

Growing support for UK Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee

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Send a message to rmpw.rfc@gmail.com to contact and join the Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee.

The Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee has received growing interest and support from delivery and mail processing workers at Royal Mail.

The latest write-ins are in response to the *World Socialist Web Site* (WSWS) article providing an account of an online Communication Workers Union (CWU) meeting held last Thursday evening, “Communication Workers Union mass meeting paves way for rotten sellout.”

Postal workers identify with the warning sounded that, left in the hands of CWU leaders Dave Ward and Andy Furey, their 8-month battle to defend their livelihoods faces a rout. They are looking for a means to fight back.

Write-ins to the committee include the following comments:

“The latest article is correct in its position that postal workers are on the verge of a betrayal. As a worker in the postal industry and a member of the CWU I am outraged at the way we are being failed.”

“Hello there I’m a postman in Sheffield. Please send me more details on what we can do in response to our awful union leaders selling us down the line.”

“Useless CWU leaders - I would like to join and know more please, a pissed off over worked under paid postman, from Glasgow.”

The WSWS article was shared on the Royal Mail Chat forum widely read by postal workers, receiving well over a thousand views. As one postie commented, “It’s a given that DW (Dave Ward) and his cronies have sold us down the river, a silk purse turned into a sow’s ear! More pigs with their snouts in the trough!”

Another stated, “Both the union and RM [Royal Mail] can do one if they think members will accept a sell-out deal.”

The CWU online meeting was an exercise in evasion

and contempt towards the rank-and-file. The WSWS explained, “Ward and Furey spoke not as union leaders defending their members, but as management consultants lecturing on the inevitability of workplace reform and the desirability of industrial harmony.”

The two union bureaucrats continued to justify the CWU Postal Executive’s undemocratic overruling of the renewed strike mandate of 96 percent in mid-February, to pursue “a back channel” with Royal Mail directors who walked out of arbitration talks in the early hours of Wednesday morning last week.

Even as Royal Mail issued an ultimatum to the CWU to accept its final offer and ballot its 115,000 members, Ward and Furey pledged to make themselves available for further talks over the weekend and bank holidays, only committing to update the membership in the latter part of this week.

Royal Mail Chief Executive Simon Thompson sent out a 2-page bulletin to employees on April 5, the day before the CWU online meeting, which cynically stated, “We have nothing left to give.” Even the selected highlights of the offer make clear that no concessions have been made by the company, with the sacrifices falling exclusively on postal workers.

This includes a 10 percent pay award for three years, which will further cripple workers’ living standards, with RPI inflation at 13.8 percent. Even this de facto pay cut is tied to demands for increased flexibility and productivity, later start and finishing times and an extension of a two-tier workforce with inferior terms, including mandatory Sunday working with no premium payment.

On job losses the offers’ only undertaking is on voluntary redundancies. This is worthless, meaning only that senior workers will be forced out through a combination of management harassment and unachievable workloads thanks to a joint union-management agreement on cost-cutting process known as “revisions”.

Claims made by Ward and Furey of “progress” in the talks and of a settlement “within reach” underscore how the CWU leadership is in cahoots with the company, agreeing to later start and finishing times, annualised hours and concessions over a two-tier workforce.

In relation to the management victimisation campaign that has left up to 400 postal workers suspended or sacked, including CWU reps, Ward insisted that all the disciplinary processes must be allowed to complete before any adjudication—by a so-called independent review by “well known people” who were never identified. He gave credence to the management frame-ups by stating that some people would have “crossed the line”, adding, “We are not here to defend them.”

Ward made one passing reference to the “£600 million odd” handed out to shareholders, but still stressed the need to accept change to turn around the “fortunes of the company” facing “a very serious financial position.”

Any fight to fund a genuine pay increase and protect postal workers’ livelihoods by reclaiming the wealth they create requires the removal of the CWU leadership and an apparatus dedicated to preserving its own privileged relations with the company, deepened through a decade of privatisation.

The staggered national stoppages over 18 days between August and December, with postal workers denied strike pay, has been tied to a campaign by the CWU to promote false friends and isolate the struggle. This has involved lobbying shareholders and investors and promoting “allies” within the political establishment, such as the cross-party Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee, headed by Labour MP Darren Jones, as a means of holding “power to account.”

Simon Thompson has testified before the Committee twice with no repercussions. Its recommendations involve a toothless investigation by the regulators Ofcom and the Information Commissioner into Royal Mail’s statutory requirement to deliver letters six days a week and use of data from digital trackers against postal workers. Investigators will report back at the end of the year!

The situation facing Royal Mail workers with the CWU is not unique. The CWU first demobilised the struggle of 40,000 telecom workers at BT Group after eight days of national strike action to enforce a rotten pay deal at the end of last year.

Ward and Furey have done the same at the Post Office after several national stoppages by around 1,400 workers since last May, pushing acceptance of a three-year pay deal of just 9 percent for the period 2021-24. On

Wednesday, Furey described this as “good news” and a “positive outcome”. A lump sum payment of up to £3,000 is used to conceal the fact that the pay rise is already 8 percent behind price rises since April 2021, with another year of inflation to go.

Every section of workers that has participated in the UK’s strike wave since the summer of discontent last year faces the necessity of taking back control of their struggles through the formation of rank-and-file committees. On the rail, in the National Health Service, in schools and universities, the union bureaucracy is winding down or delaying strike action to drive through de-facto pay cuts and stem opposition to unbearable workloads and unsafe conditions.

The formation of the Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee shows that Royal Mail workers can break out of the confines of the CWU’s pro-company agenda and mount a direct challenge to the profits diktats of the company. It is an example others must follow.

As the Committee’s founding resolution states, “Millions of workers in the UK are waging the same fight in a strike wave ongoing since last summer. This is part of an international struggle against global corporations and governments seeking to impose the immense cost of pandemic corporate bailouts and rampant inflation on the working class.

“Our allies are workers in France waging a heroic battle against “President of the Rich” Emmanuel Macron, in Germany, including in the dispute at Deutsche Post, and throughout Europe and internationally.”

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