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VOICE



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In most cases your branch should be your first point of contact. Details are on your membership card.

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BILLY HAYES
GENERAL SECRETARY



The GS column can always be viewed prior to publication of the VOICE, along with daily updates on recent events at Billy's weblog: www.billyhayes.co.uk

420 WORDS BELOW

Awaiting words from Billy Hayes

middle, between local management and your local members. To be accused of not being hard enough on local management, whilst at the same time the business regard you as something of a

despite the scale of commitment demanded of the generally unsung army of local representatives – the CWU continues to recruit volunteers to cause. Our unpaid army of activists is what makes the

IT'S A FACT!

f Liverpool has Europe's longest-established Chinese community. In the 1900s, ships had a direct connection from Liverpool to China, trading tea, silk and cotton. Many sailors stayed.



CWU in the news...

When BT announced substantial losses on May 14, a busy news day for the union was set and our press office kicked into gear to ensure the CWU voice would be heard and to ensure that our members were assured despite headlines and rumours of job losses. Here is an insight into how a busy news day pans out

Kevin Slocombe Head of communications, kslocombe@cwu.org

Andy Kerr, the CWU deputy general secretary (DGS) telecom and financial services (T&FS) was aware of the announcement in advance and he and the communications department discussed our response. The next day, always accompanied by CWU communications, he set off to make the news. As BT announced its losses with an embargoed press release from midnight, Andy started his day live on BBC 5live at 7.05am, where he made it clear that compulsory redundancies would not be happening. He then moved onto Sky Radio at 7.30am, where his interview was syndicated to local radio stations across the UK. At 8.05, he completed a separate live

interview with BBC Radio Scotland. These interviews were completed from the media room in CWU HQ, communications department. This allowed the union to respond with a formal press release for the print media for publication the next day. Andy and our press officer then set off for the Millbank TV centre in Westminster. These studios house all the major TV channels, Westminster studios. Interviews with the Press Association and then a live interview on SKY news were completed with Andy saying: "There has been damaging mismanagement of global services" - a soundbite that would play repeatedly, along with assurances

on job losses for CWU members. These interviews complete, Andy did a live BBC News 24 interview followed by pre-recorded pieces for lunchtime news. A live lunchtime channel 4 interview and pre-records for ITV evening news wrapped up the TV commitments and the DGS (T&FS) completed eight live interviews for regional BBC radio stations. For CWU communications, the rest of the day was spent answering calls from newspaper journalists, clarifying quotes and briefing detail. That night, Royal Mail published its results and the cycle commenced again. Our high profile media campaign on mail privatisation has dominated news agendas daily.



Welcome to the Postal Workers' edition of Voice magazine. The CWU publishes two editions of Voice six times a year. If you are reading a borrowed copy call T: 020 8971 7200 and ask for your own copy to be delivered direct to your door.

NEWS



CWU deputy general secretary (postal) Dave Ward has warned Royal Mail that unless change is mutually negotiated rather than unilaterally imposed, the company risks provoking postal workers into a national dispute.

CWU opposes 'savage' cutbacks

Union members in London began balloting on industrial action against Royal Mail job cuts and imposed changes last month

STRIKE VOTE

As Voice went to press, around 13,000 London postal workers were voting on whether to take strike action against Royal Mail's "savage" programme of job cuts and attacks on CWU members' working conditions.

According to the CWU London Region, the company's plan to make arbitrary cuts of 10 per cent right across its operations translates into the immediate loss of some 1,600 jobs in the capital alone.

Speaking to a national briefing of CWU regional and divisional officers, deputy general secretary Dave Ward warned that this capital-wide dispute could escalate yet further into a full-scale national dispute unless the company returns to serious negotiations.

"Attacking our members' jobs is

unacceptable and we've put a letter out to members saying we're drawing a line in the sand here," Dave began, adding: "There could be a ballot at national level if Royal Mail doesn't change its approach.

"We need to sit down together and work out how to lead our people through change that's acceptable and in the interests of our members."

Addressing the same meeting, CWU London divisional rep Martin Walsh accused Royal Mail of having "declared war on this union.



The CWU has never opposed change, but change must be mutually agreed

Dave Ward



"While we're knocking the Government back on privatisation, it seems the Government is urging Royal Mail to knock us back in the workplace.

"If we don't stand up now, every single office and member will be attacked," Martin warned, "and this issue affects every single member."

Speaking to Voice just a couple of days after members at 159 workplaces across London started receiving their strike ballot papers, Martin's fellow divisional rep Mark Palfrey said that feelings were running very high among postal workers.

"There's cuts of up to 20 per cent planned in some offices," he explained, "and London's facing some particularly savage cuts.

"What we want is a new national agreement, giving our people job

security, protecting our rights and covering all operational areas - mail centres, delivery, network, logistics, distribution and collection."

The union insists that this latest action by management has nothing to do with meaningful attempts to modernise the industry, pointing to the fact that no new machinery is arriving to deal with the workload and warning that, not only does the company plan represent an attack on postal workers, it will also lead to a further deterioration of services.

Stung by the determination of the union to resist its attack, both at London and national level, Royal Mail chiefs asked Dave Ward and his negotiating team to discussions around some of the issues in dispute.

Speaking afterwards, Dave told Voice that, although the talks had

been "constructive," no solution had yet been found and the balloting process would continue. But, with the company keen to hold further talks with the union, a last-ditch deal remained a possibility.

Our deputy general secretary explained, once again that the CWU "is not, and has never been, opposed to change," but, change must be mutually agreed and management must accept and fully recognise the right of the union to negotiate and reach agreements and must engage the union at all levels at the beginning of their decision making process.

● Industrial action has already taken place over similar impositions in areas of Scotland - CWU members taking one-day strike action at Cowdenbeath, Dundee and Edinburgh - while industrial action ballots are also being considered by many CWU branches in other parts of the UK.

Doubled profits expose Royal Mail pay freeze reasoning

PAY AND SALARIES

Royal Mail's announcement last month of doubled end-year profits brought a swift response from our deputy general secretary Dave Ward, who immediately demanded an end to the company's pay freeze policy.

Back in April, the company replied to the formal CWU pay submission by imposing a salary standstill, HR director John Millidge writing to Dave to state: "We do not envisage being able to increase pay rates for any colleagues (including all

directors and managers) across the group as a result of this coming year's pay review."

Explaining Royal Mail's "zero-resolution" strategy, Mr Millidge continued: "The company is facing a

The April Consumer Price Index (CPI), stood at 2.3 per cent

2.3%

321m Royal Mail's year-end figures show profits up from £169m to £321m

very tight financial position," before going on to refer to "global economic turmoil," "structural decline" and the fact that the Retail Price Index (RPI) is currently at a negative level - although Mr Millidge failed to mention that the April Consumer Price Index (CPI), which focuses more on everyday items rather than house prices, stood at 2.3 per cent.

But Dave rejected the company's reasoning, arguing that, despite the ongoing difficulties faced by the economy, Royal Mail had

"weathered the recession well.

"The people who run Royal Mail have again misjudged an important decision," he continued, adding: "Postal workers are first class - they don't deserve this second class treatment."

And Dave's argument was fully vindicated just a couple of weeks later, when Royal Mail posted its year-end figures showing profits up from £169 million to £321m.

"We feel vindicated by today's results," he said, adding: "A pay freeze is not defensible in this

situation and we now expect the company to change its position on a pay freeze.

"Royal Mail is making record profits so postal workers should be rewarded for their contribution to the success of the company."



Dave Ward's argument that Royal Mail can afford a pay rise this year was fully vindicated when the company announced doubled profits.



Andy Furey, Dot Gibson (NPC), Lyndsay Mackie (NEF), Nicola Marshall (CWU policy adviser), Ulrika Diallo (FSB), Natalie Jacottet (CWU head of research), Margaret McDonagh and Brian Scott (Unite)

Postal workers have rights too

POLICY



Bob Gibson reminded Royal Mail chiefs that delivery workers can exercise their right not to deliver material that members of the public may find offensive

CWU assistant secretary Bob Gibson warned Royal Mail bosses last month that our union "will always act to protect our members" after postal workers across the country refused to deliver far-right BNP election literature as a matter of conscience last month.

From Somerset to Lancashire, many CWU members, disgusted at being ordered to drop leaflets from the racist party through local residents' doors, invoked the nationally agreed "conscience clause," which gives individuals the right to not deliver material which they find offensive or believe their customers may find offensive.

And, in response to complaints from CWU reps in some localities that Royal Mail managers were threatening these workers with various sanctions, our union's national officer for delivery workers stepped in to remind the company of its obligations under the relevant procedures.

"We are protecting the rights of our members to be safe at work and Royal Mail has a responsibility to ensure the safety of employees," insisted Bob.

"We have had instances of delivery workers being threatened, chased and spat at for delivering some election leaflets and we will support individuals who feel strongly about delivering these items.

"Postal workers are well within their rights to refuse to deliver offensive material."

CWU general secretary Billy Hayes added that, although the CWU will always act to protect members' welfare and will defend postal workers' right to invoke the "conscience clause," the union does not actively encourage members not to deliver any literature.

"However, as an affiliate to the broad-based anti-racist campaign Unite Against Fascism, the CWU makes no bones about calling on ALL the people of the UK not to vote for this racist party, which seeks to win support for its politics of hate by trying to make scapegoats of anyone who is different.

"Reject the BNP on Euro-election day June 4," Billy urged.

● From the national agreement: "Whilst it is expected that delivery will be made by the individual due to undertake the particular delivery, local management will deal sensitively and sympathetically with genuine requests to deviate from this arrangement. Such cases may arise as a result of personal circumstances or beliefs where an individual believes that delivery of a particular item may incur personal risk. Both parties undertake to co-operate fully in the application of these principles and in resolving any difficulties that may arise surrounding the delivery of election material."

Post Bank - new strategy?

PEOPLE'S BANK CAMPAIGN

Government-owned Northern Rock could play a key role in the establishment of a new People's Bank, according to CWU assistant secretary Andy Furey as he outlined the next steps in our ongoing campaign to tackle financial exclusion and defend our post office network.

Following the successful launch of the Post Bank campaign by a campaign coalition led by the CWU, the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB), National Pensioners Convention (NPC), New Economics Foundation (NEF) and Unite the union, political support for the People's Bank concept has grown,

with 201 MPs having signed up to Early Day Motion (EDM) 1082, which urges the Government to "set up a Post Bank to combat financial exclusion and allow communities and local businesses to access a fair and trusted banking system."

Support for the People's Bank idea has also come from outside Parliament too, postal users' watchdog Consumer



The momentum must be kept up but our strategy must become more focused

Andy Furey



Focus responding to Post Office Limited's (POL) announcement of plans to launch a new current account in partnership with the Bank of Ireland next year by urging POL to run the account itself.

"A Post Office Bank, with a current account at its heart, could take a number of forms, including Post Office Ltd offering its banking services in its own right, not just in partnership," said Consumer Focus public services spokesman Andy Burrows.

Andy Furey believes that the momentum must now be kept up, but the strategy must become more focused.

"Although our Post Bank Coalition has won broad and growing support,

some of our supporters have told us that, as the Post Office does not have a banking licence and to set up a new bank would be extremely costly, the use of Northern Rock's banking network could be a solution in both financial and practical terms.

"This idea is worth consideration, but if Post Bank goes in this direction, it would only be possible on the basis of Northern Rock being subsumed into Post Bank - not as a partnership - and any Northern Rock "toxic assets" being separated and retained by government," Andy warned.

This story is featuring on Sky and online on



Early retirement changes in RMG

EARLY RETIREMENT

CWU assistant secretary Ray Ellis has hailed a new ill-health retirement agreement which "refocuses our whole approach" to helping members suffering from a range of conditions affecting their ability to carry out their duties.

In accordance with the Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006, and in light of increasing difficulties within the existing agreement, Ray's team have worked with Royal Mail managers to negotiate a new, updated procedure.

"Whereas the previous arrangements focused mainly on ill-health retirement itself - the financial and other aspects of it," explained

Ray, "now, the first priority is to try to help the worker back into work - what we describe as rehabilitation.

"However, if rehabilitation proves impossible, the worker's right to early retirement on health grounds remains unaffected and, crucially, her or his severance arrangements are not affected either."

This clause is particularly helpful, Ray points out, because "we have recently had cases where individuals, who have agreed to reduce their hours to assist rehabilitation have lost financially where, subsequently, they have had

to leave the business, because the lump-sum calculation is worked out on their reduced earnings."

As well as disadvantaging people financially, this also had the effect of deterring people from opting for rehabilitation - a choice which came to be seen as something of a gamble.

By contrast, the new procedures state: "In the event that a permanent reduction in contractual hours, agreed as part of an adjustment to duties following ill-health does not work out and the employee is subsequently granted ill-health retirement on the basis of the cause of the original referral, the calculation of payments will be based on full-time grade equivalent pay."

68yrs

By 2024 both men and women will have to be 68 years old to receive a state pension



Ray Ellis

Woolwich fighting on for justice

STRIKE ACTION

CWU members in Woolwich, south east London, remain determined to win the full reinstatement of their colleague after taking two days of strike action in April.

Royal Mail employee Andy Holman was sacked by the company for what the union describes as "an honest mistake" due to a misunderstanding over a post bag.

The union's London divisional rep Mark Palfrey explained to Voice that Andy, working as a reserve driver, had dropped off a delivery bag to a delivery worker, but, as he was unfamiliar with that particular round, the bag was inadvertently left with the wrong person.

But, despite these circumstances, which clearly indicated that the situation arose due to a genuine mix-up, Andy was simply dismissed by stubborn company bosses.

After negotiations on his behalf by local CWU reps failed to shift management's intransigent attitude,

his Woolwich Delivery Office colleagues voted to strike.

"The strength of feeling was clear when the ballot returned a 100 per cent vote for action," explained Mark.

"Now that this limited form of action has not moved the company to rethink its cruel treatment of our member, our Woolwich people have asked the union - and the union has

agreed - to include the demand for Andy's reinstatement along with the other demands that are involved in the London-wide ballot."

In the meantime, the union is representing Andy in taking his case to an industrial tribunal, while the membership as a whole has pledged to continue supporting him until justice prevails.



Striking Woolwich postal workers

Football, friendship and Cantona



Looking For Eric film poster

ENTERTAINMENT

CWU football enthusiasts - particularly those of the Manchester United persuasion! - will enjoy Ken Loach's new film *Looking for Eric*, which is out on general release this month.

Written by Paul Laverty and starring Steve Evets in the title role, the film tells the story of postal worker Eric Bishop, whose life is falling apart in the face of relationship, family and financial problems.

But his fellow postal workers rally round and, with their help, plus the inspiration of his hero Manchester United footballing legend Eric Cantona, our Eric battles to turn his life around.

Explaining to Voice why he based his story around a postal worker, Mr Laverty told us: "Friendship is key to my story and it is in occupations such as these that long-standing friendships are commonplace.

"As well as the camaraderie of Eric's fellow workers, I also wanted to portray the workplace banter, the jokes and the wind-ups," added the

“Friendship is key to my story and this is commonplace in workplaces like these”
Paul Laverty (writer)

writer, who thanked CWU members in the Manchester area for their help with his research.

"They were a lot more helpful than the management," he remarked.

The film certainly has that "feel-good" factor overall, but also doesn't pull its punches when portraying the harsher aspects of life - and there's a brilliant final scene of collective action for a good cause!

[FOR MORE INFORMATION GO TO
WWW.LOOKINGFORERICMOVIE.CO.UK]

Brighton postal worker heads up new 'party'

ENTERTAINMENT

When Hove postman Andy Hitchcock contacted Voice to tell us about his Socialist Leisure Party we first wondered if this was yet another new addition to our political scene.

But no, Andy doesn't want you to elect him to the European Parliament - or even his local council - and, while various election hopefuls want us to dance to their political tune, he just wants you to dance the night away.

Fronted by our Brighton Branch CWU member, indie-rock band

Socialist Leisure Party are eagerly awaiting the release of their second single *Turktown Saints* later this month, hoping that it will prove to be as popular as their debut 2008 six-track EP *Tactical POP! For Coffee Cadets*.

"We've been going for about a year now," explained writer and singer Andy, who describes Socialist Leisure Party as "angry, but upbeat, music for people who don't get the invitations" and claims that they have been compared to 1980s legends *The Smiths* and one-hit

wonders *Orange Juice*.

"We use harmoniums and auto-harps," Andy continued, explaining the band's evocative sound and adding that the band plans to play a series of dates across the south coast



The front cover of last year's SLP EP release *Tactical Pop for Coffee Cadets*.

Harmonisation in new deal with POL



The new deal consolidates pay and conditions

CONTRACTS

CWU assistant secretary Andy Furey is urging members to back the new deal that he and his negotiating team have reached with Post Office Limited (POL), which provides "clear benefits for ex-trainer and auditor grades moving to the new field support advisor (FSA) role."

As a result of the merging together of POL trainers and auditor teams, which took place under a previously agreed upskilling process, it became apparent that the two sets of employees were on differing terms and conditions, with former auditors in particular not receiving bonus payments, Andy explained.

If endorsed by members, the new agreement, will allow this group to receive the Sales Incentive Scheme overlay bonus payments, while the plan also provides them with a retrospective payment of £574 each backdated to last July.

The new FSA role will have an enhanced basic pensionable salary of £21,046 - effective from April 1 - which includes the consolidation of the existing £1168 training allowance, the benefit of which will now flow through to hourly pay and overtime rates.

"All harmonisation has been made on the basis of raising terms and conditions up to the best standards and I recommend the agreement to members," Andy concluded.

InBrief

CWU serving the people

Conscientious CWU members worked throughout the Mayday bank holiday weekend to ensure that vital Swine Flu advice was delivered to every household in the UK, in another example of the critical importance of our universal postal service. Two leaflets were delivered to each British home providing information about the condition and how to combat its spread. CWU general secretary Billy Hayes praised the hard work of members and pointed out that, "even in this increasingly digital age, the delivery of printed material remains one of the most effective ways of distributing information. It demonstrates the significance of the universal service. Royal Mail is the only company that can ensure that it reaches every household in the UK at an affordable price and privatisation would threaten that," he added.

> More at www.cwu.org

Final 50:50 payouts

Assistant secretary Martin Collins has advised members that the final payments of the 50:50 Efficiency Scheme, which ceased in April as part of the nationally agreed 2007 Pay and Modernisation Agreement, were due to have been made with May 22 wage payments. The monies, where due, are in respect of the period from the "last quarter October 2008 to April 2009 for all units that achieved savings over and above their financial budget," Martin explained, adding: "The details of the individual payments to the members in each of the offices/units that have qualified should be communicated and displayed locally."

> More at www.cwu.org

Follow Obama's lead

CWU sponsored MP John Grogan has called for the British Government to follow the example of President Obama in the US and work towards a regularisation of undocumented workers. Addressing a 15,000 strong rally of the Strangers into Citizens campaign in Trafalgar Square, John said: "If these workers become citizens, they'll pay taxes and national insurance and this would also undercut the 'black market'."

> More at www.cwu.org/voice and debate on p16

Post Bank a popular hit

Early Day Motion 1082 calling for a Post Bank has broken the 200-signature mark and rocketed into the "EDM top ten." Delighted CWU general secretary Billy Hayes said: "Popular support in the Commons for a Post Bank is fantastic news. The need has never been greater to support local communities and businesses and provide trusted banking services."

> More at www.cwu.org/voice

[FOR MORE INFORMATION GO TO
CLOUDBERRYRECORDS.COM]

● For more information, and to make your own mind up, contact the band's record labels at cloudberryrecords.com and shelllife.com.

STAR LETTER



KPP campaign boosts morale

The article in the latest CWU voice magazine about our Keep the Post Public campaign was a real morale booster.

But when I saw campaigners on our rally in February holding up Daily Mirror front pages to reinforce the message, I thought, surely we need some more posters and leaflets of our own setting out our position.

Many people I meet on my round - especially at sub-post offices - ask me for more information.

I can't speak for other CWU members obviously, but I for one would be willing to pay a subsidy to print a huge amount of posters etc. I think it's an enormous part of the campaign.

Members of the public and people with small businesses are very interested and concerned about what's going on and they really don't know that it's all imminent.

Peter O'Toole, London

CWU head of communications Kevin Slocombe replies: The campaign has two leaflets specifically aimed at giving the public more information on opposing the sale. The first of these is called "10 good reasons" and the second is imaginatively entitled "10 more good reasons." If you don't have these, I am sure they can be obtained from your branch office. Postmen and women are hugely respected by the public and you really are the best adverts for our campaign to save the public service that you literally deliver, so it is great to see you doing just that. There were posters available at the rally, but securing a special copy of the Daily Mirror, trumpeting opposition to the sale, had a huge impact and this is why the marchers chose to hold up the Mirror rather than a poster.

Saturdays? - no thanks

I have to take exception to Bob Gibson's reply to Gary Scales's letter in the last edition of Voice, when Mr Gibson said that moving to a five-day Monday-to-Friday working week is only popular with small groups of the membership.

Put it to a vote of the whole membership Mr Gibson and you will see that it is one of the most popular ideas out there.

In 1971, after the largest strike in the history of Royal Mail, part of the agreement was that Royal Mail would get rid of Saturday working. But they still have not done so 38 years later.

Our union should be telling Royal Mail to keep to its agreements.

A Monday-to-Friday week would enable us to spend the whole weekend with our families and enable us to book our holidays from Saturday to Saturday. These are just some of the ways we would benefit and I am sure that there are many more.

As for losing contracts, the firms we deliver to and for mostly work Monday to Friday anyway, so why would they object to us doing the same? And the general public does not care if we work Saturdays - most people do not realise that we do anyway.

They would rather that we get their mail to them before they leave for work and doing two deliveries Monday to Friday would achieve this.

KA Taylor, Postman, Barnet

How about a ballot?

We would like to know why we were not asked for our opinion on Monday to Friday deliveries and also how Bob Gibson knows it is only "popular" in some small sections of the membership.

Who are the small sections?

Bob also states that it is of "no benefit" to our members! How does he know what benefits me or any other member?

Surely a ballot would give

a true answer of what members want.

John Levy, Phil Western, Steve Vivian, ECPDO Delivery Office, Bristol

Please think again

After reading Gary Scales's letter in the previous edition of Voice, I totally agree with his point regarding Saturday working and I feel that the union executive is totally out of touch with its membership.

I have worked for Royal Mail for 20 years and have always despised working Saturdays.

Over many years of discussing this matter with my colleagues, I know that not one of them would miss working Saturdays. Surely, as we always seem to have vacancies at our office, the jobs could be absorbed in that way.

As for loss of revenue, I do not know of one business within our delivery office area that has a Saturday contract.

Perhaps the union should put it to a vote, to see the reaction from its members.

Dave, Winchester DO

Assistant secretary Bob Gibson replies: In response to these letters, I would suggest that if the Monday to Friday five-day working week is so popular, which I refute, bearing in mind the consequences across the whole industry, then members should submit motions to their branch meetings, mandating their representatives to submit a motion to annual conference and vote for it. In the meantime, copies of the report on the consequences of moving to Monday to Friday working can be requested from CWU HQ.

Work safe, don't overload

I feel I have to write to you in regard to the article in the last edition of the Voice on page 10, under the heading "Topic of the week."

We are trying to get our members to work safely and we see a picture of a postal worker carrying three bags at once. I'm sure you will state that the bags were empty, but even so the picture doesn't portray this and is totally unacceptable as it shows someone doing things we are trying to stamp out.

I hope that you will look into this as a matter of urgency and maybe place it in your next edition that this is in fact wrong

P Sansum, Area Delivery Rep, Cleveland Amal

CWU publications editor Simon Alford replies: Many thanks for your letter Mr Sansum. We felt that the image in question, which is a genuine photograph of a postal worker on duty, illustrated the issue that was being discussed in the "Topic of the Month" - i.e. that some CWU members argue that 'seniority' can lead to unfair, unbalanced, workloads for some workers. In retrospect, however, we should have captioned the picture to explain precisely why we were using it, highlighting the fact that this is not a correct way of working.

Speaking up for 'rurals'

The next time the CWU issues a national agreement for us to vote on, would it be possible to highlight the areas that do not include rural offices, in order that we can make an informed judgement before we vote.

It seemed that having voted "Yes" in the last ballot, we were informed, for example, that the early start on Saturdays doesn't include the "rurals."

And, although we were given the impression that teams of six or seven people would be needed to throw in another job, in the rurals, teams of three or four are the norm. This does impact on our - untested - jobs.

MG Rosewarne, CA Rosewarne, Great Glen SPDO, Blaby SPDO

Assistant secretary Bob Gibson replies: I can't find anything nationally that supports your claim. However, your correspondence has been passed to the national SPDO group for investigation.

Another view on seniority

With reference to the letters on seniority in the March/April Voice postal edition, I joined the Post office in 1957 and served until 2004, clocking up 47 years - 43 of those in uniform.

In all that time I worked with seniority and it was never a huge issue especially in my early years. I looked on it as a partner the age-old axiom "last in first out," which most workers seem to agree with.

The only alternative we were offered, and constantly fought as a union, was simply letting managers pick who does what delivery/walk etc. Can you see the scenario in an office where the three easiest walks are performed by the manager's cousin, second cousin and second cousin twice removed?

You would soon be looking at seniority in a different light.

I still think it is the easiest, quickest and most acceptable way to allocate work in a delivery or sorting office.

Peter O'Donnell, Tyneside

Be fair Royal Mail!

For the past five or six years, I have had photos on my frame, mainly of my children, my partner, holidays and of postmen I have met from the USA, Canada, Germany and Thailand. Imagine my surprise when my line manager removed them and said that no personal property was allowed on display on frames.

When Royal Mail is currently going through many changes and more pressure is put upon us, what a boost for morale!

RJ Pettitt, Cambridge

[MORE LETTERS CAN BE VIEWED AT]
WWW.CWU.ORG/LINKS/LETTEREXTRA

Cleaners underpaid and overworked

Since the cleaners went from Royal Mail over to Romec - which was a part privatisation in my opinion - the standard of cleaning every where is sub-standard.

We are told to cut back on cleaning materials to save money and most of the time you don't get what you want. Come on Romec, stop the penny-pinching.

Also, when someone's on annual leave, the coverage to their duty is non-existent! I was off for four days annual leave in April and the total coverage for those four days was six-and-a-half hours - how can you do anything in that time? And, when you do return to work, you have to work your backside off to catch up - and all I hear from my manager is: "We haven't got the staff to cover the duties."

I've heard in one office that the cleaning manager is telling the staff they have to do overtime as they can't get the work done in normal hours, the obvious answer is to get more cleaners, but what do they do? They just get more managers - it seems three managers to one cleaner.

I also see the union are trying to get postal workers £400 a week basic pay, but what about the cleaning side? My basic pay for a six-day week is £248. And why are some cleaners still on a six-day week?

A Foss, Cleaner, Folkstone DO

Assistant secretary Bob Gibson replies: We have highlighted a number of these issues with Romec and we are pursuing them. We have also just launched a magazine - Clean Sweep - specifically for cleaners to keep our members better informed.





SOLIDARITY ACROSS CWU

Proving in practice the traditional trade union motto: "Unity is Strength," CWU postal members rallied to support two reps from the telecoms section of our union when Carphone Warehouse victimised two CWU reps in Birmingham in April. Particularly prominent among them were fellow CWU victims of anti-union management from nearby Burslem...

Activists from the postal constituency have mounted a resolute show of solidarity with telecoms members at Carphone Warehouse where management at the company's Wednesbury logistics centre stand accused of "blatant union-busting tactics."

With two reps at the site currently facing the sack, in what CWU Midlands regional secretary Lee Baron believes is a "direct attempt to systematically remove the union from the workplace", the CWU has sent the strongest possible message to the company that any attempt at union-busting will be very publicly challenged.

On April 21, around 20 activists from both telecoms and postal branches across the Midlands mounted a high-profile demonstration outside the site before splitting up to target the company's shops across the Birmingham conurbation.

Amongst those protesting was Burslem postal worker Paul Malyan - one of 12 members sacked by Royal Mail in the autumn of 2007 on what the union has always insisted were "trumped up charges" - and a blatant attempt by Royal Mail to weaken the CWU in the area.

While six of the Burslem men were subsequently reinstated after winning national appeal panel hearings, Paul is one of three still fighting for justice - while a fourth has decided to leave the postal service, choosing not to pursue his case any further.

Paul sees direct parallels between his own treatment by Royal Mail and the two suspended Carphone Warehouse reps - but is the first to admit that their position is even more invidious since they are operating within a company which refuses to recognise the legitimacy of the CWU.

Both the main rep at the Wednesbury site and his assistant have been charged with bullying and harassment of a manager - the precise reverse of what the union maintains is actually the case.

The CWU is arguing that the

behaviour for which the reps are being disciplined - namely investigating a complaint by a member claiming victimisation by the same manager - actually represents the wholly legitimate duty of any workplace rep to stand up for fairness and decent treatment in the workplace.

"The whole point of being a rep is to help other people - that's why people choose to be reps. The trouble occurs when companies don't want you to know your rights," Paul explained to Voice.

"It's an absolute disgrace. These people have stood up to try to build a union in the workplace - and the reward for that is to be taken out. It's a very sad indictment when all they were trying to do is help their fellow workers, and the management feel that is a hindrance to what they want to do."

Paul continued: "What's gone on at Burslem shows this type of thing can happen anywhere - and these people are in the same situation, only worse because they are only just building the union in the workplace."

"At Burslem, we've had the backing of our union from day one, which is a big help to all of us - whereas at Carphone Warehouse they're just trying to get the union off the ground. Hopefully, the presence of everyone here today will inspire them and make them realise that they're not on their own."

Gary Perry of Wolverhampton postal branch spoke of the importance of CWU members from all constituencies and sections of the union standing together to challenge union-busting tactics wherever it arises. "Our members at Carphone Warehouse are just getting on their feet and they need to be supported," he insisted.

Mick Fitzmaurice secretary of Northamptonshire branch, which last year successfully fought similar anti-union moves at the Carphone Warehouse site in Northampton, agreed, adding: "Until we get a bigger percentage of members in there, we're always going to be facing this problem with Carphone Warehouse," he said.

▲ Top left: CWU members demonstrating for their victimised colleagues

▲ Top right: Burslem CWU member Paul Malyan



Lee Baron



Gary Perry



Mick Fitzmaurice



Elaine Bernard

Organising for the future

Strengthening our union's existing organisation and taking our workers' rights agenda into the wider postal industry were the key themes at a four-day CWU Leading in Organising course last month...

Aimed at senior reps and officials from the postal constituency of the union, Leading in Organising attracted postal executive members, regional secretaries, divisional reps and branch secretaries, all keen to hear how they can lead efforts to grow the CWU.

CWU senior field organiser Lynn Browne, who headed the event, explained that it had been planned as a "follow-on" to last year's series of Organising Ambassadors (OAs) courses.

"In 2008, we held training events around the regions aimed at teaching CWU activists in recruiting techniques and strategies," Lynn began.

"And Leading in Organising builds on that by helping to ensure that our leadership structures are geared to guiding and providing support for our OAs."

The first three days of the course took place at our union's national education and training centre at Alvescot in Oxfordshire, with the fourth day in central London, where guest speaker Elaine Bernard of the "Labor and Worklife Program" at Harvard Law School in the US outlined the challenge of trying to organise in an anti-union environment.

"There are members tending to see CWU membership as an insurance to be kept in the back pocket for times of trouble," said Ms

Bernard. "That works for some folks but not for the organisation."

The US union organiser highlighted how she felt that people often think that power lies with the union's reps and senior leadership, but in reality, it lies with the members themselves.

"The power lies in making people aware. We need to "light fires" to get people active and then keep them involved," she explained.

Our US guest went on to highlight the need for union organisers to strategise by taking the initiative, motivating others to take part, building relationships, mobilising wide support for action and mentoring to develop new leaders.

"The real skill is about building power out of collective action and that is organising," Ms Bernard concluded.

In her contribution, CWU head of education and training Trish Lavelle highlighted the danger of activists developing "an obsession with procedures and agreements" and warned against union reps allowing themselves to become "set apart" from the membership as a whole.

"Ideally, we need the workplace to be a workplace of activists," she added.

North West regional secretary Carl Webb stressed organising was a tool for recruitment and pointed out that there are

20,000 potential new members at Royal Mail. "Many are not approached," said Carl, who claimed we have reps but lack activists.

Steve Reid of Birmingham District Amal emphasised the need to relate to workers from different backgrounds, recalling how a number of Polish workers at Business Post were given leaflets in their own language from local CWU activists.

North East regional secretary Bob Maguire called for an organisational rep in every workplace. "We need to organise around local issues, talking to people one to one," said Bob, who suggested that our motto should be: "Organise or die."

And CWU general secretary Billy Hayes pledged the union's full commitment to this new organising strategy, arguing: "We need to change our approach to organising. We need succession planning and we must look for new leaders. There is a new wave of activists out there and we need to tap into them," he urged, calling for a "volunteer army" of activists.

Billy also emphasised the need for a "flexibility of approach," explaining that, for example, health and safety reps often have advantages over industrial reps in terms of mandatory rights and called for greater co-operation here.

TAKING OUR MESSAGE OUT TO THE NATION

While Westminster politicians prepare to begin debating Business Secretary Peter Mandelson's controversial Postal Services Bill, CWU activists up and down the UK are out campaigning on Britain and Northern Ireland's busy streets, explaining the issues to the people and urging them to back our fight to Keep the Post Public...

Keeping the Public Posted - our union's nationwide tour against Royal Mail privatisation, got off to a flying start last month, starting in Scotland and then heading across the Irish Sea for a whistle-stop tour of Northern Ireland, before heading back to the mainland to visit England's North West and North East regions.

And, so far, each of our regional secretaries - who have been co-ordinating the campaigns within their own areas - has reported overwhelming support for our determined fight to stop the Government's highly controversial attempt to privatise our nation's postal service.

CWU Scotland Region secretary John Brown was given the honour of kicking off the union's all-UK tour, which began at the northernmost tip of the country - John O' Groats - on a cold and windy early May morning, at a location where, on high ground, snow can still be seen.

Big support from Day One But even here - chosen by the campaign team as largely a symbolic starting point for the tour, - John and the CWU Scotland team encountered members of the public visiting the spot for the day who wanted to express their support for our campaign aims.

A motorcycling sub-postmaster from Blackpool, two caravanning couples from Yorkshire and an ex-serviceman from Essex all came over to speak to us, intrigued by our giant "Postcard to the Prime Minister" and curious as to why our Government plans to hand over one of our nation's greatest assets to unscrupulous privateers.

And this pattern was repeated as Keeping the Public Posted headed down the country - through Inverness, to Perth, Glasgow, Edinburgh and then Prime Minister Gordon Brown's Kirkcaldy constituency - members of the public making it clear to us time and time again that they place a high value on their collectively owned public services, whether in health, education, transport or communications, and they want to defend them.

Ferry over the Irish Sea

At the end of Week One, as John Brown prepared to take the ferry to Larne and hand the campaign over to his Northern Ireland counterpart Lawrence Huston, Glaswegian John told Voice that it had been "a tiring, but inspiring" opening week.

"With people queuing up to sign our giant postcard wherever we went, attracted no doubt by "Postie," our 20-foot high inflatable campaign mascot, there's no doubt we got our message across," he said, adding: "Although it's a very serious message, I must say, it's

also been a lot of fun."

Week Two saw no let up in the pace, Lawrence and his hardy team of activists taking a whistle-stop tour of his region, taking in Stormont Castle, County Down, Fermanagh, Antrim, Armagh, Tyrone and Derry, County Londonderry, before heading to the capital Belfast for a campaigning session outside City Hall.

Despite some appalling weather - stormy winds and rain for the second half of the week - our campaigners met local politicians and members of the

public at towns and cities right across Northern Ireland, reporting, once again, a gathering of support as the week progressed.

"A hectic, but hugely rewarding week," reflected Lawrence, as he handed over "Postie" and our Postcard to the PM to North West Region secretary Carl Webb for stage three of the all-UK campaign.

"We judged it an outstanding success, with the support from all quarters overwhelming," Lawrence added. "And there's no doubt, if this support is

repeated elsewhere, Peter Mandelson and his government colleagues will be committing political suicide if they make any attempt to privatise the Royal Mail."

Carl Webb took responsibility for Week Three, during which our Keep the Post Public message went out to the good people of Lancashire, Cumbria and Cheshire, while "Postie" proved his impartiality in footballing matters with visits to both Liverpool's iconic Anfield Stadium and Old Trafford, home of the mighty Manchester United.

“A great success so far, which would not have been possible without the dedication and hard work of our CWU members in the localities”



The Angel of the North proudly wearing one of our CWU campaign T-shirts

North West - no-one left out But as well as the high-profile big city locations, a visit to Britain's premier seaside resort Blackpool and a trip to the historic town of Lancaster, the North West campaigners also took in the region's smaller and perhaps less well-known towns, spending time out among the public in Carlisle, Warrington, Wigan and Bolton as well.

Carl told Voice that many local people were upset about the Government's plans after the CWU activists explained the issues at stake, while others were angry to learn that their local MPs were not supporting the union's cause.

A typical example of this was the town of Warrington, where, Carl explained: "Many were critical of their local MPs Helen Southworth and Helen Jones for not coming out publicly and condemning the plans to sell off part of

Royal Mail. "We were left in no doubt that the electorate in Warrington were very unhappy with their Members of Parliament. If they have a second home, I wouldn't choose any new wallpaper if I was them," quipped the North West regional secretary.

Over to you North East After North West, Keeping the Public Posted journeyed across "England's backbone," the Pennines, where North East Region secretary Paul Clays was eagerly awaiting the arrival of the tour, having already managed to persuade Newcastle's iconic Angel of the North to



◀ The campaign travelled across the Pennines from the North West region to Newcastle's Angel of the North

don one of our campaign T-shirts.

After a week in Paul's region, Keeping the Public Posted takes a break while our union holds our annual national conference, after which both postcard and postbox complete the second half of their expedition.

Where next for 'Postie'?

Our Wales, Midlands, Eastern, South East and London Regions will all host the tour for a week, before South West completes the campaign - set to arrive at Land's End in midsummer.

CWU general secretary Billy Hayes hailed the opening stages of the campaign as "a great success so far, which would not have been possible without the commitment, dedication and sheer hard work of our CWU members in the localities.

"Even we have been taken aback by the overwhelming support shown by the great British public for this vital public service," he enthused, adding: "This fully vindicates our members' twin-track strategy of taking our case direct to the people of the UK, while not letting up in our ongoing political campaign at Westminster."

CWU head of communications Kevin Slocombe told Voice that the nationwide tour had proved "invaluable in providing us with the opportunity to take our case direct to the people.

"And it also gives all of our members - from every region of the UK - the chance to take part in one of the most critically important campaigns that our union has organised."

Support keeps on growing

And it is not only our campaigners who are reporting huge support among the public, opinion poll after opinion poll has shown that people simply do not want their postal service to be sold off. Last month, a survey by ICM indicated that three-quarters - 75 per cent - of people oppose the sale of Royal Mail, with 78 per cent saying that a sale would be a bad deal for the taxpayer and eight out of ten - 80 per cent - believe that the proposed sale breaks a key election promise. ▶



Keeping the Public Posted Day One at John O'Groats at the northernmost tip of the UK mainland. CWU Scotland Region secretary John Brown (second right) said: "It's been a great launch - and what a fantastic place to start. We've already got support from some of the tourists we've met here today."



Lively young Glaswegians Mia Jane, Jamie Lee and Heather McLuckie showing their support for the CWU fight to Keep the Post Public when our campaign team visited Scotland's biggest city on Week One of the nationwide tour.



Carl Webb and his North West campaign team taking their message to Liverpool Football Club's iconic Anfield Stadium - just one of many campaign stops during Week Three of the tour. "The message from the public and businesses we met was clear and simple" said Carl, "Royal Mail is not for sale at any price."



John Brown



Paul Clays



Lawrence Huston



Carl Webb

FEATURE KEEPING THE PUBLIC POSTED

► Support for sale collapses

In any polls, the highest recorded support for privatisation is at 14 per cent, with the mean average standing at just 10 per cent.

And, with Royal Mail having announced £321 million profit just a couple of weeks ago - double last year's figures and in marked contrast to the financial difficulties being faced by the private sector - it's clear that there is no business case for privatisation.

With 148 Labour MPs - and 181 in total - having signed Morecambe and Lunesdale MP Geraldine Smith's Early Day Motion 428 calling on the Government to drop the sell-off, it is clear that there is strong political opposition to the sale.

But the latest indications are that the Government still intends to press ahead and the Postal Services Bill has now completed the various stages of progress through the House of Lords and the first House of Commons reading - a formal introduction of the proposals.

Latest political update

As Voice went to press, the Bill's second reading was due to kick off the

Parliamentary debate, followed by amendments, a first vote of MPs and then the committee stage, at which the legislation is looked at in detail and various amendments are put forward.

The timetable of this committee stage can vary considerably, depending on the significance of the legislation and so it is difficult for us to predict the timescale here.

However, with opinion polls also indicating that general support for the Government may be at an all-time low - some pundits even predicting that the Labour Party could be overtaken for third place in the upcoming European Parliament elections, our Government is clearly under political pressure from several directions at the moment. It is unclear exactly how this will affect us in the CWU, but, suffice to say, it is highly likely that, by the time you read this, the debate over the future shape of our postal service, your jobs and the service you all provide to our nation, will be at an acute point. ✓

► Billy Hayes leading CWU demonstrators marching to Labour's Manchester conference last September



This story is featuring on Sky and online on



CAMPAIGN RECALLS 'LEVELLER' PRINCIPLES

CWU Eastern Region secretary Paul Moffat was delighted to bump into veteran socialist Tony Benn when local union activists took their Keep the Post Public message to Burford's Levellers Day in May.

"Although our own CWU activists in 2009 do not face anything like the oppression suffered by our brave predecessors, our struggle to Keep the Post Public, to defend this vital public service to which all citizens are equally entitled, is very much in keeping with "Leveller" principles of equality for all," said Paul (pictured far right with Mr Benn).



■ LIVELY GLASGOW

Almost 1,000 Glaswegians signed our union's Keep the Post Public petition when the campaign visited Scotland's biggest city.

Glasgow Amal Branch chairman Tam McEwan said that the day's campaigning had been "a huge success, people young and old were literally queuing to sign and we reckon almost 1,000 people signed today in just a few hours."

CWU regional secretary John Brown, a native Glaswegian himself, said he was proud with the "hugely positive response" from his city.



Govan lads Jamie McIlhiney, Chris McLaren and Ross McAdam backing Keep the Post Public in Glasgow city centre

■ BUSY DAY IN ENISKILLEN

Northern Ireland Region secretary Lawrence Huston explains: "In Eniskillen, our meeting point in the Diamond, opposite the town hall, was ideal."

"It was the perfect place both for getting our message across to the general public and to the Mayor and local councillors who took time out from their busy schedule to pay us a visit."

"Our stall attracted a large and lively audience and, once again, unqualified support from everyone."



Eniskillen shoppers crowding around Lawrence Huston and the Northern Ireland campaign team's stall

A struggle we need to win

As our battle enters its most critical few weeks, CWU general secretary Bill Hayes and deputy general secretary Dave Ward explain, once again, why stopping privatisation is so vital...

As the long battle to save our Royal Mail enters its most crucial period, it is worth restating the reasons why this campaign is right at the top of our union's agenda.

Indeed, this has been at the top of our agenda for most of the past year and a half - ever since the then Secretary of State for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform John Hutton appointed Richard Hooper to head an independent review into our industry back in December 2007.

Privatisation - disaster

By far the worst scenario for the union, its members and the public is the privatisation of our industry.

Allowing private ownership to enter the UK postal service - even if it is by the back-door "strategic partnership" tactic currently being proposed by the Government - would be a disaster for this union, our members and the UK public. It would leave this industry - which truly is part of the glue that binds our nation together - at the mercy of the privateers, spivs and speculators who caused so much damage to our economy.

And, if there is a change of government at the next

election, our failure to defeat part-privatisation now would leave us in a far, far weaker position if we have to face the prospect of full privatisation by a future Conservative government.

Keep it public - we all win

"By contrast, defeating privatisation would represent a massive victory, not only for members of our union, but for all the people of this country."

"And it is only by keeping Royal Mail in full public ownership, that we can win a lasting solution on pensions, on regulatory reform and on improvements to governance."

"This can create the environment in which we can start to develop, win agreement for and perhaps begin to implement, some of their excellent ideas on the actual practicalities of building the positive future for our industry that we all want to see - but to achieve all this, we need to defeat privatisation."

Positive future - only way

The question of how to bring about change is central to government thinking and the Government believes privatisation is the only way to bring about change.

We have to convince them that this is not the only way.

While private mail

companies, including TNT, have seen huge profit reductions, Royal Mail's operating profit has doubled and these results make it easy for the Government to back the pensions element of the Postal Services Bill and drop the privatisation part.

The public and postal workers want government to see sense and keep the postal service public."

And if members of the Government ask us: "But what's your alternative? What's your solution?" Our answer must be: "To stick to the policy on which the Labour Party fought and won the last general election - a vision of a fully publicly owned Royal Mail, restored to good health, providing a high-quality service to the public and rewarding employment to its workforce."

That's our alternative."



Dave Ward

> READ MORE ONLINE @ WWW.CWU.ORG



Pay talks are still ongoing, set against a backdrop of the Project Holborn negotiations which cover everything from job security to management style

Turbulent times...

BT PAY AND JOBS

Two sets of crucial negotiations covering pay and job security for members in BT were building to a climax as Voice went to press - set against a £1.6 billion year end writedown at the troubled Global Services division, and plans to reduce the company's overall headcount by a further 15,000.

Pay talks are also ongoing - despite the company's stated position of a pay freeze. The CWU is strenuously making the case that all members deserve to be rewarded for their contribution to a company which is still profitable, notwithstanding the current economic gloom.

Despite the difficult negotiating environment, CWU negotiators are also continuing to make headway in talks on 'Project Holborn' discussions, outlined in detail to members in the last issue of Voice (see www.cwu.org/

voice/) and is the subject of a major follow-up report on pages 8 & 9 of the current telecoms issue (viewable on the CWU website).

This massively complex set of negotiations has at its heart the aim of maximising permanent contract employment within the company and, crucially, maintaining the time-honoured voluntary approach in redundancy situations.

Already BT has provided assurances that it has no plans to move away from voluntarism, but at the time of printing the CWU was seeking a more explicit statement on job security from senior management.

Deputy general secretary Andy Kerr told the Voice: "I've never made any secret of the fact that there are three 'red lines' of CWU policy which are utterly non-negotiable.

"One involves our determination to keep all of the BT pensions schemes open to future accrual - something

we have already achieved in an agreement which looks more and more timely given recent announcements on the fund's burgeoning deficit.

"Another concerns this union's determination to resist performance related pay in BT - something regularly raised by management in the annual pay review and which we

1.6bn Year end writedown at Global Services masks revenue growth across BT

will be battling off, once again this year, if the subject arises.

"The third 'red line' - and arguably the most important of all to members concerned about their job security - involves the continuation of the long-standing voluntary approach to job losses. We're addressing this issue in the current Holborn talks."

Despite the frenetic negotiating agenda on two fronts - set against the unhelpful backdrop of recessionary times - Andy is adamant the union is determined to achieve a pay rise for members this year, not least as a quid-pro-quo for constructive engagement in the often difficult Holborn negotiations.

"Of course we understand job security is, for many, the primary concern - something we are addressing in the Holborn talks - but even taking that into consideration the negotiating team still believes CWU members deserve some extra money in their pockets this year.

"Everyone understands the current economic situation and the challenges the company faces, but the fact remains that BT is still a profitable organisation and our members are the ones who generate the company's cashflow."

Andy continued: "Three out of four of BT's lines of business have performed well in spite of fierce competition and the global economic downturn - and those are not my words but those of chief executive Ian Livingston, quoted directly from an official BT press release.

"He went on to say that Global Services is in the process of being turned around, and that 'BT will emerge from the recession a stronger company' - and it is telling that despite the £1.6 billion one-off write-down at Global Services, the division's revenue actually increased by 6 per cent last year.

"Despite gross mismanagement at the division, which has been decisively dealt with by the Board, revenues are increasing - and BT Group taken as a whole saw revenues increase by 3 per cent in 2008/9, generating free cash flow of £737 million.

Andy concluded: "These are not the results of a fundamentally sick company - and provide yet another reason why hard-working CWU members should not be penalised for the mismanagement of Global Services by senior managers."

This story is featuring on Sky and online on



ON THE WEB

View these Telecoms edition stories online at: www.cwu.org/voice/

■ **CWU website blocked**
Workers at Carphone Warehouse sites have been blocked from accessing a CWU website in a clumsily implemented management move which appears to combine censorship and buffoonery in equal measure. Deputy general secretary Andy Kerr described the development, which has been mercilessly ridiculed in the internet media, as "very worrying". Andy explains: "Union membership is a legal right, and one which progressive modern companies should welcome."



■ **Final frontier for justice**
Agency members and CWU branches across the country must boldly campaign as never before to ensure the huge success of the union's campaign against agency exploitation isn't needlessly squandered. That's the stark message from assistant secretary Sally Bridge, who is urging members and branches to contribute "at every opportunity" to the long-awaited Government consultation on how the EU Temporary Agency Workers Directive is translated into UK law.



■ **No way, Hewlett Packard!**
CWU negotiators have delivered an unequivocal 'no' to Hewlett Packard's demands for employees to accept pay cuts of between 5 and 10 per cent. Under UK employment law the edict, which originated at HP's American headquarters, cannot be imposed without either a collective or individual agreement. With a collective agreement already ruled out by the CWU, the union is warning members not to be bullied into signing detrimental individual agreements.



Orange denies staff voluntary recognition

ANGRY STAFF BACKED BY CWU

The CWU has pledged to fight the decision of Orange to not grant union recognition rights voluntarily to employees it is about to outsource.

The snub comes just as Orange prepares to transfer its field operations to Nokia Siemens Networks and BT Managed Services. Under the arrangements, approximately 230 Orange staff will transfer to each company.

Amongst CWU-represented grades, 230 are transferring to BT

Managed Services - which already has a recognition agreement with the CWU - while 60 will be joining non-unionised Nokia Siemens Networks.

For the latter group, union recognition rights would provide significant reassurance at a time of understandable anxiety.

Many regard Orange's refusal to award 'parting gesture' recognition as a kick in the teeth in return for their loyal service. In a recent CWU poll, 99 per cent of members and an amazing 75 per cent of the total workforce (including non-members)

expressed a yearning for the protection collective bargaining rights would bring.

National organising secretary John East told the Voice: "We're saddened by the attitude of a company that, up to now, we've had very good working relations with.

"Orange are on record as saying they listen to their staff. This decision questions that assertion and is causing a lot of ill-feeling."

John believes there could be a twofold reason behind Orange's stance. "There's a belief that Nokia

may not want to take over the union recognition obligation," he explains. Alternatively, or maybe additionally, Orange may not want the signal sent out to the rest of its workforce that it would be a good idea to join the union - though John stresses that if that's the case its actions are backfiring, with "more people joining every day."

The transfers to BTMS and Nokia are due to go through by July 1. In the meantime, the CWU is trying to force the recognition issue via the Central Arbitration Committee.

ALL FOR LOVE...



CWU members, activists, officers and solicitors are joining forces in four major sporting fundraising events in which they will stop at nothing to do ridiculous things.

But it's all to get sponsorship for the CWUHA's mission to take essential supplies to orphaned and sick children in Bulgaria, and its projects to bring clean water and education to communities in Tanzania.

Money raised from madcap antics will support the CWU's Humanitarian Aid charity on

its September mission to assistant orphanages, children's hospitals, a mother and baby unit, a centre that cares for children with psychological and learning difficulties and a school that educates Romany children. The CWUHA will deliver hospital equipment such as incubators and dialysis machines as well as basics including beds, food and toys.

Funds will also go towards building a well for communities in and around the Tanzanian district of

Moshi and a new classroom for a school where CWUHA has already built two classrooms and provided new equipment.

For his fundraising effort, The CWU's head of legal services, Tony Rupa wore an

enormous sumo wrestler's body suit to run the 10km course of the Bupa Great Manchester Run. Naturally, it was raining too. For the second consecutive year, he teamed with fellow legal experts from the union's solicitors, Simpson Millar, to wear the gimmicky costumes, and together they hope to raise £3,000.

SEEKING SUPPORT...

Team Sumo ran the course in an impressive 69 minutes. Tony said: "Running the Manchester 10k is a great way to raise funds and raise awareness about the CWUHA. If each branch donated just £10 it would raise half our target and make a massive difference to improving the lives of impoverished children."

Branches and members wishing to make a donation can send cheques payable to "CWUHA" to Tony at his office at CWU, 150, The Broadway, Wimbledon, SW19 1RX.

Meanwhile, in her role as Regional Youth Secretary, Jo Lawton has been organising a

team for The York Rotary Dragon Boat Challenge on 12 July.

They will be racing in a Dragon Boat over a 250-metre stretch of the River Ouse. Rowing to the beat of an on-board drummer, the team participates in three sets of heats against 35 other boats.

"We don't expect to come first," said Jo, "but we do expect to have a lot of fun and raise a lot of money." To find out how to sponsor the team, email joanne.lawton@bt.com.

In June Steve Rowlands (Manchester Combined branch) and Tony Salt (NW Central Branch) will be cycling 200 miles from Manchester to Oxford to raise funds. Steve said: "We expect to be saddle-sore, but it will be well worth it if we raise enough money to purchase 50 cots for Bulgarian orphans".

Later in the year Ray Atkinson will be leading a team of CWU members pulling CWUHA's 7.5 ton 'Chuck Wagon' along the Blackpool promenade. Ray

said: "Volunteers are falling over themselves to assist. Then again I have told them that the charity's president, Ted Stead, will buy them all a drink once we reach the end of the prom!"

FANTASTIC EFFORTS

CWUHA national secretary Carl Webb thanked everyone for their efforts. "These are fantastic efforts being put in by participants and sponsors – and they are contributing to the tremendous combined effort that makes the CWUHA such an effective organisation," he said. "Everyone is a volunteer who must fund their own upkeep when working on a convoy, and the trucks and fuel are provided by loyal sponsors, in particular Royal Mail and BT. We thank everyone's commitment – especially in the current economic difficulties."

▲ Above: Two of the thousands of children helped by CWU Humanitarian Aid over the years

▼ Bottom left and below: CWUHA volunteers bring smiles to some of Europe's most disadvantaged children with a little human contact

▼ Bottom: 'Sumo wrestlers' including Tony Rupa lead madcap antics to raise cash for the charity



Watching the pennies? You could save on your home insurance

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NU Direct	£41	£156

Figures are based on online research from Consumer Intelligence 01 March - 31 March 2009 for prices of buildings and contents insurance using a representative sample of the GB population.

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* Based on independent online research by Consumer Intelligence 01 March - 31 March 2009. Average savings are based on CWU Buildings and Contents Insurance rates when compared to RBS.

‡ Based on 10% of consumers achieving this saving with CWU Buildings and Contents Insurance.

† Compared to the standard price you would be quoted if you called us. † Lines are open 8.30am-8pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat. For quality and protection purposes, your call will be recorded. We exchange information with other insurance companies and the police to prevent fraud. CWU Insurance is a trading style of UIA (Insurance) Ltd. UIA (Insurance) Ltd is a member of the Association of British Insurers, The Financial Ombudsman Service and is registered under the Industrial and Provident Societies Act - No. 2898R. CWU is an Introducer Appointed Representative of UIA (Insurance) Ltd, which is authorised and regulated by the Financial Services Authority.

HOPE IN HAFIZABAD

More than 12,000 desperately poor villagers in the remote Hafizabad region of Northern Pakistan have received life-changing and often life-saving medical treatment over the past year - thanks to the unstinting support of the ALMA Hospital Trust (AHT) by CWU members and branches over the past 17 years. **Simon Alford** reports...

Scores of babies and infants who would have died for want of comparatively straightforward medical procedures are alive today because of the ALMA Hospital Trust, a charity founded in 1991 by Watford postman Mohammed Younis.

High mortality rates amongst mothers giving birth in a region where complications often result in the death of both mother and child have been slashed - and the precious gift of eyesight has been restored to many hundreds who otherwise would have faced a lifetime of destitution or dependency in a country where no welfare state exists.

All in all an extraordinary achievement for the now fully-functioning ALMA Hospital - a facility that would never have been built but for a dedicated coalition of supporters from across the CWU and Royal Mail who, working together, have turned one man's 'impossible' dream into bricks and mortar reality.

In March this year the official opening of the ALMA Hospital should have been the crowning glory of Younis' 16-year campaign to build and equip a hospital in memory of his beloved mother, Alma Bi, who died of leukaemia in Hafizabad in 1980 without even the benefit of the most rudimentary palliative care.

Former UCW deputy general secretary Tony Clarke, now Lord Clarke of Hampstead, was to have formally cut the ribbon, but the ceremony had to be postponed because of Pakistan's deteriorating political situation.

Now it is hoped the hospital's formal opening will take place in October - but Younis and Lord Clarke agree the formalities pale into insignificance given the essential medical treatment already being provided. "The important thing is that the hospital is open and working and looking after the people," said Lord Clarke. "I wish Younis and all concerned the very best of fortune for the hospital's continued success."

SEARCH FOR FUNDING

That success will be cemented when long-promised Pakistani Government support to cover the hospital's ongoing running expenses finally materialises - but following a series of unexplained delays the AHT is currently exploring other interim funding sources including local and international relief charities.

Currently the charity is footing the £12,000 a month running costs itself - not so very much when you consider this pays for a 40-strong staff including nine doctors and 20 nurses, as well as the purchase of medical supplies and drugs - but nonetheless a considerable drain on a small charity entirely reliant on donations.

"It's nerve-wracking, and I don't mind



admitting that I'm finding it hard to sleep at the moment," admits Younis. "We're in touch with the Pakistani High Commission in London which has pledged to do everything it can to resolve the delay, and I'll never rest until I secure government funding for the hospital. In the meantime, however, I do still need support from my colleagues in the CWU.

"Donations of just a pound a week by individual members and sponsorship from branches would make a huge difference, literally saving and transforming lives."

Lives like the mother and child pictured above, both of whom could well have perished had AHT staff not been able to perform an emergency caesarean.

And lives transformed like a young man met by Younis on his last visit to the hospital who, completely blind with cataracts, had somehow made a 50 mile trek in the desperate hope treatment could help him to once again work to support his wife and four young children.

"I happened to be in the hospital the day after his operation when they took the bandages off his eyes," Younis told the Voice. "The doctors asked him if he could see anything and he said his eyes were sharper than a child's. It was a very emotional occasion for everyone, but especially for a man whose prospects and life chances had been literally transformed."

"It's this kind of thing that makes all the hard work worthwhile - and above everything I hope that everyone who has supported the AHT over the past 18 years appreciates their part in this achievement. There's too many to mention but I thank you all from the bottom of my heart." ▼

● To find out how you can support the extraordinary work of the AHT, ring 01923 215 663 or visit www.almatrust.org for details of various payroll-giving and standing order options. Alternatively email Younis at info@almatrust.org

▲ Above: Saved by emergency caesarean, operation, a mother recovers with her newborn baby

▲ Top left: A modern hospital serving a poor rural community

▲ Top right: Waiting for treatment that many would otherwise never receive

“ I hope that everyone who has supported the ALMA Hospital Trust over the past 18 years appreciates their part in this wonderful achievement ”

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GENERAL NEWS

"SHILLY-SHALLYING" ON SAFETY

Addressing April's Memorial Day event and rally in London, CWU national health and safety officer Dave Joyce highlighted continuing Government "shilly-shallying" on a range of health and safety issues.

A year after the Corporate Manslaughter Act came into law - heralded as a 'wake up call' to negligent employers - the Government's own Sentencing Guidelines Council still hasn't issued final sentencing guidance to the Courts on how to punish those found guilty.

"Many said the new Corporate Manslaughter Act would be a wake up call for employers and company bosses but if the shilly-shallying goes on much longer they'll all be falling asleep again," said Dave.

Dave went on to condemn the "betrayal of this Government, not only on privatising the postal industry but for refusing to change the law on dangerous dogs".

"6,000 postal workers are attacked delivering the mail every year and we've had two postal workers very nearly killed by dogs in horrific attacks.

"70 per cent of those attacks are on private property where the Dangerous Dogs Act doesn't apply.



Dave Joyce (right) addressing London's Workers Memorial Day rally

We asked the Government to change the Law - in Scotland they said 'yes', in Northern Ireland they said 'yes' and in Westminster they said 'NO'. Well we ain't giving up our campaign because I don't want to stand here next year and tell you about a dead postal worker - or any other CWU member - killed by dangerous dogs."

While postal workers' duty to service every address in the country renders them exceptionally vulnerable to dog attacks on private land, Dave stresses that a wide range of other public service providers - including telecoms engineers - are also continuing to be placed at daily risk because of governmental inaction.

[FOR MORE INFORMATION GO TO]
WWW.CWU.ORG/VOICE/

InBrief

Tributes to Fred Moss

Former general treasurer Fred Moss, who made British trade union history in 1977 when he, along with the late and equally distinguished UCW organising secretary Ivan Rowley, was appointed to the Post Office Board as a worker director, has died. After the then Labour Government's industrial democracy experiment was dismantled by the incoming Thatcher administration, Fred, who retired in 1981, threw himself into fundraising for the cash-strapped Labour Party. Through his work with Walworth Road Trade Union Management Company, he helped provide an efficient party HQ for many years after. CWU general secretary Billy Hayes told the Voice: "Fred will be missed, but always remembered for his outstanding commitment to the union."

> Full obituary at www.cwu.org/voice/

Youth in the regions

Representatives of the CWU's regional youth structures met in Glasgow recently to assess progress under the Youth Engagement Strategy - 'CWU YES'. Youth Advisory Committee chair Maeve Kennedy and project worker Steve Ratcliffe led activists through a series of workshop exercises to check the strength of - and plot the next steps for - youth activity in each region. Assistant secretary Simon Sapper said: "Having viable and busy youth structures in regions is a key part of ensuring the CWU is fit to face the future, but the YES project is not funded indefinitely and we need to plan for that now."

Paul Grace RIP

Heartfelt tributes have been paid to former national officer Paul Grace who died on Saturday May 2 at the age of 76. Longtime friend and colleague Mick Cowen told the Voice: "Paul was a larger than life character who sought to the utmost of his ability to help anyone in need and many of us will have good reason to thank him for his unstinting help and advice. In short he was a substantial man with a heart to match! It was fitting that he should finish his service to the union in 1992 as Legal & Medical Secretary."

New toolkit for youth

The Youth Advisory Committee have produced a toolkit that tells those who want to know how to become effective youth officers. The toolkit is an interactive development so is available on USB sticks to members. The toolkit includes advice on obtaining release from the employer and how to write reports and feedback what has happened at events to branches. "It's important that details of what is going on in the youth area is captured and fed back," said Steve Radcliffe, the youth development officer behind the toolkit approach.

CO-OPERATION

JOINT ACTION SAVES JOB

Co-operative action between postal and telecoms CWU branches has ensured that a call centre worker kept her job at Liverpool and Victoria Insurance in Bristol.

The individual is a member of the Bristol & District Amal but was represented by Clare Wright of the telecoms South West and Thames Valley Branch. "We only have a few members at Liverpool and Victoria and no recognition," explained Clare.

The member was accused of hanging up on customers ringing in to the call centre and put on a gross misconduct charge. "This was a potentially sackable offence but we came out of it with a verbal

warning and no action," said Clare. "The member was delighted at the result. It was a good result all round and shows that branches from different constituencies can work together to effect."

Dave Wilshire of Bristol and District Amal explained that the telecoms branch had the expertise to represent the member. "We felt it was better that the member was represented by a branch that has a call centre background," he explained.

"It shows how we can work together across the various constituencies. There should be more flexibility between branches so that knowledge in specialised areas is shared," Dave concluded.

Organising at Conference

A lunchtime fringe meeting at CWU annual conference on Tuesday June 9 will focus on building the union in non-recognised companies.

"We are asking the branches to bring as many new reps as they can from companies where the CWU hasn't got recognition," said national organising secretary John East. "It is a look at building the union at the sharp end."

The meeting will lead in to an afternoon workshop where people can exchange examples of best practice, learning from each other about successful innovations which may be applicable elsewhere.



PLEURAL PLAQUES BATTLE

The battle to reverse a Law Lord's decision that stopped pleural plaques sufferers from obtaining compensation has moved into a new phase with the successful passing of a Private Member's Bill onto the committee stage.

Introduced by Labour MP Andrew Dismore, the Damages (Asbestos-Related Conditions) Bill seeks to reverse the Law Lords' decision of October 2007 which upheld an Appeal Court ruling that removed the right of victims to claim compensation on the basis of negligence.

Pleural plaques, which was the subject of a major feature in the November/ December issue of Voice (viewable at www.cwu.org/voice.html) is a scarring of the lungs caused by heavy and prolonged exposure to asbestos. It is a dormant condition that increases the risk of developing fatal asbestos related lung diseases, like mesothelioma or asbestosis which often lead to a slow painful death.

CWU National Health and Safety Officer Dave Joyce welcomed the developments at Westminster which give hope to sufferers, including a number of CWU members, that compensation payments - which used to be paid out as a matter of

course - will ultimately resume.

"Asbestos, the hidden killer, continues to stalk the land. The UK mesothelioma death rate is now the highest in the world," Dave told the Voice. More than 2,100 people are diagnosed with mesothelioma in the UK each year. The total annual death toll is 4000 asbestos-related deaths a year."

The Government held a

2,100 More than 2,100 people are diagnosed with mesothelioma in the UK each year

consultation on the issue last summer with the result expected soon. In responding to the Bill, Justice Minister David Hanson, confirmed that the Government was "looking at legislative redress."

As yet it is unclear whether the Government will back Andrew Dismore's bill into law or introduce fresh legislation of its own. If the latter path is taken the private member's bill is likely to fall.

The Scottish Parliament has already passed legislation to overturn the Law Lords' decision north of the border, though a number of insurance companies have launched a judicial review.

ONE MAN'S VIGIL FOR CHERNOBYL

Retired Romec engineer Jim Gillies has been travelling over to a hospital in the Ukraine for the past two decades, taking valuable money and equipment for children still suffering the effects of the Chernobyl nuclear power station disaster.

He has held a vigil in George Square Glasgow every year since the power station's reactor went into meltdown in 1986. This year the event took place after Jim's 11th visit out to the hospital and was attended by the Lord Provost of Glasgow.

The Malin hospital is situated 50 miles from the Chernobyl plant and 70 miles north west of Kiev. "I've been going over ever since. Four years ago we provided a breathing machine for babies and last year I took over £3,000 plus clothing," said Jim, who has raised £20,000



over the years.

"I've been given a list of some of the medical items they would like to get such as blood transfusion kits, bronchoscope and ear, nose and throat small operating instruments. There are still a lot of orphans in the area in need of support."

[FOR MORE INFORMATION GO TO]
WWW.MALLINHOSPITAL.BLOGSPOT.COM



◀ Left: Jim in the former nuclear power station's abandoned control room

▲ Above: Glasgow's Lord Provost joined Jim at his annual vigil

DEMOCRATISING RACING!

It's not for nothing that horse racing is known as the "sport of kings" - but CWU members are now launching an audacious assault on one of the final sporting preserves of the super-rich. **Simon Alford** caught up with an unlikely new breed of racehorse owners muscling in on a formerly privileged and exclusive world that can actually be surprisingly cheap to enter...

A horse! A horse! My kingdom for a horse" lamented Shakespeare's Richard III shortly before he met his grisly end at the Battle of Bosworth. 524 years later an intrepid posse of trade unionists has acquired just such a creature for far less of a king's ransom! Meet the Communication Workers Racing Club which, since its formation at the union's annual conference in Liverpool last June, is already challenging one of the sporting world's most resilient bastions of the rich and famous.

Should you ever have a flutter on a filly named Inthawain you won't be backing the four-legged prodigy of some Arabian royal, UK aristocrat, merchant banker or celebrity millionaire...but a trusty steed that is 100 per cent owned by a 75-strong syndicate comprising postal workers, telecoms engineers, clerical workers and the odd CWU headquarters employee.

The brainchild of recently-retired postal outdoor department policy adviser Dave Percival, criteria for membership of the CW Racing Club (CWRC) is straightforward - namely a love of horse racing combined with either membership of, or employment by, the CWU...and a willingness to pay £10 a month towards Inthawain's upkeep and training.

Having previously set up a much less ambitious racing syndicate (which never owned its own horse) while branch secretary at Croydon, Dave points out it is advances in internet and email communications that has made the idea of a scrupulously democratic national racing club feasible.

Monthly updates to members include not just details of fixtures and Inthawain's progress - but also a detailed breakdown of the amount of the horse members actually own. "Although the minimum payment is £10 a month, some people pay more - even though they still only get one vote in the case of a ballot of members over any decision being made," Dave explains.

"Every month we update what everyone has paid in, and from that we get a percentage of what their share is. If we were to get a horse that was really successful, winning big races - or indeed we sold one and had a surplus - we'd divvy up the proceeds depending on what individuals had paid in."

Assuming the club continues to grow, the hope is to invest in more horses - and true to its democratic ethos, the intention would be to have them dotted about the country - enabling easier access to the free-entry racing and access to exclusive parts of the course that owners and trainers enjoy.

"The ambition would be to ultimately get a horse that's able to contend at a really high level," explains Dave, "but you need a



▲ Above: Inthawain leads the field at Southwell

▲ Top right: Paul Clays and Alan Thomas meet Inthawain's rider



Southwell Racecourse near Newark

lot of luck for that."

At present the idea of a CWRC horse beating one of the Queen's stallions remains a pipe dream - but already the club is able to give its members a tantalising glimpse into another world.

"When the Croydon club was going we once had a horse running against one of the Queen Mother's horses and she was in the parade ring at the same time as us," explains Dave.

"On another occasion we had a horse running in the Cheltenham Festival and Princess Anne was in the Owners & Trainers bar with us. The funny thing is my friend said: 'Look at that woman over there - she looks just like Princess Anne'. I said 'you silly sod - it is Princess Anne!'"

Inthawain's no donkey!

It might only be eight months since the CWRC acquired Inthawain at last October's horse sales for £4,000 - a quarter of what she would have fetched prior to the credit crunch - but already the three-year-old filly has recouped her price tag in prize money.

With just five races under her belt as the club's pride and joy as Voice went to press, the score sheet includes three second places at Southwell Racecourse near Newark.

It was on Tuesday April 21, when Inthawain's second place in the 2:40 "Queen Mother Restaurant Stakes" netted her owners £528, that Voice caught up with the CWRC at Southwell.

Having led the field for much of the race, CWRC members watched on with understandable disappointment as

Inthawain was robbed of her first win in the final seconds of the race.

Her York-based trainer Noel

Wilson, however, was sanguine: "She's run an absolutely cracking race - she battled every horse that came either side of her - battled and beat them - and the winner has come wide and fast from the outside and won by a neck.

"You can't fault her. She's given 110 per cent, and that's all we can ask - that they try...and she's certainly a trier.

"She's due a win - she deserves it more than anyone - she's just been unlucky so far."

Prior to her purchase by the CWRC, Inthawain was Arab-owned and trained by former England and Southampton FC striker - turned hugely successful racehorse trainer - Mick Channon.

"They only keep the very best - but Inthawain's a good solid little handicapper and we can have a lot of fun with her," said Noel, stressing he believes that syndicate members "should be overjoyed at what they've got."

"She won't be going to York or Epsom or places like that, but smaller courses like Southwell or Catterick. Horses have their own level of ability - and at that level she runs very well and consistently. That's what you want for a syndicate.

CWRC organiser Paul Clays - North East regional secretary in his day job - agrees: "I'm always gutted when they don't win, but we've got a horse that gives 100 per cent and you can't ask more than that. She's in good form and she ran well today - she just got pipped at the post."

Above everything, Paul explains that



the aim of the CWRC is about knocking down barriers in the form of

"ordinary people having a chance to have a share in a racehorse and take part in the races from the inside."

"We provide a vehicle under which ordinary postal and telecoms workers can enjoy a day out at the races as an owner, get into the parade ring, go and see the stables, talk to the trainers. They've never had a chance to do that before."

Great day's racing

Retired postman Alan Thomas, who had travelled to Southwell Racecourse all the way from Cardiff for just that experience, certainly wasn't disappointed...and his each-way bet even left him about £20 up on the day.

"I'd recommend the club to anyone," he said. "It's such a great day out and as an owner you don't even pay to come into the racetrack. It gave me a real buzz - little things like being in the parade ring before the race and the jockey coming over and tipping his hat to you.

"When the horse ran second today I was like a fool shouting and screaming at it. Now I can understand how the Queen probably feels at these types of events - but I'm not a royalist by the way. I'd most definitely like to see a CWRC horse beat the Queen's horse - that would be the crowning glory!" ▽

READ MORE ON THE CLUB & AN INTERVIEW WITH THE TRAINER AT WWW.CWU.ORG/VOICE/



AMNESTY OR EJECTION?

The debate over what to do about more than 500,000 undocumented workers in the UK rages on. On May 4 supporters of a regularisation (or amnesty) took to the streets holding a rally in Trafalgar Square...but the Government remains steadfast in its resistance to such a measure, claiming it will only attract more illegal immigrants to these shores in future...



FOR

Austen Ivereigh has been co-ordinator of Strangers into Citizens campaign for the past two and a half years. Previously he was public affairs officer to the Catholic Archbishop of Westminster

“The London School of Economics, whose research in this area is the most up-to-date, estimates that there are around 750,000 undocumented migrants in the UK. They mainly fall into two categories: refused asylum seekers, whose claim has been turned down and should, technically, be returned to their country of origin and visa overstayers, whose student or tourist visa lapsed sometime ago and who, for whatever reason, have ended up working in the UK.

Strangers into Citizens believes that a large part of the undocumented migrant population – about 450,000 – should be eligible for a form of regularisation, otherwise known as an earned amnesty, or pathway into citizenship. Our suggested conditions are these: that they should have been resident for at least four years and that they work legally for a subsequent two years. At the end of that period they should present employer, union, church or mosque references demonstrating good English and a clean criminal record, etc.

The Government objects, saying that this would act as a green light to further illegal immigration. There has never been any evidence from Europe to suggest that an occasional,

one-off regularisation has such an effect, and plenty of evidence – as in the case of Spain, which regularised 700,000 – that when combined with border enforcements it markedly reduces illegal immigration, by extending the control of the state over the underground economy.

If it were true, as the Government says, that such regularisations are irresponsible, then why did they begin to deal with the backlog of asylum cases at the end of 2007 by granting leave to remain to refused asylum seekers on the basis of their “long association with the UK”? It is time we named the truth. The existence of a Dickensian underclass in Britain, trapped in limbo, often destitute, is a source of scandal. Workers cannot claim their rights as long as the state does not recognize those rights.

The measure pays for itself in unpaid tax revenue. It is not a complex process (the Spanish programme took just three months) and the benefits are many: levelling the playing-field for British-born workers, bringing new hope and dignity to people trapped in limbo, and ending the scandal of destitute asylum-seekers on our streets. The Mayor of London, the Lib Dems, and dozens of MPs from all parties agree. Why not the Government?

There has been a debate over the last couple of years as to what to do about the 750,000 undocumented (or illegal) migrants living in the UK. A growing number of proponents, including the Strangers into Citizens campaign, Labour MP Jon Cruddas, London Mayor Boris Johnson, former London Mayor Ken Livingstone, the Liberal Democrats and several trade unions, claim the time has come for a regularisation (amnesty) similar to that employed in other European countries like Spain. The CWU Black Workers Conference passed a motion in favour of regularisation in February.

The mass of undocumented workers are made up of failed asylum seekers, over-stayers and trafficked migrants. They work mainly in cleaning, hospitality, home care, agriculture and food processing.

The Government approach has been to deport undocumented workers and increase pressure on employers not to take them on.

Opponents point out that at a cost of £11,000 per individual, and at the present rate of 20,000 removals a year, it will take more than 25 years to remove the undocumented workers presently residing in the country.

Supporters of a regularisation, like the Institute of Public Policy Research, argue that it would make much more sense to grant citizenship. They say not only would there not be the £4.7 billion cost of deportation but regularisation would bring in £1.2 billion a year in extra tax revenue.

The Government claims that granting a regularisation would act as a pull factor, with future migrants targeting the UK on the expectation of another regularisation coming along.

Supporters of regularisation say there is no evidence to support this view from countries that have employed regularisations. Indeed, they argue that the Government could operate a properly managed immigration system by dealing with the reservoir of undocumented labour once and for all and then tighten border controls.

Another argument on push and pull factors relates to the poverty in many southern countries. Long before the present economic downturn, unfair trade, international debt, war and environmental degradation contributed to creating a world where two thirds of people live on less than £1 a day. These factors act as push factors in propelling people out of their homelands and toward rich countries in Europe, the US and Asia. A long term strategy would deal with this injustice.

The Government's overall immigration policy seems prefaced on using coercive measures, the opponents claim it is inhumane and does not make economic sense. Clearly something has to change. ▽

AGAINST

Phil Woolas has been the Border and Immigration minister at the Home Office for over a year now. He entered Parliament in 1997 representing Oldham East and Saddleworth and has a majority of 3,590



“Our policy on an amnesty for illegal immigrants remains unchanged and is very clear – those here illegally should go home, not to the front of the queue for jobs and benefits.

The UK has a proud tradition of offering sanctuary to those who truly need our help, but to grant an amnesty would create a significant pull factor to the UK and would undermine the asylum system as a whole. We shouldn't be under any illusions. What start out as good intentions could end up causing more harm, playing into the hands of traffickers who try to smuggle people into the country in dangerous and life-threatening conditions.

If asylum seekers need international protection we'll give it to them – and we'll give it proudly. If migrants want to come here and work, we will let them – provided they have the skills we need. But all immigrants have to play by the rules and if they don't we expect them to leave.

There is now a triple ring of security that protects Britain: fingerprint visas, ID cards for foreign nationals that lock people to one identity, and our high-tech electronic border controls that check people against police, immigration and customs watch-lists and will cover even more passenger journeys by the end of

this year. Our new force at the border last year alone stopped over 28,000 individual attempts to cross the Channel illegally and by moving our controls abroad we are stopping people before they even set foot on British soil.

Last year the UK Border Agency searched more than 1 million lorries at our juxtaposed controls in France and Belgium.

We're also taking tough enforcement action to make sure employers cannot benefit from employing people who have no right to be here. Since the start of the new civil penalties regime last year the UK Border Agency has issued over 1,700 fines to employers who hire illegal workers, worth over £16 million.

CWU members will agree that those here illegally should return home – they shouldn't be rewarded with an amnesty.

Let's be clear – access to jobs, benefits and healthcare will be reserved for those who play by the rules and make a contribution to Britain.

Illegal immigration leads to exploitation, tax avoidance by the employing as well as the employed, health and safety abuse, and distortion in the labour market.

An amnesty may sound superficially attractive, but would lead to more, not less, exploitation.