

Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee's call for a fight against CWU-Royal Mail agreement receives welcome response

Our correspondents
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“Keep up the fight” was the response of a postal worker at the Royal Mail’s Mount Pleasant sorting office in London to the campaign for the Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee’s (PWRFC) next online Zoom meeting on Sunday, September 24 at 7pm.

Over the past week hundreds of copies of the PWRFC statement “Reinstate all victimised reps and postal workers! End the CWU-Lord Falconer conspiracy at Royal Mail!” and the WSWS article “Postal workers in Scotland and London vote for action as CWU-Royal Mail partnership ushers in savage attacks” have been distributed at mail centre and delivery offices.

Postal workers spoke to WSWS reporting teams in London and Manchester who expressed anger and deep-seated opposition to the sellout agreement rammed through in July by Communication Workers Union (CWU) leaders Dave Ward and Andy Furey.

Many postal workers at **Mount Pleasant Mail Centre**—a major sorting office in Farringdon, central London, where Royal Mail headquarters is located—stopped to express their views and experiences about the flood of attacks opened up by the Business Recovery, Transformation and Growth Agreement (BRTG Agreement). They were scathing over the complicity of CWU officials with Royal Mail on a national and local level in overhauling their terms and conditions.

A young postal worker who took leaflets to distribute among his co-workers commented, “One thing is for definite at our place the union are not representing the workers, they are working with management, the atmosphere on the shop floor is toxic.”

A senior postie described management intimidation as “rife” in the workplace with co-workers instructed to carry out duties outside their job description and training, such as driving vans without a license. A group of workers were told they had to transfer to another depot in Essex and accept a new contract which paid three hours a day, 15 hours a week which they refused.

“A lot of posties have left the union in disgust; they don’t see the point in giving their hard-earned cash to a union that does nothing for them,” the worker said.

Postal workers recounted other examples of the raft of attacks they faced including the disregard for health and safety. They told WSWS reporters that one worker had died, and another suffered a stroke during the previous heatwave. Workloads are already unmanageable during what is traditionally the least busy time for

delivery with traffic set to increase in September. At nearby Tottenham delivery office postal workers were refusing to accept new productivity targets recommended by the union.

At the **Hayes Delivery Office in West London**, near London’s Heathrow airport, a postie spoke about their recent vote for strike action.

“We voted for strike action but there are no strikes till the end of September when the lump sum comes through from the national deal.”

Another worker said, “We voted to strike against the workload. They [Royal Mail] are not forcing us to stay out until we finish our load, but my fear is they will.”

In response to the PWRFC statement in defence of the 400 victimised workers they added, “They sacked our union official. It is a very oppressive atmosphere in the depot. Last November our union representative intervened to stop a manager bullying a quiet hard-working colleague. The union guy told us to stop work which we did, we stayed in the depot but refused to deliver. The union went into a meeting with the manager, there was a lot of shouting, and the union official was suspended and then sacked weeks later. I did not realize it was happening everywhere. I am very interested in this meeting and will let my work friends know and bring them along.”

A delivery driver who stopped his van to take a statement responded to the discussion about the collusion of the CWU with Royal Mail.

“That’s exactly what we are thinking in here, management and union are doing something behind our backs, that’s why we voted to strike. I will forward this information to my colleagues.”

A colleague said, “I have seen a lot of changes in my time but in the last two years it has been seismic. A lot of workers have left the union over this deal. If your older you can’t do the work. They are bringing in a lot of younger staff under worse conditions, on a different hourly rate and they don’t get paid for their lunch break.”

This is in fact the content of the BRTG Agreement which the CWU bureaucracy signed up to and is enforcing at a national level. It creates a two-tier workforce with new entrants on inferior terms and senior posties forced out via a back door policy of fire and rehire. A reported 1,000 postal workers are leaving Royal Mail per month.

Even the CWU wording on the ballot regarding industrial action

voted for at Hayes and at Stranraer in Scotland over “unagreed change” is false. During the dispute, Ward and Furey rubber stamped completing of the largest cost cutting revisions in history—a downpayment on the brutal restructuring agreement. This could only proceed after a 96 percent mandate in February for the renewal of national strike was overruled to pave the way for ACAS-brokered talks which hatched the rotten deal.

The stalling and isolation of action both at Hayes and Stranraer is part of a deliberate policy of divide and rule by CWU headquarters, which extends down to the local level and a warning must be sounded that other mandates will be used similarly.

As the WSWs has explained:

“The CWU postal executive has repeatedly blocked ‘rule 13’ strike votes this year, including over the victimisation and sacking of reps. Local walkouts and strike ballots were suppressed as CWU General Secretary Dave Ward and his deputy Andy Furey colluded with Royal Mail to ram through their Business Recovery, Transformation and Growth Agreement.”

What is required is a collective and organised mobilisation of the rank and file to defeat the pro-company agreement rammed through based on a campaign of lies and intimidation by Ward and Furey.

The alternative is that postal workers will be worked until they drop or are driven out. Those returning from their walks at Hayes delivery office were coming back with many unable to complete their deliveries. With temperatures topping 30 centigrade in the capital, one postie said, “It’s important what you’re raising, but I feel nausea and sick from tiredness and the heat” and could not manage to say much else.

In north-west England at **Manchester Sorting and Delivery Office** on Oldham Road postal workers stopped in their cars as they left work to take leaflets.

One postal worker asked WSWs reporters, “Have you got the follow up to last week’s article”—a reference to the PWRFC statement on the CWU-Lord Falconer review—as he took the latest WSWs article. “I read your leaflet and I agree. I’m going to put them on the tables at work,” he added.

A postal worker with long service said “I voted no [to the CWU-Royal Mail sellout deal]. I can’t believe the union have just left the reps. There are 20,000 jobs going! There’s no fight now by the unions, they’re too much like politicians.”

Another said, “Falconer won’t find in their [sacked reps] favour. You know where that’s going. Workers are getting screwed over constantly. The CWU is doing nothing. I ended up getting a £6 increase, but that put me in the next tax bracket up, so I’ve lost it!”

Another postie said, “They [Royal Mail] threw a carrot, the lump sum. We went this far, but should have gone all the way.”. The worker asked why the unions are betraying the working class and was interested in attending the PWRFC meeting and finding out more.

The hostility to the corrupt methods used by CWU in conjunction with Royal Mail to get the rotten deal through is fully justified but responsibility must be placed where it lies—with the union top brass, not the membership.

The pay component of the pro-company deal accepted by the

CWU amounted to a paltry, well-below inflation, 10 percent over three years between 2022-5. This included the 2 percent imposed last year by Royal Mail. A £900 lump sum was added to the original non-consolidated one-off payment of £500 as the CWU stalled the ballot over the agreement to pre-empt its rejection and get it over the line. Rather than a “sweetener” it has more in common with extortion.

The well-heeled union apparatus led by Ward on his £140,000 salary demanded postal workers sign away their terms and conditions or face “mutual self-destruction”. The CWU did not pay a penny of strike pay for the 18 days of action between July and December last year as workers faced the worst inflation in a generation. The lump sums are not due to be paid until the end of this month and the £900 has come from the workers’ pensions fund.

Another postie said, “I’ve seen the changes in the workplace—it’s making your life hell.” A co-worker explained that he “reported this place to the Health and Safety Executive. Managers were telling young people they couldn’t have a break.”

Other comments included, “now management have all the power”; “Everyone wants to leave. Things have become completely difficult” and “We were sold out. Morale in there [Royal Mail] is absolutely terrible” to describe the carnage wrought by the CWU-RM agreement.

All the comments underscore that what is required is an independent path of struggle against the alignment of the CWU bureaucracy with the company and billionaire shareholders, and places the interests of postal workers above profit accumulation, in defence of a vital public service.

Register for the September 24 online meeting of the Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee [here](#).

Do you have information about conditions at your workplace? Share your views by submitting the form below. Submissions will be published anonymously.



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