

Communication Workers Union stalls “rule 13” industrial action in Shropshire against revisions

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Royal Mail workers in Shropshire, England have voted for local industrial action against revisions that have hiked up workloads and led to systematic failures of the USO. But a postal worker has told the *World Socialist Web Site* that the Communication Workers Union (CWU) is stalling their action.

Members of the CWU at Tweedale delivery office voted unanimously for industrial action on June 23 under rule 13 of the union’s constitution.

Under rule 13, local branches have the power to “authorise, endorse, call or take industrial action, including strike action”. The rule further states, “Where a Branch decides to take action to protect immediate local interests, the General Secretary and NEC must be informed.”

But a CWU rep told members they would have to wait for any decision on their vote until after the ballot on the union’s sellout national agreement with Royal Mail. CWU leaders Dave Ward and Andy Furey are trying to ram through their pro-company deal through anti-democratic methods, with the ballot closing on July 11.

The vote at Tweedale follows similar action by Royal Mail workers in Glasgow and Northern Ireland. In May, the CWU blacked-out news of a walkout in Glasgow against imposed revisions. Since February, the union’s postal executive has blocked a unanimous strike vote under rule 13 to demand the reinstatement of two victimised reps at Craigavon Delivery Office in Northern Ireland.

How many similar votes are being suppressed by the CWU postal executive? Royal Mail workers delivered a 96 percent renewed strike mandate in February, which the CWU suppressed to conduct closed-door talks with

the company. Ward and the postal executive have been firefighting ever since, desperate to prevent any coordinated challenge to their pro-company agreement.

Do you have any information to share? We invite postal workers to get in touch using the online form below. Your anonymity will be protected.

Report from Tweedale Delivery Office

“We voted for action under Rule 13 against the revision made at our Delivery Office a few months ago, since then the workloads have become impossible, and we have had enough.

“There are around 80 employed at the Delivery Office. We’ve seen around 20 leave in the past three or four months and they have not been replaced, agency staff are brought in on-and-off.

“The revision up until now has only affected around a quarter of the workforce but things are already bad enough. We are talking delivery rounds increased from 580 to 1,000 delivery points which is impossible to complete in four and a half hours. Mail is failing daily but the managers only care about tracked parcels because this affects their bonuses.

“They like agency staff because they don’t get paid for meals breaks, but they are wanting Royal Mail staff to work for free, no meal breaks, and coming in early unpaid to complete the prepping—some are doing this because they feel it will make their jobs secure.

“Everyone is hacked off. It is all totally unachievable. Royal Mail just lies, recently blaming us for failures of

the USO, saying it was because of industrial action and sickness absence. We are treated as if we are overpaid and work-shy by managers who don't know the first thing about the job and are not interested in providing a public service, just making further 'cost-efficiencies' on behalf of the Area Managers.

"Nothing has changed. The CWU is just telling lies about a review of revisions and maintaining the USO [universal service obligation]. We decided something had to be done about this 'keep your mouth shut and get on with your work' regime of bullying.

"We had heard about the walk-out in Glasgow and the vote for rule 13 action at Craigavon, Northern Ireland, but not through the CWU. It was via the internet, social media and the *World Socialist Web Site*.

"We would have moved to this type of action anyway as the job has been going down-hill for a long time. We are in a high growth area here in Shropshire, with new build houses. The solution of Royal Mail is just to increase our workload, not employ extra staff.

"There was a good turnout for the meeting of around 50, off work premises. Not a single worker failed to raise their hand. It was unanimous for Rule 13.

"The meeting was put back several times. When we took the vote, the CWU rep told us we would have to wait until after the ballot on the deal. This should not affect our action as it is on local matters. They are kicking it into the long grass.

"No one is voting Yes for the agreement at our place. It does not resolve any of the issues of suffering and problems we face over the constant demands for 'efficiency'. It's all lies from the CWU. They want us to work for free—no meal breaks and unpaid work. The pay and cuts to sick entitlements are bad, but it's about the physicality of the job, the workloads are backbreaking and impossible. They don't care about the welfare or health and safety of anyone.

"The vote on the deal was put back twice to avoid a rejection. It has nothing to do with reviewing revisions or protecting the USO, everything is being ploughed through.

"We have been lied to by both sides Royal Mail and the CWU and sold down the river.

"All this talk about the 'financial difficulties' of the business by the CWU—they might as well be Royal Mail. They had money for the shareholders. If they go for administration, it is just their way of seeking a

bailout. Make it fail so the government can take over the letters, while they siphon off the more profitable parcels and run it like a courier service.

"Ward and Furey have no idea about what we face, it's like chalk and cheese. I agree we should get rid of these three clowns including Chris Webb [CWU Head of Communications] that would be a start. The union does not stand up for us, it has the back of Royal Mail. I hear things are bad at Parcelforce [part of Royal Mail Group] and BT Group.

"You see what the government are doing over pushing up the retirement age and MOTs on the over 50s. It is all driven by greed and money. It will take a big movement to change anything from the standpoint of the working class."



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