

Why we need a National Strike

The Communication Workers Union is heading for a national strike. Up to 500 offices are balloting or on strike. London offices have taken seven days of strike action in the past six weeks. Now the leadership has promised to publish a timetable for a national ballot on 4 August. The future of our whole industry and the union is at stake. London, Scotland and other offices around the country have taken action because they recognise this. Now is the time to unite the strikes and bring every office out together. Management has put out a lot of disinformation about the strikes: it's about local issues that other areas have already agreed, like flexibility, savings or georoutes; they say it's just London being "bolshy"; or they claim that the union is lying about Royal Mail refusing to talk, and nobody will be forced to go part time. And they are laying it on thick with the blackmail: if we strike, customers will leave and our jobs could suffer. That's the spin. Here's the truth.

Jobs, pay & pensions

Royal Mail's modernisation plan, according to the Hooper review published last December, could see up to 50,000 full-time jobs being cut over the next few years, with half the mail centres and two-thirds of delivery offices closing. So look around your office and imagine one third of people disappearing - or maybe the whole office! With so many jobs and offices going due to cuts, where will all the surplus workers go? Onto the dole,

most likely, after all where are we going to get a job in this recession? Royal Mail says it has no plans to force anybody to go part time or for compulsory redundancies, but that isn't a guarantee they won't in the future; it's what they want us to think now, so we don't go on strike. Their promises aren't worth the paper they are printed on.

Royal Mail still claims postal workers are 25 per cent overpaid and 40 per cent underworked. That's why, despite £321 million in profits and management bonuses worth thousands of pounds, it imposed a pay freeze on us this year. If we don't stand up to them now, they will almost certainly try to cut pay in the future. Plus there will be more cuts to our pensions - the deficit is now £10 billion, thanks to Royal Mail putting it all on the stock market.

Union busting

Royal Mail claims it is talking to the union but this is just a bare-faced lie. Royal Mail ripped up the 2007 Pay and Modernisation agreement - after they got the "flexibility" they wanted - and for months has refused to negotiate with the CWU on closures, cuts, and everything else. Instead they are shutting down over a dozen mail centres - one fifth of the total - and slashing full-time jobs.

It is now clear Royal Mail wants to follow TNT's operations in Holland and impose a majority part-time, casualised workforce that rarely comes in the office and so has little contact with the CWU, hoping union member-

ship will wither away.

To sum up, modernisation is meant to bust our union, which is how we collectively stand together and force Royal Mail to give us wages, respect workers and adhere to health and safety. This is the strategic question for every worker. With a union, we can always hope to recover from a defeat like 2007 and fight to win again. Without a union, all these things go out the window, as we won't even be able to defend what we've got.

Fight for our Future

This is the future Royal Mail has in store for us. We need to take this chance to knock back their plans, it's now or never. If we don't, the slash and burn cuts and closures will become inevitable, along with privatisation - despite the recent setback. So let's seize the moment, unite and rally our strength for a real victory over postal bosses.

We're not alone. Several sections of workers have already scored victories, such as the second Lindsey unofficial strike and Linamar dispute in June. Many more are going into dispute alongside us - tube workers, construction workers, possibly steel workers. Millions are sick of the government bailing out bankers while making workers pay for their crisis. We can unite with these other workers, build a mass solidarity movement of working class people behind us and deal the bosses and their Labour politicians a bloody nose. What's there to win? The future of our whole industry and union!

Bring on the ballot and vote yes!

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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

For a new Anticapitalist Party

Add your name and to this appeal for the trade unions and socialist organisations to call a conference and form a new working class and anticapitalist party. Get your union branch or group to back it too.

After more than 12 years in office, Labour has proved itself time and again to be a party that attacks workers' pay, conditions, jobs and rights. And now we face the worst capitalist economic crisis for decades, with a massacre of jobs sweeping the country.

The working class in Britain does not have a party of our own to organise and inspire resistance to the bosses' crisis on a daily basis - on the streets and in the workplaces as well as at election times.

Without a new working class party, there is a danger that the racists and fascists will take advantage of the anger and anxiety caused by the crisis and scapegoat migrant workers, asylum seekers, and Black and Asian people.

We appeal to all the trade unions and socialist organisations, to all activists fighting for resistance from below, to anti-racist and anti-fascist campaigners confronting the BNP, to the trade union leaders and members: let's unite and build a new anticapitalist party.

Many activists and groups are now discussing left unity. Conferences in the autumn will discuss challenging Labour at the next election. We want to see a new anticapitalist workers' party take up that challenge. We call for:

- **An open conference - bringing together unions, socialist organisations, workers, youth and left campaigners - to launch a new anticapitalist party**
- **Local committees for a new party: start building roots in communities**
- **For a slate of candidates in the general election**

To add your support, email your details to workerspower@btopenworld.com

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...

How can we win the strike?

The 2007 strike was a defeat plucked from the jaws of victory. CWU leaders turned the strike on and off, dragging it out unnecessarily for months. Then after a real push, with back to back 48 hour strikes, our leaders surrendered to a court injunction just when victory was in sight.

It is understandable that some are worried this might happen again. However the answer isn't avoiding a strike - that will only make Royal Mail more aggressive - but to apply the lessons from 2007. These can be summed up as organising the strike from below, because the officials will never lead a fight consistently without pressure from below at the very least. At key points in the past, postal workers have had to take unofficial action without the leaders.

For instance, the CWU tops are set to agree a ballot timetable for 4 August - great. But CWU conference set the date for 2 July! It will mean no national strike until September. Not good enough.

London and Scotland will have been striking for three months by then.

The 500 offices that have taken action or secured ballots should call an unofficial conference as soon as possible. Delegates could then hammer out a strategy to win. How long should strike days last? How close together should they be? What should we do if Royal Mail victimise activists? Or redirect mail? Or open up temporary scab mail centres? What if wildcat strikes develop - should we spread them and stay out?

All these are live questions of strategy now. If we leave it to chance, we could end up like we did in 2007 - with the rank and file disunited and ill-informed. But if we use the summer to get organised, then, when the crunch comes, we will have an alternative leadership ready to stop any backsliding or hesitation by the officials.

There can be no doubt that CWU militants have sufficient experience and courage to win this fight. But we have to take control of the dispute to make it happen.