

# Postal services privatisation

Britain's postal services were the best in the world when Royal Mail had a monopoly of the service. Remember the twice daily deliveries and all the post offices around and an efficient profitable postal service to anywhere in Britain at standard prices?



Now it is hard to find a post office and the loss to communities even in large towns and cities is only too apparent. The cost of postage for a letter has just been hiked to 50p a letter. Privatisation and 'competition' has been introduced to the service.

EU Directives have specified the steps towards an open market for postal services. This is part of the Single European Market where there has to be 'free movement of capital, goods, services and labour'.

We warned some years ago the national postal service would be subject to EU privatisation policy. This is now well and truly with us. In the lucrative area of West London a company called TNT Post UK, a subsidiary of the Dutch postal service, is now collecting, sorting and delivering their customers' mail to West London addresses.



Royal Mail delivers to all 235,000 West London addresses and collects from 1,480 post boxes and business collection points at least once a day. This is carried out by 900 full time and 100 part time postmen and women.

A Royal Mail leaflet has now been distributed stating that Royal Mail is no longer wholly responsible for the postal service. It points out that Royal Mail delivers six days a week. If mail is unable to be delivered customers can collect it from a nearby postman's office or arrangements made for redelivery, and a redirection service is available.

TNT has not announced how many days they will deliver to homes. TNT does not have post boxes to allow the public to post items of mail. ➔

➔ TNT has not stated whether mail can be collected from a collection point or whether or not there will be a redirection facility. This means you cannot return TNT unsolicited mail, return or forward mail.

Experience already shows that TNT mail is not delivered promptly. In the May Greater London elections for the mayor and assembly members the political address by the Labour Party arrived after the election. This has been taken up with the leadership of the Labour Party where they have been asked why they are supporting privatisation of the postal service by using TNT rather than Royal Mail. The leadership has been asked why they are not supporting an affiliated trade union, the CWU and members.



It is clear TNT Post UK has cherry picked the lucrative area of West London as a trial. If this is repeated around Britain it will make matters bad for Royal Mail and all postal workers. There will be an end to a national service which currently delivers to 29 million addresses which includes unprofitable areas. Practical democracy is at stake as well as jobs.

Since the postal service was set up in Victorian times it has been a form of practical democracy. The postal rates were based on a standard which would take a letter to the next street or town or along long routes to remote farm houses or homes. All customers share in the overall cost of running the service. Further encroachment by privatisation will end that aspect and could possibly wreck the system as we know it.

The objective of privatisation is profit which can only be achieved by exploitation. The massive mechanisation and investment in Royal Mail should not be followed by a TNT takeover or any other private postal service company.

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