

Postal workers speak in defence of victimised Royal Mail delivery worker Des Beach

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The video interview with victimised Royal Mail delivery worker Des Beach conducted by the *World Socialist Web Site* (WSWS) and posted on the site last Friday evening has attracted a wide audience.

On YouTube the video has received 1,800 views. The widespread interest comes despite Facebook deleting the video within minutes of its being posted Friday night on the Royal Mail Chat and Postal Workers Say No Facebook groups and on several personal accounts and other groups.

Facebook's removal notice claimed the video was in breach of its Community Guidelines on spam, citing efforts to obtain views "in a misleading way".

This is entirely spurious. The video was clearly branded as an interview with Des Beach by the WSWS and the Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee (PWRFC) under the headline, "Video: Victimised Royal Mail worker exposes anatomy of a management frame-up."

The tech giant's actions are clearly indefensible and a fundamental attack on the democratic rights of Royal Mail workers. Facebook has not responded to date to requests for a review of its actions.

The WSWS and the PWRFC have been thanked for bringing this blatant case of victimisation to their attention. Postal workers have expressed their solidarity with Beach, opposing their colleague's dismissal on trumped-up charges of "intentional delay of mail". They have denounced Communication Workers Union (CWU) officials for refusing to oppose his unfair dismissal.

Andy, a Royal Mail postie in **Northern Ireland**, told WSWS: "That lad in the video done nothing wrong. He and his young colleague followed the outdoor procedure and had already notified his manager to alert him to the fact that they would not be able complete their duty. He returned and done what hundreds if not thousands of under-pressure posties would have done on the same day and every day: placed the returned mail under his frame.

"Let's be clear and all current posties will verify: Royal Mail are responsible for wilfully delaying mail. They extended deliveries, laid staff off and cannot retain staff.

"During the recent dispute they extended duties and expected posties to complete in the same timeframe, [it's] impossible. Royal Mail are failing the USO [Universal Service Obligation] daily. First Class letters, 24 Hour Tracks and SP 1pm's all fail daily, and yet the managers found this lad guilty of 'intentional delay of mail'. What a liberty and worse; this lad was a paid-up union member and the CWU refused to defend him.

"How can the CWU allow Royal Mail to dismiss this lad unchallenged, whilst frauding the public daily on a seismic scale? The CWU are telling members they will not take up Employment Tribunals because the individual case does not have a 51 percent chance of success. If truth be told, the real reason is that the CWU is financially broke because of the haemorrhaging of members, after the rotten deal last July.

"However, CWU bosses Dave Ward and Martin Walsh still feel free to accept their six-figure pay packets. This same CWU have supported Royal Mail in making it a two-tier minimum wage employer, with new entrants on lesser pay and horrible conditions. Zero pay for meal breaks and delivering unaddressed mail, 7-day shift working. Since the dispute and the unagreed revisions, the USO has been failing and the CWU have sat back and allowed their members in the offices to be battered by managers, and Christmas has still to come."

Kevin, a collection and delivery driver in **Scotland** for Royal Mail's Parcelforce division said, "I'm appalled at this. This guy should be reinstated with immediate effect, the union should have that whole office at the gate until he gets his duty back. I work in Parcelforce and have done for many years. Most of our workloads have been increased and the manager sends threatening messages on our PDA to drive up our work rate.

"The narrative is 'work more for less'. The union reps accept all this after we were sold down the river last year. If you need anything done you will find them with the manager who stitched you up having coffee and cake. It is a disgrace."

The PWRFC has been informed by various sources in

Sheffield, South Yorkshire that in early October, duties were failing on a large scale as postal workers are told to leave mail to prioritise tracked parcels, with the blessing of higher Royal Mail management.

As another delivery worker told WSWs, “What an outrageous injustice against those two posties. I think more accounts like this will come out and the fact that the CWU are helping them to get rid of staff by not supporting them at Tribunals because they falsely say they will have to cover Royal Mail’s costs at a tribunal if they fail. There have been a few cases locally where ‘intentional delay of mail’ has been used as grounds for dismissal.”

CWU officials are directly colluding with Royal Mail management in setting postal workers up to fail letters by ramping up their workloads through cost-cutting revisions and increased parcel deliveries.

This was demonstrated by the comments of CWU Outdoor Secretary and national executive member Tony Bouch during a CWU Live event on October 24. Bouch explained a scenario in which a delivery worker could be landed with an additional 50 parcels on their delivery. His feigned concern was immediately exposed when he asserted this would require a postal worker only finding an extra 50 minutes—a parcel a minute!

The full-time official falsely placed himself in the shoes of a delivery worker stating, “If I get 50 extra parcels a day that’s 50 minutes.”

This drew angry fire from postal workers in the comments section, including a postal worker who wrote, “Difficult to have confidence in someone who says we can do 50 parcels in 50 minutes. RM must be laughing at this. Presenter should audition for *Blue Peter* [children’s television entertainment programme].”

This was no slip of the tongue. Bouch repeated this expected work quota a second time. As far as the CWU officials are concerned the established rate set for average parcel deliveries of 20 per hour is old hat. The trebling of the work rate is the benchmark CWU officials are working out with Royal Mail management through the Industrial Relations framework behind the backs of postal workers.

Bouch’s comments were made in connection with a commercial contract Royal Mail agreed with Amazon allowing the e-commerce and logistics giant to piggy-back the USO infrastructure in what he admitted was a “dumping” exercise to deliver to addresses it deemed “too costly” and at short notice.

Another postal worker posted a link to a YouTube video “China’s Hardest Job” with the question “Can you imagine this happening at Royal Mail?”. The video shows workers in huge warehouses in China working in gruelling conditions and at breakneck speed to process parcels for e-commerce

giants Ali Express and Temu.

This is the direction of travel if the CWU bureaucracy gets their way, courtesy of the pro-company agreement last July slashing pay, terms and conditions and implementing a two-tier workforce. This is being enacted through their collusion with the Labour government over the takeover bid of Royal Mail by billionaire Daniel Kretinsky’s private equity firm EP Group.

The bid is currently under review under the terms of the National Security and Investment Act. The claims by CWU leaders Dave Ward and Martin Walsh that their months-long secret talks with EP Group and the Labour government are to scrutinise the takeover and secure protection of the mail service and the workforce are a fraud.

Much of this revolves around an “official” commitment to the USO and maintenance of 6-day delivery of First-Class letters. The reality is this is already being gutted on a de-facto basis thanks to a joint statement between CWU and Royal Mail in January that mail could go out every other day on delivery rounds left uncovered.

Ward and Walsh also rushed to agree the CWU trialling Royal Mail’s proposal announced in April for an alternate weekday delivery service for anything other than First Class. This is a further cost-cutting exercise of £300 million a year at the expense of thousands of jobs.

The *Telegraph* ran an article on November 3 aimed at bolstering Labour’s backing for the EP Group takeover, “Royal Mail bidder under pressure to cap prices”. It stated, “The Czech billionaire bidding to buy Royal Mail is under pressure to cap stamp prices as Labour pushes for tougher concessions”.

But Royal Mail has conducted successive price hikes to First Class stamps with the latest 30 pence increase in October to £1.65, doubling the price from 85 pence since March 2022. Postal workers recognise this is a deliberate policy of overpricing to justify cutting back to service.

The PWRFC welcomes all those who want to take part in a fightback against the workplace regime of management bullying and intimidation. This is inseparable from a fight against the direct collusion of the unaccountable pro-company CWU apparatus which plays the main role in overriding the collective will of postal workers. We demand that the rights of workers, their jobs, terms and conditions and safe working conditions take priority over ruthless pursuit of either corporate or private equity profits.



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Socialist Equality Party visit:

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