

Royal Mail workers speak: “We have been sold down the river: walks impossible, terms and conditions evaporating”

Postal worker correspondents

10 April 2024

The *World Socialist Web Site* (WSWS) is publishing the second of two batches of write-ins received from Royal Mail workers across the UK in response to its interview with Ian, a member of the Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee (PWRFC): “Royal Mail delivery worker explains ‘The Communication Workers Union is facilitating a race to the bottom.’”

The correspondence exposes the common experience by postal workers of ramped-up exploitation, institutionalised management bullying, and the systemic running into the ground of the mail service to prioritise the more lucrative parcels market—with the CWU indicted for its complicity.

On Wednesday April 3, Royal Mail outlined proposals to begin the dismantling of the Universal Obligation Service (USO), heralding a further wave of job losses and cost-cutting. On the same day, the CWU confirmed its acceptance of this next stage of restructuring at a fraudulently named “Live Q&A” online meeting with leaders Dave Ward and Martin Walsh.

We welcome further write-ins and encourage postal workers to attend the next online meeting of the PWRFC on Sunday April 28 to discuss a strategy to fight back. Register here.

Nottinghamshire: Hi, I had to offer my opinion on the comments above as a relatively new starter to the postal community. I started on a new contract in August last year. Training was non-existent; I had no coach and was given 1 day’s induction which involved me being told which street I was to deliver to and set on my way, being followed by someone in a van at walking speed for several hours.

The new contract is as far from existing contracts as could be. Door-to-doors (D2D) for example. We are

expected to complete up to six D2Ds per delivery point every week as part of our contract, whilst your partner is getting paid for each one. Over the Christmas period this was impossible to do.

Our current situation is a total overload of the workforce with each two-man team being expected to deliver mail, tracked small parcels, oversized parcels. This, tied in with collections and the increasing amount of specials mail, is getting the back seat with some delivery points on my frame lucky to receive mail twice a week. A good week is mail every second day.

I find it hard to see how reducing delivery days of 2nd class will have any effect as you’d have to have two frames as currently mail is delivered as one unit.

Last Christmas, several times, our line mangers told us to LEAVE all mail and just take tracked parcels. So little Johnny got his new present, but 85-year-old Mrs Smith missed her NHS [National Health Service] appointment. It’s all wrong and if the workforce worked to time and didn’t go above and beyond the whole machine would stall.

The new times will, as pointed out above, push out the stalwarts of the system and lose valuable knowledge, to be replaced by increasing staff turnover with no commitment and a ‘just a job’ mentality. I despair.

London: We are bullied and harassed because of failed modernization. They know it’s failed but to me they are not behind the business but behind only money, and CWU only backing them. They don’t care about anything, make workers frustrated and they leave the business. They’ve run out of ideas.

Derbyshire: The business is becoming a shambles and a disgrace. I’m on delivery in Derbyshire on a rural walk. I’m out 6 to 7 hours on delivery most days walking up to 16/17 miles a day. The vans are awful: always breaking

down, some of them don't lock, bald tyres and everything.

I'm ashamed to be a postman now and I dread going to work in the morning. I've worked as a postman for 23 years. I used to love the job but not now.

We've been sold down the river by both the CWU and the government. I'm too knackered to go anywhere else now. Who wants a knackered 59-year-old? I consider myself very fit for my age but the job is just too hard now. Time someone did something about it.

West Midlands: Started working for Royal Mail on September 23. Within a month I had been sent to three different delivery offices. My personal opinion of the management couldn't be any lower, they only look after their mates.

New starters don't stand a chance; I would work on one walk for a day and be expected to know it immediately then put on another walk the next day and know that as well. Prepping and bundling is supposed to be done by full-timers in overtime but they only cover their own walks, leaving part-timers to prep their own jobs and deliver it all in 5 hrs (impossible). So when mail comes back or overtime is needed to complete, managers are on their backs? It's a no-win situation.

The staff turnover is ridiculous. I know three new staff who've left. The job is not what was sold to me at interview or at my induction as what they said just didn't happen. I was really looking forward to being a postman but that feeling has been shattered. I'm already actively looking for something else.

West Sussex: We have been sold down the river: walks impossible, terms and conditions evaporating, work-life balance diminishing. Senior management are intent on having a zero-hours workforce, forcing out long-serving workers by constructive dismissal.

I've been a CWU member for 33 years but they now seem redundant in the workplace and, from a member's perspective, looking after their own jobs by colluding with management. The list goes on, very depressing state of affairs!!

Buckinghamshire: I have been a postie for nearly 25 years now and I have NEVER seen morale so low. From the posties to management, no one seems bothered anymore and all you hear around you on the shop floor is colleagues moaning and groaning about the job or each other. There is no teamwork: it's all self, self, self now. And I agree with the comments made in this article that people are forever being moved around constantly. Mental health and general sickness have never been as

bad as they are now.

West Yorkshire: A manager discriminated against me for a medical issue saying they were tired of that excuse too. Union hopeless; did nothing apart from attend, rep swore loudly at me, abusive. Morale in office hit the floor. Managers show no interest or respect regardless of age. People on phones all the time. Work constantly put back in machines to better the figures.

Staffordshire: I've got 26 years' service at Royal Mail. At the moment, my depot fails every day. We have agency staff taking out tracked parcels and all overtime is doing tracked items. We are vastly understaffed, and the new plans come into force in the next few weeks. We are getting rid of 7/8 posties because they are merging that many walks into the other walks.

At present, my walk has had over 200 delivery points added to it which I stay out and do for overtime. It takes between one hour and three hours to complete. The new revision is adding a further 400+ delivery points to it. They are taking 18 percent of large parcels out which covers it... Not!

On Saturdays, not many do overtime because we have a life out of Royal Mail so, at best, one out of every two walks go out, or posties just do the large parcels or tracked items. Total farce and morale and goodwill battered through idiots just thinking about easy profits. Not long left for Royal Mail now. Sinking ship.

Leamington Spa: I left in February. Sold out by a company only interested in shareholders and lining their own pockets and a toothless union who are more interested in appeasing the management than their members.

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