

Open letter to CWU General Secretary Dave Ward: Suspend the undemocratic ballot on new bullying and grievance policies!

Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee (UK)
25 August 2024

We demand an immediate suspension of the postal ballot announced by the Communication Workers Union Postal Executive on the new Grievance and Bullying & Harassment procedures drawn-up with Royal Mail following your closed door talks with the company one month ago.

The postal executive has deemed it acceptable to open a ballot on August 20, closing on September 9, without even providing members a copy of the policies they are voting on! The first time we were notified of the changes was via a Letter to Branches (LTB) dated August 19, signed by CWU Acting Assistant Secretary Bobby Weatherhall, just one day before the ballot opened.

Weatherhall's LTB claimed the new procedures will provide greater "transparency" and "accountability" and states they have been endorsed by the postal executive after "consultations with Field Representatives". But these are all paid fulltime officials of the CWU. This is a rubber-stamping exercise on behalf of the company, so you can claim the membership has been "consulted".

Weatherhall's two-page letter announcing the new policies is a joke: a vague summary with a few bullet points thrown in. Under these circumstances the ballot is devoid of democratic legitimacy. The "online briefing" for branches last Thursday at 10:30am was a farce. We didn't need to check our diaries as most of us were at work and unable to attend.

The CWU claims the starting point for negotiations was the overwhelming "perception" of members that the Grievance and B&H procedures "were no longer fit for purpose and being applied in their best interests." This is not just a perception! Moreover, the current

industrial scale victimisation and bullying of postal workers has happened on your watch. It is a direct consequence of the CWU's collusion with the company, epitomised by last year's surrender document you co-authored with Royal Mail executives at ACAS.

The existing grievance and B&H policies used to stitch-up thousands of postal workers in recent years, were all endorsed by the CWU. The replacement policies you have cooked up will do nothing to address this situation.

The new company policies appear to give managers even greater control over the B&H and grievance process. Despite your LTB trumpeting "a single approach for all concerns and complaints" via the People App, it will be at the discretion of an "investigating manager" to decide whether our complaints constitute a grievance or a bullying & harassment complaint, "removing the need for the individual to make this determination". How convenient!

Company grievance and B&H procedures have traditionally been viewed as a last resort, with workers preferring to try and resolve issues on the ground through local union representation at their delivery office or mail centre. But over recent decades the CWU has become an arm of management, and last year's national agreement sealed this process at every level of the CWU with local reps integrated into company-union working groups to oversee "productivity" and "efficiency" (i.e., ramped-up exploitation).

The current national ballot is the first since last year's vote on the Business Recovery, Growth and Transformation Agreement. That sellout deal,

unanimously endorsed by the CWU Postal Executive, was rammed through based on lies and disinformation. Among these was your self-serving claim that the “toxic workplace environment” would be ended. In reality, as the Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee warned, the agreement was the chief mechanism to impose the company’s attacks. Impossible workloads and “performance management” have created a hostile and toxic environment for tens of thousands of postal workers.

The CWU Postal Executive does not speak in our name. Since the end of the dispute, you have signed a joint statement with the company to accept a reduced Universal Service Obligation and you are currently in secret talks with Daniel Kretinsky’s EP Group over their takeover arrangements, preparing yet another race to the bottom.

To take forward a genuine fight against the regime of intimidation, harassment and bullying of postal workers, we demand the following:

Suspend the ballot: No vote is legitimate until all postal workers have been provided a full copy of the new policies and a tracked version of the old policies showing what has been added, deleted and amended. Meetings must be called in every delivery office and mail centre to discuss what policies are necessary to put an end to victimisation and bullying.

Full disclosure: Stop colluding to conceal the scale of attacks on postal workers! How many workers have left Royal Mail over the past two years, including through Early Retirement and ill health retirement? How many members currently have B&H and grievance procedures in motion? How many cases has the CWU refused to progress, claiming “insufficient chance of success”?

Reverse the Lord Falconer stitch-up: Expunge all disciplinary penalties which remain on the work record of reps and members, including those who have left. All managers responsible for victimisations and bullying to face misconduct proceedings.

Bans on all further revision activity: No more cost-cutting and impossible workloads! The Joint Statements issued by the CWU-Royal Mail must be rescinded, including the January statement on Quality of Service which accepted de facto alternate-day delivery.

The Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee is

urging all postal worker colleagues across Royal Mail and Parcelforce to take up the fight for these necessary demands.

From the Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee

Royal Mail workers are invited to attend an online meeting called by the Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee on Sunday September 15 to discuss a collective fightback against plans by Royal Mail and EP Group for a major assault on jobs, wages and conditions.



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