

Royal Mail workers in London oppose CWU union leaders

“I’m one hundred percent for a rank-and-file rebellion. There is no one defending us in our depot.”

Our reporters

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Royal Mail workers at the Mount Pleasant Mail Centre in central London have been discussing the call by the Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee (PWRFC) for a fightback against the Communication Workers Union (CWU) leadership’s collusion with billionaire Daniel Kretinsky’s EP Group and the Starmer government.

The Mount Pleasant site houses the Mail Centre involved in processing and distributing mail, and the local delivery office.

The PWRFC statement—and a reply published on the *World Socialist Web Site* (WSWS) to the swipe against it by CWU deputy general secretary Martin Walsh—were circulated as leaflets.

One postal worker responded, “You’re right; we need to fight Kretinsky this year—we won’t have a choice. He is a billionaire investor; he will demand a return on his investment and he’s going to take it out of us.”

A veteran postie described the impact of the Optimised Delivery Model (ODM) trials: “Our office was a trial for ODM. It’s been a complete disaster: nothing is working properly, priority is given to parcels, no one knows what’s happening. No one knows where [CWU General Secretary] Dave Ward is. We’ve not heard from him in weeks. The union and management are the same outfit. There is no difference.”

The PWRFC statement explains that the collapse of the mail service is not accidental but the outcome of a deliberate wrecking operation. As EP Group moves to restructure Royal Mail around parcels and a downgraded letter service, CWU officials have acted as industrial enforcers. They have agreed to trials/pilots of the ODM at 35 delivery offices nationally since last February, reducing duties from 4 to 3, extending delivery spans and parcel-driven workloads.

In response to the call for a rank-and-file fightback, the same worker said, “Sounds a good idea; something for workers to focus on.”

A young colleague added, “Glad to see you are not the union. I think it’s a good idea to have us, the workers, deciding what our conditions should be. I’ll read this and scan for the (PWRFC) Newsletter.”

Another postie said bluntly, “There is no difference between union and management, they work hand in hand.”

Anger extended to the divisive two-tier workforce created with the union’s agreement. One worker said, “The union has always been in management’s pocket. The young never last five minutes on the job because it’s like a prison camp. Their hourly rates are different. They should be on equal pay to the rest of us.”

Typical remarks included: “Ward has disappeared,” and “Union? What union? We have heard nothing from them, and they have done nothing for us.”

Campaigners explained that Dave Ward, Martin Walsh and the CWU leadership’s disappearing act was bound up with discussions with management behind workers’ backs. As the PWRFC statement notes: “Even as Royal Mail moves to executive action to impose ODM nationally, this will not be resisted by CWU officials. Instead, they will retreat into closed-door meetings for weeks to promote an alternative that constitutes no opposition at all.”

CWU headquarters disabled comments on its Facebook page under Martin Walsh’s one-minute video “update” posted on February 10 about the talks with management. He gave no details other than stating that “both sides” were committed to reaching an agreement.

Walsh is seeking management backing for his

repackaged version of ODM (a “Heavy and Light Model”) reducing duties to facilitate job cuts and greater productivity. None of this has been agreed by a single postal worker.

One worker said, “There has to be a fight. We have noticed Kretinsky has chosen to target our depot. He is a bastard. We have heard there is going to be a ballot and we’ll be striking soon.”

Another added, “The shop floor is in chaos. We are all feeling under pressure from management. I am one hundred percent for a rank-and-file rebellion. We need a proper leadership. There is no one defending us in our depot.”

A long-standing postal worker summed up conditions at what he described as Kretinsky’s headquarters:

“Management on at us all the time; everything is about efficiency. Everything worked until the ODM trials at 30-odd sorting offices. Now nothing works. No one has heard anything from Ward or Walsh. This week they are all in there—union, management—discussing ODM and USO [the downgrade of the Universal Service Obligation to deliver letters six days a week]. We are going to be sold down the river. It doesn’t matter what we say.”

“All they keep saying is efficiency, efficiency, efficiency. These changes are what management has wanted to bring in for over 20 years. It’s now staring us in the face. Of course we have to fight, but the union is signing agreements that undercut that. I will read the leaflet.”

The PWRFC statement addresses the reasons why postal workers have been disempowered and what they need to do to overcome this:

Workers can put a stop to this by asserting what is right and necessary against the profit interest of the private-equity billionaires at EP Group, represented jointly by the union apparatus and the government. We appeal to you to help expand the Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee (PWRFC) to make this possible.

Organising from the shop floor—establishing independent committees in delivery offices and mail centres, and throughout distribution and Parcelforce—is essential. These committees must advance clear demands: no executive impositions, no USO ‘reform’, an end to two-tier pay and conditions, defence of a fully funded daily universal mail service, and opposition to all job

cuts and workload intensification.

The statement concludes by insisting that postal workers’ strength lies in collective political struggle, waged independently and against the sabotage of the union bureaucracy:

Our power lies not in partnership with EP Group or appeals to the Starmer government, but in the conscious, organised mobilisation of more than 100,000 postal workers. Above all, the struggle must be politically oriented, linking postal workers in the UK with postal and logistics workers internationally facing the same attacks and privatisation drives. This is the fight the PWRFC is taking up as part of the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees.

Postal workers at Mount Pleasant and other Royal Mail workplaces should contact the PWRFC to detail how their grievances over unsafe and impossible workloads are being swept under the carpet by the CWU apparatus. This will open up a vital line of communication with their colleagues around the country and help prepare an organised fightback through the building of a new leadership against the pro-company bureaucracy.



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