

Postal workers slam CWU ‘Framework Agreement’ endorsing Kretinsky’s takeover of Royal Mail

“Workers are beginning to realise they are up against a billionaire class stealing the wealth they create”

Our reporters
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Postal workers have condemned the Communication Workers Union (CWU) and its endorsement of the Labour government’s rubber stamping of the £3.5 billion takeover of Royal Mail by billionaire Daniel Kretinsky.

The WSWs article “The CWU’s ‘framework agreement’ backs Kretinsky’s Royal Mail takeover” subjected to close scrutiny the 12-page document drawn up after months of private talks between CWU leader Dave Ward and EP Group executives, as well as the Labour government’s own “Deed of Undertakings” to approve the takeover.

This exposed as worthless the official claims about employee protections and securing the long-term future of the mail service. If the Starmer government and CWU officials have their way, the takeover will set the stage for a further restructuring of Royal Mail at the expense of postal workers’ jobs and conditions and the mail service. This is to complete its conversion into a gig economy parcel business as part of the global operations of parent company International Distribution Services (IDS). The article highlighted how the CWU has agreed to trial Royal Mail’s plans to gut letter delivery and sanctioned a raid on postal workers’ pensions.

The alignment of the Labour government and CWU with Kretinsky and his takeover vehicle EP UK Bidco Ltd is based on establishing a corporatist set-up. The “groundbreaking” part of the agreement with Kretinsky is that Ward and his fellow CWU bureaucrats will be provided a seat at the boardroom table to drive up exploitation and police all opposition among postal workers.

In opposition to this official conspiracy, the Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee (PWRFC) has called its next online meeting for Sunday 5 January at 7pm.

Register here to discuss the takeover and its implications and a strategy to fight it. The meeting will also hear from postal workers internationally faced with similar attacks by the corporate oligarchy and capitalist governments.

Steve, a delivery driver in central Scotland at the Parcelforce division of Royal Mail, was scathing.

“The whole reason for our strike two years ago was to prevent this happening, now Ward is doing deals with the guy. It’s no surprise to anyone anymore, because it’s just fabricated what the CWU talk at all

levels. They’ll spin this as a great and groundbreaking achievement and tell their minions to spread the word to us members, telling us how great this could be if we put the effort in. This means you’ve got to work harder and quicker than you’ve been doing. Well, we’re not buying this anymore. You’ve sold us down the river more than once and we’re sick of being underpaid and overworked because of your s*** deals that you keep agreeing to—modern day slavery.”

Chris, a new delivery worker in the Midlands, refuted the hype that the Framework Agreement would mean a “levelling up” for him and some 20,000 new entrants on inferior pay and terms.

“When I started working for Royal Mail as a new entrant, I expected to be slightly worse off than people on older contracts. However, I wasn’t prepared for the full extent—it’s a real indictment of the sellout deal by the CWU last July. No paid breaks, none of the various supplements and uplifts. Sunday working and a level of “flexibility” that means at a day’s notice your shifts can be switched, changed to any time Monday to Sunday between the hours of 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. Overtime on a 30-hour contract only paid after 40 hours at 1.25 the hourly rate. I’ve been on zero hours contracts before but at least I accrued annual leave equivalent to how many hours I did. Not here, annual leave remains the same as if you did your basic hours no matter how much overtime you do.

“As Dave Ward talks about ‘equalising’ the pay, terms and conditions of new entrants, the lack of the words ‘raising’ and ‘improving’ are notably absent. That’s because the reality is they will only be levelled down and not up as soon as possible for the whole workforce so that everybody is on these terrible contracts that ‘ensure the necessary flexibility’. Why is he not demanding improvements to pay, terms and conditions instead of adopting a tone of acceptance and obedience? When considering this equalisation, Ward should be asking himself questions about the astonishing merger between the leaders of the CWU and Kretinsky and his kleptocracy.

“The minimum wage rises to £12.21 in April 2025, we will only be 33 pence above it, with no shift allowance for late or weekend working. There are clearly some people within the CWU doing a great job standing up for their members daily, but I was surprised at how tepid and toothless the union is overall. When I found out about the Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee on the *World Socialist Web*

Site it was a relief to find other voices not prepared to give up and shrug their shoulders but instead prepared to organise, highlight and challenge what is going on.”

Members of the PWRFC also encouraged fellow postal workers to attend the online meeting on January 5.

Ray a delivery worker in London, said:

“The WSWs article on the CWU’s ‘framework agreement’ backing Kretinsky’s Royal Mail takeover is concise and spot-on. It is a culmination of months of analysis provided by WSWs on the current betrayal by the Communication Workers Union.

The CWU has become an open mouthpiece of Royal Mail and Kretinsky himself. Since the betrayal of the last postal strike, the union has worked around the clock to pave the way for the takeover of Royal Mail by Kretinsky.”

As the WSWs article explains:

The CWU’s deal with Kretinsky, ‘Rebuilding Royal Mail: A Framework Agreement between EP Group and CWU’, was unanimously endorsed by the CWU Postal Executive Tuesday. It sets out the union’s corporatist partnership with EP Group’s investors and gives union officials a seat at the boardroom table.

It goes on:

Ward claimed the agreements with Kretinsky ‘give us the best chance of rebuilding Royal Mail.’ Nothing could be further from the truth. The agreements seek Royal Mail’s transformation into a gig-economy parcel business to compete with Amazon. It is part of a global restructuring of the post and logistics sector, using AI and automation to slash thousands of jobs.

Ray continued, “Now, compare this Marxist analysis to that peddled by the UK Socialist Workers Party [SWP]. In a recent article (which it must be said is the only analysis the SWP has made in over five months at the least), ‘Unions Should Battle on after Royal Mail sell-off,’ the SWP takes obfuscation to a new level.

“They write, ‘The postal workers’ CWU union is positive about the deal. It insists that Kretinsky has signed up to significant protection against asset stripping and breaking up the company. And it says that it and the government now have a greater say in how the firm will be run’. This is a lie and completely disarms postal workers as to the true nature of the CWU, the Labour government and Kretinsky.

“The SWP has become not only a cover for the treachery of the CWU but has become a mouthpiece for Kretinsky, writing that ‘he pledges that he wants to invest in Royal Mail for the long term. Kretinsky says he has no plans for compulsory redundancies and instead wants to expand the workforce.’ Again, this is a direct lie. It is clear to anyone that the SWP is now a junior partner of not only the CWU bureaucracy but also a mouthpiece of the Labour government and Kretinsky himself.

“Postal workers wishing to fight the CWU’s open betrayal should join the Postal Workers Rank-and File Committee/IWA-RFC and attend the PWRFC’s next online meeting on Sunday, January 5, at 7

pm. It will discuss the takeover agreed upon between Kretinsky, the Labour government and the CWU and a strategy to fight back.”

George, a delivery worker in Glasgow, told us, “Last week I watched the ‘CWU Live’ promoting the takeover with anger and disgust at a time of year when postal workers are working in near impossible conditions—and a longer working week thanks to the deal reached by Ward last year.

“We are witnessing in real time the sellout of the remaining terms and conditions. The CWU bureaucracy try and hide their collusion through these slickly produced livestreams, burying all the bad news in amongst exclusive announcements such as ‘there will be a review of’, or another ‘we will look at’: deliberately vague promises that they think will sell this surrender document mark two to the membership.

“Also buried with a brief announcement was a scandalous promise to give away the over one billion pension surplus to Royal Mail. But this money belongs to the pension fund members who contributed to it. I’m old enough to remember when arch criminal Robert Maxwell stole from the Mirror Group pension fund. Don’t let Ward and Walsh become accomplices in this latest scandal.

“The meeting on January 5 will give Royal Mail workers an opportunity to find out firsthand about the struggles of postal workers around the world, information they are denied by the mainstream media and CWU.

“Workers are beginning to realise they are up against a billionaire class who are stealing the wealth they create, mostly in collusion with the union hierarchy, who are willing participants. Whether it be Germany or Brazil, or most recently at Canada Post where the workers were standing up for their jobs and conditions—only to be criminalised by the strikebreaking Labour Code, meekly surrendered to by the union apparatus despite the will to fight amongst the grass roots.

“We are in the same fight here in the UK with an ongoing smash-and-grab on the jobs, pay and conditions of Royal Mail workers by the predatory EP Group led by Daniel Kretinsky, while the CWU meekly roll over and again participate in the theft for a promise (for them) of a seat at the top table.”

Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee (PWRFC) next online meeting is on Sunday 5 January at 7pm. Register here to discuss the takeover and its implications and a strategy to fight it.



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