

Vote No and reject blackmail by CWU's Martin Walsh to enforce pro-company agreement with Kretinsky

Postal Workers Rank-and File-Committee (UK)
26 May 2026

We call on our brothers and sisters to reject Communication Workers Union (CWU) deputy general secretary Martin Walsh's 10 points for a Yes vote on the "negotiators agreement" with Royal Mail and billionaire owner Daniel Kretinsky's EP Group.

The message to branches from Walsh, "When voting!", appeared on CWU WhatsApp on May 17. It was not based on positive arguments but a series of threats to enforce the pro-company agreement, all directed against a No vote.

Colleagues have seen through Walsh's "heavy and light" alternative to the Optimised Delivery Model (ODM)—"DM26"—as a rebranding exercise. It accepts the policy of three delivery workers doing the work of four: slashing jobs by a quarter and intensifying workloads.

The "first step" in so-called equalisation for new entrants is an insulting 1.75 percent uplift, leaving them near minimum wage and without paid meal breaks or payment for delivering flyers. This is topped off by another real-terms pay cut for 130,000 colleagues—a miserly 3 percent for this year below even the lower CPI inflation rate. This was falsely sold as part of a three-year deal based on "no strings". Now making up the gap with the CPI inflation rate is being tied to further USO "reform", meaning more job cuts and heavier workloads.

Walsh's message, seven days into the online ballot ending May 29 shows union HQ are panicked. Calls for a No vote have dominated the CWU Facebook page and social media. Walsh's intervention is an attempt to spike a No vote by claiming it will not count because the company will move to executive action.

Walsh is already doing this behind our backs. The CWU has briefed reps that DM26 went live at a delivery office in Manchester last week as the first step in a rollout across 240 units.

Walsh, Ward and the Postal Executive do not respect the democratic process because a No vote strips them of legitimacy for collusion with Royal Mail management.

A No vote is critical to enforce the will of the membership and rally the rank-and-file. Walsh's 10 points have been reproduced as a CWU leaflet to silence opposition. This is our response:

1. "USO reform is not optional".

Walsh presents Ofcom's rubber stamp for downgrading the USO last July as passive acceptance of the regulator's decisions when he embraced it. In February 2025, he complained the USO "costs Royal Mail £300 million per year": the figure cited by Royal Mail in its cost-cutting program to conduct USO "reform".

Walsh echoed the mantra that the USO was an "unfair financial burden" so EP Group can claw hundreds of millions in profits through restructuring.

This is the content of USO "reform" hard-wired into the framework agreement with EP Group agreed by Ward and Walsh in December 2024. ODM pilots at 35 delivery offices since last March were the downpayment on this restructuring agenda.

The issue is not what Royal Mail or Ofcom want. It is whether workers organise independently against destruction of the mail service, jobs and conditions.

2. "Voting no will not result in the status quo."

Walsh repeats his threat of executive action by the company. For Walsh the "status quo" is retaining our terms and conditions. But we will not be blackmailed into signing away hard-won rights because management threatens imposition.

Walsh is saying we only have a "choice" of poison. This is capitulation dressed up as a negotiated settlement. Acceptance is an admission of bankruptcy by those supposed to represent us.

3. "Voting no, will not mean that you suddenly don't have 4 into 3."

This is intimidation to impose the framework accepted by the CWU apparatus of managed decline and ramped-up workloads.

We reject the idea that postal workers must pay for Kretinsky's profits through exhaustion and unsafe workloads, causing heart attacks and mental stress.

4. "Voting no will likely mean you won't have a resign which is in the agreement, or the option to select the duties."

We are offered scraps: the right to apply for duties based on seniority after working conditions have been trashed.

After years of revisions chaos, broken duties and collapsing

staffing levels, postal workers are told to vote Yes to preserve minor selection rights rather than oppose the sweatshop charter.

5. “Vote No will mean no protection from compulsory redundancies.”

The CWU apparatus repeats this threat in every dispute. Thousands of jobs have been removed without formal redundancy programmes through management bullying, overwork, duty absorption and “natural wastage”.

Meanwhile, a two-tier workforce is entrenched, with new entrants on inferior pay and terms. This is not job protection; it is workforce fragmentation along gig-economy lines.

6. “Voting will mean that you work the ODM model.”

Whether it is the CWU’s “heavy and light” model or full optimisation by Royal Mail, this is the same cost-cutting framework: fewer staff, intensified exploitation and turning Royal Mail into a parcel logistics operation.

Walsh & Co have accepted EP Group’s priorities, not ours: the parcel-first model, cost minimisation, duty fragmentation and gutting the public mail service.

7. “DM26 has downdialed the saving from ODM.”

Translated into plain language: the union is managing the pace of restructuring designed to disrupt collective opposition. This is sold as mitigation, but it is simply controlled implementation of the employer’s agenda.

We are told to be grateful that job cuts and workload increases are being introduced gradually rather than abruptly.

8. “There is no magic money tree.”

Walsh repeats the standard Thatcherite-Blairite trope for austerity and cuts. More than £600 million was handed to shareholders in 2022 before Royal Mail pleaded poverty and launched the biggest attack on jobs, terms and conditions in history.

Walsh accepts the logic that postal workers must compete with gig-economy operators—falsely defined as “self-employed drivers”, without pensions, sick pay or stability.

The alternative is not imitation of Amazon-style exploitation, but a unified fight against it. We should organise with delivery drivers at DPD, Evri and Amazon against the race to the bottom.

9. “Voting No may seem a good idea and may get a few likes, fist emojis and some good comments but it is the road to oblivion.”

Walsh and Ward know about the road to oblivion: they co-authored it through their sellout deal in July 2023 after sabotaging our national strike. They used the same smear tactics against opposition then to ram through the two-tier workforce, slashing sick pay and seasonal hours to create a flexible workforce along gig-economy lines. This is why the tenure of the unaccountable bureaucracy must end.

10. “The risk is also in 3 years when the legal guarantees are up for review that EP and Royal Mail decide that the 11% of mail which is actually USO traffic will be delivered by a much reduced level of employees and everything else parcels and

tracked by self-employed drivers.”

The “legal guarantees” come with a get-out clause citing adverse market conditions or poor business performance. The threat of replacing directly employed staff with gig-economy drivers - already 25 percent among colleagues at Royal Mail’s Parcelforce arm - is used by the CWU to prove it can discipline us to accept mirrored exploitation by downgrading contracts.

Walsh ends his rant with denunciations of the influence of “political parties who are not elected (sic) only have an agenda of progressing their parties beliefs”. He does not identify who is involved in the alleged conspiracy, but this chimes with Ward’s comments at the recent CWU conference attacking the left.

This from a bureaucracy which opposed a motion to disaffiliate from the Labour Party which, as one of its first acts in government, rubber-stamped the £3.6 billion takeover of Royal Mail by Kretinsky, with whom the CWU apparatus is colluding while demanding workers “accept the reality of privatisation.”

A No vote must be the starting point for independent rank-and-file organisation outside the CWU apparatus, linking delivery, mail centre and Parcelforce workers nationally, preparing collective resistance to executive action and uniting with postal workers internationally facing the same restructuring offensive.

It is not demands for a living wage, job security and safe working conditions which are unrealistic, but the demands of billionaire oligarchs like Kretinsky laying waste to a public service and our hard-won rights.

The outcome will be determined by struggle. This means first defeating the CWU bureaucracy, their threats must be answered by demanding a no confidence vote in Walsh, Ward and the Postal Executive.

- **Vote No to blackmail!**
- **Vote No to corporatism!**
- **Build the Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee!**



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