

UK postal workers expose back breaking working conditions at Royal Mail

Our correspondents

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The World Socialist Web Site (WSWS) is publishing further correspondence from postal workers exposing the brutal exploitative regime being imposed by Royal Mail.

The Communication Workers Union (CWU) put out a statement on March 18 claiming this was the result of “out of control managers” but their actions were greenlighted by the union in a Joint Statement with Royal Mail published March 2. The union agreed to re-engagement with local revision activity: the euphemism for a cost-cutting exercise designed to boost productivity and slash jobs before the end of the financial year in April. The Joint Statement appendix stated this was to address the “serious financial and economic challenges facing the business” and “align hours to workload and improve productivity.”

The CWU is playing the role of chief strike breaker by suppressing a renewed mandate for industrial action, delivered by a 96 percent majority last month. This is allowing exploitative practices to be imposed to fund another pay-out to shareholders.

The latest correspondence comes from London, Cheshunt, Luton, Chatham, Houghton Regis, Stalham and Blackburn.

I started working at Royal Mail in 2021, it was tough, but I enjoyed it. I was contracted to work 25 hours a week but placed on a walk that is full time. My hours were increased to 30 but I still went over every day to clear my frame. Was told by colleagues that my walk was a training walk and I'd be taken off it soon.

Over a year later I'm still on the same walk. I've not had driver training but three people who started after me were given it. We've now absorbed another walk which is an extra loop on top of the five I do already, because I do van share my colleague who drives has a smaller walk. We've been double lapsing since Christmas so I'm now at 7 loops to do but I'm still on 30 hours.

I'm mentally and physically exhausted; I dread going back to work. It's my day off today and I know that loops will have been left today which can't be cleared on Saturday because we've got to be back at depot by 2.15 for collections. So that will roll on to Monday and unless I go over it won't get cleared. Our overtime is being held hostage so unless we clear we won't get overtime. Start times have been changed and everyone preps their own walks now so by the time we get out of the depot it's already 10am.

I'm currently looking for alternative work because I can't continue like this and our manager doesn't listen to my concerns over the workload.

The union isn't fit for purpose; they only care about protecting

themselves and not the workers who pay their dues.

Lads thank you for highlighting this, it is disgusting. Lads and girls are on the verge of collapse from the amount of work imposed on them—it's like a prison camp. Bullying is rife, managers are puppets for higher management or fat cats. My fears are that somebody soon may commit suicide because of the health and mental pressures and then Mr Thompson and Co will have blood on their hands. This needs to be highlighted everywhere, thank you.

I have worked for Royal Mail since 1996, it was the best job ever back then but since privatisation it is clear making a profit at any cost was all that matters. The way we're treated by management changed almost overnight, and the service stopped being that—it's not a service anymore and all or part of around 35 letter deliveries fail on a daily basis at my office. On top of this Royal Mail thinks the law only applies when it suits them and regularly breaks them. Basic employment laws are being ignored and as for the Equality Act I don't think this exists in Royal Mail's eyes.

Place is a joke, hod carrying donkeys get treated better. Tracked parcels, packets etc are given priority every time. Simon Thompson [Royal Mail chief executive] is a big liar as are most managers. These idiots up top have absolutely no idea. Maybe they should come do my round for 2 weeks and see just how ridiculous things really are? People dropping like flies, going sick, mental health issues growing all the time. Bosses get irate and shout abuse if things don't go right.

I've done this job for lots of years, and up until 5 years ago I loved it. Now I'm applying for jobs on a weekly basis. First chance I get I'm off before it either kills me, or I do something I regret. Managers aren't managers; they got no idea and would not survive in a real managerial position.

I've worked for Royal Mail for more than 20 years and the morale in my office is at an all-time low. The managers only care about tracked parcels and our jobs are all getting changed, hours and terms. They have refused to answer any of our questions on what being made a supernumerary involves and expect us to sign a blank contract with no mention of what happens to things like sick pay or holidays or pension. It's a joke run by idiots and it's stressing everyone out. Not a nice place to work anymore and I'm

just hoping they offer VR [voluntary redundancy] but they already backtracked on that before so don't hold out much hope.

Casual staff are in before rm [Royal Mail] staff too so we're getting less hours too. In effect we're becoming the casuals and they are becoming the workforce on zero-hour contracts, just how Thompson wants it.

I had worked for Royal Mail for over 30 years. Customers are not getting what they pay for, why buy first class stamp when it's luck of the draw if your round is going out that day, defrauding the customer. They are not recruiting new staff which are clearly needed. Managers can get away with wilful delay of mail, but if a postie did it, sacked—double standards. This company has been mismanaged for years, to be honest all they really care about is: get the rounds out the door have an easy life.

What I have seen through the years is me and my fellow posties care about the job and the customers, it's been our life. I wish I could say the same for some of the management. Not all, as I have worked with some good ones I must say, but when I have chatted to them they are dissatisfied with it all and have left. I know so many posties that have gone on management and then had enough of it and gone back down to postie, that says it all—wouldn't happen in any other company.

Summing up... Royal Mail had not only let the customers down, it's let its loyal staff down. We care about the service, do they? I ask the question.

My observation is the pride that post people take in delivering people's mail is slowly being eroded by a system that starts with tracked items, then specials, then packets, then letters. The office I work in used to be in the top ten in everything the business is measured on. Our office is in a terrible state. What OFCOM [the regulatory body for communications and postal services] and the Select Committee [Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee-BEIS] need to do is visit a few offices without invite and see the volume of mail being left daily.

The changes the business wants are being implemented without agreement, or that's what we are told by the CWU. Again, I say this dispute was and is about a wage rise and conditions, all of a sudden we are being told daily that the business is losing money so we may not get a wage rise and the changes need to happen. I have 40 years in this job in various roles and I never seen such depression in the staff. Part of this is definitely down to the inexperienced managers which in some cases are power crazy. Also, when your office manager disappears, he is going to a meeting for a brief on the steps the executive wants done next.

My place is continuing to employ agency staff who are paid more than me, yet I'm paid too much!! Revisions taking place, duties being cut, hours being cut, no overtime, yet agency being employed. The Royal Mail is being run down, you can see it. They want people to leave so they can use agency staff.

I only work 28hrs per week, as a walker. Since the revision the office I currently work in has been turned upside down. It has lost numerous staff members for various reasons. The staff within my

office are constantly trying to play catch up with mail. As previous people have said, we are having to make sure tracked items are delivered and whatever mail we can get done.

One of the frames has had 7 extra rows added to its delivery, [therefore] mounting mail and parcels as the rounds cannot be completed, due to the amount of extra work expected, as no guidance or map has been given for staff that have never done the duty before. On Tuesday I posted 20 items of post to one household. I and many other staff members can walk up to 50 miles per week.

The pay rise still hasn't been given, but the extra workload and changes are being implemented. If you are a part timer and a meeting is held with full timers, the management DO NOT make the effort to give part timers the information, this is usually found out by another staff member telling you. Along with so many other issues .

It was good to see that the management got their bonus for the revision, but it looks like they have just sat down with a blindfold on to complete this task. Royal Mail certainly have no concern for the health and welfare of their staff. Although I have only been with the company for a short while I can certainly see a change in my fellow colleagues.

Royal Mail are aware of the saying, "There is no 'I' in team."

I have worked for Royal Mail for over 3 years, never have I seen a company run like this, nobody is in charge. The CEO cannot make up his mind about the pay, absolutely s##t. I worked at a certain office, I was given s## vans, my back hurts, before the electric vans no training given, the workload has got so much worse. Lot of people are bringing half of the walk back. The managers just want an empty frame in the morning. They don't care if you can complete the walk, only care about the tracked items. Time to leave Royal Mail.

What Simon Thompson is doing to Royal Mail is criminal. I'd love to swap roles with him for a day to see if he can walk for over 5 hours without a toilet break in all weathers. 23 years in a job I loved but this once great British institution is being destroyed. Simon Thompson will go down in history as the one who decimated our once great public service before he moved on to pastures new. RIP Royal Mail.

The WSWS has published a statement by the Socialist Equality Party inviting postal workers to an online meeting on Monday, March 27 at 7pm to discuss how a fightback can be mounted. Confidentiality will be preserved to prevent victimisation. Please register to attend. We encourage further comments, including on the statement's suggestions for a way forward.



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wsws.org/contact