



Cleaners and Allied Independent Workers Union
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PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

London, UK – October 6th 2021

- **Facebook harms workers as well as users**
- **Social Media giant prioritises profit over workers' health and safety**
- **Cleaners say excessive workloads are making them unwell**
- **Cleaners campaigning to be brought in house**
- **Further Protests Planned for October 8th and 15th**

Facebook prioritises profit over the safety of its workers as well as its users.

Facebook has been in the headlines a great deal recently, after a whistleblower claimed the company routinely prioritises profit over user safety. But it isn't just users whose safety the company disregards in its pursuit of profit.

Former Facebook product manager Frances Haugen testified on Tuesday to a US Senate committee that the company's products 'harm children, stoke division and weaken [US] democracy.' Haugen went on to say that the company's leadership "won't make the necessary changes [to make Facebook safer] because they have put their astronomical profits before people."

There is a growing body of evidence to support the claim that Facebook is equally negligent towards the health of some of its workers. For example, cleaners at the company's Brock Street offices in central London are being worked to the point of exhaustion and sickness.

The weeks since the start of the summer have seen a surge in reports amongst the cleaners of health conditions ranging from severe back pain and stress to internal bleeding. One cleaner ended up in A&E as a result of extreme pain in the shoulder, arm and hand. But despite the severity of the situation, Facebook has shown a disregard for its

cleaners' welfare similar to that alleged by Haugen, whose testimony featured the claim that the company is 'buying its profits with our safety'.

There can be no doubt that the cleaners' plight is driven by financial considerations.

In September 2020, the Cleaners and Allied Independent Workers Union (CAIWU) uncovered plans to reduce the number of cleaners at Facebook's Brock Street and Rathbone Square offices, in direct opposition to the company's public position that no workers would lose their jobs during the Covid-19 pandemic.

A campaign organised by the cleaners and CAIWU successfully resisted those proposals. But in May of this year five entire floors at 10 Brock Street were added to the six for which the cleaners were already responsible, effectively doubling their workload. Around the same time, increasingly strict and often impossible cleaning schedules began to be introduced. In one example, cleaners say they are expected to clean a washroom containing five toilet cubicles and a shower in just ninety seconds.

CAIWU has repeatedly approached Facebook about the claims of excessive workloads, exhaustion and sickness at 10 Brock Street. On each occasion, the company has reiterated its concern for all its staff. Yet to date it has refused to intervene, referring all enquiries back to the cleaners' employer, Churchill Cleaning.

On September 30th the cleaners declared a formal trade dispute with Churchill. They intend to vote on the possibility of strike action in the coming weeks. A key element of the campaign is to be brought in house as direct employees of Facebook, where they would at least enjoy the same contractual and in-work benefits as every other employee of the company. In the meantime they are organising an ongoing series of protests at both Brock Street and Rathbone Square.

Protests:

Friday October 8th, 4pm: 10 Brock Street, NW1 3FG

Friday October 15th, 4pm: 1 Rathbone Square, W1T 1FB

END

About CAIWU: The Cleaners & Allied Independent Workers Union is a registered trade union representing over a thousand workers mainly in London's cleaning industry. We believe that every human being is entitled to dignity and respect in the workplace, and it is our mission to help our members fight for this basic right, along with others like fair pay, terms and work conditions.

Notes to editor:

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