting centre. We require organizations of class struggle controlled by workers on the shop floor, not corporatist structures bound by a thousand threads to the capitalist state and Canada's business boardrooms. The PWRFC has begun this fight, but it must now urgently be broadened across Canada Post and all logistics companies to unite workers as the class struggle across North America intensifies. The goal must be broadening our fight into an industrial and political counteroffensive that draws in all workers under attack, like the 40,000 public service workers laid off by Carney's government, the steelworkers at Stelco facing trade-war-driven job cuts, and the 1,200 National Steel Car workers in Hamilton who have been on strike for three months to put an end to a murderous piecework system. We must document and expose the consequences of the collective agreements as they unfold.

3. The fight we face is international, because the ruling elite is conducting an onslaught on workers in every country. As we were waging strikes and voting down sellout contracts, the Trump administration in the US was working to privatize the US Postal Service and American postal workers were dying on the job due to the disastrous conditions they confront. In the UK, a years-long struggle by Royal Mail workers against privatization and the gutting of workplace protections has been ongoing. Outside of the logistics sector, thousands of workers have been laid off across North America due to the reactionary trade war between the US and Canada, and thousands more face unemployment in auto and other manufacturing sectors as globally operating companies use technological change as an excuse to slash labour costs.

The CLC unions and Unifor are bitterly hostile to workers uniting internationally, as they are the loudest advocates of foul Canadian nationalism. In the trade war, they defend Canadian imperialism's counter-tariffs and demand that we all make "sacrifices" for "Team Canada," while they back Carney's rearmament plans and efforts to establish "economic sovereignty." Against this nationalism and corporatism, we call for rank-and-file committees to coordinate our struggles through the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC).

Our American brothers and sisters in the auto industry are one of the many sections of workers facing similar challenges as us. Will Lehman, a socialist who ran in the United Auto Workers (UAW) presidential election, put the matter clearly in his opening remarks during the July Presidential Debate, "What we need is a strategy and an organization, class struggle instead of class collaboration, internationalism instead of nationalism, rank-and-file committees in every plant and workplace, controlled by workers, linked across industries, to abolish the bureaucracy and transfer power to the shop floor."

4. What is posed is a fight for workers' control over the workplace and operations of the postal service, and a workers' government to put an end to imperialist war and capitalist austerity. The ruling class is using technological advances, including AI, to increase workloads and intensify worker exploitation. But these technologies, subordinated to democratic workers' control, could just as well serve to reduce burdensome tasks and working hours with no loss of pay.

The working class is the only social force capable of defending public services and jobs, and it must build its own party to lead this fight. Workers reject the idea that basic public services like the post office must be run as profit-making concerns. Social need must take priority over profitability, and society's vast resources must be expropriated from the financial oligarchy and placed under workers' democratic control to meet the urgent needs of the vast majority. To carry forward this fight, workers require a socialist and internationalist program to put an end to the dominance exerted over economic and political life by the financial oligarchy and political establishment. This is the program fought for by the Socialist Equality Party, which workers should join and construct as a mass revolutionary party to lead the struggles immediately ahead.

We encourage all workers who wish to discuss these questions and contribute to the ongoing struggle to contact the PWRFC by filling out the form below.



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