

Postal bosses go nuclear

- **Court injunction threat demands real escalation**
- **Appeal for labour movement strike fund solidarity**
- **Act to defend suspended reps and activists**

DESPERATE ROYAL Mail bosses have threatened to use the courts to call off CWU strikes. This would have stopped the strike for six weeks or even overturned the ballots.

CWU leaders argued that two allegations could be upheld by a judge, and cancelled two weeks of rolling strikes, replacing them with two all-out 24 hour strikes on 12 and 14 November—the earliest possible date permitted by the two week notice period.

Management will be gloating and many workers dismayed, but this is the reality of the anti-union laws. There are so many petty regulations that even the smallest failure means a company can go running to court screaming for an injunction. In this case the CWU failed to get the grading right of some workers in a handful of offices; after a herculean effort to dot every 'i' and cross every 't' the union had not managed to keep up with Royal Mail's operational changes.

Technically every postal worker will be striking for just as many days as before, since rolling strikes call different functions out on different days, but these were billed as an escalation due to the extra disruption involved for the mail. So now there is an extra week without action during the crucial pre-Christmas period, when postal work-

ers are at their strongest.

CWU leaders met with Royal Mail negotiators at arbitration service ACAS for the first time on 25 October. Even sulking CEO Simon Thompson dropped in for the first few days. But workers should not have any illusions. Only a week back Thompson was tweeting that there was 'less than a 1% chance' of a deal with the CWU!

On the shop floor the company is pressing ahead with the very policies that the strike is meant to oppose, from electronic signing in to using PDAs for performance and conduct issues.

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The injunction threat is just the icing on the cake, and has probably been planned for weeks to hit November's escalation.

If workers were only fighting a corporate nonentity like Thompson then they would have won long ago. But he has been able to sabotage negotiations, because behind him stands the billionaire Kretinsky, the biggest shareholder, with his plans to break up the company.

Escalation

The only way to get a deal that defends pay, terms and conditions—or possibly any deal at all, given the employers' intransigence—is to escalate the fight sharply now. The rolling strikes for the second half of November are threatened

by the injunction. This tactic was a step up, but as well as forcing workers in different functions to cross each others' picket lines, it is unlikely to win. Postal workers should throw all their strength into the balance for November and December, going quickly to all-out by Black Friday, to bring management to its knees.

Many members will say they can't afford that. That's why the CWU needs to boost the strike fund fast. The CWU should call an emergency meeting for trade unions and trades councils, setting up solidarity committees to get the whole movement raising funds and solidarity for us and others on strike like the RMT. That builds our strike and the movement at the same time.

Injunctions stopped strikes in 2007 and 2019 with disastrous results. Yet union leaders continue to abide by them, no matter how undemocratic or damaging.

Only grassroots organisation can overcome this, with workers organised and prepared to act from below, with strikes committees and local rank and file committees, that can take action when the leaders won't act or prepare to sell short the struggle. Ultimately, that is the only way to get round Royal Mail's injunction blackmail, while insisting on escalation and democratic control of the strike.

Royal Mail takes hostages

AT LEAST thirty CWU reps and members have been suspended, often on trumped up charges, by managers. This is a calculated attack on the union's strength, taking the reps out of the workplace to try to weaken the strike. Royal Mail has every interest in dragging these out, effectively taking reps hostage until the end of the strike and whatever amnesty is put in place as part a deal.

Where workers can they should challenge this with sit-ins and walk-outs, but until the rep is freed, it makes it even more important that workplace committees are built of reps and militants that can fill the gap and oversee the strike, keeping people informed, addressing the concerns of members worried about money, approaching agency workers to convince them to respect the strike.

Anti-union laws: screw tightens

BORIS JOHNSON'S government passed a new law was passed allowing bosses to break strikes by employing temporary agency staff. Business secretary Kwasi Kwarteng boasted, "This was a criminal offence. Now it's an option for business." The Tory programme summed up in a tweet!

But there's more. A new Bill proposes to institute minimum service levels during transport strikes. Further measures will compel unions to suspend action and ballot the membership on every new pay offer.

RMT general secretary Mick Lynch described the proposals as 'the latest step in a clampdown on democratic dissent, which every trades unionist and democrat must oppose'. Too right—but what are the unions going to do about it?

This summer, Lynch threatened a general strike if minimum service laws are brought in. But this fighting talk was just that; the left union leaders will never act without the TUC—and the failure of these "lefts" to put a general strike on the agenda at the recent TUC Congress shows they won't act unless there is pressure and organisation from below.

We call for the creation of cross-union rank and file committees in every workplace to prepare the necessary action: mass pickets to stop scab labour breaking strikes, stewards' groups to defend pickets from police harassment, wildcat action against victimisation.

Any tightening of the anti-union laws or their use to outlaw strikes or penalise unions must be met with the full solidarity of the entire labour movement—a general strike to smash the anti-union laws.

BRIEFING

Tory government prepares cuts, unions must prepare resistance

SIX WEEKS was all Tory MPs needed to put an end to the Truss experiment. This time they did not make the mistake of consulting their members. Having already installed Jeremy Hunt as Chancellor, the election rules were blatantly rigged in favour of the bankers' man Rishi Sunak.

The forces of chaos, in the guise of Boris Johnson, were determined to spoil Sunak's coronation, but Tory MPs threatened to split the party rather than accept his leadership. This concentrated enough minds to scupper his bid. But the fact that they resorted to such desperate measures is indicative of the depth of the crisis British capitalism and its traditional ruling party, are in.

Britain has been subjected to a constitutional coup, carried through with the encouragement of the bond markets, the Bank of England and the IMF. The democratic case for a general election is clear. But the Tories won't be driven from office unless and until their plan to make workers pay for the crisis is comprehensively defeated.

Truss' departure concludes the third act in the Tories' attempt to make Brexit work. After the paralysis of Theresa May's Brexit-lite, then the detour through Johnson's populism, Truss heralded the rise to power of the free-market fundamentalists who knew what Brexit was really about: unleashing economic growth by ripping up the welfare state, employment rights and regulations.

Kwasi Kwarteng's budget was designed to justify the ongoing suffocation of the health service by creating a hole in public finances. Although he fell or rather was pushed into the hole, his sacrifice was not in vain; our public services face 'painful', 'eye-watering' cuts.

The new budget will set out the precise balance between spending cuts and tax rises but, like every budget since 2010, austerity will

decimate the welfare state and impose severe cuts to people's living standards with pay, pensions and benefits pegged way below inflation.

The wider government programme consists of attacking the working class' ability to resist these attacks, and intensifying exploitation: attacks on trade union rights, intensifying the hostile environment, expanding free ports and deregulation.

Labour in the wings?

The courting of Britain's bosses by the Labour Party leadership, a re-run of Blair's infamous 'prawn cocktail offensive', is an attempt to sell Labour to the bosses as a responsible steward of British capitalism.

As proof of this Starmer has abandoned Labour's 2017 and 2019 manifestos and reneged on the pledges made during his leadership election. His recent speech to the TUC Congress was a blunt warning that Labour is committed to being the party of 'sound money' that will take 'difficult decisions'. The TUC top table enthusiastically applauded him.

Labour's pitch rests on its links to the top levels of Britain's pro-capitalist trade union bureaucracy, allowing it to more effectively pacify and police working class resistance to the restoration of 'economic responsibility'.

That is why, in the mouths of the Labour and trade union leaders, the call for a general election now is a diversion. Not only does it rely on the illusion that a Labour government would protect the working class against the economic crisis, it also has no means of achieving its aim... unless it is tied to a strategy of raising the level of class struggle.

Only mass workers' action—demonstrations, strikes, civil disobedience—can drive the Tories from office. And only a government that rests on workers' organisations—strike committees, councils of action, defence guards—can become a real workers' government that rules for the many, not the few.

WE FIGHT FOR WORKERS' POWER

WORKERS POWER is a revolutionary communist organisation.

We support all workers in struggle against the bosses. We fight to turn every struggle into a conscious fight against the whole profit system. It is the system that is the problem, not just this or that employer or government.

Behind the Tories and their billionaire backers lies the capitalist system. It is a system that puts millions on the dole, drives down wages, and destroys the environment. We want to destroy that system and replace

it with one where production is guided by the needs of the many, not the profits of the few. That means taking the wealth of society; the banks and the major firms, into the hands of the working class and drawing up a democratic plan of production under workers' control.

The working class has the power to do this. It is rediscovering its enormous power to defeat the bosses through strike action. We think that power should be used to smash capitalism and build a new kind of society without poverty, oppression and war.

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