

No more delay restore the strikes!

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The icing on the cake was a series of face to face reps meetings in York, Birmingham, London and Glasgow that saw workplace reps line up to say that management's shop floor offensive around revisions and bullying hadn't let up for a minute and the union had done nothing about it. Many said their members wouldn't vote for the deal, and they wouldn't either, hitting the spin on the deal with a harsh reality check.

By London, Dave Ward was saying they would not put the ballot to members until Royal Mail had changed their behaviour on the shopfloor. Now they are trying to hold a mass

zoom meeting of managers and reps to say that change has to be agreed – that is way too little, and too late. Most of the revisions are already in, since the union officials did nothing to challenge them for months. Ward and Furey are only reversing gear now because they realise the deal could tank in a mass no vote.

Besides trying to make Royal Mail 'change its behaviour' on the shop-floor, CWU tops are promising to get start and finish times published for individual offices (a massive issue in Scotland) and hope to boost the lump sum by another £1000 to bribe workers, a blatant attempt to bribe us to vote no. But this deal is a rotten deal, hiking workload, slashing terms and conditions, introducing a two tier workforce, not just the below-infla-

tion pay rise. Workers should throw it out.

Against the mantra of 'mutual interest solutions', 'joint working' and Ward's arguments that we need to make Royal Mail 'a successful company' (in the private sector), it can only succeed by hiking the exploitation of postal workers and downsizing the USO.

Workers and reps should demand that there are no more delays. Let offices fight the revisions and victimisations, or follow Glasgow's example and walk out where possible. To make sure we aren't being fooled again, set national strike dates now, rapidly escalating to all out if necessary. Build a solidarity movement with other unions and community organisations to support us, and campaign for renationalising Royal Mail, without compensation to the fat cats and run under workers' and consumers' control.

Can strikes win?

The anger in the Delivery Offices and Mail Centres is tangible. Many workers who reject the deal don't want to strike under the current, sell-out leaders. Even many of those inclined to support the deal are fed up with the union leaders. Thousands have already left the business, having had enough, in what one postie called "passive redundancy".

The danger is that workers now see no way to secure any kind of victory through restarting the strikes. If this mood deepens thousands of posties might end up leaving the union but without any alternative to

it. That would lead to a rout in the workplace as managers push home their advantage. But it's not inevitable.

To those who argue that 18 days of strike action have led to nothing, we should say, imagine if they were all strung together from Black Friday to Christmas Eve, in a rapid escalation with the threat of an all-out strike. That would have broken management and if they had threatened bankruptcy, created a political crisis for the Tories.

A campaign to renationalise

Royal Mail and all the other public services could mobilise this support and organise it locally to prevent hunger and poverty from forcing posties back to work.

Most importantly a new round of strike action should be controlled from below and all negotiations made public. Never again should CWU members be left in the dark. Ward, Furey and co. have had their chance; now it's time for the members to take the reins.

For a rank and file movement in the CWU

The CWU leadership are running scared of their own members, first delaying the ballot and now the NEC has unanimously agreed to cancel the conference, no doubt fearing a serious challenge to their leadership.

That's what should happen. We need an entirely new leadership on both postal and telecoms sides of the CWU. Besides the sell-out deal in the post, the below-inflation pay deal in BT hasn't satisfied the bosses who have just announced 55k job losses coming in the next few years.

The answer to restructuring in BT and Royal Mail isn't to make concessions but to struggle for these to occur under workers control and in the interests of the public and workforce. It needs to oversee the complete transformation of the union from top to bottom.

We should replace Ward, Furey, Kearns and co. with new leaders, drawn from working posties and telecoms workers paid a workers' wage so they remember where they came from. They should be elected by and accountable to CWU members organised in the workplaces, recallable when they act against the workers' interests.

Most of all, they need to be committed to fighting the bosses with militant strike action, including walkouts where needed, for example to combat victimisation and 'revisions' — imposition of harder conditions and job cuts.

Different aims

The bureaucracy — the caste of officials and general secretaries who run our unions — and the rank and file members who pay their wages, have diametrically opposed interests.

The officials want a deal, any deal, that they can sell to their members, just so long as it keeps them at the negotiating table with the employers. Their concern for the bosses' welfare runs so deep that they put the profitability of Royal Mail above the working conditions of their own members.

Workers on the other hand need to maintain, if not improve, their real wages and sustainable working conditions.. Against local management's offensive they need to fight against every cut and for workers' control in the workplace, with a union prepared to call for and endorse strike action, regardless of the anti-union laws.

But you cannot fully control what you do not own. We should demand Royal Mail opens its financial accounts to workers' inspection so we can see where the money's gone. If it is close to bankruptcy, it should be renationalised without compensation to the billionaires who have used Royal Mail like their own Royal Mint.

With this agenda, an alternative leadership would use completely new methods of organising. As far as possible the bureaucracy should be dissolved and its functions carried out by elected rank and file members. The union should be based on workplace and strike commit-

tees, accountable to mass meetings, and its leaders mandated to carry out whatever action is needed to win.

Appeal

The good news is that this dispute has thrown up the new kind of leadership we need, based on reps and militants in the local area that have opposed the deal, stood up to the leaders in meetings and got their branches to recommend a no vote. But it remains in embryonic form, scattered about and unaware of the next steps it has to take.

The Postal Workers Say Vote No campaign, set up by CWU members with the help of Workers Power, has played a positive role in growing the rejectionist mood in the union. Hundreds of reps and posties have joined in but on its own it is not enough. All the left groupings in the union should join together to actively build it.

The aim must be to organise this rank and file revolt into an ongoing movement, that's what really scares Ward and Co. A network of reps and militants, organised locally and networked nationally is completely possible now, if all those who can see that possibility come together and seize it. That's the way to rally the membership and restore the strike momentum.

Together we could hammer out a plan to take the fight to the bosses and transform our union. If the CWU leaders won't call a conference — the rank and file should!

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international
solidarity and
revolution,
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