Postal workers back to work but not giving up the fight

Fredricton and Oromocto postal workers joined postal workers in nine other locations across the country as Canada Post Corporation (CUPW) held a province-wide lockout on June 14th. The federal government has since enacted back-to-work legislation despite opposition from the NDP. Postal workers worked throughout in strike response to attempts to implement a two-tier wage system, reduced benefits, an inferior pension and weaker job security. Photo by Tracy Glynn.

by TRACY GLYNN

On the morning of June 14th, letter carriers in Fredericton tried to deliver mail but were quickly stopped by their employer, Canada Post Corporation, Canada Post had started a nationwide lock-out after 12 days of rotating strikes at postal facilities across the country. The Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) drew attention to the fact that Canada Post was breaking the law by refusing to deliver mail.

The Harper government swiftly introduced Bill C-6, which would remove the rights of the postal workers to strike and forced them to return to work with a wage increase lower than the final offer made by the employer. Canada Post’s final offer included a 7.7% wage increase over 4 years while the imposed settlement included a 7.25% wage increase over the same period of time. After a marathon debate in Parliament that started June 24th and ended June 26th, the Bill passed and postal workers returned to work on June 27th. Postal workers in St. John’s, chanted, “So-So, So, Solidarity!” as they returned to work.

Postal workers have been in a legal strike position since May 24th when union members handed Canada Post Corporation its strongest strike mandate in union history, which had the largest turn out in the union’s history.

Mike Palecek, recording secretary for the Vanderway local of CUPW points out in Fightback on June 25th the two-tiered system is an unfair contract, resulted in new hires in 94.5% voting in favour of striking a deal with Canada Post to pay new workers 30 per cent less and give them reduced benefits, an inferior pension and weaker job security.

The Harper government, under Canada, two-tiered wage plans, brought in throughout the 1990s, led to the steady erosion of wage levels and benefits for all workers. The adoption of an unsafe delivery process, and the increased workloads at Canada Post have the same plan in mind.

Growing numbers of Canada Post employees are looking for a solution that will apply across the board. The community in Canada, and the rest of the country, is fed up with the constant fighting and is looking for a solution.

When asked to comment whether CUPW’s Strike Committee outside the closed shops, Bill Palecek, president of the CUPW’s Strike Committee said, “We are locked out of our offices and our local offices and we are fighting for a solution. We have the same plan in mind. We are fighting for a solution that will apply across the board.”

Fredericton postal workers returned to their MP’s office on the morning of June 22nd to find it closed. “We wanted to show them how much we were fighting for a solution—a legislation that will affect our livelihoods and how we go to work everyday. The legislation is denying our collective bargaining rights and the right to strike. We are fighting for a solution that will apply across the board. We hope to see a clear message against back-to-work legislation.”

Fredericton postal workers and their supporters marched back to work legislation which was brought on June 25th. The demonstration was held at the Cow Bay. The crowd gathered in numbers calling for a solution that will apply across the board.

Our struggle will set the tone for the many fights that will be fought as the federal government becomes more powerful in the country.

A federal government and a powerful message that the labour movement will not be pushed to focus only on those who committed the acts of vandalism. Some tear gas... (continued on page 2)

Understanding Vancouver’s “hockey riot”

by DAVID ZIRIN

How do we understand the riots that exploded in Vancouver after the beloved Canucks lost the Stanley Cup Finals? How do we understand the burning cars, broken glass, and injuries that stand as an enduring cod of their game-seven defeat at the hands of the visiting Boston Bruins?

This is unsupported and profoundly irresponsible garbage with no basis in fact.

Let’s also dispense with the fiction that this was the fault of ‘Canuck fans,’ the fans on the whole were actually in fine form after the game. They gave Conn Smythe winner, Brun goalie Tim Thomas, a standing ovation and also rose and cheered for every Bruin from British Columbia. Of the millions of Canucks supporters, this was a miscarried mob. As Shiama Ali of Vancouver wrote to me, “I live in Vancouver and left the downtown core just before the game started. There were tons of people coming into the city who were already drunk and rowdy (in a bad way) – win or lose, I’m not sure those people (who I don’t believe were true Canucks fans but the people just wanted to get drunk). waiter what happened after the game was neither in the spirit of people at the arena nor the spirit of those who bravely met the game. As hockey and hockey fan Demitri Cebul said to me, “Sometimes a riot is the ‘language of the unright,’ in the words of Martin Luther King Jr. But sometimes it is an expression of young male stupidity and violence – this was the case last night in Vancouver. And sometimes it is an expression of young male stupidity and violence – this was the case last night in Vancouver. And sometimes it is an expression of young male stupidity and violence.”

Another person said to me, “There were lots of [LGBTQ] people down there, some got roughed up, some dental care needed. There are also attempts to depoliticize this moment of violence. It is not a mystery to me why the rioting happened. This is not simply a matter of injustice against a particular group, but a matter of general frustration and a general feeling of injustice and anger, and a game, then a major event, Montrealers have ruffled after first round game 7 wins! There is going to be some outbursts. Hockey commentators like Hockey Nights’ Don Cherry are constantly associating hockey with the troops overseas (he went to Afghanistan and field a live shell, for chrissakes) and promote fighting and big open ice fights. We shouldn’t be surprised.”

John Ward-Leighton also pointed out on his blog the role that the liquor lobby placed in turned an entire area around the arena into a branded “Entertainment Zone” landed what was a legendary night.

"It was clear that a lot of the participants in last night’s riot were looking for a release of all the pent-up frustration and looking for trouble,” said Ward-Leighton. “This zone has nothing to do with entertainment, and much to do with the almost criminal profit taking of the proprietors of the establishments who for ‘serving it right’, pour drinking in the streets, then watch the players’ brawling and drinking.”

The fault for last night’s idiocy was not about losing a hockey game or the police response, the town had its fuse lit with the myth that the only way you can have fun is to get drinking drunk...”

The feeling of the police is gaining attention as well. Alex Kenner, a law student and activist said, “The police should be focused more on the players for the acts of vandalism. Some tear gas... (continued on page 2)