

Defeat the CWU's rotten deal with Royal Mail!

Attend Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee meeting

Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee
21 April 2023

The Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee is holding a meeting this Sunday, April 23, at 7pm to organise a fightback against the Communication Workers Union's sellout agreement. Share the event with your colleagues and make plans to attend. You can sign up to the Committee and find out more about its work here.

On Friday afternoon the Communication Workers Union finally made a public statement on the deal reached with Royal Mail, releasing five pages of selected highlights aimed at putting a positive spin on the rotten agreement it has made behind closed doors.

Even before the full 35-page agreement was circulated on social media, postal workers could smell the stink.

The surest sign of a sellout is how much effort the union put in to telling CWU members how great the deal is. No fewer than eight videos were posted to the union's twitter page pushing the deal, and the "highlights" collected in a glossy brochure in a propaganda blitz that collapsed on first contact with reality.

"Rather than represent, you prefer to patronise. Good luck with a marketing campaign that insults members' intelligence," wrote one postal worker.

At last posties know what the CWU leadership has been doing these last few months: figuring out how to dress up its sellout and screwing up the courage to put it to the membership.

Workers know best what the deal would mean for them, and the *World Socialist Web Site* will be publishing a detailed commentary in the next days, but here are the key issues.

The pay offer is as bad if not worse than feared. Workers will get a 10 percent raise in the three years from April 2022. This accepts the 2 percent imposed by Royal Mail for April 2022-2023 and comes after the CWU previously agreed a 3.7 percent rise for the

two years April 2020-2022. This gives a roughly 14 percent rise between April 2020-2025. Prices have already climbed by over 25 percent, with more than two years of inflation to go. In addition a previous lump-sum payment of £1,800 has been reduced to £500, before tax.

In an insulting attempt to sweeten the deal, the agreement states that "for each financial year up to and including 2024/2025... The first 20% of operating profit will be distributed as a one-off payment to employees."

What a fraud! Royal Mail has spent the past year justifying its attacks on the workforce by pleading unsustainable losses, claims repeated by the CWU, and the opening paragraphs of its agreement with the company. All sorts of creative accounting has been used to make this claim, while still handing massive dividends out to shareholders.

Posties explained on social media, "They split GLS [a very profitable subsidiary of Royal Mail] and RM [Royal Mail], there isn't going to be any profit, heard this from RM before too. The 'phantom shares' where they just reinvested all profit in that 5th year and we all got nothing." And, "'We're losing a million pounds a day' is all we've been hearing for the past year. So with that in mind...you could give us a 100% share...100% of nothing is still nothing."

Changed start and finish times will wreck family lives. Agreed changes to start and finish times mean Royal Mail can implement a last letter time of 16:30. One worker commented, "Thousands took the job for the finishing time to fit around school/childcare and work/life balance. Now what for them?" Another, "I assume Dave [Ward, CWU General Secretary] and his sidekicks don't have childcare issues, neither will they be working up to 4.30 on a Saturday afternoon."

New employees' contracts "will include a requirement

for regular Sunday working,” creating a two-tier workforce and adding incentive for management to pressure longstanding employees out of the job. Sunday work remains nominally voluntary for current employees...or else! “In the event current employees do not volunteer to follow the work... Royal Mail reserves the right to use alternative resourcing arrangements.”

Workers’ jobs are not protected. Royal Mail’s commitment to no compulsory redundancies only lasts “for the life of this agreement,” with a “a joint review of this position in April 2025.”

Based on reports received by the WSWs, the joint CWU-Royal Mail March 2 agreement on revisions is forcing thousands of long-standing posties to quit because of impossible workloads. At one delivery office, 20 percent of the workforce has taken voluntary redundancy.

Postal workers commented, “No need for redundancy when thousands have already quit. Royal Mail aren’t replacing the already lost staff”; “They no longer needed compulsory because of the sheer amounts of fed-up people leaving and/or taking voluntary.”

“Uberisation” has not been ended! The headline claim made by the CWU executive that “Uberisation” has been ended is a lie. But the agreement states only that the company “has confirmed they will not introduce owner-drivers into the Royal Mail core USO operation.” Parcelforce will “freeze” the recruitment of Owner Drivers while it “consider[s] alternative solutions.” One worker commented of their workplace, “We’ve seen owner drivers/agency flood offices despite taking action against it.”

Another section of the agreement refers to the “design and pilot of a new hybrid reward mechanism based on a price per item approach” and “pay per parcel” to “incentivise performance.”

Victimised workers have been thrown to the wolves. The end of the dispute is not made dependent on Royal Mail reversing its suspension or dismissal of some 400 CWU reps and union members during the dispute. After claiming that it would stand by workers and its own officials in the face of an unprecedented victimisation campaign, the CWU reaffirms that their fate will be fobbed off to “an independent review of conduct cases involving CWU members and representatives.”

That review will be overseen by the Right Honorable Lord Falconer of Thoroton, a veteran of Tony Blair’s Labour government. How he will act has already been indicated by Ward, whose last comment on the subject was that some of those disciplined had “crossed the line”

and would not be defended by the CWU.

Workers demanded to know, “how much longer must our dismissed reps and members have to wait. These people need their jobs back NOW” and made clear, “Not voting yes until all suspended colleagues are back to work.”

There is much more to say, including on sick pay and hours, but this is more than enough for postal workers to reject the agreement. “I’ve not heard anyone from my office who would vote yes”; “No-one in my office has said they’re voting yes. I know I’m not”; “Massive no from our office and I’ve asked 30 plus members and not one said yes”; “I don’t know anyone in Burnley DO that will vote yes for that after speaking to 50+ posties there this afternoon.”

Every postal worker should do all they can to ensure the biggest possible No vote. The bigger the rejection, the more momentum the rank-and-file will have for the difficult next stage of this fight—removing the union leadership and handing the power back to the rank-and-file.

Posties have already commented, “instead of being called The CWU, you should be called the CMU... The Communication Management Union”; “They feathered their own nest and left us out in the cold. Time to get rid of Ward and his cronies”; “Dave has lost the battle with [Royal Mail CEO] Simon Thompson. It’s now up to us the members, to win the war.”

This fight to build a new leadership will be the focus of Sunday’s meeting of the Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee. Sign up to attend here.



To contact the WSWs and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)