Rank-and-File delivery worker sets out case for No vote on CWU-Royal Mail agreement

3 May 2023

A member of the Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee (PWRFC) has issued an appeal to Delivery workers on why they should reject the Communication Workers Union's (CWU) pro-company agreement with Royal Mail. A founding member of the committee, he explains the detrimental impact the agreement will have on colleagues and the red lines the CWU bureaucracy has crossed.

The PWRFC appeals to workers in Fleet, Parcelforce, Processing and other areas across Royal Mail to submit statements on the impact of the CWU-Royal Mail "Business, Recovery, Transformation and Growth" agreement and what it will mean for you, your family and your colleagues.

An overall summary of the deal was published by WSWS on April 26.

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As the largest group of workers in this referendum, delivery workers will carry the heaviest burden in the plan to create huge profits. Delivery workers will have to work longer, faster, and harder to reduce the cost of their jobs and to increase the profits of the work. Delivery workers will see their mates leaving, retiring early, and being managed out of their jobs. We waged a fight over 18 days of strike action to stop the casualisation of our jobs.

The myth of profit sharing

We have been promised a share in the profits we create time and time again. "Colleague Share" did not produce a single penny for delivery workers. We have workmates who do not receive a penny in share dividends. Profit sharing schemes give very little money to workers in return for the work they do. The claim of "trickle-down economics" was used to justify privatisation which we have paid for ever since with our jobs, pay, terms and conditions.

More work for less pay

We have suffered below inflation pay rises for years and this is the largest cut in wages for a long time. Every time delivery workers are given a "pay rise" it is self-financed by us through cutting costs. This time delivery workers are being asked to reduce our additional payments. Over half of the money given for delivering leaflets is being used to top up weekly wages. Wages will not increase by the rate of inflation. Delivery workers took strike action to get an inflation proof pay rise.

No job is secure with extended casualisation

There is no job security for workers beyond 2025. Until then, jobs will be casualised through the employment of other delivery workers on inferior terms and conditions. The offer agrees to a two-tier workforce. Working conditions will be attacked by placing pressure on loyal, long serving delivery workers--those who can, will leave. Every workplace will have vacancies that will not be filled. Delivery workers went on strike to stop a two-tier workforce.

The gutting of USO

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Dedicated parcel routes are the beginning of courier style delivery services along the lines of Amazon. The creation of these routes will take work away from workplaces and concentrate it in fewer locations. It will put workplaces at risk of merger and closure. Dedicated parcel routes will not ensure a universal service and will reduce the number of delivery workers. We took strike action to defend the Universal Service Obligation. We care about the service provided to the community across the country through letter deliveries. The public are being failed by Royal Mail and its obsession with profits from parcel deliveries.

The sick and injured must not become scapegoats!

The non-stop revisions and increased workloads are breaking our bodies. Royal Mail many years ago ended the practice of weighing the loads taken out on delivery.

The occupational injuries sustained, such as plantar fasciitis (a painful foot injury), are very hard to cure. There is also the mental illness caused through daily pressure on delivery workers to achieve the unachievable. No delivery worker wants to be absent from work, earning less money. Delivery workers must not allow the sick and injured to be singled out and blamed for the industry making them ill. The attendance regime in the agreement will penalise the sick and injured. Delivery workers went on strike to defend terms and conditions, not to have the clock turned back on them.

Oppose sweatshop conditions

Indoor delivery work and delivery workplaces must be protected. Delivery workers cannot agree to reducing their indoor working time and the replacement or removal of their indoor working equipment. We are being offered European style working conditions where preparation equipment has been removed, where delivery workers operate from their own homes and prepare their work in the street. These are gig-economy working conditions.

Outdoor delivery work will increase if the agreement is accepted. We will face walking the streets for five or six hours without access to toilets or places to rest. The time spent outdoors will increase, meaning those who cannot walk for longer and longer will leave the industry. Delivery workers oppose covering vacant work through (col)lapsing or absorbing uncovered work. The agreement will not stop lapsing and it will continue during periods of reduced work.

The work of delivery workers is being casualised even further through the enforcement and renewal of flexibility clauses in our contracts. Delivery workers will be expected to work until their delivery is completed. The stricter flexibility clause in the offer will stop delivery workers completing once their time ends.

Delivery workers will be under surveillance throughout their working time just like at Amazon--however the CWU and Royal Mail try and dress it up. The offer introduces an electronic individual performance regime called “My Performance”, an APP on the PDA digital tracker, that will be used to continuously review and drive-up exploitation.

Defend workers’ representation

We cannot accept an end to our fight unless all the 400 CWU reps and workers sacked or suspended during the dispute are reinstated. The agreement leaves them left behind at the mercy of a kangaroo court presided over by a Labour Lord who is no friend of workers.

Delivery workers will only have a say in their workplace if they have strong and independent representation based on their choice. The management frame-ups are directed against us having the right to determine our workplace representation. Delivery workers will not be able to defend their friends and family, or their brothers and sisters who start working in the industry based on inferior terms and conditions. The agreement paves the way for joint working parties with the CWU acting as an arm of management.

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