

Zoom meeting announcement: A rank-and-file fightback strategy for Royal Mail workers

Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee (UK)

21 August 2024

Royal Mail workers are invited to attend an online meeting called by the Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee (PWRFC) on Sunday September 15 to discuss a collective fightback against plans by Royal Mail and EP Group for a major assault on jobs, wages and conditions.

Communication Workers Union (CWU) officials have been in closed-door talks for months with EP Group and owner Daniel Kretinsky over their £3.5 billion takeover bid of Royal Mail and parent company International Distribution Service (IDS). CWU officials Dave Ward and Martin Walsh claim the talks have been “constructive”.

This secrecy has continued in collaboration with a Labour government making good on its pledge to be “the most pro-business” in history. Kretinsky’s bid is being reviewed under the National Security Investment Act, but Business Secretary Jonathan Reynolds has given Labour’s “in-principle” support for Royal Mail’s takeover by the billionaire oligarch.

Postal workers are being kept in the dark by the CWU about plans to carve up Royal Mail.

As the *Telegraph* reported last month: “Kretinsky’s swoop for the postal service is just one step in a far larger strategy”, using his company’s retail and logistics assets to create “the Amazon of Europe.” He already has a top-three ownership stake at Sainsbury’s and investments in Curry’s and Marks & Spencer’s. Analysts discern plans for a vertically integrated online retail and logistics company that would compete with Amazon.

Kretinsky’s assurances to protect the service and the workforce will be ditched at the first opportunity. He has already described the Universal Service Obligation (USO) as “a death grip” and announced plans to invest £400 million in a network of 20,000 drop boxes as part

of an “out-of-home” parcel delivery service.

These plans confirm the warnings by the PWRFC against last year’s sellout national agreement co-authored by the CWU Postal Executive. This has produced the biggest attacks on jobs and conditions in Royal Mail’s history. Meanwhile, IDS executives and shareholders will make millions from handing the mail service to private equity investors and asset strippers.

The claims made by Walsh that the pro-company agreement “mitigated” attacks on jobs and conditions are an insult. CWU officials have colluded with the company to enforce:

- **Mass job losses:** 10,000 redundancies were rammed through even while last year’s dispute was live. A union-endorsed redeployment scheme has since fast-tracked postal workers out of mail centre jobs, making way for two automated Super Hubs. In April, the CWU agreed to “trial” Royal Mail’s reduced USO, with deliveries slashed to alternate weekdays, and no Saturday delivery other than for First class items, threatening thousands of jobs.

- **Gig economy-style working times:** Later start and finish times of up to 90 minutes – more in some cases – have upended postal workers’ lives along with the constant changes to Seasonal Variation shift patterns moulding postal workers lives exclusively around the demands of the business with no life outside the job. This is only phase 1 of the network changes creating a fully “flexible” parcel-delivery workforce.

- **Two-tier workforce:** Senior postal workers on “legacy” terms have been driven out in their thousands through impossible workloads and cost-cutting revisions imposed via the national agreement. New entrants doing the same job are paid a lower hourly rate, just 57 pence more than the National Living Wage. They receive no paid meal breaks and Sunday

working is mandatory.

- **Management bullying:** A regime of intimidation and harassment reigns supreme, sanctified by the Falconer Review that oversaw the stitch-up of 400 reps and workers victimised during the dispute.

The CWU postal executive cynically used our industrial action to cement their role as corporate partners and enforcers. They have forfeited any claim to represent us, responding to criticism from the ranks with either ridicule or censorship.

Royal Mail, EP Group and the CWU have a strategy, and are working with the Starmer government to implement it. The rank-and-file must develop a strategy to challenge this and fight back.

That is the purpose of the Zoom meeting called by the PWRFC.

Royal Mail's regressive attacks are part of a global offensive by corporations across the post and logistics sector. This is not a sectional issue. In the car industry, new technology and the shift to electric vehicles is being weaponised across Europe and North America to throw tens of thousands out of work and ramp up exploitation.

We cannot fight this simply through trade union politics. A network of rank-and-file committees must be created to link workers together in a global fightback. AI and digital technology must be used to lessen the burden of work, freeing up time for leisure and family. This means freeing technology from the selfish control of the corporate oligarchy and placing it under workers' democratic control. Society must be reorganised along socialist lines, to meet human need, not private profit.

Register to join the Zoom meeting. Hear reports from postal workers across Royal Mail and Parcelforce, and send a delegation from your mail centre or delivery office to join the discussion. For copies of this flyer to distribute to colleagues please email rmpw.rfc@gmail.com



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