

In memory of Des Beach: Victimised Royal Mail worker

UK Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee
2 May 2025

The following letter was sent by the UK Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee to Pauline, whose husband, Des, died on April 23 after suffering a catastrophic heart attack.

The Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee (PWRFC) sends our deepest sympathy to Pauline and family on hearing of the tragic news of the passing of her husband Des Beach.

Des was a fellow postal worker with thirty-one years' service for Royal Mail at the delivery office in Chester-Le-Street, County Durham.

Pauline, his partner of 34 years, contacted the PWRFC to inform us that Des had suffered a major heart attack on Easter Sunday from which he never recovered. He died the following Wednesday. Pauline explained, "He had the best care in the country in the Freeman hospital, but his brain was starved of oxygen making a recovery impossible. He was a very fit man who took care of his health."

Des was 58, a non-smoker who played cricket, his favourite sport.

Pauline said that the expert cardiologists at the hospital all agreed that stress over the last couple of years was a contributory factor to his heart attack.

Des loved his job and had a spotless work record over more than three decades before he was unfairly dismissed on June 8, 2023.

He and van share partner Ross, faced the trumped-up charge of "intentional delay of mail." This was towards the end of the 2022-3 national dispute at Royal Mail when management bullying was rife.

Des had returned to work from a long weekend and Ross after a period of leave on May 9, 2023, to find their shared duty had not been fully covered. They were therefore unable to complete their deliveries for the next two days. They were then scapegoated by

management.

The conduct procedure leading up to their dismissals was a travesty of due process and company policy.

Ross, who had worked for Royal Mail for 18 months, did not qualify to bring a case of unfair dismissal due to the onerous two-year employment criteria, Des, with Pauline's support, took out an Employment Tribunal claim. He had been a paid-up union member all his working life at Royal Mail.

The Communication Workers Union (CWU) backed the Employment Tribunal (ET) claim brought by Des, who received a date for a hearing on February 2024. In the meantime, Des was forced to find alternative employment while Pauline pursued matters with the CWU legal services. But the support he received from the CWU went from sketchy to finally having his case dropped altogether.

Des was advised to take a low ball negotiated offer of £10,000 compensation which he rejected and then told he ran the risk of damages being awarded against him if he lost the Tribunal.

He explained later:

"The only reason I dropped my ET case in early January was due to lack of CWU support and being threatened with costs. I have since learned it is under one percent of cases where costs are awarded against the claimant in an employment tribunal case. Basically, I feel I was conned by the CWU."

Des approached the PWRFC and *World Socialist Web Site* (WSWS) to tell his story in a fight to establish the truth, alert his colleagues to his unfair treatment and to clear his name against management lies and the complicit silence of the CWU.

This led to two interviews with WSWS reporter Tony Robson, the first a written interview in October 2024, the second a video interview conducted in November

outside his former delivery office in Chester le Street. Both attracted a wide audience among postal workers, with the YouTube video receiving 7,600 views and 177 likes.

The WSWS published many messages of support for Des from postal workers including Andy, a Royal Mail postie in Northern Ireland, who asked, “How can the CWU allow Royal Mail to dismiss this lad unchallenged, whilst frauding the public daily on a seismic scale?”, and Kevin, a collection and delivery driver in Scotland for Parcelforce, who wrote “the union should have that whole office at the gate until he gets his duty back.”

Neither Royal Mail or the CWU have responded, let alone challenged the damning account which Des provided to the PWRFC and the WSWS. But their apologists on social media mounted a spiteful smear campaign against Des and the PWRFC, even questioning whether he even existed.

This was a desperate attempt to cover-up for the CWU’s collusion with Royal Mail’s management bullying and the deliberate sabotage of the mail to prioritise parcels, under the leadership of Dave Ward and Martin Walsh.

Following the sabotage of all industrial action, this has created the necessary facts on the ground for the dismantling of the mail service now rubber stamped by the Ofcom regulator under the euphemism of “USO reform”. In this way, working with the Keir Starmer’s Labour government, the CWU has paved the way for Kretinsky’s EP Group of asset strippers to convert Royal Mail into a parcel courier company along the lines of Amazon.

The human cost of this social vandalism in terms of inflicting injury and ill health on postal workers, physical and mental, has been swept under the carpet. The tragic early death of Des Beech raises the question: How many other postal workers have been made to suffer because of the pro-company collusion of the CWU?

Establishing the toll of this corporate rampage and preventing further harm will be the work of our committee, with the support of postal workers across Royal Mail.

On Sunday April 27, it was reported to a PWRFC meeting that the CWU had agreed to have heart monitors attached to delivery workers at a USO reform

pilot office for “fatigue monitoring”! There is no reference to the first principle of safety—prevention of injury.

Safety practices thrown overboard by the CWU include bag weighing and a sliding scale of bags during delivery to reduce fatigue and the use of equipment to avoid having to carry delivery pouches. This cuts across the agreement of CWU officials at national and divisional level for increased delivery spans and call rates in the name of “financial sustainability.”

Walsh states that *we* must accept the reality of privatisation, USO reform and the Kretinsky takeover. For those who do the job, this translates to a demand that we work until we drop. We will not be lectured by well-heeled bureaucrats—our health and lives matter more than the profits of the oligarchy!

We are deeply saddened by the death of our fellow worker Des Beach. He exemplifies all that was best among those many postal workers who believe in a public service and working-class solidarity and oppose how privatisation has ruined the service and their working lives.

The best tribute we can pay to Des is to take forward this fight: As Des told the committee in his most recent message to us, “Great to see people supporting me. Hopefully what you are trying to achieve will help others in future.”



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wsws.org/contact