

Workers Power: What we stand for

Workers Power is a revolutionary communist organisation. We fight to:

- Abolish capitalism and create a world without exploitation, class divisions and oppression
- Break the resistance of the exploiters by the force of millions acting together in a social revolution smashing the repressive capitalist state
- Place power in the hands of councils of delegates from the working class, the peasantry, the poor - elected and recallable by the masses
- Transform large-scale production and distribution, at present in the hands of a tiny elite, into a socially owned economy, democratically planned
- Plan the use of humanity's labour, materials and technology to eradicate social inequality and poverty.

This is communism - a society without classes and without state repression. To achieve this, the working class must take power from the capitalists.

We fight imperialism: the handful of great capitalist powers and their corporations, who exploit billions and crush all states and peoples, who resist them. We support resistance to their blockades, sanctions, invasions and occupations by countries like Venezuela, Iraq or Iran. We demand an end to the occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq, and the Zionist occupation of Palestine. We support unconditionally the armed resistance.

We fight racism and national oppression. We defend refugees and asylum seekers from the racist actions of the media, the state and the fascists. We oppose all immigration controls. When racists physically threaten refugees and immigrants, we take physical action to defend them. We fight for no platform for fascism.

We fight for women's liberation: from physical and mental abuse, domestic drudgery, sexual exploitation and discrimination at work. We fight for free abortion and contraception on demand. We fight for an end to all discrimination against lesbians and gay men and against their harassment by the state, religious bodies and reactionaries.

We fight youth oppression in the family and soci-

ety: for their sexual freedom, for an end to super-exploitation, for the right to vote at sixteen, for free, universal education with a living grant.

We fight bureaucracy in the unions. All union officers must be elected, recallable, and removable at short notice, and earn the average pay of the members they claim to represent. Rank and file trade unionists must organise to dissolve the bureaucracy. We fight for nationalisation without compensation and under workers control.

We fight reformism: the policy of Labour, Socialist, Social-Democratic and the misnamed Communist parties. Capitalism cannot be reformed through peaceful parliamentary means; it must be overthrown by force. Though these parties still have roots in the working class, politically they defend capitalism. We fight for the unions to break from Labour and form for a new workers party. We fight for such a party to adopt a revolutionary programme and a Leninist combat form of organization.

We fight Stalinism. The so-called communist states were a dictatorship over the working class by a privileged bureaucratic elite, based on the expropriation of the capitalists. Those Stalinist states that survive - Cuba and North Korea - must, therefore, be defended against imperialist blockade and attack. But a socialist political revolution is the only way to prevent their eventual collapse.

We reject the policies of class collaboration: "popular fronts" or a "democratic stage", which oblige the working class to renounce the fight for power today. We reject the theory of "socialism in one country". Only Trotsky's strategy of permanent revolution can bring victory in the age of imperialism and globalisation. Only a global revolution can consign capitalism to history.

With the internationalist and communist goal in our sights, proceeding along the road of the class struggle, we propose the unity of all revolutionary forces in a new Fifth International.

That is what Workers Power is fighting for. If you share these goals - join us.

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The 2007 postal strike and the struggles ahead

- A Socialist Analysis



www.workerspower.com

After the yes vote: where next for the CWU?

The 64% "yes" vote in the November ballot signalled not just the end of this year's powerful strike by postal workers, but its defeat. Major aspects of flexibility that Royal Mail bosses have demanded since April are now accepted, and will see a both a speed-up and hike in workload for postal workers. In exchange for this boost in the rate of exploitation, we get a sub-inflation pay deal now and productivity bonuses sweated out of us in the future.

In order to regroup and turn this situation, postal activists in the CWU will need to organise at every level, from the local workplace battles against flexibility to the national level, mounting a struggle to change the course - and leadership - of the union.

An important battle has been lost, but the struggle is not over, as more major issues are coming up for negotiation in 2007: pension cuts, door to door (junkmail) hikes, and local trials for team-working and summer saving negotiations. Jubilant managers will seek to use the Pay and Modernisation Agreement to go on the offensive in every office, in an attempt to push through the maximum changes, accompanied no doubt by attempts to victimise reps and activists that try to stand in their way.

Ward and Hayes deliver for Royal Mail

This was not a done deal from the start, and the CWU membership is not to blame - the strike proved postal workers' will to sacrifice and struggle. This was a sell-out manufactured at the highest levels of the CWU, with Dave Ward and Billy Hayes using every trick in the book to beat down the aspirations of ordinary postmen and women.

Twice they suspended strikes that were hitting home, demobilising and confusing members, who watched in dismay as Royal Mail cleared backlogs. When thousands went on unofficial strike, the bosses and behind them the government panicked. On 12 October a judge banned our strikes, but instead of fighting on, Ward and Hayes lost their nerve. From the jaws of victory, they snatched defeat.

Once CWU leaders made it clear that they would not lead a serious fight for victory, it was always going to be an uphill struggle to stop the sell-out. Posties had already lost up to £500 each, many two or three times that through unofficial action. Although we had brought Royal Mail to a standstill not once but twice, the prospect of starting all over again was not a pretty one.

programme of reforms within capitalism. This was to be achieved by a passive campaign of collecting signatures, rather than a militant intervention into the struggles against the Labour government.

Where now?

The vote to accept the deal is a real defeat. However, it is not the end of the story. Royal Mail's "consultation" on pensions ends on 16 January, after which it intend to impose working till 65, and wind up the final salary scheme, whatever the answer. London Region is recommending a campaign to reject these counter-reforms (which Hayes and Ward support!) and has called for a national meeting.

As flexibility trials start in January and Royal Mail, arrogant in victory, presses home its advantage, tensions will rise. More strikes and walkouts are inevitable. A rank and file movement must be built to regroup these isolated sparks and stoke them into a wildfire again. In the process we could develop an alternative leadership, and a strategy to defeat restructuring and privatisation. The meeting called by London could take a step in this direction if it is not just a national reps briefing but a meeting that is open

and accessible to ordinary reps and members and democratic, taking resolutions and making decisions by voting, so it is not just a plaything of the Hayes and Ward."

The crisis of leadership that we referred to in the beginning of this article is the major problem facing the working class. It is not just the sell-out bureaucrats; this crisis is also manifested at the level of the rank and file and the far left. The postal strike shows this to be the case. Workers Power does not claim to have all the answers, and we have much to learn from the rich diversity of tactics that workers develop in struggle. However we believe that we gave answers to the burning question on how to win the CWU strike, qualitatively better answers than the rest of the left, which sway between reformism and revolution and are what Marxists call "centrist".

We appeal to all CWU militants who have appreciated our practical support during their strike, and agree with our political solutions to the problems raised in it, to join us. That way we can have a bigger voice in the coming struggles, and fight to win this time.

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revolt. Having agreed with RMT union leader Bob Crow not to “interfere” in other unions' affairs, it blocked our resolution at the NSSN conference calling for escalating strike action in the CWU and a united strike.

What's the point of setting up these networks, if they are shut down when they are most needed? But it got worse. Loftus voted against the deal on the PEC, but then refused to campaign against the sell-out, putting her cosy relationship to Hayes and Ward above the needs of the workers. Putting positions above principles and policy is the hallmark of every bureaucrat, left or right.

Indeed, the SWP and Socialist Party never even named the bureaucracy or condemned any leaders by name, not even Hayes and Ward. Workers Power alone called for strike committees to run the dispute locally and nationally, made up of delegates elected from workplace meetings. Without developing such organisations, even an all-out strike could be foiled by the leadership - as the fizzling out of the wildcats showed.

Socialist Worker occasionally called for strike committees, but failed to distinguish them from branch committees, which were often bureaucratic. The AWL was better, calling for strike committees and national meetings of reps and so that “not just the top full-time officials” controlled the strike. We need rank and file fighters to replace the bureaucracy, not just squeeze in alongside them.

We linked the call for strike committees to the proposal for a rank and file conference of militant workplaces and activists that could hammer out a strategy to win. It could lay the basis for a movement to replace the bureaucracy with accountable, i.e. recallable fighters, paid the average postal worker's wage.

New workers party

The postal strike was inherently political. By defeating the CWU, the boss class wanted to open the way for steamrolling a series of anti-working class measures across the public sector and make us pay for the impending crisis in their system.

The Labour government could have intervened and resolved the dispute in the workers' favour, and many militants called on it to do so. After all, the CWU has paid Labour millions in affiliation fees and donations. But instead Gordon Brown condemned the strikers and demanded a return to work on Royal Mail's terms.

Thousands of CWU members cancelled the Labour Party contribution in their political fund as a result, and there is likely to be a call to disaffiliate at conference 2008. While this wrong-footed the AWL, which continues to support Labour and merely called for a “debate about political representation”, the SWP eagerly supported the spontaneous movement.

But it is not enough to break from Labour. Apolitical trade unionism would leave the working class without a mass party of its own to fight for an alternative to Labour's privatisation, anti-union laws, the destruction of wages, pensions and conditions. We need a new party, one that can fight for a different system, socialism, while at the same time providing a political leadership to today's struggles and linking them to the overthrow of capitalism.

The SWP did not even argue for the CWU to support Respect. While the Socialist Party did call for a new workers party, it was for one modelled on old Labour and fighting elections with a pro-

Activists report that many accepted the deal, resigned to defeat rather than believing the official union line that it was a victory.

Rank and file members launched a brave Reject the Deal campaign with few resources - the first such campaign against a leadership decision in living memory. Meanwhile Ward and Hayes used the CWU HQ machinery to maximum effect, sending out three letters to members, with Ward even posting an online podcast - arguments that would not have been out of place on the plasma screen propaganda that workers were forced to watch at work everyday during the strike.

Ward and Hayes will say the big yes vote is an endorsement of their methods, but this rings hollow. Despite all the propaganda and spin from the leadership, still more than a third of CWU branches and members chose to reject the deal, even though this would mean striking in the Christmas period and losing more pay. As for the yes vote, it is clear that many began to ask themselves whether they could really trust the current CWU leadership to lead a successful strike and win anything more - wouldn't it be better to cut our losses? No doubt for thousands, a vote for the deal was not a vote of confidence in the leadership.

CWU tops accept the market

Our “leaders” completely reversed the union's previous positions and switched over to Royal Mail's arguments in order to sell the flexibility, emphasising the some token concessions as a real improvement on management's original demands. They said it was a real gain to separate thorny issues like pensions, teamworking where workers cover their workmates off sick, and Door to Door

junkmail from pay and flexibility. However why separate an issue to negotiate when a national strike is off, and our moment of strongest leverage is past? Instead we should have continued the fight for a comprehensive settlement on all our demands. Without a national strike, we are in a much weaker position to say no to these attacks that are in the pipeline for 2008. Royal Mail will be in a much stronger position to push its demands, while the CWU tops, having abandoned a national strike once, will resist launching more national industrial action. If they did try to threaten Royal Mail with another strike, they would have little credibility, after they bottled this one and won such a strong vote in favour of winding it up. Only a mass push from below for action can force the CWU leadership to take such action again. Ward and Hayes claimed that the deal was the best achievable in the circumstances - but by definition a deal cut in the hours after a court injunction, where the balance of power lies - temporarily - with Royal Mail, will be the worst deal we could have won.

Fake lefts like Pete Keenlyside toured the branches to put a “left” spin on the agreement. In one breath he stated that the strikes were magnificent and he recognised postal workers' will to fight, in the next he said we should quit before the strike crumbled! Yes, he said, the deal wasn't great but is was “adequate” - well it is if you sit behind a desk in Wimbledon like Ward, Hayes and Keenlyside and don't have to face the speed-up, forced overtime and harassment by managers. Keenlyside stated that unless those against the deal put forward concrete proposals, this was the best deal possible. But Royal Mail doesn't put forward “concrete proposals” that undercut their main demands, they stick

to their guns and fight it out, why can't we? Sure, members might decide to negotiate at some point, and that might mean we don't win everything at once, but surely we could win far more than this. Keenlyside's hypocritical answer was to lobby the Labour Party to back postal workers more in the future - this after Brown himself had sided with Royal Mail and condemned our strike! The CWU bureaucracy's arguments were aimed at softening up postal workers for flexibility and for the further cuts to follow: we have to make concessions, the business is changing and postal workers needed to change too, there is no alternative. They have accepted competition and the market, and want to "downsize" CWU members' expectations - and jobs and conditions - to fit the modernisation needs of the business and the Labour government's plans to "marketise" and ultimately privatise public services. Ward and Hayes say again and again that they are against privatisation and will fight it, but this rings hollow. What kind of fight did they wage against the 2006 opening of the postal market? Token stunts and behind the scenes lobbying of Labour MP's. And of course privatisation is already here in the form of the open postal market, since 40% of revenues from big business customers have been won by TNT and the other private companies. While Ward and Hayes may say they are against privatisation, the Pay and Modernisation Agreement includes the "phantom shares" scheme which before they correctly claimed was a step towards backdoor privatisation. More importantly, they will not fight the process of "death by a thousand cuts" that will bring Royal Mail to the brink of privatisation, and make it nearly a foregone conclusion. The fight against privatisation starts with

What kind of pension campaign?

We need a pension campaign that can regroup the union after the ballot defeat, develop a rank and file campaign to power the campaign forward, and defend our pension. Members stand to lose thousands with the changes Royal Mail proposes, with possibly no pension scheme for new starters. The London Divisional Committee's call for a national meeting and a campaign is a start. However there are dangers in the strategy that the LDC proposes.

A similar national meeting called for September 2005 became a rally with a top table stuffed with Labour MP's and CWU tops, rather than a working conference to debate resolutions and take decisions. As a result it launched a token campaign, too little and too late, against the 2006 postal market opening only three months before it happened. Indeed the pro-Labour LDC ignore the possibility of strike action - the only way to defend the pension - in a fruitless echo of Hayes and Keenlyside that the only way we can safeguard the final salary scheme is if we were to successfully lobby the Government! This kind of "political campaign" to pressure a pro-privatisation, neoliberal Brown government will get us nowhere.

Another problem is the LDC states that if we can't defend the final salary pension scheme, our "plan B" should be to make the CARE scheme that Royal Mail is putting forward as good a scheme as possible. But the lesson of the 2007 strike is, we should decide what our goals are and stick to them, not signal Royal Mail what concessions we are prepared to make in advance, that just makes them dig in their feet.

What's more, this is money that belongs to us! Over a decade's pension holiday by Royal Mail in the 1990's saw billions that should have gone into pensions go into the government's coffers instead, lets have it back to pay for the pension - if Labour can pull £30 billion out of a hat for Northern Rock, why not meet the their obligations to postal workers' retirement?

- **Defend the final salary scheme for all postal workers including new starters**
- **No to later retirement at 65!**

phone is the last to ring."

The AWL did not give a lead to these militant, courageous workers but tailed them. Rather than demanding the leadership call an all-out strike and fighting for it among the membership, the AWL relied on workers spontaneously walking out. When they didn't, demoralisation set in. The call for extending the walkouts needed to be combined with the demand for all-out strike on the leaders and members.

Even more embarrassing for the AWL was the regular and mostly uncritical column space that they gave to CWU executive member Pete Keenlyside who eventually supported the sell out by the PEC.

SWP: Autumn of discontent?

The SWP had a member on the CWU Postal Executive Committee (PEC), the CWU President, Jane Loftus, who, along with Sue Bond (Public and Commercial Services union vice-president), issued an appeal: "We believe our two unions should be uniting their battles, and should set a date for coordinated strike action in the near future. This could become a day of action and solidarity for the entire labour movement." (4 August Socialist Worker)

Behind this was a wider campaign for a united public sector strike to smash the 2 per cent pay limit (i.e. real pay cut), with ballots in several major public sector unions and a TUC resolution calling for "coordinated industrial action".

Why call only for a one-day strike when the CWU was already taking two-day strikes and weekly days of action?

Because its favoured bureaucrat Mark Serwotka (PCS General Secretary and Respect member) would only contemplate one-day protests, and so the

posties would have to rein themselves in for the sake of unity!

Worse, they did next to nothing to build for such a strike from below. In a few isolated areas, like Bristol and Leeds, they set up local postal support groups or public sector pay campaigns, but if they involved other left forces, like in south London, they boycotted them. Without local action committees to coordinate the struggle, as Workers Power called for, the SWP appeal, like the TUC's resolution, remained a dead letter.

Rank and file control

But despite having organisations under their control that could link up the militant rank and file and give them a political direction in their fight against the bureaucracy - the Post Worker newspaper in the CWU, Organising For Fighting Unions across the movement - the SWP refused to activate them. Post Worker did not produce a single paper or bulletin from July to November. Its website was not even updated. Then Post Worker refused to support the Reject The Deal campaign in the ballot, because the SWP was afraid of losing its links to the London leadership, which was recommending a Yes vote in support of Dave Ward.

When Workers Power proposed to the OFFU steering committee that it call a national conference to hammer out an alternative strategy for both the postal strike and the united public sector strike, the SWP voted us down.

Nor did the Socialist Party do any better. It echoed the PCS call for co-ordinated action across the public sector. However, although it has considerable influence in the National Shop Stewards Committee, it refused to use it to campaign either in the postal dispute or for a public sector

active campaign.

Of course, any escalation would have been welcome. But limiting the action to protest strikes, telling the bosses in advance when we were going back to work, and giving the bureaucracy the chance to call - and call off - the dates would remain the main problem.

This is why Workers Power petitioned and leafleted for an all-out indefinite strike. It was not only the quickest and most decisive way to win our struggles, it could have broken the company's modernisation plans and taken us towards the union's agreed goals: £400 a week, no to flexibility, no cuts to jobs or pensions, a 35-hour week with no loss of pay. Such a struggle could pave the way to defeating privatisation itself.

what Workers Power argued... How to win the strike

- Defend jobs and conditions: no efficiency deals that trade jobs for pay
- Raise our pay to £400 a week, the UK average pay rate
- Escalate the action: up to and including an all-out strike
- For rank and file control: strike committees of recallable delegates, elected in mass meetings, to control the dispute and all negotiations - for a rank and file movement in the CWU
- Solidarity committees in every borough, town and city: Unite the public sector strikes!

But this would have also dealt a political body blow to the Labour government - exactly why the CWU leadership ruled out the all-out strike.

The problem is, the left ruled out such a strike too, as well as many key demands. For instance, the SWP argued only for a rise above inflation - the same position as Dave Ward, who described the £400 a week goal as a "long-term" aim to be achieved over five years!

Of course, Workers Power did not present our proposal as an ultimatum. We had a dialogue with workers and militants: would support escalating action leading to an all-out strike? But as the dispute wore on, and wildcat strikes posed the question of the indefinite strike point-blank, more and more militants supported our view.

AWL: Tailing the wildcats

The Alliance for Workers Liberty supported the rolling strike tactic as "currently the right one" in July, but demanded the union back those that refuse to cross picket lines. But crossing picket lines was the defining feature of the rolling strike. So how could it be the right tactic? This was also the approach of CWU militants in key branches such as Liverpool, who wanted to spark a decisive confrontation by walking out and inspiring others to follow, forcing the strike to reach a tipping point.

Once Ward and Hayes hatched their sell-out and suspended the strikes, however, the wildcats began to fold. Two weeks later Liverpool finally went back after their heroic stand, embittered. At the mass meeting of up to 800 workers that decided to end the strike, the last speaker from the floor said: "Next time something kicks off, and somebody else needs help, don't phone us - Liverpool's

the fight against competition and the open postal market. It is this that is the battering ram for restructuring Royal Mail, and all the attacks we face. If we do not face up to these attacks, the union will grow too weak to fight the privatisation of Royal Mail when it comes.

The struggle will continue

We need to recognise a defeat for what it is, so we can develop a strate-

gy on how to regroup and turn the situation around. A third of branches and thirty thousand members rejecting the deal shows there is a more "militant minority" within the union that is to the left of Ward and Hayes and willing to wage a more determined struggle. It shows the potential to develop a real challenge both to Royal Mail's offensive and the current pro-market, pro-Labour strategy of the CWU leaders. First off, the pension consultation ends January 16 and already the London

Break from Labour: campaign for a New Workers Party!

A major reason why Billy Hayes capitulated this autumn was that he did not want a head on fight with Gordon Brown and the Labour government. Saving Gordon, keeping Labour in office, fear of Cameron's resurgent Tories, all meant he saw selling out our struggle as the lesser evil. No matter that it was Brown and Labour which backed the reforms of Royal Mail bosses Adam Crozier and Allan Leighton.

We need to resolve this political crisis facing the trade union movement and the entire working class. Thousands are already stopping their contributions from going to Labour. There will be a struggle leading up to conference to disaffiliate from it. But to just abolish the political levy would be worse than useless. It would be a step backwards. Non-political trade unionism will leave us with no weapon to fight against the government, whether it is attacking our jobs and wages, or dismantling public services and sending our youth to war. The fighting unions, the campaigns fighting against war, racism and privatisation, the radical youth need to found a new working class party, one where strikes are not called off to save the prime minister from embarrassment, but where any MP that turns against the workers is recalled and replaced. We need a party that fights for socialism as tenaciously as the current Labour Party defends capitalism.

In short, we need a party of struggle, one committed to wage a struggle not just for reforms but the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism. A democratic movement for new party, one that threw itself into every struggle rather than marked time till the next election, would inspire thousands of youth and workers to its ranks. In the context of struggle, we are convinced that many could be won to go beyond tinkering with this rotten system and for the fight for socialism, for a society where the wealth created by the working class is seized from the hands of the moneymen and bosses and the economy democratically planned, in order to produce for real needs not profit, and develop society in a sustainable way.

Let's ensure we flood the 2007 conference with resolutions demanding the CWU disaffiliates from Labour and initiates a campaign for a new workers party, approaching the RMT, PCS and FBU unions and seeking to organise the thousands of young anti-war and anti-capitalist campaigners.

Divisional Committee (LDC) are calling for a national meeting and a campaign. This is an excellent issue to focus a fightback and these calls should be taken up by the “militant minority” of the union and used to launch a massive militant campaign to defend our pension and reject Royal Mail's demands, including renewed national strike action.

In addition, the pension issue will come to a head just as flexibility trials hit the offices begin in January. Local action will be inevitable if we are to resist the renewed offensive, and no doubt there will be local ballots and walkouts. But unlike a national strike, these struggles will be in a weaker position due to their isolation from one another, so we need to unite the offices that do mount resistance. However we cannot rely for one single minute on the union leaders, not even the “left wingers” on the executive. So how can we regroup our forces for a militant defence, without relying on the leadership which would be a real mistake, as the 2007 strike shows? Workers Power has consistently called for all those branches and workplaces that have taken a militant lead by walking out, waging local strikes over and above the national action, or recommending a “No” vote to seize the initiative and call a conference to hammer out answers to these questions. This way, a rank and file movement could be put in place to launch campaigns, connect local struggles and organise solidarity, so branches that take action are not left to fight alone.

Many have lost all confidence in the current leadership and will want to organise an alternative slate for the coming national elections. But only if we found a democratic rank and file movement, open to all militant activists and branch-

es, can we ensure that the new leaders do not sell us out again. Remember - Dave Ward was a “left” once!

For a Rank and file movement

Bureaucracy is not a matter of the personal weakness of this or that leader - it is a result of the social position of the full-time and unaccountable officialdom. It is a result of the high wages that top officials like Ward and Hayes earn, the comfortable office existence safe from the shopfloor exploitation that postal workers face day in and day out. All this means their interests are not the same as ours, and they cut deals that trade our jobs, wages and conditions away. It is also a result of the membership not having the means to control the conduct of disputes and the actions of negotiators. Free of the control of the rank and file, but subject on a daily basis to the pressure of the management, the billionaire media and the government, even former fiery left wingers cave in. The power and privileges of this entire caste needs to be dissolved.

We believe that every union official should be regularly elected and instantly recallable by the members they claim to represent. They should be also be paid the average wage of the members to deter careerists.

Postal workers need every dispute to be under rank and file control: what is said on our behalf in negotiations, what kind of strike action is taken, whether and when it should be suspended, what constitutes a victory or not. Mass meetings and elected strike committees can do all this, without any recourse to bureaucracy or individual postal balloting.

A rank and file movement can go beyond a solidarity network, it can develop an alternative strategy to the leader-

ship and campaign for it among the members. It can hold its leaders to account, by making them instantly recallable and only take an average postal worker's wage. Ultimately it can develop an alternative leadership and transform the CWU into a democratic union, one part in the wider class struggle for socialism.

The Left and the postal strike

The postal dispute was the most powerful strike in Britain for many years. Two rounds of solid strikes shut down the postal network and piled up a backlog of over a million items. Ninety-five per cent of posties came out. Picket lines were well attended and lively. Thousands walked out on wildcat strike in defiance of the anti-union laws, threatening to turn the dispute into an all-out strike. However, this inspiring story was also a tale of betrayal by Communication Workers Union leaders, Postal Deputy Secretary Dave Ward and General Secretary Billy Hayes in particular. Twice they called off the strikes, just as they were beginning to hurt the all-important business customers. A high court injunction on 12 October gave them the excuse to cut a deal, giving Royal Mail nearly everything they wanted. Postal workers faced what Marxists call a crisis of leadership. The main obstacle between them and victory was their own leadership. Marxists strive to resolve this

crisis by offering an alternative strategy and tactics. That's why it is worth examining what those groups that claim to be Marxist - Socialist Workers Party, Socialist Party and Alliance for Workers Liberty - had to say during this dispute.

What type of action?

The leadership's strategy of dividing the members up and sending them out on different days - rolling strikes - came in for heavy criticism from the rank and file. But what sort of action was needed? Usually SWP simply called for “more” or “harder” action, occasionally being more specific: “We would have preferred a two-day strike with everyone out together, [which] would be much more visible to the public.” (18 July SWP bulletin) The Socialist Party was even more vague, only at the very end musing that it was “likely that all-out national strike action is needed to win this dispute”. This was a one-off after-thought, not an