

Reject CWU's Royal Mail letter writing stunt

For rank-and-file opposition to collusion with Kretinsky and Starmer government

Tony Robson
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The Communication Workers Union's (CWU) letter-writing campaign urging postal workers to contact their Member of Parliament (MP) for urgent action to "Protect Postal Services" is a political fraud from top to bottom. It claims Royal Mail workers can "Have your Say", when in fact it is based on adding a signature to a pre-written email tightly scripted by CWU general secretary Dave Ward and deputy Martin Walsh.

The 870-word message is a tissue of distortions designed to bury their responsibility for destroying the postal service and the jobs and conditions of Royal Mail workers, who are presented as humble petitioners. Eleven months after hailing its "groundbreaking agreement" with Royal Mail's new owner, billionaire Daniel Kretinsky's EP Group, the CWU now claims the issue is persuading EP Group to "honour the agreement" and adopt "a more realistic approach to USO reform".

The CWU-EP Group Framework Agreement—tied to Labour's Deed of Undertakings in December which rubber stamped Kretinsky's £3.6 billion takeover—has from the outset been a restructuring agenda for downgrading the mail service and its Universal Service Obligation (USO) to deliver letters six days a week to addresses across the UK at a fixed price. Its purpose is to facilitate mass job cuts, further automation and gig-economy practices, converting the postal service into a low-wage parcel courier network.

EP Group immediately reneged on limited commitments to improve terms and conditions, most critically the first step in September toward piecemeal equalisation for new entrants on inferior pay and conditions.

Ward and Walsh used these bogus pledges to ram through the Framework Agreement in an August ballot tied to a pay award, which postal workers received six months late after the takeover was completed in May. Rather than a sweetener, the below-RPI rate of inflation three-year deal was another real-terms pay cut. The award and agreement passed with endorsement from just one in three CWU members as disaffection took the form of mass non-participation.

The CWU now portrays its stage-managed letter-writing campaign as "mobilising members"—the same workers they delivered bound and gagged to EP Group. It is another PR stunt

aimed at shielding Ward and Walsh from rank-and-file anger as they deepen collaboration with the Starmer government, block workplace resistance, and limit the fallout from handing the postal service to a billionaire oligarch.

CWU cover-up of collusion with Royal Mail and EP Group

The letter states: "In recent years, we have seen a deliberate and sustained attack on postal workers by the previous Royal Mail Group Board. Alongside this, the service to customers and businesses across the UK has been completely undermined. This includes mail delays and failures, prioritisation of parcels over letters and underreporting of the true extent of mismanagement that goes on in many workplaces across the UK."

Ward & Co were joint partners with Royal Mail in this assault. They co-authored the pro-company agreement in July 2023 that sold out the national strike, imposed a two-tier workforce and overturned hard-won rights as part of the Amazon-style regime they helped design—citing the threat of bankruptcy after shareholders were handed £600 million. This was not "mismanagement" but capitalist plundering.

Royal Mail has since breached statutory delivery targets for three consecutive years, failing to deliver a quarter of first-class letters on time. The fines by the regulator Ofcom have been written off as cheaper than meeting legal requirements, while the public are defrauded. Joint union-management agreements—including in January 2024—endorsed de facto alternate-day delivery amid chronic understaffing.

After airbrushing this, the email explains: "We cautiously welcomed the takeover by EP Group because the status quo under the previous Board was completely unsustainable."

Royal Mail workers did not welcome EP Group; Ward and Walsh did—and there was nothing cautious about it. They acted as company enforcers, using union comms to browbeat members suspicious of impending disaster and demanding

acceptance of “the reality of privatisation”. They functioned as Kretinsky’s junior partners, with CWU officials guaranteed a seat at the boardroom table via an Advisory Committee.

The Optimised Delivery Model stitch-up

The new “governance model”, based on full integration of the union apparatus, required clamping down on any independent voice for workers. Postal workers had no say over the Optimised Delivery Model (ODM) pilots agreed with Kretinsky. Walsh drew these up with CWU divisional reps and Royal Mail executives in December, rolling them out at 35 units ahead of national deployment to 1,250.

Workers warned that collapsing four duties into three, extending delivery spans to five hours or more and increasing call rates by 30 percent would be disastrous. Walsh responded as a loyal company mouthpiece, insisting “there is no alternative”. CWU officials promoted Ofcom’s January report rubber-stamping ODM and downgrading non-First-Class mail to alternate-weekday delivery, boasting of £425 million in annual cost savings—destined for EP Group.

Walsh’s belated admission that ODM is unworkable does not reverse his support for the cost-cutting agenda. The call in the email for a “more realistic approach to USO reform” reassures Labour and other MPs of the pro-market agenda the CWU apparatus remains committed to in policing workers’ opposition. At the CWU Live event launching this PR stunt last month, Ward and Walsh outlined “sensible alternatives” based on a “heavy and light” model driving up productivity by 12 percent and cutting 6,500 jobs—ODM Mark II.

Two-tier working: the reality

The plea for MPs to engage with EP Group on ending two-tier working “imposed by previous management” is shot through with deceit.

Ward and co. drew up the two-tier agreement and the sellout was promoted with the aid of Labour MP Darren Jones, now Chief Secretary to Starmer. He received a standing ovation at the CWU Briefing of union officials in April 2023, falsely marketing the agreement as pro-worker. On X, Jones claimed, “Too many bosses think they can force through lower pay, fewer protections and tech surveillance without consequence”—spinning a deal that delivered all of this, courtesy of his partners in the CWU.

New entrants—as well as senior workers who fought against the imposition of the two-tier workforce in the 2022–23

dispute—have voiced disgust with the CWU’s equalisation pathway, requiring a three-year qualification period. With half of new entrants leaving within a year and 27,000 quitting since December 2022, most of the remaining 23,000 will never qualify. Two-tier conditions—pay near to the minimum wage, unpaid meal breaks, mandatory Sundays and inferior pensions—will persist.

The way forward

The CWU’s letter-writing PR stunt must be rejected. To stop ODM, defend the postal service and win immediate levelling-up for new entrants, the fight must once and for all be taken out of the hands of the unaccountable pro-company union apparatus led by Ward. Power must be transferred through workplace committees to the shop floor where it belongs, and a campaign waged to defend the 130,000-strong workforce and the public service it provides, not to appease EP Group.

This is the fight being taken up by the Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee (PWRFC), which also seeks to help Royal Mail workers reach out to resident doctors, refuse and transport workers opposing austerity cuts and profit gouging; and logistics workers such as DPD employees who have taken action against what they describe as a “corporate dictatorship”.

Through the International Worker Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees, the PWRFC can coordinate the fight of Royal Mail workers with postal and logistics workers internationally coming under attack by the same hedge funds and equity firms, with postal services being restructured to prioritise profits in preparation for outright privatisation in America, Canada and Australia—ripe for plucking by oligarchs like Kretinsky.



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