

UK Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee issues call to reject CWU deal with Royal Mail

Our reporter
18 April 2023

To build support for a rejection of the sellout deal and to organise a centre of resistance to the Communication Workers Union’s collusion with Royal Mail, the Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee will hold its next online meeting this Sunday, April 23, at 7pm. Register here to attend the meeting.

The Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee met on Sunday April 16 and passed the resolution “Vote No to CWU pro-company deal—organise the rank-and-file fightback against Royal Mail!” (published below).

In his report to the meeting, *World Socialist Web Site* writer Tony Robson explained, “Yesterday the Communication Workers Union announced it had reached a tentative agreement with Royal Mail without any details being released after stating originally that a full report back would be provided to members by Friday.

“They have shown nothing but contempt for the struggle waged over the last eight months with all oversight and control of the dispute removed from the rank-and-file. This is to promote the union-management partnership. The entire set-up is illegitimate and should be rejected.”

Robson raised the need to draw the lessons of other union-endorsed sell-outs during the strike wave in Britain, referencing the pay struggle of the million-strong National Health Service workforce and its sabotage by the union bureaucracy.

Nurses in England have withstood the intimidation of the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) and voted down its rotten deal with the Conservative government. A petition has been organised to remove RCN President Pat Cullen and the entire negotiating team.

“Such a struggle to remove the entrenched bureaucracy in the RCN not only deserves the support of every worker. The same fight must be taken up in every union.

“The mobilisation of the rank-and-file independently of the union bureaucracy is the precondition for any genuine fight against the government and the employers. The work of our committee can provide a lead to other workers facing the same struggle.”

A Royal Mail delivery worker spoke of the urgent need to organise the widest possible rejection of the deal worked out secretly between the CWU bureaucracy and Royal Mail management. It was clear from workplace briefings that the final offer did not meet any of the workers’ key demands on above-inflation pay rises and the protection of terms and conditions.

“No postal worker should be left behind,” he said, insisting that the frame-up of some 400 CWU reps and union members who suspended or dismissed since the start of strike action last August must be overturned.

A delivery driver from the Parcelforce division of Royal Mail emphasised that the rank-and-file must take responsibility for the unity of all postal workers because of the divisions created by CWU bureaucracy. He spoke of the beginnings of a gig economy already agreed to by the union in the form of “owner drivers” employed on far inferior terms and conditions in Parcelforce.

The meeting discussed the ham-fisted attempt made by the CWU to discredit the WSWS and the Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee on the union’s official Twitter page. The CWU replied to a tweet on Saturday evening—shortly after the announcement of its deal with Royal Mail—from a postal worker who had asked the question, “Is it time we started thinking of alternatives?”, alongside a screenshot of the WSWS article “Growing support for UK Postal Worker Rank-and-File Committee”.

The CWU’s short rant described the WSWS as “absolute cranks” and told postal workers to “stick with the union. It’s your voice.” This backfired, with postal workers challenging the union for withholding strike pay and for its abject failure to communicate with members. They also pointed to the major concessions handed over to Royal Mail by the CWU’s official negotiators Dave Ward and Andy Furey. Robert Stevens, WSWS UK editor, who chaired Sunday’s rank-and-file meeting, responded to the CWU’s tweets in “Communication Workers Union attack on WSWS and Postal Workers Rank and File Committee backfires.”

To build support for a rejection of the sellout deal and to

organise a centre of resistance to the CWU's collusion with Royal Mail, the Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee will hold its next online meeting this Sunday, 23 April, at 7pm. Register here to attend the meeting.

For further details and to join the Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee visit here:

“Vote No to CWU pro-company deal—organise the rank-and-file fightback against Royal Mail”

We call on our fellow postal workers across the Royal Mail Group, including Parcelforce and Fleet, and at every delivery office and mail centre, to Vote No and reject the sell-out deal agreed by Communication Workers Union negotiators Dave Ward and Andy Furey.

We came together eight months ago to wage a fight for an above inflation pay deal, in defence of our livelihoods and terms and conditions against Royal Mail's race to the bottom. Our most basic demands have not been met. We must see this through to victory. No section of postal workers must be left behind.

The fact that we are not even aware of the contents of the deal shows that the negotiations process has no legitimacy. It has not been conducted to secure our terms for a settlement, but to safeguard the partnership of the Royal Mail Board with the CWU Postal Executive at our expense.

According to the CWU, we are the last to be consulted after manning the picket lines for 18 days last year and receiving not one penny of strike pay. The CWU Postal Executive meets Monday and Tuesday to “decide” on a sell-out and a meeting has been scheduled with senior reps Thursday to roll out the deal.

We handed the CWU Postal Executive a 96 percent vote last month to renew strike action, but this mandate to fight by a majority of 115,000 postal workers was vetoed by just 17 officials in order to start talks with management behind our backs.

This past month we have already seen the results of the joint management-union partnership through the agreement on revisions in delivery offices that has driven up our workloads. Our bodies are being broken by work practices agreed by the CWU to secure the company bottom line. The “guarantee” of no compulsory redundancies is worthless. Many of our long-standing colleagues are being forced into voluntary redundancy, as they cannot cope with the punishing demands.

Royal Mail is also bringing forward plans to entrench a two-tier workforce with new entrants on inferior terms and conditions.

In the face of this management offensive, we have been disarmed by the collusion of the CWU leadership with the company.

The CWU stated that the talks continued over outstanding areas, but our terms will be sacrificed building on the major concessions already agreed. This includes later start and finishing times and seasonal hours to guarantee flexibility, so we are at the beck and call of the company with no life outside of work.

On the issue of pay, Ward could not even bring himself to reject as an insult the final offer from Royal Mail of just 10 percent for three years and only referred to areas of improvement. This is after we had imposed on us one of the lowest pay awards for any section of workers last year of 2 percent and as the cost-of-living crisis still rages.

The regime of management intimidation must be ended. This starts with the overturning of all trumped up charges against some 400 CWU reps and union members during the dispute who have faced dismissal or suspension. The CWU leadership have thrown our colleagues to the wolves, agreeing to a toothless review headed by an appointee of the graveyard of strikes, the arbitration service ACAS. There must be no settlement before all victimised postal workers are reinstated and compensated for all loss of income.

We reject the claim by Royal Mail, echoed by the CWU leadership, that the company is cash strapped and unable to pay a decent wage and working conditions. The profits we produced have been shovelled to shareholders and major investors to the tune of some £600 million. Last year four top executives alone—including Simon Thompson—received bonuses in shares worth £2.4 million.

To take the fight forward, the vote to reject the deal should become a vote of no confidence to remove Ward and Furey and the union apparatchiks, with power restored to rank-and-file postal workers where it belongs.

Signed,

UK Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact