



Democratic Reps' Meetings Will Make Dispute Stronger

Reps around the country should call for a national reps' meeting as soon as possible. The membership should be told the full details of any possible deal. Members at branch level should be able to have their say on any deal. As we write this bulletin on Thursday 5th November, the news from the BBC (but not yet from the CWU) is that this week's strikes have been called off. Shouldn't postal workers have had a say in the decision? If there is a deal, shouldn't it be presented to the membership and voted on before there is a decision to call off action?

The best way to decide on precise and realistic demands, on whether to go for all-out strikes or rolling strikes, and on how to escalate the action is through democratic reps' meetings, where experiences from the branch and unit level can be shared and discussed.

These meetings need to be organised regionally and on a national level. In the South-West, a weekly reps' conference call is organised, to feed back information and discuss. Regular communication of that kind is important and should be copied elsewhere. There should be regular face-to-face reps' meetings, where binding decisions are taken and communicated back to members and up to the executive. Formal meetings of members at the branch and workplace level should also be held regularly - possibly on strike days when the picket line winds up, when members are present anyway.

Meetings like that will make the strike stronger! A strategy that has been debated and decided on by an active and informed

membership, at workplace meetings and at regional and national reps' meetings, is going to be a better thought-out strategy. People are more likely to stick to a plan they have discussed together. It is also important to use meetings to share information and address rumours that management have been putting about. Nothing is as demoralising during a strike as being uncertain about what is happening.

At this stage in the dispute, no-one doubts that the stakes are high. Crozier and Mandelson have made no secret of the plans that they have to gut the post as a public service and casualise its workforce. The rest of the labour movement is watching this dispute - and the bosses, the government and the Tories too! - to see who will win. This is seen as a test case in the big industrial battles that will soon come to the rest of the public sector when the planned cuts are introduced after the election. The Tories are making chilling promises to impose even more restrictive anti-trade union laws. The CWU needs to adopt an ambitious strategy to win. Postal workers need to show in front of the whole labour movement that the big attacks - privatisation, political attacks on the trade unions, cuts and casualisation can be defeated just the same as the smaller ones - victimisation, management bullying, the use of strikebreakers and other dirty tricks that we have seen.

Organise the casuials!

The use of scab mail centres is continuing. The union should organise the picketing of these mail centres. Union members should approach all casuials, wherever they work, and ask them to join the union and not to cross picket lines.

Membership should be offered free or at greatly reduced rates. It should be made clear to casuals that once they join the CWU they should join the strikes - and they have a right to do so. We should explain that postal workers have a quarrel with Royal Mail, not with the casual staff themselves, who are facing all the exploitation that management hopes to heap on permanent staff too: low wages, no job security, management bullying. Casuals are forced to work for minimum wage and will be spat back out of work after two months - they need the union too!

Management lies

Management have been putting out various rumours to postal workers and the public in an attempt to undermine the strike. Here we re-print a statement from reps in South Wales and the South West:

"REPS GET PAID?"

Management across the UK are once again rolling out the lie that CWU reps get paid whilst you are on strike. This is false and we set this challenge down to all Royal Mail managers – **We will AGAIN display our wage slips which clearly define the deductions from pay if the same managers making these accusations publish their slips.**

We all know that won't happen because it may well show the huge bonuses of between £2000 - £ 9000 that they have received off the backs of YOUR work. Its may also show the money some of them have made from travelling the UK breaking strikes and undermining our dispute. Remember when your reps are spending 20 hours on the picket line defending your futures these managers are working 15 hrs + on overtime."

Sack Mandelson and Crozier!

In this dispute the postal workers are pitched against two particularly aggressive and conscious fighters for the ruling class: Peter Mandelson and Adam Crozier. All trade unions should start campaigning immediately for both to be sacked. Labour MPs who do not support the call should be challenged by the unions and be denied union funding and support.

Both have made it clear that it is their intention to break the strike. Mandelson has

been manoeuvring behind the scenes to undermine the union, and has made public statements in support of Royal Mail bosses.

Even though Mandelson has toned down his act in recent weeks, the labour movement should recognise Mandelson for what he is. They should not tolerate a member of a Labour government openly organising to break the strength of the CWU.

There should be a labour movement campaign to force him out of office. Such a campaign would make the government less able to intervene on management's side in the strike, and would re-assert the role of the labour movement in national politics. It would also draw a clear line between the right-wing New Labour leadership and those elements in the Labour Party still loyal to the working class.

It could put on the spot those union leaders who have supported the CWU and deplored Mandelson's attitude without drawing active conclusions.

Build solidarity committees!

Postal solidarity committees already exist in many towns in the UK. Where they do not, they should be set up, if possible through the local trades council.

They should meet regularly, and organise to raise money for the strike through collections in workplaces and on the streets; they should organise big meetings, leafleting and other demonstrations of political support for the postal workers, against management's propaganda offensive, and they should send delegations to help out on picket lines.

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