

While we wait for the national ballot...

## Royal Mail batters our union

Rather than back down as the national ballot approaches (papers issued 9 September) Royal Mail has ramped up its attacks on postal workers.

From across the country comes report after report of executive action, management diktat and attacks on workers who stand their ground. We've seen massive cuts, managers doling out new duties as they like and overriding seniority, drivers being docked a days pay for refusing to cross a picket line.

As one postie, from Wallasey office on Merseyside which walked out last week, explained:

"Today we returned to our office after the weekend to find all fittings had been changed and we had lost six walks plus a driving duty... [we told our Area Rep] we wanted to pick our own duties going down the seniority list and we would return to the shop floor. Royal Mail chose not to allow us this. So on the gate we went..."

A letter from London Division was sent to branches to explain the all-out assault London postal workers face:

"The levels of job reductions ranges from 6 per cent to 33 per cent in each workplace. One example of what is going on in London is at Mount Pleasant, where management have given notice of executive action on removing 250 jobs from the Mail Centre... Others units in London

have received proposals for the introduction of over 40 per cent part timers. This effectively means that full timers will be compulsorily transferred. This will mean that with all offices receiving similar proposals it is inevitable that in the very near future we will reach a tipping point whereby there will be no full time jobs to be transferred into."

Royal Mail claims the union is ripping up agreements, yet 1,800 London postal workers will be affected by Royal Mail ripping up the arrangement it had just signed with those on four day weeks under the recent Pay and Modernisation Agreement!

Any postal worker who believed management spin that this is "a London thing" must now be starting to realise the truth: this is a national union-busting offensive aiming to slash and burn jobs and conditions in every office. We need a national response: bring on the ballot and let's get a massive yes vote!

### Royal Mail goes for the nuclear option?

On 7 September the strike could go "nuclear". Royal Mail is planning to impose sweeping changes to Network drivers' jobs. Royal Mail's bonus-busting bosses, Adam Crozier, Donald Brydon and Co. are trying to wear down and batter our strongest sections, the ones leading the fight so far, before the rest come into battle.

All those branches and offices out on the picket line defending our union should unite to publicly demand the Postal Executive speeds up the ballot - they could notify the company tomorrow - rather than holding out for talks. This foot-dragging must end.

However, either way, Network drivers especially need to prepare to meet the 7 September attack with a nationwide indefinite walk-out, along with all those able to do likewise or who want to refuse to touch strike mail. It is Royal Mail that is escalating the battle, workers need to respond in kind.

Some will say those walking out in their own defence is actually playing into Royal Mail's hands. But what choice do workers have? Once cuts are imposed and people are working to it, it is ten times harder to get them reversed. An immediate response is not only justified but necessary. Postal workers need to support those who put themselves on the line to defend their jobs, in the process they are defending the union.

Midlands Divisional Rep Lee Barron commented on the power

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of the network drivers:

“These people carry trailers of mail which are going to be at a standstill for 24 hours on Friday. The impact that they are going to have is proportionately greater than their numbers. It will run into millions of items because of the sheer size that they carry - they will not be picked up and the bulk of it will be business mail.”

That's right, when the drivers go out, this strike goes nuclear, ballot or no ballot. This will shut down the postal system completely and business will scream bloody murder. Already Royal Mail is organising scab driving networks and asking firms like Eddie Stobart to do the job. Some of these workers will turn round at picket lines and we should call on Unite and other drivers' unions to publicly appeal to drivers not to cross picket lines and to defend anyone victimised for doing so. But we will also need to prepare mass picketing for any scab operations that do get off the ground.

### **Rank and file control not top wobbles**

An emergency conference called by the fighting sections of the union, even if it began with only some taking part, could prepare the ground for this necessary defensive action, while putting the maximum pressure on the leadership to speed things up. What's more, it could develop a strategy to win the strike that would learn the lessons of the 2007 strike: since Royal Mail management is prepared to act decisively and take the initiative again and again, so must the CWU.

Our leaders' go-slow tactics so far this summer show that they will not be the ones to respond decisively, it will be up to the strongest, best organised sections of postal workers to do that. Of course every practical step to contact other workers, to meet and discuss and coordinate, is necessary to prepare a wave of walkouts. But more is necessary. This will be a hard fought fight

and we will need to break senior management and their Labour minister backers' will, in order to win.

What's more, we will need to ensure that those leading the union through their action, from below, are able to get the rest of the union behind them, should Dave Ward, Billy Hayes and the PEC wobble.

Why are Ward and Hayes still offering to call off strikes in exchange for talks? This could easily backfire, as it did in 2007. Also, if the courts try to rule ballots out of order and undermine a majority decision to strike, the CWU tops could also call off action.

### **We've come this far...**

London is more solid than ever. Stoke is on indefinite strike to stop the rot. The Network drivers are about to deliver a mighty blow to Royal Mail. And the national ballot is finally just around the corner.

Now is not the time to hesitate or wobble. Now is the time to knock the stuffing out of these fat cat time-servers who just see the postal service as another entry on their CVs. Postal workers know that they are ruining the service and the livelihoods of those who deliver it. And we won't let them win.

Let's call a rank and file conference of branches, offices, and activists that meets and puts together a strategy to win. Such a conference could speak directly to workers in those areas with weaker or timid branch officials and win them to the fight. Such a conference could hold the union together if the courts try to stop our action and organise to stop scab operations.

The next two weeks are crucial:

- o Demand our leaders bring the ballot forward
- o Let's prepare for 7 September
- o Let's organise a rank and file conference

**Bring on the battle, we can win!**

## **Labour is behind these attacks, let's stop funding Labour**

London Division is threatening to ballot its members on disaffiliation, let's follow this example in every branch. The unions should break from Labour and form a new party that fights to ensure workers' don't pay for the capitalist crisis.

### **Protest at the Labour Party Conference, 27 Sept, Brighton**

## **How Royal Mail is ripping up the 2007 agreement**

The Pay and Modernisation agreement that ended the 2007 strike was a crap deal with four “phases”. The first three phases were all about us giving in to flexibility and signed off by summer 2008.

But then, when Royal Mail had what it wanted, it refused to accept phase 4, which meant negotiating with the union on the future of the business, covering closures, cuts, and everything else.

Instead they pulled out of the agreement after they got the flexibility they wanted and launched a massive closure drive of mail centres and cut full-time posts. We should pull out of it too and refuse flexibility!

**So when your manager tells you that Royal Mail is talking to the union, ask them what happened to phase four:**

### **FINAL AGREEMENT CWU AND ROYAL MAIL PAY AND MODERNISATION AGREEMENT - APRIL 2007/2009**

**...PART 4 SECTION 2 - DELIVERING CHANGE AND FLEXIBILITY**  
Change is to be shaped and implemented in four phases...

**...PHASE 4** To assist development of a fourth Phase of Royal Mail modernisation, consultation and negotiation will now take place in the following working groups. The intention is for these joint working groups to develop **national agreements**, where appropriate, by no later than the end of April 2008...

**...Joint Working Group 3 - Future working.** This group will look at the business' future mail centre / delivery / network strategies and have an opportunity to input to them...