

# Postal workers speak ahead of Sunday's rank-and-file Zoom meeting: "The CWU puts management's agenda front and centre"

Our reporters  
9 September 2024

**Royal Mail workers can register for the Zoom meeting on Sunday 15 September at 7 pm here. You can hear reports from postal workers across Royal Mail and Parcelforce and send a delegation from your mail centre or delivery office to join the discussion.**

\*\*\*

Royal Mail workers around the country have been taking up the statement by the Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee for its next Zoom meeting this coming Sunday: "A rank-and-file fightback strategy for Royal Mail workers."

The statement calls out the closed-door talks which have continued, overseen by the Labour government, between Communication Workers Union (CWU) leaders Dave Ward and Martin Walsh and billionaire Daniel Kretinsky and his EP Group over its take-over bid for Royal Mail (and parent company IDS). It connects the swoop by the private equity firm to carve up the business with the bonfire of terms and conditions rammed through by Ward and Walsh based on the sellout agreement last July to end the national dispute.

Hundreds of copies of the statement have been distributed at delivery offices and Mail Centres including in Glasgow, Bournemouth, Keithley, Barnsley, Rotherham and Sheffield.

At the Mail Centre in Manchester, postal workers raised how their concerns are ignored, and slammed the CWU's pro-company agreement. They were also critical of the collusion of the Labour government with the EP Group take-over.

"The CWU has rolled over. We don't get sick pay for the first two days, and new entrants are on worse conditions", "We've never heard from the union or Dave Ward since the deal was pushed through", "It's gone quiet on the takeover", "I thought Labour would stop the takeover when they came in but they haven't. A new starter told me their Saturday shift was changed to 1-8pm. Who wants to work that on a weekend?"

No section of the workforce has been spared, a member of the cleaning staff at the office explained, "When I came here there were 28 cleaners. Now there are eight and two of them are part time."

A FedEx driver making a call at the distribution centre said, "These postal workers get a raw deal".

At Mount Pleasant sorting office in London, postal workers were equally scathing about CWU officials and their collaboration with management for keeping them in the dark and leaving them defenceless in the face of mounting attacks.

"I need to read this leaflet," a postie said after hearing just how bad the inferior pay and terms for new entrants are which the CWU postal executive negotiated.

Another added, "I am based at another depot; I am on a different contract—I get door-to-door with no overtime, and I have to work Sundays and no overtime, just a flat rate. I'm interested in this meeting. The union are working with management to fill vacancies; there are more than 20 at my place. But they start and leave within a few weeks because of the amount of work. One told me he could not complete his work daily and it got worse and worse and he had to leave."

## Supporters of the Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee

The *World Socialist Web Site* also spoke with supporters of the Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee ahead of the Zoom meeting. Their names have been changed to protect against victimisation.

**Jim**, who works at the Midlands Super Hub which opened last July:

"They talk about this being a state-of-the-art facility because of the level of automation but the reality is working conditions are primitive. The lay-out is not fit for purpose, there are all sorts of problems with health and safety and a lot of the technology is not applied properly.

"The distribution lorries come in and their ramps for unloading the Yorks (roll containers) full of parcels are not level with the loading plate. The Yorks can weigh anything from 30kg to 70kg which have to be pushed up an incline. It is a repetitive job, taking a toll on the body. Control measures recommended by Occupational Health to eliminate the risk

have been ignored by both the management and CWU reps.

“The workplace agreement between Royal Mail and the CWU on manual handling to reduce MSD’s and the union’s campaign ‘Better Backs—One York at a Time’ is a joke. I’ve seen cases of agency staff pushing up to 20-30 Yorks at a time in a chain. We are just expected to turn a blind eye.

“The level of casualisation is very high, at least three agency staff to every one Royal Mail employee. A lot of this is conducted by Royal Mail’s in-house employment agency firm, Angard. The agency workers get holiday pay and receive a higher rate on Sundays than those employed by Royal Mail but they do not receive sick pay and struggle to secure regular hours. Why should they care about the work? I don’t blame them. They are treated as expendable and the CWU has allowed this to happen.

“There really is no Quality of Service. The robotic arms empty the Yorks onto the conveyor system but the smaller parcels and ones which are not flat fall off as it turns the corner and end up in the netting. These are tracked parcels and can stay there for up to a week, which is the only time they are routinely cleared. They would rather pay the compensation than provide the right service. It is all about maximising throughput and trying to manipulate the figures because Royal Mail want to close down Mail Centres to re-direct the work to the Super Hub.”

**Andy**, a delivery worker in Glasgow:

“I am sure it must be the same in every delivery office: ‘Forget the mail, concentrate on tracked parcels’. That’s all you get from management. In my office they are shelling out more overtime than ever because these new hours with the ‘network window’ are not working, as well as ‘seasonal variation’. You have a different start and finish time every day. It’s a complete mess. There’s no consistency at all.

“First-class stamps are increasing to £1.65. That’s twice they’ve increased the price in this year alone. How is there not a price cap on that? It is deliberate; they are pricing letters so that the market for them dies off. That’s the endgame here: price letters so high that no one uses the service. It’s shocking.

“The CWU has become a tool of management. They put management’s agenda front and centre. If the unions stuck together with the workers we would be a force to be reckoned with. Dare I say it, I think we would be unstoppable in the fight for better terms and conditions for every worker in every country around the world. It’s always the same though, where money is involved greed and corruption are sure to follow.

“I’m fed up watching my own ‘union rep’ work hand-in-hand with my manager instead of standing against him. This assault worldwide, on average working-class people like us, is an absolute disgrace and there seems to be no shame at all from any of these union officials and employers about exploiting us. After everything is said and done, it’s ordinary working people like us that keep the world turning.”

**Ray**, a delivery worker in London:

“One of the more insidious things coming out of the stinking deal between Royal Mail and the CWU last year has been using Postal Digital Assistants (PDAs) to monitor and control postal workers inside and outside the workplace. Not even George Orwell and his Big Brother could have imagined the extent to which Royal Mail could control the behaviour of postal workers, even to the point of using the data to sack any postal worker they deem to have stepped out of line.

“The complete acceptance by the CWU of the use of these PDAs to punish and control workers is a new milestone in its integration into corporate management. As the WSWs exposed, ‘Appendix 5 of the union-company agreement outlined measures for enhanced “performance management” of staff to deliver “improved business performance” through increased “data use” from PDAs. The CWU’s assurances that PDAs would “not be used to de-humanise the workplace” and would “not be used to track individuals in real time” have been exposed as worthless.’

“I don’t need to explain what these handheld devices can do to postal workers. Still, the wider public has little comprehension of how Royal Mail controls and terrorises postal workers and is using them to get rid of the most principled and militant postal workers to bring in a two-tier workforce that is more compliant with their aims and objectives.

“I would encourage all postal workers to attend the Zoom meeting on Sunday. The CWU is dead from the standpoint of defending postal workers. It is nothing but an arm of corporate management. The only thing that can stop Royal Mail and the CWU from pursuing their aims of turning Royal Mail into an Amazon-like company is the Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee.”



To contact the WSWs and the  
Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)**