



# GOING POSTAL

## Postal Workers Bulletin No 1 Spring 2020

### Posties on wildcat strike over corona virus!

Postal workers in Alloa, Clackmannanshire took direct action against unsafe working conditions, a lack of suitable protective equipment and having to deliver junk mail, with a wildcat walkout on Monday morning (March 30th). The workers have had to continue to deliver bullshit advertising throughout the Coronavirus crisis, which adds significantly to the workload and is an extra stress.

So, out they went. Management whined that they hadn't had a ballot! When workers are resolute and united behind direct action then they have the power to make their bosses move. The Postal workers of Alloa have set a fine example.



Another fifteen workers did the same at Lochgelly, in Fife, and there are reports of Edinburgh postal workers also walking out.

Earlier in March, postal workers went out on wildcat strikes in Southwark in London and Bridgwater in Somerset for similar reasons.

Postal workers at five different sorting offices, Medway in Kent, Winchester, Hedge End in Hampshire, Greenock in Scotland and Warrington in Cheshire went out on wildcat strikes over their concerns about safety conditions in early April.

All of the postal workers were worried about lack of PPE equipment and lack of social distancing in the sorting offices. In Warrington management responded by promising a deep clean of the sorting office in Milner Street. When pressed, as to what that meant, management was quoted as saying “hotspots like door handles” and that was it!

At Winchester on Friday April 3rd, workers stood outside the depot whilst observing social distancing until they were assured that they would be provided with PPE equipment.

Postal workers at the Greenock sorting office in Scotland walked out when management failed to disinfect the desk of a worker who had fallen ill and was subsequently hospitalised. A source told the Greenock Telegraph newspaper: “They actually had people working where the ill employee had been. Three separate individuals approached management last week and highlighted that they were not happy with the situation but management chose to ignore concerns. Managers have done nothing about it and are refusing to clean any of their stuff. We’ve said they’re not going back until it has been sorted and social distancing measures are put in place. The managers didn’t want to make any decisions. They’re putting the health and safety of staff at risk. We’re classed as key workers and we don’t mind helping people at this time.”

Management eventually agreed to a deep clean and enforcement of 2 metre distancing.

Also, in April, Parcelforce drivers in Swansea demonstrated in the car park over lack of serious measures by management to deal with coronavirus concerns at the depot. They were threatened by a manager who said he would call the police to report a social gathering. In Stoke on Trent at the Longton office fifty workers wildcatted after management did not enforce adequate social distancing. At Didcot in Oxfordshire, workers walked out of their sorting office after it was not deep cleaned after a member of staff contracted COVID-19. In Oxford, there was another wildcat strike over safety concerns.

## The Postal Dispute



*After a massive 97.1% vote for strike action by CWU postal workers, an ACG postie gives a bit of background.*

What is the dispute about?

The new Chief Executive, Rico Back, has clearly decided that the way forward for Royal Mail is to have a cheaper more flexible workforce. This is why Royal Mail, under his leadership, has developed a strategy which is designed to marginalise the union (CWU) in order to create a cheaper more flexible employment model.

Royal Mail want to review, and possibly change, the legal guarantees which stopped Royal Mail from outsourcing, franchising, breaking up the company, creating a two-tier workforce as well as stopping Royal Mail from recruiting zero-hour contracts.

Royal Mail want to use PDAs (the machine people sign for their parcels on) to spy on workers and use it as a revision tool (changing duties, job cuts) even though they know PDAs do not truly reflect a postal worker's duties.

Royal Mail are not saying they will support the continuation of the USO (Universal Service Obligation) when Ofcom reviews it next year. This possibly means the USO being cut to a five day service, and resulting in the loss of 20,000 jobs.

(Note: USO - Universal Service Obligation - means royal mail is obliged to deliver and collect mail six days a week at any location in the UK. If the six days is cut to say five, that would mean that the 20 000 staff that cover other posties' rest days could lose their jobs since all duties would be covered by the regulars. It would also mean a reduction in service for people since mail won't be delivered six days.)



Three times now over the last 2 years the CWU has wormed its way out of calling for an official national strike after postal workers voted massively for action. Now the union has called off the strike, despite the massive YES, in the “national interest” and offered the Johnson government the postal workers as a fifth emergency service. No wonder workers have to resort to unofficial strikes.

Despite at least 3 postal workers dying from COVID-19, the CWU are doing nothing about the lack of adequate social distancing in sorting offices, little PPE equipment (masks and gloves), and adequate hand cleaning facilities.

## A London ACG Postal worker writes:

Since a few offices in Scotland rightly walked out recently because of failure of Royal Mail to enforce social distancing and provision of hand sanitisers and gloves the CWU along with Royal Mail management have been enforcing One Van one man policy.

For our office (W1 London) the result has been that although finally providing hand sanitisers (after 50 MPs got lobbied to write Royal Mail a public letter) and one size gloves the result is that postmen have to either walk to delivery point (several miles away since our old office in W1 got sold off and we're now crammed into Mount Pleasant in London EC1) or bus (with a lot of general public not socially distancing in a crammed bus).

Although most offices and businesses are closed the volume of parcels to residential addresses is going through the roof. Up to a third of staff is isolating at home so a lot of delivery walks has been uncovered as well.

*Going Postal* is put out by the Anarchist Communist Group. But we want all and any postal workers to contact us about conditions in their offices and we are offering this bulletin as an uncensored place to express your opinions on the situation among Royal Mail and Parcelforce workers.

Contact us at: [info@anarchistcommunism.org](mailto:info@anarchistcommunism.org)



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