

Royal Mail workers support call for a rank-and-file investigation into the death of USPS workers Nick Acker and Russell Scruggs Jr.

“The deaths of our two brothers in America should be a wake-up call to workers everywhere”

Tony Robson
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The call by the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) for a rank-and-file investigation into the on-the-job deaths of USPS workers Nick Acker and Russell Scruggs Jr. has been endorsed by members and supporters of the Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee (PWRFC) at Royal Mail in the UK.

Postal workers have drawn parallels with the exploitative practices which inevitably sacrifice workers' health and endanger their lives at Royal Mail—privatised more than a decade ago and now under the sole ownership of Daniel Kretinsky's billionaire equity firm, EP Group. The leaders of the Communication Workers Union (CWU), Dave Ward and Martin Walsh, embraced the £3.6 billion takeover in alliance with the Starmer Labour government to drive forward the downgrading of the mail service and transform it into a low-wage parcel carrier.

This underscores the need for an international, rank-and-file-led fightback against the profit-driven dismantling of postal services worldwide—which are being carved up for privatisation and handed over to the financial oligarchy.

Miles, a distribution driver at Royal Mail in London:

I fully support the call for an independent inquiry into the tragic, preventable deaths of two US postal workers, Nick Acker and Russell Scruggs Jr., in such a short space of time.

Millions of workers go to work expecting to return home to their families at the end of an exhausting working day, but even this can no longer be taken for granted. My thoughts go out to the families. Why is this happening in the 21st century? These conditions were supposed to belong to the long-lost past.

The fact these tragedies are brought to light by the IWA-RFC lifts the cloak on years of speed-up, job cuts and the destruction of long-standing health and safety conditions by the corporations and their labour understudies in the trade union bureaucracy. It's long been clear that just by changing a union's leader brings no change to our conditions.

I work for Parcelforce, the UK parcel arm of Royal Mail, now owned by billionaire asset-stripper Daniel Kretinsky who—working closely with the CWU—is driving up profits through hiked up workloads, to the point where heart monitors were used on postal workers to see if productivity could be increased to the maximum. It is common to see postal workers with bandages and strain supports during long days in temperatures from -1°C to 35°C .

Workers in UPS, FedEx, DPD and DHL report the same experiences. Different uniforms and vans make no difference—so why are we divided locally, nationally and internationally? These global companies extract ever-greater profits while the unions block unity to protect their relationship with management.

Technology like AI should assist workers, but instead it is used to impose higher volumes and workloads. We work in a globally integrated postal system where we are treated as nothing more than wage slaves. We need a globally integrated movement to oppose this. The work of the International Workers Alliance is crucial in exposing our dire conditions and organising a fight against the slaughter of workers in the name of profit.

James, a delivery worker in Glasgow:

With great solidarity to Nick Acker and Russell Scruggs Jr. and their loved ones. Workers in the UK face the same struggle as our brothers and sisters in the USA and worldwide. Royal Mail workers have endured the year-on-year destruction of living standards and safety conditions through every union-management agreement. Safety conditions supposedly guaranteed by the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 have instead been eroded in the race for profit. The Health and Safety Executive, the body meant to enforce these laws, has shown itself to be a paper tiger.

The deaths of our two brothers in America should be a wake-up call to workers everywhere. Instead, the CWU ignores it and presses ahead with its policy of collaboration with management. We face massively increased fatigue from impossible workloads, with deliveries that once

took three hours now stretched to five hours or more. New work patterns were introduced without the legally required risk assessments, despite the entirely predictable rise in accidents and sickness. Stress levels are through the roof as workers try—and inevitably fail—to complete mail duties deliberately built to fail in favour of parcels.

Any attempt to involve the union or health and safety reps is met with stonewalling. The only consistent opposition now comes from the rank-and-file committee. Senior full-time reps, once in near-daily attendance to ram through extra work, are now totally absent and unreachable. The lesson is clear: we must build an opposition from the ground up and stop relying on full-time officials who serve management's agenda.

One example of the cavalier contempt shown by CWU and management was the replacement of proper, legally binding risk assessments with the monitoring of exhausted delivery workers using heart-tracking devices run by a private company with no experience in the postal sector. The results were never published, and no lessons were learned—except what we already knew. Increased workloads in extreme conditions leave workers exhausted, ill, and unable to enjoy family life.

It is time for the rank-and-file to make a stand take up the struggle to win back our hard-fought conditions—and the right to a life outside work.

Pauline Beach, whose husband Des was victimised by Royal Mail, has also backed the call for a worker led investigation. Des died on April 23 this year at the age of 58 after he suffered a catastrophic heart attack. The PWRFC published a tribute to Des and his fight against injustice sending condolences to his family and friends. Des previously conducted a video interview with the PWRFC in November 2024 to bring his case to light. This exposed his unfair dismissal by Royal Mail on trumped charges on June 8, 2023 after 31 years of exemplary service, and the collusion of the CWU with his frame-up who withdrew support for his Employment Tribunal claim. Neither party have ever replied. The YouTube video which can be viewed here has received 8,000 views and Des received messages of solidarity from postal workers around the country.

Pauline said:

Reading of the deaths of postal workers Nick Acker and Russell Scruggs Jr. in the USA brought back to me how Royal Mail and the CWU contributed to the death of my husband in April this year. I send my sincere condolences to the families and close friends of those who lost their lives. An investigation led by rank-and-file workers is the only way of getting at the truth and stopping a cover-up.

I can totally relate to how their families and friends are feeling. This is the sort of thing that happens when you work for a company who put profits before people, just like Royal Mail here in the UK.

Some of you will remember the interview done by my husband Des Beach in November last year. Little did we know he would lose his life only a few months later. Des looked after his health and fitness his whole life. He was diagnosed with kidney disease in October 2020 but with treatment it was well managed.

Des was dismissed for gross misconduct in June 2023 along with his CDV [van share] partner. These were allegations he always denied and a former manager who spent a week going over his case said there was nothing in it that even warranted a quiet word in his ear, let alone dismissal. The case notes are full of procedural errors, management inconsistencies and CWU negligence. The only outcome as far as Royal Mail was concerned was always going to be dismissal. Des had 31 years' service and an unblemished record, no current sickness

stages.

Despite him being diagnosed with chronic kidney disease there was never any occupational health assessment done. Personally, I find this omission in a company as large as Royal Mail totally unacceptable.

Having spoken to many former and current posties I have found what happened to Des not uncommon. Rumours abound as to the reasons, but I feel sure getting rid of long serving posties on legacy contracts and replacing them with part-time staff on much inferior contracts will save Royal Mail a lot of money. Unbelievably the CWU, who are meant to protect their workers, actually agreed to these new contracts along with new inferior sickness policies for all staff.

After almost 2 years of knowing he had lost his livelihood due to his treatment by Royal Mail and the CWU, Des suffered a massive heart attack and passed away in the Freeman Hospital, Newcastle upon Tyne on 23 April 2025. Some of the top cardiologists in the country looked after Des and all agreed the stress of the last 2 years had contributed to his death. Des's colleagues at Royal Mail were threatened with being conducted [face disciplinary charges] so only a small number of brave souls stuck their heads above the parapet with supporting witness statements. These were totally ignored by Royal Mail and the CWU other than being told they were lying or mistaken.

The problem here is as long as folk choose to bury their heads in the sand this sort of situation will carry on. The workforce at Royal Mail is huge as is the CWU membership. You pay the wages of the CWU so should expect a first-class service when you need them. Workers shouldn't be expected to take on even heavier workloads when they can't even manage the existing ones. Des paid union fees for 31 years and got nothing. Without the union members the union will not exist.

If you don't expose bullying managers, health and safety problems and CWU reps who are besties with the managers then nothing will ever change. Stick together and stop looking out just for yourself otherwise nothing will ever change and it could be your loved one left distraught and grieving.

Help lift the lid on the conditions facing postal workers and expose the workplace injuries, stress and death toll caused by the ruthless drive for corporate profit. Messages of support to the Scruggs and Acker families can be sent using the report form below. Please say whether you are willing for them to be published as part of the IWA-RFC's campaign for a rank-and-file investigation.



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Socialist Equality Party visit:

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