

CWU announces “agreement” with Royal Mail on revisions: A backroom manoeuvre to ram through a sell-out deal

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The Communication Workers Union (CWU) statement issued Thursday morning after two days of talks with Royal Mail claims to have reached an agreement over a review of “failed revisions”.

The statement provided no details to the membership about what “actions” the CWU has agreed during its latest closed-door session with the company. CWU leaders Dave Ward and Andy Furey went back into talks with Royal Mail executives after last Wednesday’s announcement postponing the ballot of 115,000 postal workers over their rotten deal to end the national dispute. This was the second time it had pulled the ballot in a fortnight, this time with only 24 hours’ notice.

The statement clarifies nothing other than confirming that the CWU leadership remains unaccountable to the membership and is working hand-in-glove with Royal Mail. It states:

“Meetings have taken place with Royal Mail Group to discuss the crucial issues of restoring quality of service and reviewing failed revisions. The employer has accepted the need for a joint statement and more importantly, a set of agreed actions on these issues. It has also been agreed any statement will be launched via a joint zoom meeting of every manager and CWU representative in the UK.”

The Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee warned last week that the postponement of the ballot served a two-fold purpose: avoiding a massive No vote while trying to cobble together something that could be dressed up as a “concession” to push through the deal. Ward and Furey are fully aware that their complicity with revisions is fuelling a revolt against their pro-company agreement. They justified

postponing the ballot on the grounds that “the environment was not right” for it to be held.

The delayed update from the CWU on their talks, and the absence of any detail provoked immediate and universal scorn from postal workers on the CWU’s Facebook and Twitter pages:

- “Couldn’t care less get my ballot to me so I can vote NO, under no circumstances should a union agree poorer sick pay conditions!”

- “Watch as the union demands yet another joint statement in a week’s time after Royal Mail renege on this one within hours.”

- “Stalling a #VoteNo?”

- “The white flag will be raised on zoom.”

The CWU bureaucracy’s cynicism is underscored by their citing a “toxic” environment created by “failed revisions” which they helped implement. On March 2, a joint CWU-Royal Mail statement agreed the revisions as a cost cutting exercise. In its financial report for 2022-3, Royal Mail boasted that revisions had been implemented at all workplaces alongside 10,000 redundancies achieved by the end of March. This jobs massacre was pushed through while the CWU Postal Executive sat on a 96 percent strike mandate from mid-February.

The membership is now being denied its right to throw out the rotten deal, for a second time, through entirely undemocratic methods.

Ward and Furey have not retreated one inch from their agreement with Royal Mail which is a corporate blueprint for creating a low wage, flexible, two-tier workforce to compete with the likes of Amazon. It rewards the bureaucracy with positions on the Joint Working Group and Transformation Boards that will

oversee the company's sweatshop charter against postal workers.

This corporatist agenda demands the suppression of any democracy within the CWU. The fight by postal workers to defeat brutal restructuring threatens the CWU's commitment to restoring profitability after a £600 million looting spree by shareholders and investors.

Ward has attacked postal workers opposing this agenda as wreckers, warning those voting No that they are courting "mutual assured destruction". CWU officials are doubling down on their claims that workers and management share a common interest and must work "in partnership". This means workers sacrificing their interests for the benefit of billionaire majority shareholder Daniel Kretinsky and other oligarchs and investors who control Royal Mail.

While Ward and Furey continue their dialogue with company executives, postal workers have written to the *World Socialist Web Site* explaining they have been blocked from the CWU Twitter page for posting comments against the deal.

That the CWU's "agreed actions" with the company on revisions is being unveiled at an online meeting with every Royal Mail manager and CWU representative in the UK is part and parcel of its pro-company offensive. An earlier statement by the CWU calling for such a meeting made clear its aim was to agree productivity and cost saving targets.

Ward and Furey have assigned to the CWU reps the task of rubber stamping their sell-out. They know that mass meetings of postal workers at Royal Mail workplaces would result in an eruption of anger and demands for a resumption of strikes and unofficial walkouts. That is why they have buried news of the unofficial action by mail delivery workers in Glasgow.

The CWU's objection to "failed revisions" is centred on efforts to ensure the union bureaucracy is not bypassed as the company's junior partner in imposing cost cutting measures, including the junking of the Universal Service Obligation and the suppression of industrial action. That is the meaning of its demands for reinstating the "Industrial Relation framework"—embedding the union apparatus as Royal Mail's corporatist labour management partner.

The Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee is reiterating its call:

Ward, Furey and the authors of the surrender document must be removed from office and the union's assets and conduct of the strike placed under the control of the rank-and-file. This bureaucracy cannot be pushed to fight. It responds to rank-and-file pressure by shutting down every democratic mechanism, censoring and brow-beating critics, postponing the ballot and even cancelling the CWU's annual conference.

Postal workers should convene workplace meetings to organise a fightback, electing rank-and-file committees to coordinate the struggle against Royal Mail and for the removal of Ward, Furey and company.

Demand the reinstatement of strike action to fight for the following demands:

- No pay cuts! For an inflation-busting pay-rise funded by the shareholders
- No surrender of terms and conditions! Hands off sick pay, hours and entitlements!
- No inferior conditions for new entrants! Reject a two-tier workforce!
- No agreement with Royal Mail unless all victimised workers and reps are unconditionally reinstated!

We urge Royal Mail workers to contact the Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee to coordinate this counter-offensive. The committee's next Zoom meeting is on Sunday June 11, 7pm. Register here.



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