

DPD uses mass sackings against UK delivery workers standing up against pay cuts

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Logistics giant DPD has launched a campaign of reprisals against workers in the UK who staged a three-day protest from October 7–9 against drastic pay cuts—including the scrapping of their Christmas bonus.

According to reports by the BBC and Guardian, between 1,300 and 1,500 DPD drivers joined the nationwide stoppage organised via online chatrooms and forums. Even these initial stirrings of organised opposition were enough to strike fear into DPD which, like Amazon, has become a byword for sweatshop labour.

The action was triggered after the company imposed sweeping reductions in pay rates from September 29, targeting those classed as “self-employed” or franchise contractors—the majority of DPD’s UK delivery workforce.

GeoPost/DPD Group, the international parcel subsidiary of La Poste, France’s state-owned postal and logistics service, recorded a £520 million operating profit in 2024. Those profits are extracted directly from the labour of 122,000 delivery drivers internationally across 49 countries—tens of thousands in Britain—through relentless workloads, arbitrary deductions and bogus self-employment models.

The “adjusted pay rates” announced by DPD cut 65 pence from payments for each small parcel and abolished the £500 Christmas bonus. For many drivers this represents an annual pay cut of £6,000–£8,000, pushing already poverty-level incomes further into destitution.

In Preston, northwest England, a driver who explained the pay cut came on top of a 10-year pay freeze told the Lancashire Evening Post, “We believe it is important that our voices are heard and that the public is made aware of the pressures and treatment faced by drivers under what many feel is a form of corporate dictatorship.”

Another worker in Hull, Yorkshire and Humberside told Hull Live, “We suddenly noticed our pay has gone down by around £500 a month. They’re taking money off each

parcel we deliver. It’s a substantial knock to wages. We have to get up at 4 or 5am to load up and don’t get home until 7pm. Everyone at the depot has had enough. What option have we got?”

Workers spoke anonymously, fearing retaliation, but refusing to be silenced. Confronted with this combative mood and unofficial action, DPD was forced into a temporary retreat. The Guardian reported that after meeting workers’ representatives, the company agreed to defer the rate cut until after Christmas but insisted it would still proceed. Within weeks, management began a campaign of intimidation and victimisation to stamp out resistance.

The Guardian article of November 1, titled “Delivery firm DPD accused of ‘revenge’ sacking drivers who criticised pay cuts,” gives examples. DPD confirmed it had terminated contracts with at least eight supplier companies, accusing them of breaching gagging clauses that prohibit involvement in “any newsworthy event or story” that could, in DPD’s opinion, “damage the firm’s interests or reputation.”

Among those cited by the newspaper was Jose Alves, who operated a fleet of vans under contract to DPD. The company claimed he breached the “newsworthy event” clause and warned it might keep part or all of the £16,000 deposit he paid at the start of his contract to cover supposed “replacement costs.”

Another driver, Dean Hawkins, said he was dismissed for a Facebook post made around the time of the protests: “Any threats of a strike or legal action, you’re terminated. DPD don’t allow you to stand up for yourself or have a voice... This is why so many drivers across the UK are looking into striking, because God forbid we ask for a fair wage to support our families.”

The DPD dispute tears away the façade justifying the exploitation of self-employed couriers. These workers are not independent business owners, but part of a tightly

controlled labour regime designed to transfer risk and cost onto individuals while guaranteeing profits for shareholders. They work gruelling hours under surveillance, often earning below the minimum wage once vehicle costs and insurance are deducted.

The so-called “agreement on a way forward” announced by DPD after the October protests was a sham. The company’s only aim was to buy time to crush opposition. DPD recognises that a well-informed, organised workforce appealing to others would fatally undermine the balance of forces stacked in its favour—and has set out to behead that movement.

This is not just the policy of one firm; it is enabled by a legal framework that allows corporations dependent on gig-economy labour to sack and blacklist workers at will.

The Starmer Labour government will not redress this or any of the exploitative practices faced by DPD workers and many others. Its much-vaunted Employment Rights Bill (ERB) excluded the previous pledge to introduce a “single status for workers” to end the bogus “self-employment” definition used to entrap hundreds of thousands in the gig economy. The current bill, rebranded “The Plan to Make Work Pay”, is being steered through Parliament and the Lords in a heavily watered-down form.

The courageous stand of DPD workers contrasts sharply with the silence of trade union leaders who have not uttered a word about the dispute. The union bureaucracy fears any independent struggle using class struggle methods to challenge the law and the brutal means by which the giant corporations amass their profits. It has long ago severed any connection to such militant action, using a vast apparatus to suppress any such movement among the workers they claim to represent and anti-strike legislation to discipline their membership.

At the Trades Union Congress in September, union leaders falsely claimed the ERB would be adopted in full by the Starmer government.

In fact, even before the July 2024 general election, they had already consented to Labour’s neutering of key provisions including scrapping zero-hour contracts, fire-and-rehire, and establishing first-day rights. The bill will be further whittled down before reaching the statute books, as big business continues to vet every clause. In April, the government even amended the ERB to endorse fire-and-rehire in local government and the National Health Service.

The so-called “New Deal” for workers touted by the union bureaucracy is a busted flush, used only to justify its partnership with the government in suppressing any

mobilisation of the working class against its right-wing, pro-business agenda.

This is personified by Communication Workers Union (CWU) General Secretary Dave Ward, who has claimed credit for Labour’s “New Deal.”

Among Royal Mail workers, Ward is notorious for his 2023 sellout agreement of the national strike that imposed a bonfire of terms and conditions. At its centre was the introduction of a two-tier workforce with new entrants on inferior pay and terms: including unpaid meal breaks and mandatory Sunday working. This incentivised management to drive out thousands of long-serving postal workers with their “legacy” terms.

The Ward-led bureaucracy embraced the £3.6 billion takeover of Royal Mail by billionaire Daniel Kretinsky’s EP Group and became junior partners through the intervention of the Starmer government who rubber stamped the deal. The bureaucracy is up to their necks in foisting on postal workers a restructuring agenda to dismantle the mail service and introduce new gig-economy practices ramping up workloads and geared towards a low-wage parcel courier service.

The CWU bureaucracy speaks in disparaging terms of “owner drivers” used by rivals of Royal Mail such as DPD, Amazon and Evri, while never once challenging the bogus definition from the standpoint of championing workers’ rights. In fact, it has long accepted the use of this practice within Royal Mail’s Parcelforce division. The pro-company CWU apparatus uses the “unfair competition” of rivals who use this model of exploitation more extensively as justification for every sellout agreement in a race to the bottom.

This divide-and-rule strategy must be ended. A fightback must be organised through the formation of rank-and-file committees to unify workers across company divisions and national borders in the postal and logistics service—against victimisations, crippling workloads and low pay. A successful struggle depends on challenging the grip of the entire corporate oligarchy.

This is the perspective advanced by the Postal Workers Rank-and File-Committee. We urge DPD workers to get in touch and Royal Mail workers to express their support for the fight they are waging.



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