

## London and Edinburgh strike the first blow...

# Now call a national strike!

The 10,000 CWU members in London and Edinburgh on strike today are standing up for every postal worker and the union. A brilliant result - 91% and a yes vote in every London office - has helped bring on another 100 ballots across the country with many likely to strike in coming weeks. Those on picketlines today can stand proud knowing that they are blazing a trail for the rest of the CWU. However, this determined stand must now be matched by the rest of the union. London and Scotland can't be left to fight alone, the strike must go national. As one delegate at CWU conference last week said, "Royal Mail is attacking every unit, attacking nationally, and we need a national response. What kind of union do we want, we want a national trade union."

### Why we are right to strike

Royal Mail has refused to negotiate with the union nationally for months. This has meant cuts being imposed office by office and a string of mail centres axed. They have frozen pay (not senior managers' bonuses however!) and threatened to close the pension scheme, while bullying and victimising workers and reps. Royal Mail bosses hope to make our union a casualty of this process and permanently damage it. The only way to stop this is a national strike. Meanwhile the Labour government, though dead on its feet, still refuses to rule out a share sell-off. Ministers are hinting that they might drop it - for now but are demanding in return that the CWU agrees massive cuts and closures. They want us to sign up to "modernisation": half of offices closed, 50,000 jobs lost and a busted union. The real word for this comes from Thatcher's era: downsizing. Pardon us if we don't want to be thrown on the scrapheap. The aim of modernisation is to pump up the profits so the company is a juicy

target for privatisation. We need to strike against both. Unfortunately the CWU leadership has said it wants to do a deal with Labour, settling for more market measures, cuts and closures to stop privatisation. They are dragging their feet on a national strike, just when we need to pick up speed. Every branch should ballot and every office should hold mass meetings to elect strike committees, with recallable delegates, to prepare for the strike and ensure a voice for the shopfloor in running it.

### Bosses laws used again

Royal Mail has attacked ballots in three of the key sorting offices, Rathbone Place, Nine Elms, and Mount Pleasant. All are central to shutting down London post especially the City of London, and it is no surprise bosses have attacked at these key points.

This is not because union officials were careless, it is inevitable. The same thing happened with the tube strikes. The anti-union laws are there to make it nearly impossible to strike. The message is you can have a union as long as it isn't effective. Blair and Brown not only kept these Tory laws, they boasted about them!

Workers should be prepared for these laws to be used again to undermine the strike. Breaking them is the only way to ensure the strike is effective, as London did in the wildcats of 2003 and 2007. If thousands of postal workers at these three offices walked out, what could the government do?

If they try to attack the union, the union must call every member out in solidarity, and other sections of workers would likely to do so too if we raised the call for the defence of trade union rights. Every single union in the country has a policy for the repeal of the anti-union laws - we should combine to break them when its necessary.

### Build for victory

Lots of ballots are coming on line, and other areas will likely join London and Scotland on strike soon. There is talk about coordinating with the tube strikes too- the more the merrier! Let's build alliances with other unions, with all out till all claims are settled. Right now we should set up solidarity committees in every town, city and borough to support the strikers - post, tube, college lecturers. Such committees could raise money for strikers and present our case to the public. We will find many allies: public and private sector campaigns against cuts, the militant youth who face a jobless summer and busted future, the unemployed who can be a strong ally and give mass support to our picketlines if Royal Mail tries to ram through a scabbing operation. To defeat Royal Mail's modernisation plan, our experience in 2007 shows that even a national strike will need to escalate quickly up to an all-out indefinite strike. By determined strike action and organising our massive public support behind us (90% against privatisation), we can force the weak government to drop privatisation for real and pull the plug on Royal Mail's plans. We have suffered Royal Mail's attacks for a year, and much worse is ahead if we do not defeat them. We have the power, now is the hour to strike with all we've got!

#### Postal workers need a consistent campaign to defend our conditions and reject the market in our industry:

- for the £400/week wage
- for a moratorium on flexibility, cuts and office closures
- cut the hours not the workers: for a 35 hour gross working week, with no loss of pay.
- for a fully nationalised postal sector under workers' and consumers' control
- For a Rank and File Movement in the CWU
- Stop funding Labour - build a new, anti-capitalist Workers Party!