Communication Workers' Network

Bulletin of the Communication Workers' Network - Solidarity Federation

#6

Free/Donation

# Creepy crawlies

Do you work in the postal service or communications industry? Do you want a fair deal for all workers?
**To join a network of like-minded communication workers, or simply find out more, write to one of our regional addresses**;

*CWN-SF,*
*PO Box 29*
*SWPDO*
***Manchester** M15 5HW*

*CWN-SF,*
*PO Box 1681*
***London** N8 7DN*

*ANSWERPHONE:*
*0161 232 7889*

***-Anti-bullying***

***-Networking with like-minded communication workers***

***-Spreading the word***

***-Going on the offensive***

**Today, Quadrant, the catering arm of Royal Mail, is a private company. The rest of Royal Mail is also on its way. The New Labour plan is not the big bang approach, but the creepy crawly pally pally we're all in this together approach. And when the crunch comes, sorry but you have to grow up and face reality. Business knows best.**

Whose reality? It is not that long since New Labour opposed the Tories' plan for privatisation in 1994. A combination of public pressure and an intense CWU campaign brought the Tory privatisation juggernaught to a grinding halt. In 1997, the New Labour government arrived, promising that mail privatisation was a dead duck. Now the truth is out in the open for all to see. New Labour 'opposition' to privatisation was simply a ploy to win votes and get into the driving seat. Now, the white knuckle ride is on.

## *Cheap and cheerless*

So what will a privatised Royal Mail mean to those of us who actually do the work? For workers, temporary or permanent, cleaners, caterers, processors, drivers, deliverers – in fact everyone, the implications of Royal Mail privatisation are tremendous.

The U.S. Postal Service now uses cheap labour in Mexico to code sort mail via E-mail to cities across the U.S.A. There are rumours that Royal Mail plans to use workers in India in the same way. At present IMP machines are set to read short codes and there's been a massive increase in 'walk sorted' bundles. Sooner or later the machines will be set to read the entire postcode and mail will arrive in walk order. Under a privatised Royal Mail, your job could well be history.

Don't be fooled by the idea that there is no history of redundancies in Royal Mail. There was no history of redundancies in British Telecom before privatisation. And what of the New Labour rhetoric that privatisation is needed to increase profitability and offer a better service to the public? The debacle of the rail system, British Gas, the water industry and bus deregulation show this lie for what it is.

## *Blair's blueprint*

It is worth bearing in mind how far the Labour government has already gone. The government regulator is already in place in anticipation of the great sell off (sell out). Current management-speak is all about partnership, teamworking and business opportunities. This is classic pre-privatisation rhetoric. Are the speculators and share-dealers part of the team? Who gets the profits? Who has to work more and harder to make them? Who pays the price of profit? Unfortunately for New Labour, we already know what 'teamworking' means – one team, one leadership, one outcome. One side does the work, the other side rakes the profits. Blair's blueprint might look and sound pretty, but it sure smells bad.

The future might be uncertain, but under the current proposals several things are inevitable. There will be more short-term contracts and longer waiting times for part-

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# *Does New Labour make you sick?*

# *Direct Action is the cure!!*

**We were all ignored when we voted against *The Way Forward* the first time around. The CWU leadership's New Labour mantra states that if a ballot does not go in their favour then they must keep balloting until it does. The election promises not to privatise have already been broken, not least in the Quadrant sell-off.**

time staff to become full-time. There will certainly be a tightening up of the attendance procedure and fewer people 'getting off' with RTU's. It will mean pressure on those who are on long term sick to return or face the sack on capability grounds. It will have such an impact on wages that this year's derisory 2% will seem like a good deal. It will open the door to 'flexibility' and more victimisation. You think we are being victimised now? You ain't seen nothin' yet.

## *Union interests?*

What action will the CWU leadership take to head off the threat?

Well, we certainly won't see a CWU campaign against Labour like there was against the Tories. The CWU leadership is saturated with Labour Party members, and life is apparently so much easier when you count yourself as one of Tony's Cronies.

The recent debacle over '*The Way Forward*' speaks for itself. For '*The Way Forward*' read '*The Way Forward*… TO PRIVATISATION'. Despite a massive campaign by the CWU leadership to get us to go for *The Way Forward*, the result of the ballot was neck and neck. Last year, they screwed up the first ballot. This time, they managed to split, cajole and threaten enough people to make the fudge stick. Just. Anyone still wondering whose side the CWU Executive are on could do with a long lie down and a visit to the doctor.

One obvious tactic for the CWU to fight privatisation is to mobilise the political fund against it, in the way the rank and file of Unison have called for. Fat chance. The CWU leadership are too cosy with Tony to play rough.

## *Our interests*

The current agenda is being set by the government, the management and the union bosses. Having a good moan about this is fair enough. But what next? How can we set our own agenda that meets <u>our</u> needs?

Rumours in London are circulating that people have had enough of the CWU leadership blatantly and repeatedly ignoring their views and have decided to break away from the CWU. It may be debatable how much this might achieve, but it certainly indicates their feelings. The same goes for workers up and down the country.

Before *The Way Forward*, was the Employer's Agenda (OK, they <u>called</u> it Employees Agenda). Then came Business Partnership, which means giving the boss the power to do as they see fit with 'their' business. Meanwhile, the government controls the CWU Executive - not difficult as they are already wedded to the Party and will suck shit to keep their fat wage packets.

There is really only one option. FIGHT BACK. It is up to all of us… <u>All</u> governments are there to govern, <u>all</u> union leaders are there to please the Party, and <u>all</u> Political Parties are there for their own power-mongering reasons. No-one can ever act in our interests, except us. When we organise ourselves, we can fight back on our terms in our interests. We don't need to accept all the 'business reality' crap. Only by organising our own campaigns independently of all political parties can we expect to start setting our own agenda. Forget their rules and their mantras. Let's start making our own future.

## *PISSED OFF?*

*Why not spend 1 minute and 1 stamp for some instant gratification!*
*A percentage of your Union dues go to Labour Party funds. If you think they are taking the piss, why not stop them snatching any more of your hard-earned cash? Don't pay the political levy. Just fill in the form below.*

### Political Fund Exemption Notice

I hereby give notice that I object to contributing to the Political Fund of the union and am in consequence exempt, in the manner provided by Chapter 6 of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (consolidation) Act 1992, from contributing to that fund.

**Signature**.....

**Name**.....

**Membership number**.....

**Address**.....

.....

**Date**.....

**C.W.U. branch:**.....

*Send this form to:*
*CWU/HQ,*
*150 The Broadway,*
*Wimbledon, London,*
*SW19 1RX.*

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*Communication Workers' Network - Solidarity Federation - International Workers' Association*