

CWU's Martin Walsh caught in a lie over support for Royal Mail ending six-day letter delivery

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The Communication Workers Union (CWU) posted a video from Deputy General Secretary (Postal) Martin Walsh on its Facebook page and X account on Saturday claiming to refute “the idea the union supports a cut in the USO [Universal Service Obligation].”

Walsh's one-minute video did nothing of the sort. It served only to underscore how the CWU postal executive is fully complicit with Royal Mail plans to divest itself of the USO—the statutory obligation to provide a six-day mail service to 32 million households across the UK.

Walsh stated, “Hi all, you would have seen the article in the *Telegraph* saying that the union supports a cut in the USO. We just want to reassure you this is not true. We've opposed Ofcom's proposals on a three-or-four day reduction of the USO. We've also opposed the speed of delivery service which delays first class which Germany's adopting and a couple of other speed of delivery options.”

Framed as a reply to the *Telegraph*, the clip was first shown during the weekly *CWU Live* YouTube last Thursday in which presenter Ohmar Mehtab referred to reports in the *Guardian* and *Sunday Times* that the CWU has ceded to demands by Royal Mail to end six-day delivery.

Both newspapers quoted Walsh's declaration at last month's CWU annual conference in Bournemouth: “The reality is, the USO as a six-day option is no longer financially viable. The challenges we face are so significant—probably the most challenging time in this union's history, whether it's the USO change, sale or possible takeover.”

During his one-minute video Walsh never challenged—or even referred to—his recent statement in

support of a reduced USO. His PR stunt will only reinforce the widespread view that nothing CWU officials say can be trusted.

CWU head office have been forced to respond not by the *Telegraph*, but by the *World Socialist Web Site* and the Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee (PWRFC).

Last month WSWs reported the CWU's own submission to regulator Ofcom supporting changes to the speed of delivery and cutting the USO to a five day service. Its submission stated: “the CWU is open to changing the speed of delivery of some products, if the USO continued to ensure that First Class products were still delivered across six days.”

It continued: “The CWU would be willing to consider a five-day USO for letters (Monday to Friday), if it were part of a seven-day parcel service.”

What has unnerved Walsh is that postal workers are discovering the truth about the CWU's collaboration with Ofcom, Royal Mail and the government. Any fight to defend the USO and thousands of jobs threatened by its destruction would involve boycotting Ofcom's phony consultation exercise. But the CWU executive are fully committed to the pro-business agenda of transforming Royal Mail into a 24/7 parcel network.

At a Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee Zoom meeting on April 28 a victimised CWU rep exposed January's joint statement between Royal Mail and the CWU on “Quality of Service”. It agreed in black-and-white an alternate day delivery model to trample the USO in breach of the law.

The CWU had pledged: “Where a delivery route or part of a route is not covered on any given day it must be covered the next working day to ensure any delay in

delivery is a maximum of 1 day. To enact this process both parties need a plan as part of a weekly resourcing to ensure walks never fail x 2 days in a row.”

At the rank-and-file meeting, the victimised rep explained the significance of these words: “Here we have an admission by Royal Mail that they are planning to fail the USO and introduce their own 3-day a week service. And as it’s a Joint Statement, it’s supported by the CWU.”

The rest of Walsh’s lamentable video address demonstrated how the CWU is a compliant lapdog to Royal Mail’s cost cutting agenda: “What we have said is we recognise there has to be a change in the USO if Royal Mail is to be sustainable in the future. We are working with the company to look at a model which delivers six days a week first class and has the least impact on the number of jobs but increases Saturdays off. We are working with the company on this and will communicate further in due course.”

At a CWU Live Q&A event on April 3, Walsh and union General Secretary Dave Ward described this as Royal Mail’s “Optimised Model” announced the previous day.

But their corporate jargon cannot conceal the company’s downsizing intent. Royal Mail is demanding that Ofcom reduce second class and bulk mail (bills and statements) to a 2.5 day or 3-day-a-week service starting in April 2025 at the latest. It estimates that 7,000 to 9,000 routes will be cut. Officially, the company is citing 1,000 redundancies, but the CWU has briefed reps that the company is targeting 6,000 jobs.

At its misnamed Q&A, the CWU refused to answer members’ questions over the real number of jobs threatened. So servile is the CWU that it declared its hand by offering to trial the downsized delivery model in Scotland and elsewhere in the UK before it has even been rubber stamped by Ofcom.

Ward proclaimed the CWU had “influenced the politicians, both the government and the Labour Party and obviously Royal Mail” by offering its own proposals for “modernisation”, seeking to tamper down opposition to what represents only a down-payment on the total dismantling of the USO.

CWU bureaucrats are seeking to gaslight postal workers just as they did last year in sabotaging the national strike via their backroom talks at ACAS. The

state arbitration service was used to veto a strike renewal mandate delivered in February 2023, buying time to draft a national agreement pushed through in July that established Amazon-style terms and conditions. This time, the CWU is working with Ofcom to dismantle the mail service. It is the next phase in a brutal restructuring, using automated Super Hubs for parcels to shed thousands of jobs.

But CWU officials have no shame. Walsh and Ward are now claiming Royal Mail’s cost-cutting drive can serve as a negotiating position for a “statement of principles” on improvement terms and conditions which they are working on with Royal Mail executives!

This from the authors of a surrender document that has ushered in the biggest attacks on postal workers in Royal Mail’s history, including cuts to sick pay, increased productivity through management surveillance and a two-tier workforce with new entrants on inferior pay and conditions and with thousands of senior postal workers driven out of their job through back-breaking workloads.

The WWSWS and PWRFC have provided a consistent exposure of the deepening collusion between the CWU and Royal Mail over the dismantling of the USO, prioritisation of parcels and the market driven restructuring. This has involved written testimony from hundreds of postal workers against a CWU bureaucracy which functions as a business partner of the major shareholders.

A genuine statement of principles is needed to mobilise the rank-and-file and to replace the CWU’s unaccountable bureaucracy. A network of committees must be elected from the shop floor across every section of Royal Mail, putting workers’ interests before the company’s profit grab that is destroying the mail service. This is the strategy being fought for by the PWRFC as part of a fightback by postal and logistics workers globally. We urge Royal Mail workers to get in touch and help build the rank-and-file movement.



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