

Letter to Branches

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General Secretary: Billy Hayes (www.billyhayes.co.uk)

No. 716/2009

Ref. 24005

Date: 19th August 2009

TO: ALL BRANCHES WITH POSTAL MEMBERS

Dear Colleague

NATIONAL DISPUTE

Following a meeting with Mark Higson, the Managing Director of Royal Mail on Friday 14th August, the Union has written to Royal Mail making a number of points about our current dispute.

Firstly, we have welcomed the fact that Royal Mail has finally accepted that Phase 4 of the 2007 Pay and Modernisation Agreement, did explicitly commit the company to further national negotiations and further national agreements on a range of crucial issues that will shape how we take forward modernisation. It is important that we convey to our members that this was not Royal Mail's public position a few weeks ago.

However, given that we know, from past experience, that Royal Mail conduct meetings on the basis of lectures and not proper negotiations, we have made the company a fresh offer on how talks should proceed. The Union has proposed that both parties immediately commit to an intensive period of national negotiations based on meeting 3 days a week over the next month. In order to demonstrate that the company are now serious about resolving this dispute we have asked the Managing Director to confirm acceptance of our offer by close of play today.

Secondly, we have responded to an invitation from the Managing Director to formulate ground rules that would ensure local change is agreed and deployed fairly, in line with all national agreements, and not on the basis of managerial executive action. We have asked Royal Mail to cease all further planned executive action and immediately reach acceptable agreement in all offices where executive action has already taken place.

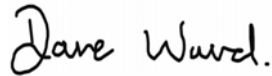
With regard to deployment of fair local change, we have identified a key problem as being that management are imposing unfair work rates to fit unrealistic budget demands, which means that many of our members simply cannot cope with the resulting workload. As a solution to this problem, the Union has offered Royal Mail the opportunity to engage external independent experts in the field of work study, to once and for all establish fair and objective measurement of employees' workloads.

Finally, we have raised again, our serious concerns over the appalling way that Royal Mail managers are treating postal workers in many offices. As a solution to this problem we have asked the Managing Director to intervene and stop some of the current management behaviour, which amounts to bullying and intimidation. We have also asked the Managing Director to agree to an external independent enquiry into the managerial bullying and harassment of postal workers.

On all of the aforementioned issues we will advise you of further developments in due course.

Given that Royal Mail continue to selectively display letters between the national parties on their intranet system we have enclosed a copy, of the letter that has been sent to the Managing Director and a copy of our latest press release for information purposes.

Yours sincerely



Dave Ward
Deputy General Secretary (P)

Our Ref : DW/JDD 24005

18th August 2009

Mark Higson
Managing Director
Royal Mail Group
First Floor
35-50 Rathbone Place
London
W1T 1HQ

Dear Mark

During our meeting on Friday you confirmed that the company now accepted that Pay and Modernisation Phase 4 did require further national negotiations and national agreements to shape and take forward modernisation. Dale Haddon has also written to the Union setting out his view on a process for talks.

However, we explained that we are not convinced there is any genuine urgency or desire from the company to commit to an intense period of negotiations and resolve the differences between us. From past experience one of the fundamental problems that we must overcome is that Royal Mail continually uses meetings as a vehicle for external public relations and to lecture the Union on why you must selectively move your agenda forward - not ours.

Meetings where genuine negotiations take place would be very different to your current approach. We need to see a visible demonstration that this time around the company's public statements are matched by your actions. To kick start this process the Union is proposing that we clear our diaries and commit our teams to a schedule of intense national negotiations based on 3 days a week over the next month.

I see no reason why our proposal cannot be agreed by tomorrow. Can you let me know.

We also spoke, at length, about local change and I raised, again, with you our very serious concerns over the appalling way that our members are being treated by Royal Mail. I explained that the bullying, managerial culture which exists within the company is now reaching very dangerous proportions and I genuinely fear for the wellbeing and safety of our members. Examples of this are increasing numbers of employees facing

unfair conduct action when they simply cannot complete, in paid time, the work tasks demanded by your managers.

People are also being harassed and bullied at work, on a daily basis, through constant and unfair testing of their work rates by managers who are deliberately using this tactic to intimidate staff. People are also increasingly harassed when they are genuinely ill and managers are dismissing employees for issues that would only trigger informal counselling in most other companies. There is also the deliberate tactic of taking people off of pay if they dare question management on legitimate work related issues.

You responded by saying that you accepted that in an organisation as big as Royal Mail that some managers have been crossing the line – this is not good enough. If you accept that a problem exists - even though we may disagree on the scale of that problem – it is incumbent on both of us to take appropriate action.

I am now urging you to support our call for an independent national enquiry into the bullying managerial culture that is endemic within Royal Mail and the unacceptable treatment of employees.

In the meantime, I would like to see evidence that you are taking immediate action to stop this managerial behaviour.

Finally, we also discussed at length, the need to find an urgent solution that would ensure local change can be agreed and deployed fairly, in line with our agreements and ultimately what people can cope with. Central to these local problems are the issues of unrealistic budget demands combined with imposed work rates, and management ripping up local agreements covering earnings and attendance patterns, both of which were an integral part of the Pay and Modernisation Agreement.

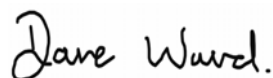
You invited the Union to set out our ideas on how we could formulate ground rules for agreed local change. Crucial to resolving these issues is that both parties must agree that work rates are based on fair and objective measurement. This can best be achieved by engaging independent expert advice. Furthermore, we must clearly set out and separate, for the benefit of all managers and representatives, what is appropriate for national negotiations under Phase 4 and what is appropriate for local change utilising the IR Framework.

You also accepted imposed change by managerial executive action is not the right way to proceed. I am asking you to cease all planned executive action and immediately review, with the Union, offices where executive action has already taken place with the intention of reaching new local agreements.

The content of this letter addresses many of the problems that we must jointly overcome and offers a positive and pragmatic way forward.

I look forward to your response and my team and I are available to meet you as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely



Dave Ward
Deputy General Secretary (P)