

Postal Workers Concerned about Bill C-51

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OTTAWA- The union representing 51,000 postal workers is adding its voice to the growing chorus of concerns over Bill C-51, the federal government's sweeping national security bill.

“The Canadian Union of Postal Workers knows what it is like to experience out-of-control state surveillance,” said Denis Lemelin, National President of CUPW, referring to the lengthy history of CUPW being spied upon by the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) and the RCMP.

Bill C-51 would give CSIS even broader powers to invade the privacy of Canadians in the name of combatting terrorism. Similar concerns over the bill's overly sweeping reach will be raised by the president of the Canadian Labour Congress, Hassan Yussuff, who appears today before the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security (SECU).

“Increasing the powers of the security establishment will not necessarily make us safer,” said Lemelin. “The lack of civilian oversight and the dearth of monitoring information-sharing between government agencies in this bill is very disturbing.”

In the early days of the union, a CSIS provocateur, Grant Bristow, was discovered to be working at a postal plant. In the 1980s, CUPW's national office was bugged by the RCMP. And in the 1990s, the union asked for its security files under the Access to Information Act, only to be denied the bulk of the records, deemed “harmful to the defence of Canada.” What was released revealed not only a massive surveillance operation on the daily activities of union members, but also collusion between the RCMP and Canada Post management.

“Bill C-51 would make it all too easy to target ordinary working people or any marginalized group and label them ‘terrorists’,” said Lemelin. “We should accept no violations of our human rights and freedoms in the name of national security.”

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