

Police and courts enforce Trudeau's law criminalizing Canada Post strike

By Roger Jordan
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The police and courts are working hand-in-glove with Canada Post to enforce the reactionary law Justin Trudeau and his Liberal government passed last week illegalizing job action by the Crown Corporation's 50,000 letter carriers, mail sorters, delivery truck drivers and postal clerks.

Indeed, they have effectively extended the anti-strike law into a legal ban on any protest that impedes Canada Post's operations.

Six peaceful protesters were arrested Sunday evening for picketing a Canada Post facility in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Reports indicate the police acted extremely provocatively outside the Almon Street sorting station, where a small group of protesters had set up a picket line to prevent mail delivery vehicles from entering the facility.

The police declared the protest a "serious threat to public safety" and ordered the participants to clear the road, even though protesters had used no physical force or threat of any kind to block the mail trucks. Those who did not abide the police order were detained and now face criminal charges of mischief and obstructing a police officer.

Earlier, Canada Post had gone to court in Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia and obtained injunctions prohibiting anyone from obstructing or preventing vehicles or persons from entering or exiting its facilities. "We have asked the police for assistance and we are considering all available legal options," declared Canada Post in a press release Saturday.

The Halifax protest was part of a series of stunts mounted by "allies" of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW)—that is by the Canadian Labour Congress, its affiliates and sections of the pseudo-left—to cover up the unions' abject capitulation to the Liberals' draconian back-to-work law. Labeled community pickets, all of the protests have been relatively small affairs, with

most comprised of a handful of union functionaries.

For legal reasons, CUPW is not officially sponsoring these protests, which have been held at a wide array of locations. Those at postal sorting stations that have "blocked" mail trucks have included no postal workers, and lasted no more than two or three hours.

Despite the protests' toothless character, Canada Post management has provocatively declared them "illegal protests" and secured the backing of the courts to criminalize and repress them.

This further escalation of the state assault on postal workers only serves to underscore that they and the working class as a whole must mount a political struggle.

In their fight against precarious employment, two tier-wages, unsafe working conditions, speed-up and declining real wages, postal workers are opposing not just a ruthless employer determined to squeeze bigger profits. They are challenging the class strategy of the entire ruling class and therefore of its political hirelings in the Liberal government. All are determined to make the working class pay for the capitalist crisis through the destruction of public services and the gutting of workers' social rights.

Big business howled for the illegalization of postal workers' five-week campaign of rotating strikes, not just because they wanted to cash in on the Christmas online shopping rush. They, along with the Liberal government and the entire political establishment, feared the postal workers' struggle could trigger a much broader mobilization of working people.

The issues that prompted a near unanimous vote for strike action by postal workers in September—a vast expansion of "flexible," part-time and precarious jobs, the slashing of pensions, decades of wage stagnation and a dramatic intensification of workloads due to technological change—are not merely problems for postal workers. The vast majority of workers in both the public

and private sectors, in Canada and around the world, face like conditions.

The same week the postal workers' strike was outlawed, the automaker General Motors announced the slashing of 14,500 jobs across North America, including that closure of its Oshawa, Ontario, plant. Meanwhile in France, the "yellow vest" movement, driven by opposition to deepening social inequality and the austerity agenda of the Macron government, continued to swell despite a brutal state crackdown.

The assault on postal workers mounted by the Liberal government, now joined by the courts and police, has been made possible chiefly due to the impotence and complicity of CUPW and its "allies."

Adamantly opposed to making the postal workers' struggle the spearhead of a political and industrial counter-offensive against the austerity policies of the ruling elite, CUPW has from the outset systematically worked to isolate and demobilize postal workers.

Despite being armed with an overwhelming strike mandate, CUPW President Mike Palecek refused to call a nationwide strike. Instead, he restricted postal workers to a campaign of regional rotating strikes, which he himself acknowledged were aimed at having as little impact on Canada Post's business operations as possible.

More fundamentally, Palecek and the entire CUPW bureaucracy maintained a deafening silence on the threat of the Trudeau government outlawing the strike, although it was obvious that Canada Post was relying on government intervention to enforce its attacks, as it has for decades. Even after Trudeau all but publicly announced that such a law was being prepared, Palecek and CUPW continued to evade the issue for another week-and-a-half.

This is because the CUPW bureaucrats feared any discussion of the impending clash between postal workers and the government would have exposed the need to expand the struggle, rally support from the working class and transform the strike into a working-class political struggle against the Liberal government and big business as a whole.

CUPW pursued this disastrous strategy because it, like the CLC and the rest of the trade union bureaucracy, enjoy close political ties to the Liberals and the entire establishment, including the pro-capitalist New Democratic Party, and is terrified of the eruption of a genuine working-class challenge to capitalist austerity.

Palecek stumped for Trudeau's election in 2015 on the basis that he represented a "progressive" alternative to

Stephen Harper's Tories. He opposed any and all job action during the 2016 contract dispute, claiming that nothing should be allowed to "disrupt" the work of a Liberal-appointed task force studying the future of the post office. Predictably, that task force lined up behind the demands of Canada Post management. And even as the Liberals were ramming their strikebreaking law through parliament, Palecek and the CUPW continued to plead with them to live up to their phony "progressive" promises, while issuing not a single appeal to the working class for support.

After ordering workers back to their jobs without a single issue having been resolved, Palecek proclaimed that the struggle was entering a "new phase," and that the union would challenge the Liberals' outlawing of the strike in the courts. These are the same courts that have repeatedly upheld antiworker laws—such that the right to strike has all but become a legal fiction—and have now criminalized even the token "community pickets" organized by CUPW's allies.

Recent events demonstrate the correctness of the *World Socialist Web Site's* insistence from the beginning of the Canada Post dispute that if workers are to achieve their just demands, they must broaden their struggle and transform it from a collective bargaining dispute into a working class political struggle.

This requires a political and organizational break with CUPW. At every workplace, postal workers should form action committees to prepare a national strike in defiance of the Liberals' strikebreaking law and relaunch their struggle as part of a working-class counter-offensive in defence of all public services and workers' social and democratic rights, including the right to strike.

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