

Royal Mail adds pay freeze to job cuts and privatisation

For a year Royal Mail has imposed job cuts and office closures. This month widespread anger finally is boiling over into action with strike ballots in Edinburgh, Perth and the London Division with its ten thousand members.

Now postal bosses have heaped insult on injury by freezing pay - despite Royal Mail making £255 million profit in the last nine months of 2009 and paying its chief executive Adam Crozier £3 million last year.

Dave Ward, Deputy General Secretary Postal for the Communications Workers Union, warned:

"For Britain's highest-paid civil servant [Crozier] to impose a pay freeze on workers who earn less than the UK average wage is outrageous. This inequality will lead to strife."

Postal workers should take Dave Ward at his word and demand a national strike on pay, cuts and closures to force Royal Mail to back down on its plans.

Royal Mail has refused to discuss its modernisation plan with the union, instead imposing it, office by office, with mail centre closures (the latest victims this month being Stoke and Ellesmere Port) and thousands losing their jobs. This year's savings round has seen management ram changes through, converting full-time jobs to part-time and upping our workload, all without agreement.

This pay freeze is just the latest slap in the face. All workers deserve a pay rise - our bills went through the roof last year. The time for talking is done, the time for action begun. Some will say we should just be happy to keep our jobs in the current crisis but, if we don't strike now, up to 50,000 jobs could go in the coming years.

Privatisation

On the political front, Labour's Business Minister Peter Mandelson continues to push for a sell-off of a minority stake in Royal Mail to a private operator, such as TNT or Deutsche Post. However just when it should be taking off, the CWU's campaign has begun to run out of steam. Only three more rebel Labour MPs signed up to the anti-privatisation Early Day Motion last month. But if this side of the campaign is poor, others are bankrupt. Ward and General Secretary Billy Hayes have declared we need to accept some cuts. The campaign has used arguments against "foreign" companies, like Dutch outfit TNT, buying into Royal Mail, as if British privateers would be ok. The latest embarrassing tactic is a lickspittle birthday card the union executive sent to the Queen trying to enlist her support!

No-strike offers and stunts like this will not halt privatisation or keep jobs. Only a determined strike could make Labour reverse course.

The leadership has begun to talk about the need for a strike, under the pressure from below. Now we must act, building on the moves of some of the union's strongest areas. A strike by 170 workers at the Edinburgh Mail Centre in Sighthill, along with several other offices, would cripple the service in Scotland, while a London stoppage would be devastating for big business.

For a national strike

The issues for these ballots are national - Royal Mail breaking national agreements - therefore the strike should be too. A rank and file network

Stop funding Labour

Ballot CWU members on disaffiliation

CWU 2008 conference resolved to ballot the membership by March 2009 if Labour did not reverse its privatisation plans and pension cuts. A ballot would pile the pressure on Labour, but there is a real danger CWU tops will argue we need to keep the Labour rebels on board, even though those in charge of the party, Brown and Mandelson, are steering privatisation through. We should suspend funding to Labour immediately. Reps, branches and activists should demand that conference is respected and the ballot brought forward so that members can have their say on whether to disaffiliate from Labour.

Break from Labour - build a new, mass working class party!

in the CWU should come together to maximise the pressure for a national strike, and ensure the members control the action this time. If, as in the 2007 strike, wildcat walkouts spread in response to management provocation, scabbing operations or redirecting mail, we need to be prepared to bring out every office and not cave in to the anti-union laws, like Ward and Hayes did last time.

Such a strike would not just blow Royal Mail's modernisation assault out of the water, it would sink Labour's privatisation plans.

Fight for Jobs

**16 May, Birmingham
National Demonstration
called by Unite the union**