

Postal workers meet to discuss fightback against Kretinsky's CWU and Labour-backed takeover of Royal Mail

Our reporters
7 January 2025

The Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee (UK)—PWRFC—held a meeting Sunday, “For a rank-and-file fightback against Kretinsky take-over and defence of the mail service.”

The meeting addressed the regressive character of the two agreements drawn up between Britain's Labour government and the Communication Workers Union (CWU) with billionaire Daniel Kretinsky to approve his £3.5 billion takeover of Royal Mail.

The agreements were publicly announced in mid-December after half a year of secret tripartite talks. The *World Socialist Web Site* published an article exposing both, arming workers against political gaslighting by the CWU, which has claimed the agreements protect the workforce and the mail service. In fact, they were crafted to provide open license for profiteering and the gutting of letter delivery by Kretinsky and his EP Group of private investors, to create what the financial press has described as the “Amazon of Europe.”

Royal Mail workers at the meeting were joined by postal workers from Canada and the United States who brought greetings from their rank-and-file committees, which like the PWRFC are affiliated to the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File-Committees (IWA-RFC).

The opening report was given by WSWs reporter Tony Robson. He emphasised that every aspect of the CWU-EP Group Framework Agreement “pointed to the need for a rank-and-file rebellion to remove Ward and his fellow bureaucrats,” who “are being granted a seat on a new board-level Advisory Committee alongside company executives.”

Ward's previous agreement with Royal Mail, made to sell out the 2022-3 national dispute of more than 100,000 postal workers, had torn up terms and conditions and delivered workers into the jaws of an even more brutal restructuring under Kretinsky.

The agreement with EP group, Robson explained, permits a raid on the £1 billion surplus of the postal workers' pension fund, allowing half to be used by Kretinsky to fund his investments in Royal Mail. It also allows the company and CWU to push ahead with plans to reduce mail delivery for all

letters other than First Class, making £300 million a year more in profit at the expense of at least 7,000 jobs. The CWU has foisted on postal workers a pilot of these plans at 37 delivery units across the country from February.

He added that the Kretinsky take-over could not be understood in isolation from the global war unleashed on postal and logistics workers by corporations and governments who had weaponised automation and AI to conduct a brutal restructuring to prioritise profits—including the outlawing of the Canada Post strike, and Trump's plans to privatise the United States Postal Service (USPS).

“Workers at Royal Mail, Canada Post, USPS and Amazon face a common political fight against a billionaire corporate oligarchy and capitalist governments in every country,” warned Robson, explaining that the IWA-RFC is an organising centre for workers to act independently, share information, develop joint action, assert their demands and link up their struggles with workers around the world.

George, a delivery worker in Glasgow, said, “We are one of the delivery offices singled out for these pilots of so-called improved ways of working. It's going to be more work, extended delivery spans and health and safety disregarded.

“The CWU has the cheek to say they will improve quality of service when they are agreeing trials to suspend mail for two days.

“Addressing fatigue, we are already working up to five-hour deliveries and they are going to extend that in offices where many of the staff are 40, 50, 60-plus years of age, asked to deliver more and more.

“There needs to be a fightback and we will be looking to build the resistance in our workplace because this will lead to thousands of jobs going if they have their way.

“They also want to rob your pensions. That money does not belong to Ward. He's promised half of our £1.4 billion to Kretinsky. This guy is a billionaire, he can invest in the company with his money, not yours or mine.”

Paul, another delivery worker from Scotland, raised how delivery spans had been increased since 2004 from two-and-a-half to three-and-a-half hours. “Who in Royal Mail signs off

health and safety to walk five to six hours,” he asked, “It’s beyond physical exhaustion.”

Dave, who works at Parccelforce in London, challenged the CWU’s claims that the agreement meant EP Group would not be a gig economy employer, after accepting that one in four workers at Royal Mail’s dedicated parcel arm could be employed on this basis.

The CWU accepted the bogus definition of “owner drivers” when these postal workers should be provided their full employment rights—which had to be fought for by rank-and-file committee, uniting workers across the divisions sown by management and the union. The CWU was also introducing the gig economy model of payment for those directly employed, using a pay-per-parcel bonus to compensate for meagre basic wages.

Geraldine, a retired postal worker in California, spoke on the struggles of workers at USPS in America.

Postal workers were waiting for the result of the vote to accept or reject an “atrocious tentative agreement”. Carriers had expressed their disgust at letter carrier union NALC, which had negotiated in secret for 600 days then presented a tentative agreement which consisted of a derisory 1.3 percent salary increase in each of three years and a maintained two-tier system. It also makes it easier to force carriers to work over 12-hour days and 60-hour weeks.

The NALC and APWU unions had also worked to keep workers in the dark about a brutal “Delivering For America” (DFA) restructuring plan which, “If fully implemented, will destroy the Postal Service and it will be privatized and become a highly lucrative enterprise that will further enrich the oligarchs.” It has already resulted in job cuts and wage losses.

Mark Dimondstein, President of the APWU, was silent on the DFA when he was welcomed onto a CWU Live broadcast last year.

Dimondstein also falsified the history of a 1970 wildcat strike by USPS workers, claiming they had the right to strike when they had in fact defied a prohibition of action on pay, and a strikebreaking operation organised by the Nixon administration using 23,000 soldiers. A subsequently imposed no-strike clause and binding arbitration has been used by the union bureaucracy to police rank-and-file postal workers ever since.

Daniel Berkley, a mail carrier from Ontario, brought greetings from the Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee at Canada Post. He explained how the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) had enforced a strike ban on behalf of Trudeau government.

“The Canadian government stepped in three times in 2024 to end strikes. Rail, dock, and postal workers were each ordered back to work by the Labour Minister, and in each case, the respective union apparatus did nothing to prepare for or resist the undemocratic orders.”

Berkley drew attention to use of AI technology to end route ownership for postal workers and enforce more hazardous

shifts and less pay. He also contrasted Canada Post’s complaint of \$3 billion in losses since 2018 with the \$12.4 billion provided by the Trudeau government to fuel the NATO proxy war in Ukraine and corporate tax evasion by just 123 corporations for the year 2021 alone of \$30 billion.

“Developing and understanding these more general political points is necessary for postal workers to broaden our horizons beyond this immediate struggle and appeal for support from other sections of workers to oppose government-backed attacks on the right to strike, working conditions, and the pursuit of war abroad and austerity at home.”

Tom Hall, a writer for the WSWS who has been active in the building of rank-and-file networks at USPS and the IWA-RFC among other key sections of workers, spoke about its central role in the fight against the oligarchy in the US and around the world.

He reviewed how the incoming Trump administration was in advanced internal discussions to privatise USPS, in line with his plan spearheaded by Elon Musk to slash £2 trillion a year from the federal budget. Hall drew attention in this context to the union bureaucracy’s seamless line-up with Trump, with whom they share a basic hostility to the working class.

He concluded of the fight confronted by postal workers around the world, “This is a struggle which is inherently global in character, not least because the attacks on post office are taking place in every country, really, simultaneously, by globally mobile finance capital which scours the globe for the highest return.

“The workers of the world are not enemies, it’s not ‘America First’, or ‘Britain First’. In America they are attempting to portray trade war measures, including against the so-called allies of America, as to the benefit for the American worker. In fact this will cause massive economic hardship and dislocation which will be imposed on the backs of the working class.

“The interests of the working class can only be defended based on a global strategy and a global movement. The question of the unity of postal workers in every country, the closer collaboration of the committees which have been formed in the US, Britain, Canada and other countries, is a central strategic question.”

Pointing to recent significant strikes at Amazon, including among delivery drivers, Hall argued, “It’s critical that postal workers span out to appeal to other key sections of the working class for support, tell them what is happening and appeal for solidarity. And not just moral solidarity but a real coordination of struggles.”



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