

UK Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee resolves to fight Communication Workers Union sell-out deal

Our reporter
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The Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee held a meeting Sunday, passing a resolution pledging a campaign against the sell-out deal agreed between the Communication Workers Union (CWU) and Royal Mail. The meeting was attended by postal workers from all grades within the Royal Mail Group (RMG).

The resolution states:

**Organise to defeat CWU-Royal Mail agreement:
Vote NO! Reinstate all victimised workers! Build the
Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee!**

The CWU's deal with Royal Mail leaked Friday is a betrayal of Royal Mail workers' eight-month battle to defeat the company's destruction of our jobs, pay, terms and conditions.

General Secretary Dave Ward and Andy Furey declared Friday that "Uberisation is cancelled". But their 35-page "RMG/CWU Business Recovery, Transformation and Growth Agreement" gives the company everything it wanted, delivering Uberisation via the back door.

The CWU has signed up to the most savage assault on postal workers in the history of Royal Mail, pledging "to reduce the overall cost base and make RMG more competitive and agile". No section of the workforce will be left unscathed, beginning with a massive real-terms pay cut, slashing sick pay and core entitlements, and market-driven "flexibility" across all operations.

The Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee rejects every aspect of this agreement, including changes to our start and finish times, and longer shifts and seasonal variations that will ruin family life and destroy our health. The CWU has approved "a 24/7 network, including Sundays", agreeing to explore "all options" to reduce "unit cost per parcel" including "new reward mechanisms based on the hybrid pay per parcel model" to compete with the likes of Amazon.

If "employees do not volunteer to follow the work,

after utilising and developing all options contained in this agreement, Royal Mail reserves the right to use alternative resourcing arrangements." In other words, those who refuse to submit to the brutal new work regime will be sacked.

Ward and Furey declared the deal a "win". This is because it cements their partnership with Royal Mail executives via "RMG/CWU joint recovery and transformation boards" and a Joint Working Group. These will enforce a relentless process of workplace revisions attacking our terms and conditions. The CWU acts as an arm of management and every part of its apparatus, down to the reps, will be expected to toe the line.

The deal hangs the 400 sacked workers and reps out to dry. Their fate will be decided by a pro-company "independent" review headed by Lord Falconer of Thoroton, a veteran of Tony Blair's Labour government. We demand the reinstatement of all victimised workers as the precondition for any agreement with Royal Mail.

The fight begins now at every mail centre and delivery office across RMG to deliver a resounding NO vote to this sellout agreement. This must be the start of a fightback across RMG including Parcelforce. Resolutions should be prepared at all workplaces to reject the CWU-RMG deal and draw up our own demands for decent pay, terms and conditions for all. This counter-offensive must restore control to the rank-and-file to defeat Royal Mail's agenda-backed and enforced by the CWU's unaccountable bureaucracy.

Tony Robson, a leading writer for the WSWs who has written extensively on the postal workers' dispute, told the meeting that since the 35-page agreement was leaked, "From the best kept secret in town we now have a propaganda blitz from CWU headquarters. This started from the national briefing on Friday with a highly skewed press release and multiple

videos from Ward to extol the agreement.”

Robson pointed to the statement produced by the committee on Friday evening in response to the sell-out deal, which explained, “The proposed pay settlement is just 10 percent for 3 years. Postal workers will not receive any pay rise for the past year just a one off £500 lump sum as the CWU has accepted fully the 2 percent already imposed. The 6 percent for this year is half the rate of RPI with an even more substandard 2 percent to follow for next year. Including pay awards from 2020 this works out at 14 percent over a period in which prices have risen by 25 percent with two years to go.”

Robson stressed, “Our work at Royal Mail provides a lead to other key sections of workers in struggle who are in the same boat, resisting sell-out agreements as the unions work hand in glove with the Sunak government.” He drew attention to the fight waged by workers in France against President Macron’s pension reforms. The French president had been able to ram them through because “the union bureaucracy is blocking the type of fight which must be mounted. They called for mediation while 80 percent of the population supported blocking the economy through a General Strike and bringing down Macron.

“This fight can only be taken forward through rank-and-file committees mobilising workers and youth who recognise there is nothing to talk about with the President of the Rich. The issue facing workers is taking ownership of their struggles and unifying the fight as part of the European and international counter offensive.”

Robson concluded by recommending to the committee that it declares “its solidarity with the strikes by Amazon workers in Coventry. Royal Mail has used Amazon as its benchmark for attacking terms and conditions... Amazon workers standing up to Jeff Bezos must not be isolated. They are not rivals but allies in the fight against the race to the bottom.”

In reply, one worker commented, “Solidarity to all workers in the postal and logistics industry.”

Comments from postal workers who registered for the meeting were universally hostile to the CWU-RMG deal. One wrote, “Pay rise is not backdated. Pay rise is not even near to the inflation. And not even close of the amount of money we lost with the strikes.”

Another said, “Feedback from members on the agreement is they are voting NO some asking about mass transfer to another union, preferably with strike pay otherwise they will leave CWU, etc.”

Another said, “Feel angry, disappointed and lied to by the union!”

A worker in attendance at the meeting commented, “I’m with my union, but after seeing the deal, I’m so underwhelmed by what’s offered. What good is a £500 payment when it will be worth £300 after tax? The cost of living is out of this world and the pay isn’t even touching it. My colleagues are going to struggle with childcare costs because of the start and finish times.”

Another asked, “How have the CWU allowed Royal Mail to decimate the agreed voluntary redundancy terms from two-year salary to just nine months?”

One postal worker said he was asked to attend the Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee meeting by other workers in his delivery office. He asked, “Members in my unit will by majority vote no. The next question is what is the next step if a no vote is successful?”

The meeting was attended by a member of the pseudo-left Workers Power group, a CWU rep, who said he did not agree with the existence of the Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee. He stated, “I don’t think we can declare a rank-and-file committee. I think we have build a No campaign and out of that build a rank and file committee.”

The fraudulent character of the “rank-and-file” movement he was proposing was made clear when he cited as his precedent the campaign in 2007, after the CWU had concluded a rotten deal with management, “Everybody got together because one of the guys on the PEC [Postal Executive Committee] allowed us to launch it on a much larger scale and actually said he would go into opposition to it.”

In other words, he wanted a “rank-and-file” movement endorsed by and acceptable to a section of the union bureaucracy. Until then, only a campaign for a No vote that did not challenge the union hierarchy was permissible. He said of his much-vaunted 2007 campaign, led by CWU officials, “Unfortunately, we didn’t win”.

The meeting concluded with an announcement for attendance at the upcoming April 30 May Day online rally being held by the International Committee of the Fourth International, the International Youth and Students for Social Equality, and the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees.

Postal workers, sign up and support the Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee and find out more about its work here.



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