

Royal Mail workers speak in run-up to next Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee meeting

Our reporters
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In the run-up to the next Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee (PWRFC) meeting this Sunday, workers at Royal Mail have continued to make their opposition felt to the betrayal inflicted by the Communication Workers Union (CWU) against their year-long struggle.

They recounted how the Business Recovery, Transformation and Growth (BRTG) Agreement pushed through in July by CWU leaders Dave Ward and Andy Furey was exacting a terrible price on working conditions. There was also interest in an independent fight for the reinstatement of all the CWU reps and workers victimised in the largest frame-up in an industrial dispute since the 1984-5 miners' strike.

Postal workers spoke to reporting teams from the *World Socialist Web Site* (WSWS) in response to 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". These have been distributed as leaflets at mail centres, delivery, and sorting offices around the country.

At **Whitechapel Delivery Office** in London's east end, a postal worker taking a leaflet commented, "It's good to see opposition to this sellout happening.

"The union will have nothing from me after September, this is a big sellout. I've been here for over 20 years, and this is the worst it has been. The money we are getting at the end of the month, I have called it severance pay, saying goodbye to all our conditions".

The lump sum of £1,507 (pro-rata) promised by September 29 has been clung to by the CWU bureaucracy as the one positive aspect of the agreement. The insulting amount is part of a mere 10 percent pay award over three years—a real terms cut.

On the issue of victimisation, a colleague explained, "We have had a union rep sacked here. It's intimidation against all of us and we are not told what is happening. In terms of the changes taking place the management have it all their own way and it is all at the union's discretion."

Another delivery worker expressed interest in learning about the mandates for local action at other Royal Mail workplaces—reported in the WSWS article in the face of a CWU news embargo.

"I have heard that there are strikes taking place in different areas

but don't know where and the union are silent on it. Over the years I have paid hundreds of pounds in union dues, and this is what we have got! I will read your leaflet with a lot of interest as we need something else now. We need to oppose this agreement but it's the union that is operating it."

At **Lower Edmonton Delivery Office** in north London, there was a high take-up of leaflets as delivery workers rushed back from their walks.

A postal worker explained, "With the Seasonal Variations which have been implemented, up to December 13 we are starting 24 minutes earlier a day but still unable to complete our walks. People are missing their health appointment letters, bills and other vital mail.

"We have received about £24 more a week in this agreement, and we don't have a life outside of work. It is all based around the company. None of the profits will go to workers, it will all go to the rich investors. This agreement is a betrayal by the CWU of everything we fought for."

In South Yorkshire at **Sheffield City Delivery Office**, postal workers spoke about how the clock had been turned back on working conditions. Three different postal workers with decades of experience stated they were the worst they had ever known, refuting the CWU narrative that the BRTG Agreement has seen off the worst of Royal Mail's demands.

A senior worker stated, "I feel for those coming into the job now trying to raise a family on this pay and these conditions. The company has you completely at their beck and call and the workloads are impossible. It is heading towards a gig-economy.

"It is all about profit and has been that way since privatisation, but now it's worse. We are being pushed to our limits both mentally and physically every day."

Another postal worker explained, "As far as I know most of the office were against this agreement. The CWU done a reversal on everything we were fighting for and gave the company what they wanted. Eighteen days of strike action for this and we lost a lot of money. I know a few that have left the CWU.

"We are getting this lump sum at the end of the month, but it has come out of the pensions. Royal Mail made so much money during the pandemic from our work, but it was given to the shareholders. It is all about greed.

"After P&O [mass sacking of 800 ferry workers last year] this is

another version of it in terms of fire and rehire with the new entrants on worse conditions. From what I know about their contract from those here, it involves compulsory overtime to make sure workloads are cleared.

“The workloads are demoralising. This office failed on 25 walks last week. And we are getting more packets as letters fail.”

In east Yorkshire at **Hull City Delivery Office**, posties were scathing of the company, CWU officials and the pro-company agreement.

In response to the call for a genuine fight against victimisations, one worker said, “We have to stand up for sacked workers and I will sign up for the meeting.”

In relation to the CWU leadership another added, “Well they got their golden handshake. They knew what they were doing, and they’ve been paid for services rendered and it stinks—the whole lot stinks.”

Other comments included:

“This deal has made conditions absolutely s***. We’re stuck in the middle of it all having to deal with both mail and parcels and it is dragging the working day on and on.”

“Things began to change in the workplace during the pandemic and it’s got a lot worse. Many don’t even come out for their break. We’re working extra hours for free.”

“They are all in it together; they are not bothered about the workers. We lost £1,800 for nothing and we should take further strike action against the sackings, management have engineered all this.”

At **Leeds Mail Centre** in West Yorkshire, a mail sorter expressed solidarity with those in delivery.

“A lot of the parcels here are now going over to Warrington, that big hub. So, the work is sort of dying out over here. To be honest, I feel for the delivery office workers because they are putting more and more on them. Making the walks longer.

“All governments are full of it. They are all thinking about their pockets, the ones sitting up there. They don’t think about the normal people, the hard-working people. The big boys are making plenty of money.”

A central part of the BRTG Agreement is the restructuring of Royal Mail into “a single parcel network.” Mail centre workers are being forced into a redeployment pool to speed up “headcount reduction” as more parcels are transferred to the Super Hubs and extra parcels heaped on Delivery Offices.

At the **Holbeck Delivery Office**, also in Leeds, a Royal Mail worker described conditions in the workplace as “terrible” and said he had been following the WSWS coverage. “It’s true. It’s not as double-edged as what the CWU give anyway. You give a blunt response to what is going on.”

A colleague made a series of criticism of the CWU saying, “Let’s just say, for argument’s sake, that they [CWU] were on our side and they weren’t in bed with Royal Mail and the upper people, the CEO. If they were defending us, I would quite happily, en masse, stay out.

“I think the CWU got it wrong with their strategy, I don’t know if that was deliberate as well. If they’d have gone all out before Christmas this company would have been on its knees. They [Royal Mail] would have definitely come back to the table. That

just tells me, as you look back, was there something going on at that stage?”

In relation to the potential for a general strike he added, “That’s what I would have loved. It seemed at one point in our dispute that it was gathering momentum and that everybody was saying, ‘Well, we’re going on strike, the nurses, and this and that’, and I thought, this is it, this is it! And then it just sorted of fizzled out. That’s such a shame because we could have had them by the bollocks basically. They [workers] were really unhappy, they could see the elite were treading on us, they could see that pressure was being applied.

“All I stand for is fairness. You just want a fair crack of the whip. I don’t agree with the elite. I don’t agree with the money that’s touted around. You’ve got people out there who’ve got millions and billions of pounds, and they’re never satisfied. They’ll have billions and you’ll be the worker and they’ll reduce your wage by 50p an hour, just for the sake of it, to get even more.”

In north west England at **Manchester Delivery and Sorting Office** there was anger not just against the CWU but all the unions for presiding over a rout of the national strike wave from last year. One worker commented, “We had a chance to change things when others were going out on strike and look at what has happened. We should all have come out together. When I think about the way the nurses have ended up being treated, it is unbelievable. In COVID we were told to clap for them, now they are being treated like crap!”

Another worker commented, “We have been sold down the river. When I look at what the new starters here will face, I feel really sorry for them. I remember a time when you were proud of what you did and you liked working for the post, not now.”

The latest WSWS round-up of how postal workers feel about the agreement and the union leadership came as Dave Ward told the membership to stop “moaning” about Royal Mail in a CWU Live interview. This rare appearance took place directly before his tub-thumping performance at last week’s Trades Union Congress gathering where he congratulated himself and the other bureaucrats present for winning “better settlements”, after they had collectively snuffed out the largest strike wave since the late 1980s based on sellout deals.

Postal workers wanting to oppose the lies and censorship of the union, inform each other about what is really taking place in the workplaces, and overcome the divisions being imposed by the CWU to discuss a joint fightback should attend the Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee meeting this Sunday, September 24 at 7pm. Register [here](#) for the Zoom meeting.

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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