

Royal Mail thanks “our union” for biggest revisions in history: Rank-and-file must take control!

Statement by the Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee
15 June 2023

Royal Mail has announced its successful imposition of “the biggest revision ever in the history of this business” delivering a barely concealed tribute to Communication Workers Union (CWU) officials for “working together” to make the company competitive with Amazon.

Royal Mail’s statement explodes the lying claims of Dave Ward and Andy Furey on June 9 that “progress has been made” on “restoring quality and USO compliance” and “improving the local office environment”.

Not only has the CWU’s “progress” failed to materialise (a fact we already knew), but Grant McPherson, Chief Operating Officer for Royal Mail, made clear the current brutal revisions are merely a downpayment on what is to come.

Royal Mail’s press release alluded to the CWU with its headline, “Change is difficult, but it has to be done, and together”. His remarks were delivered at a “Village Hall session” in London alongside Royal Mail managers and CWU officials. McPherson declared, “Thank you to everyone who helped us achieve this”.

Citing Royal Mail’s self-inflicted financial losses, McPherson declared with a straight face, “We can’t afford to throw money at the problem”.

He was silent on the £1 billion in profits squandered by Royal Mail on shareholders during the pandemic, declaring, “We must become more efficient”, “the job doesn’t stop” and “We need to work together to change our culture and mindset”.

McPherson outlined the company’s strategic aim of making Royal Mail’s 140,000-strong workforce competitive with global logistics giant Amazon: “At the moment, Amazon is currently top in terms of NPS

[Net Promoter Score-loyalty] for recipient customers according to the preferred carrier report. We can’t accept this.”

Jon Nicholson, UK sales director for Royal Mail and Parcelforce, said the company’s business-to-business clients, “want an easy life” and that failure meant “they’ll go elsewhere and give their business to a competitor. We can’t risk that happening.”

The meaning is clear: The CWU’s pro-company “Business, Recovery, Transformation and Growth” agreement (AKA surrender document) will be used to enforce gig economy conditions via shift flexibility, the gutting of sick leave and retirement benefits, PDA surveillance and performance management and inferior pay, terms and conditions for all new entrants, to compete with Amazon, Evri, DHL and other sweatshop operators.

Responding on Wednesday to Royal Mail’s announcement, a notice was posted on Royal Mail Chat stating, “Agreement reached on national statement which satisfies CWU demands. CWU comms issued tomorrow. Nation zoom call with branches next week. National joint zoom with all Reps and Managers next week. Date for ballot agreed by [Postal Executive Committee].”

But so far there has been no official response from the CWU. What such a “national statement” will look like can be judged by the fact that the CWU’s “comms agenda” of Zoom meetings with managers and reps includes no such meetings for members.

There is a huge contradiction in this dispute. Mass opposition exists to the CWU-Royal Mail agreement, but it has yet to take an organised form.

Ward, Furey and the postal executive are terrified of

the membership. That is why they have suppressed all democracy within the union. They are running down the strike mandate which expires on August 16, and doing everything they can to block a No vote and prevent a rank-and-file eruption. Ward and his cronies have repeatedly attacked the Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee and the *World Socialist Web Site* for cutting through the CWU's disinformation and galvanising the rank-and-file.

Calls are growing for Ward and Furey to be sacked. Members are demanding their right to vote this deal down and resume industrial action to defeat the company's attacks. The executive has responded with a war of attrition against the membership. It has even cancelled the union's annual conference. Under the CWU's anti-democratic constitution, members have no rights to remove the leadership and a CWU "policy conference" can only be called with the support of 51 percent of branches, the majority of which are either dysfunctional or whose union reps are toeing the official line.

The views and fighting sentiments of Royal Mail workers have been relegated to the sidelines by the bureaucracy. But beneath the surface, opposition is reaching boiling point. When postal workers at Glasgow's Baird Street DO walked-out last month over bullying and revisions, news of their fight was blacked-out by CWU head office. At Craigavon DO in Northern Ireland, members' unanimous strike vote under Rule 13 to fight revisions and the suspension of their reps was repeatedly blocked by the CWU executive. Their control over our fight must be broken!

The grip of the bureaucracy can be ended through the building of rank-and-file committees at every workplace. Postal workers can start a committee at their delivery office or mail centre, taking necessary measures to protect against victimisation while they campaign for support among colleagues.

The Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee offers colleagues every assistance in this struggle. We have proposed the following red lines in the fight to overturn the CWU's pro-company agreement:

- No pay cuts! For an inflation-busting pay-rise funded by major 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!

The Royal Mail dispute involves the largest workforce in the UK outside of the NHS. It is part of a broader wave of strikes begun last summer by rail workers, nurses, teachers, BT workers, oil refinery workers, dock workers and others against the biggest attack on pay and conditions since the 1930s. Across Europe and internationally the working class is fighting back, including at Amazon, UPS and at Royal Mail's sister company GLS.

Royal Mail and the CWU have two main advantages in their fight against postal workers: they have a worked-out global strategy and they are organised. The Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee, as part of the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) provides a forum to discuss and develop a global strategy to win, placing the interests of the working class before shareholder profit. Get in touch and join this fight today.



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