Comunication Worker's Network

Solidarity Federation - I.W.A

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Five day week. Why not?

Some people may have read reports in newspapers of events at the Communication Workers Union conference (annual booze up and week off work more like!).

John Keggie, the defeated candidate for the position of General Secretary has been warning management of industrial action if any further privatisation takes place within the Post Office. We could ask why he did nothing when the engineering and catering sections were sold off, but the answer is probably that he didn't want to rock the New Labour boat. No doubt Keggie expected to become the next General Secretary, and this would have suited Royal Mail management. What did for Keggie was the fact that his fingerprints were all over the 'Way Forward' knife which he plunged into the back of the membership at the second attempt last year. The fact is that there was no real militant opposition to Keggie for the top job.

Former militant, Billy Hayes was elected instead in a very low turnout. Billy's credentials these days consist of a bust of Lenin on the cabinet in his office. (Inspiring stuff!) Certain left-wing individuals have seen this result as some sort of victory and believe we have a

General Secretary who will make a stand against privatisation. Time will tell.

Those of us with long memories have heard all this before when Alan Tuffin took over as GS from Tom Jackson in the early eighties. Tuffin negotiated pay deals which had more strings attached than a symphony orchestra, then retired on a big pension.

One of our local heroes on the Executive Committee, Pat O'Hara, has stated the CWU will support 'unofficial' as well as official industrial action. It's easy making speeches from the conference

rostrum and quite another when push comes to shove and a local rep gets the boot for 'instigating industrial action'.

These professional socialists are living on a different planet and the rank and file have the privilege of keeping them in a manner we will never be accustomed to.

The real driving force for change, as in any trade union, comes from the workers themselves.

In the meantime, don't believe anything you read about a more militant approach from the CWU EC or any tripe you hear about 'left-wing' Billy Hayes. Billy has put his red flag away until next time, but John Keggie has found his at the back of the drawer. No doubt by the time the next election comes around, Keggie will be seen as the great hope of 'the left' by some. But you can exclude the CWU membership from the list.

Royal Mail.

Consignia, (that's the Post Office to normal people) recently wrote to 140,000 postal staff with a veiled threat of dismissal if the present wave of industrial unrest continues. The letter blames a handful of staff for fomenting discontent among the work force. Who could argue? In a few short months this tiny group of politically motivated individuals have caused strikes right across the country. Unfortunately, the letter was sent to postmen and women and not to those intent on causing trouble, the management.

'The Courier' has been quick to condemn staff for standing up against management bullying but has yet to attack the real culprits. Recently, it has trumpeted the joint working party on industrial relations within Royal Mail without pointing out that no such inquiry would ever have taken place were it not for workers going on strike to secure it in the first place. They have been forced to look at a situation which they are solely responsible for only after staff decided enough was enough and took direct action against the wishes of management and their friends in the C.W.U. leadership.

To add insult to injury, *'The Courier'* also blamed the fall in profits on the workforce. According to the dodgy mathematics of *'The Courier'* we are earning just seven pounds a week profit per person employed by Royal Mail. Of course, if the parasites with the shiny arses in their suits were removed, this figure would soar as the amount of mail being delivered by the real workers has greatly increased in recent years. Probably the only other thing which has rocketed to the same extent is the numbers of managers in positions which didn't exist a few years ago.

The recent redundancies which have been announced should be seen as nothing more than propaganda by Royal Mail. Thousands of staff would take early voluntary retirement if it were offered and this has always been the case. If the leadership of the C.W.U. had any go at all about them, they would challenge Royal Mail on these actions, but that's not going to happen while there are favours to be had from a Government they so generously fund with our subscriptions.

Management are looking for scapegoats.

It seems that just recently (over the last couple of months) management or and government tactics are becoming clearer, I hope. Before it was "we"want to wave goodbye to the old style of worker against boss and boss against worker. But with the propaganda they are now peddling it's the status quo. Blaming wild cat strikes for low profits, but with 70% of delivery staff still on a 41.5 hour week, three mail centre's (Birmingham, Oxford and Sheffield). All working that 1.5 hours for no pay, and they expect the regulator to swallow this. Maybe they do, but have they not thought of the millions they have spent on building new mail centre's and new machines that are not performing as they hoped they would? No. It seems that the new tactic is to punch you in the face until you retaliate, then say to the regulator i told you so.

More ways than one to skin the lying bastards

Unpaid Overtime. (35 hour week)

Many people with memories long enough will be able to cast their minds back to the late 1980's and the last reduction in working hours for postal staff.

We were then still working forty three hours a week. Thatcher was still reigning supreme and many people still imagined things would be better under a Labour Government.

One proviso which the then U.C.W. leadership secured was that in the period of time between the one and a half hour reduction being agreed and it's implementation, the time worked would be 'banked' and paid back in the form of time off. This meant many workers having a couple of extra days leave.

Here we are under a Labour Government, with many of us still working forty one and a half hours a week, but being paid for forty. Things can only get better? It's true that we have been promised a forty hour week, just as soon as we can fund it ourselves by working that bit harder in a shorter time. The so-called 'Way Forward' agreement came into force, in May 2000. Since then, many of us have worked over ninety hours for no pay. Over two weeks worked for Royal Mail with not a penny in payment and no chance of getting that time back.

Of course, there are those who enjoy working for nothing. They're the goon squad who insist on starting work even earlier that the official starting time says they have to. The bosses love these people, and this practice, along with using private cars on delivery saves Royal Mail hundreds of thousands of pounds every year. It also costs jobs. If you are one of the goon squad, you have no complaint as you obviously love the job so much.

For the rest of us, we don't see why we should work for nothing. We think the C.W.U. leadership should have had the wit to see through Royal Mail's game and had the intelligence to get an agreement for the hours worked to be paid back to us.

We think the new 'left-wing' General Secretary should be made aware of how we feel and that he should immediately pursue a deal on behalf of those of us still working forty one and a half hours, thereby getting us our time back and applying pressure on Royal Mail to implement forty hour, five day week's as soon as possible.

Why not drop him a line at

C.W.U. Headquarters,
150 The Broadway, Wimbledon, London. SW1P 5RQ. Tel. 020 89717200

Getting Inline

As it seems to be "management speak" to be "in line with the rest of Europe" and " competing on the level playing field". If this is really where management want to be, then we will start with a 35 hour week, as most of the work places in Britain as well as Europe are in this ball park.

We don't want overtime, we want a decent basic pay. Not wage's made up by overtime.

It is that they like to play at being a private company, maybe sell off things that appear to be non-profitable. It makes them look good and they get thier bonuses, may be they like the idea of being fat cats like thier counter parts on the Railways. But alas when it comes down to it they really don't give a fuck about anyone but them selves.

It has taken ten years to drop three hours off our working week, it doesn't take a mathamitition to work out that to loose the next five hours, to be "in line with Europe" could take more than ten years.

If we stand back and let these bastards do what they are planning, many of us won't have a job (or a service to the public) to be fighting for.

We must take action and our lives in to our own hands and not wait for a watered down, burnt out, legislated against Trade Union to come to our defence.

The fight is far from over, now is the time.

But remember Management want us all out on a National Strike,these are thier tactics. What are yours?

Write to us at the address over the page or E-mail da@directa.force9.co.uk