

Royal Mail workers speak on far-right danger: “We are not safe on the streets anymore”

Our reporters
8 August 2024

The *World Socialist Web Site* published an article on August 7 exposing the inaction of the Trades Union Congress (TUC) in response to far-right violence against immigrant communities in Britain over the past week.

The article cited the worthless platitudes of the TUC and the Communication Workers Union (CWU) that “Unity is strength” while proposing no concrete measures to mobilise against the far-right danger.

Members of the Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee (PWRFC) spoke with the WSWS earlier this week about the growth of the far-right and the need for an organised rank-and-file movement to defend the interests of the working class.

George, a delivery worker in Scotland, explained, “These were not ‘protests’, they were more like pogroms, with attacks mounted on mosques, asylum seekers’ accommodation set alight and people dragged from cars.

“I would like to know who’s funding Tommy Robinson and this far-right movement? Nigel Farage helped to stir this up as well, with his comments that the police were ‘withholding information’ about the person responsible for the murder and violent attack on children in Southport. It gave legs to the lies about it being a Muslim asylum-seeker. He did this in a Trumpian way, as if he was merely posing a question.

“I don’t accept the police were overwhelmed. We are not talking about tens of thousands of people. These guys were allowed to conduct all manner of offences and people could have been killed.

“Compare that to the police treatment of Just Stop Oil activists who were rounded up and jailed before organising any protest. Look at how the Palestine protestors have been treated by the police with high-tech surveillance and police snatch squads pulling people out of peaceful demonstrations.

“During our dispute at Royal Mail, anti-strike laws restricted us to just six on a picket line. We had to humbly

accept all this to prevent anyone getting arrested. The CWU then crumbled, overriding massive strike mandates to sign away our terms and conditions. We are now at the stage where it’s slave labour, akin to zero-hour contracts. We work the times the company dictates, for as long as they want, as hard as they want. And when we protest, we are told ‘your union signed up to it’.

“Labour is an enabler to the far-right. They have money for wars in Ukraine but not for the needs of the working class. The RAF are secretly spying over Gaza and the Labour government is fully complicit in genocide.

“Look at the former Labour minister Ed Balls on ITV interviewing his wife Yvette Cooper, Labour’s Home Secretary. Anyone calling out the far-right violence and Islamophobia promoted by Labour was dismissed. It is so homogenised between the Tories and Labour now. Balls [a former Labour shadow chancellor] has a shared podcast with the former Tory chancellor George Osborne.

“There needs to be platform to speak out against the far-right, and mosques and asylum seekers need to be defended. We have to put a stop to the right and these endless wars.”

Ian, a delivery worker in the north west, told WSWS: “We have to be clear: this didn’t start last week. It has been going on for years. We’ve seen the perpetuation of a false narrative used to attack predominantly the Muslim faith and refugees.”

After last week’s attacks by the far-right, Ian said members had written to the CWU, “They were saying to the national leadership, ‘What’s our response? Why aren’t we saying anything?’ and that being silent is complicit.”

The CWU has proposed no measures to protect even their own members, simply declaring that local branches should take action where needed.

Ian said delivery workers from minority backgrounds are facing dangerous conditions on the job:

“Even on my round, colleagues reported people running around wearing balaclavas, and they were quite fearful,

understandably so.

“When you’ve got a situation where people are being stopped in their car [by rioters setting up roadblocks] to ascertain their race, then you know that people out there doing their job are at risk.

“The IWGB [Independent Workers of Great Britain] union put out a statement today saying that casualised delivery workers are all fearful. They don’t want to go to work, and they don’t want to have to deliver in areas where they may end up putting their lives on the line simply to earn a living.

“The most exploited workers in the postal industry are people from these backgrounds. They will have the shit duties. They will be at work at the shit times, and they are most at risk, without a shadow of a doubt. And the union has said nothing about it.”

Ian described the CWU’s call for “unity against the right” as a fraud, “Within hours of them putting that out, they are at it again, having a go at [Royal Mail shareholder Daniel] Kretinsky about being a Czech. They are saying that he’s got Russian links. How is that not racist? The idea of othering Russian people? Kretinsky is not the only person who’s involved in the ownership of the company. There’s all sorts of shareholders. It could be an Australian pension fund, but we’re not calling out Australian people, are we?”

He said the CWU was aligning itself—and seeking to align workers—to the interests of British imperialism: “Is it not dangerous to stoke the fires of war? To repeat that Russia is the enemy? How on Earth is that in the interests of the members?”

Asked about the connection historically between militarism, war and fascism, Ian replied: “The primary concern of the British establishment in the Second World War was to prevent the spread of communism. They weren’t particularly concerned about the Nazis. Churchill’s primary concern was preventing the spread of communism and a workers’ uprising. That was their priority.

“There was nothing Churchill hated more than the working class. Our own recent history shows us that the CWU executive is imperialist. We were on strike, and they cancelled the strike because a member of the Royal Family died. They made us go back to work that day. If that’s not imperialism, I don’t know what is.”

Ian urged Royal Mail workers to get involved in the Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee, “The most important thing to say is that people aren’t alone. There’s plenty of us right across the country who are all saying exactly the same thing. That we’re not going to put up with it. At the end of the day, we don’t need the likes of Dave Ward and Martin Walsh to tell us what to do in this situation. We are going to do it ourselves, because we’ve got no other choice.”

Aditi, a postal worker from London, said the far-right

attacks are “part of a war against the working class. Before we had issues inside the workplace, but now we have issues outside the workplace as well. And if we take action on our own, we will be sacked. That’s why we need a rank-and-file movement.

“Starmer is a crook. Labour is no different from the Conservatives. One puts down the foundations, and the other works on construction. Royal Mail is attacking the workers because they know the union and management are together.

“Nigel Farage is using tactics to try and start a race war against immigrants, to get people fighting each other. It’s the same in Spain as well. But it’s not immigrants who are the problem. Immigrants built this country. All the worst jobs, they are still done by immigrants.

“With what is happening now, we are not far behind what happened in Sri Lanka [in the civil war] and Bangladesh.”

Aditi said that refugees in Britain were fleeing wars started by the United States and Britain in Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria: “they’ve lost everything”.

She described their scapegoating for “taking money” from British people as lies and sheer hypocrisy, “Under the British Empire so much money was looted from these countries. Blair stole the oil and other resources from the Middle East.”

Commenting on far-right attacks on refugees and immigrants, she said, “It’s really brutal. They are attacking NHS nurses from the Philippines, anyone who looks Asian. I’m afraid for my children. We are not safe and secure on the streets now.”

Aditi was scathing toward the CWU’s statement calling for unity against the far-right: “The CWU is bullshit. That is a fact. They don’t care about anything that happens to workers. The only thing they care about is the money coming in. They make their statements for the media, ‘we’re going to do this, we’re going to do that’. We are living under modern slavery. They are treating us like machines, using technology like the PDAs to control our every movement. They don’t care about their workers or the customers.”



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact