

**INSIDE:**



**PAGE 4  
UNAGREED, UNFAIR  
AND UNWORKABLE**

BT's 'bull in a china shop' changes to performance and appraisal system draw fire from union



**PAGE 5  
OPENREACH SLAMS  
DOOR ON GRADING**

There's stormy weather on the horizon as bosses finally come clean on grading snub



**PAGES 3 & 7  
TWO FRONTS TO  
AGENCY BATTLE**

New line of attack on pay amid excitement at big development in the wider political campaign

# VOICE



TELECOMS & FINANCIAL SERVICES | MAY & JUNE 2008

WWW.CWU.ORG

## BETRAYAL OF BIRMINGHAM

**PAGE 3** Fujitsu members  
pledge to fight latest nail in  
manufacturing's coffin



## GENERAL SECRETARY'S COLUMN

## ContactUs

**CWU HQ - all enquiries**  
150 The Broadway, Wimbledon,  
London SW19 1RX  
T: 020 8971 7200

**Harassment Helpline**  
0800 107 1909

**Accident helpline**  
0800 804 6674

**Changes to your membership details**  
020 8971 7246

**Recruitment Hotline**  
0800 731 7434

**CWU Road Assist Scheme**  
0800 542 9927

**Voice stories and Communications department**  
020 8971 7497

**CWU cashback**  
Membership benefits detailed at  
[www.cwucashback.co.uk](http://www.cwucashback.co.uk)

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

**Publications Editor**  
Simon Alford

**Voice Journalist**  
Karl Stewart

**Contributors**  
Paul Donovan and Dawn Chamarette

**Published on behalf of CWU by Century One Publishing Ltd.**  
T: 01727 893 894  
W: [www.centuryonepublishing.ltd.uk](http://www.centuryonepublishing.ltd.uk)

**Advertising enquiries**  
Ollie Kirkman  
T: 01727 739 184  
E: [ollie@centuryonepublishing.ltd.uk](mailto:ollie@centuryonepublishing.ltd.uk)

**Designed and art edited by**  
Heena Gudka and Sarah Thorley

**Telecoms cover image**  
John Harris/reportdigital.co.uk  
**Postal cover image**  
CWU

**Printed by**  
TU ink  
T: 020 7729 9425  
W: [www.tuink.co.uk](http://www.tuink.co.uk)

**VOLUME 15 NUMBER 3**  
© CWU 2008



**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](http://www.billyhayes.co.uk)

## IT'S ALL TOO MUCH

The CWU had won,' writes BBC business editor Robert Peston in his new book *Who Runs Britain*, a book which will be of interest to CWU members.

But it is no paean of praise for the CWU, as Peston castigates the Government for its failure to privatise Royal Mail. In the book, unions get a walk-on part and the CWU even gets a backhanded compliment, when he describes the union as "anachronistically powerful."

Nonetheless, Peston's work is a sad indictment of all governments who worship at the altar of the rich and powerful at the expense of the poor and those on average earnings, in the supposed belief that we will witness a trickle-down effect of increased wealth for all.

Yet, with no demonstrable evidence, we continue to hear government ministers heap praise upon the doings of the super rich, whilst at the same time imposing limits on public-sector pay on everyone from civil servants to teachers.

Around 30,000 people are now paid more than £500,000 per annum – they are the top

0.1 per cent of Britain's earners, with a combined income of £33 billion, about four per cent of all earnings in the UK.

Yet for all the fawning upon the super rich, Britain is a much less equal place than France.

Books such as Peston's are useful reminders in the struggle for equality and justice, whether that be in the workplace or more generally, in enabling us to understand what is happening in our country and the wider world.

Despite the increase in wealth and power of the super-rich, the work of organised trade unions still delivers benefits. The TUC has demonstrated that being a member of a trade union increases your pay by around 17 per cent above that of the unorganised workplace. In other areas, such as equality and health and safety, real improvements are made.

The CWU Pay Handbook, now in its fifth edition which will be issued shortly, tracks how well the CWU performs as a trade union and will once again show the value of the CWU.

## Agency Workers

The CWU, as part of the TUC negotiating team, reached agreement with the Government and the CBI recently on a commitment for the implementation of the European Directive on Agency Workers. It will lay the foundation for improving the lives of 1.4 million agency workers within the UK. There is much still to do, but it should be registered that the CWU have been campaigning on this issue for many years. It is as a direct result of the cogency and doggedness of our campaigning activities that we have raised this issue up the agenda within the Labour movement. Congratulations to all those within the CWU who have helped deliver this breakthrough.

f

## IT'S A FACT!

The eight museums and galleries that form the National Museums in Liverpool house the largest collection of artefacts under single ownership in the UK



## CWU in the news...

Progress on agency workers, the future of the postal industry and fat cat pay brought CWU into the news over the last few weeks. The highlight was the delayed announcement of Royal Mail's accounts that were sent out late on the Friday before bank holiday in a sad and failed attempt to hide the enormity of the chief executive's pay.

Kevin Slocombe, Head of communications, [kslocombe@cwu.org](mailto:kslocombe@cwu.org)

The union consistently led stories on Royal Mail pensions. Headlines in daily papers included: "Royal Mail forces more disputes over pensions" (Guardian) and "Post strikes loom after pensions row" (Metro). This story, along with post office closures, saw both print and broadcast news.

The review on the future of the postal sector saw prominent items on television, radio and in the papers. CWU Communications spent time briefing a number of comment journalists and secured excellent coverage in the Guardian, particularly with Seumas Milne's column titled "Corporate cherry-picking isn't delivering the goods," an excellent analysis of why government

policy on Royal Mail hasn't worked. The union's consistent criticism of the role of Postcomm was reflected with the Guardian commenting of the regulator that its "ideological passion for markets and unchained competition has been central to this sorry saga."

Prominent media coverage of the agency workers' campaign reflects the significant developments achieved through negotiation with government in May. The FT screamed: "Unions flex muscle on agency workers," while the Mirror's headline was "Unions' joy as temp workers win new deal."

CWU has been on the airwaves publicising the issues facing Fujitsu workers in Birmingham,

securing national and local print coverage around the industrial action ballot, with the Morning Star reporting, "members of the CWU...backed walkouts by 68-1 in protest at plans to cut 150 jobs." It was the fat cat story that made the biggest news, however, with CWU leading the opposition. "Outcry over £3m payout for the boss closing your post offices" shouted the Daily Mail, while the Mirror headline summed up the common view: "Failure...yet Royal Mail boss Crozier pocketed £3m last year." CWU general secretary Billy Hayes was widely quoted saying the chief executive was being "rewarded for managing decline. This is a massive insult to employees and the public."





Defiant: Not what security guards wanted to see outside Fujitsu's plant!



Fighting spirit: For jobs and for Birmingham

# SHAME ON FUJITSU!

CWU members at Fujitsu in Birmingham are taking centre stage in the fight to save what is left of the West Midlands' dwindling manufacturing base. **Simon Alford** reports on a brave and defiant stand against yet another multinational intent on exporting work from British shores, and speaks to workers for whom the bombshell is a very personal betrayal...

Members at Fujitsu have vowed to fight the company's plan to export production to Texas by industrial action if necessary. As Voice went to press last-ditch negotiations with the company were underway, with bosses clearly jolted into talks with the CWU by an unprecedented show of employee anger over their plans to end manufacturing at its site near the NEC by September 2008, leaving just a research and development facility.

Despite - or maybe because of - the workforce's long history of co-operation with management, the result of an industrial action ballot organised by the CWU could not have been clearer.

No less than 100 per cent of those who voted in a 77 per cent turnout vowed to fight for their jobs by taking disruptive action falling short of strike action - with only a single member voting against a stronger proposal for an all-out strike.

The ballot result was announced to the cheers of workers who had gathered outside the Birmingham Business Park site to release 140 black balloons - one for every job that will be lost if the company gets its way. To the clear discomfort of security staff, who had attempted to move on anyone gathering outside the plant prior to the balloon release, the protest was broadcast far and wide thanks to a strong media presence.

CWU negotiators, who only moments earlier had come out of crisis talks with the company, told the gathering how the solidarity of the workforce had clearly rattled the company. Telling how some progress had been made on ideas which the CWU believes could offer a way out of the impasse - lead negotiator, assistant secretary Grace Mitchell, told the crowd that she was convinced the company was genuinely shocked at the outrage its proposal had generated. "The members have spoken extremely clearly and made their feelings utterly clear," she said.

As Voice went to press, negotiations were still ongoing - and while hopes of an agreement were still alive the union was delaying exercising its mandate for industrial action.

Prior to what was expected to be a decisive meeting with management on May 30, Grace told the Voice: "We've had some useful and constructive discussions but there are major points of principle on which we've yet to agree - critically whether or not there will continue to be a manufacturing presence in Birmingham."

"If there's no agreement we'll have no option but to immediately serve notice of action." Grace concluded: "I'm very proud of the way the members have faced this terrible situation. If it hadn't been for their determination we wouldn't be having the talks we're having now."

Fujitsu's apparent misjudgement as to

how its Birmingham-based workforce would react to its plans to ship their jobs to America was compounded when a team from Texas arrived on site to start preparations for the transfer - making a very public mockery of company claims that no final decision had been made.

## ABYSMAL TREATMENT

Local anger had already been exacerbated by the fact that the off-shoring bombshell had dropped just weeks after Prime Minister Gordon Brown visited the site and lauded management for the way they have brought in skilled workers from overseas to work on research and development projects. "It's deeply ironic that at the same time Fujitsu was clearly putting the finishing touches to plans to export the work currently being done by 140 local people," acting deputy general secretary Bill McClory told the media at the time. That point was picked up by deputy general secretary (elect) Andy Kerr who told members: "You've been abysmally treated...and to be honest I'd say the PM was treated abysmally too."

Meanwhile telecoms executive member Steve Catterall, who has co-ordinated the CWU's campaign, warned members to "expect flak" from managers rattled by the strength of their "brilliant" solidarity.

"They're worried about what's going to happen and they're having to talk to us now. Don't weaken, and don't give up!"

## Defiant and proud

There's certainly no sign of any shortage of resolve in Fujitsu member's determination to fight to the bitter end to save their jobs if that proves necessary.

Phil Bayliss told of widespread anger at how the company had dropped the news on a workforce that has pulled out all the stops to co-operate with the company at every turn.

Elaine Ryder picked up the same theme: "We've been benchmarked against America and Japan and we won - yet our jobs are still going to America. It's really so frustrating. Whatever they've asked us to do, we've done - but now they've just turned their backs on us."

Christine Cresswell added: "Big companies seem to be like that nowadays, they think more about shareholders and profits than the people who work for them. It's not just this factory - all the manufacturing jobs in the Midlands are going."

Denise Price told the Voice: "They aren't bothered by the

fact that people have mortgages to pay and children to look after. I think it's disgraceful."

Tony Dunleavy insisted members wouldn't hesitate to take industrial action if no negotiated agreement can be reached. "People feel they've been pushed against a wall. They're in a corner and it's fight or flight really. It's something we just feel we have to try to do."

Fujitsu Birmingham branch secretary Bob Hammond and branch chair Ray Lolley told of their pride at the way members have refused to take the redundancy bombshell lying down.

"The vote shows the strength of the feeling here," stresses Bob. "They've had enough of what this company has done to them. For years this workforce has bent over backwards helping to improve the efficiencies of the plant. Our hope is to save as many jobs as we can and keep manufacturing here in Birmingham and it's clear the membership is 100 per cent behind us."

## STOP PRESS ++ AGENCY BREAKTHROUGH ++ STOP PRESS ++ AGENCY BREAKTHROUGH

A potentially momentous development in the Government's thinking on agency workers' rights was being closely analysed by the CWU as Voice went to press.

While the precise details of last month's announcement are still being assessed - and many of its elements still need to be fleshed out in

further negotiations anyway - grounds for cautious optimism exist that a significant corner may have been turned in the long-running campaign for equal treatment for agency workers.

The breakthrough came following discussions between the Prime Minister, a

trade union team including CWU general secretary Billy Hayes and TUC general secretary Brendan Barber and the CBI. The talks, to see if a consensus could be found on a way to end unfair treatment of agency workers without damaging Britain's much-vaunted labour market flexibility, were conducted

against a backdrop of continuing parliamentary progress of a private members bill supporting the trade union position that 'flexibility; shouldn't mean 'exploitation'.

A joint statement agreed by the Government, the CBI and the TUC states that agreement has been reached

on "how fairer treatment for agency workers in the UK should be promoted", and goes on to say that agency workers should be entitled to equal treatment to directly employed staff doing a comparable job after 12 weeks in the job.

If this translates into legislation in the way the

CWU believes it should, that would have a beneficial effect for thousands of workers.

Deputy general secretary Jeannie Drake told the Voice: "This is a major first hurdle we have overcome in getting the Government to agree to support the EU's Temporary Agency Workers Directive. However, there's still much

work to do on the detail of any UK legislation - including ensuring that there are robust anti-avoidance measures in place so that agency workers really do see the benefit."

See a detailed analysis of the union's initial thinking at [www.cwu.org/links/ltb391](http://www.cwu.org/links/ltb391) • Two pronged attack for agency justice: see page 7

## STOP PRESS ++ AGENCY BREAKTHROUGH ++ STOP PRESS ++ AGENCY BREAKTHROUGH

## InBrief

**Focus on Virgin Media**

A major forum of reps from across Virgin Media had just taken place at CWU HQ as Voice went to press. Held to discuss a wide range of workplace issues, the forum highlighted similarities and parallels in members' concerns in different parts of the company, and the need for a concerned drive to expand on the existing union base. "There is a clear desire to reinvigorate recruitment campaigns, not just in the recognised areas of Virgin Media, but also to push out into the large swathes of the company where we do not have recognition at the moment," CWU organiser Lynn Browne told the Voice. Plans are now being drawn up to push things forward – and progress will be reported in future issues of the Voice.

**Monteray talks**

As the August 1 date approaches for Monteray's five regions to integrate into one service provider, there are several issues that the union has placed top of the agenda for talks with the company. These include developing the formal CWU/Monteray relationship, TUPE transfer and possible redundancies where functions are duplicated, a job security agreement and a workforce skills assessment. The CWU is seeking clarification that current contractual terms and conditions will transfer to the new employer on an 'as is' basis with negotiations on harmonisation to take place immediately after 1 August. More at [www.cwu.org/links/monteraytalks](http://www.cwu.org/links/monteraytalks)

**Pay up at ISS Eaton**

The CWU has concluded a successful pay negotiation with ISS Eaton over the O<sub>2</sub> catering contract resulting in a 3 per cent pay rise for members. The O<sub>2</sub> catering contract transferred from Eurest to ISS Eaton via a TUPE transfer in January 2008 and the pay review was the first opportunity for the union to meet senior management and negotiate with them. "It was a successful first round of negotiations with ISS," concludes assistant secretary Sally Bridge. The union will be working to build on its current membership strength over the coming months. More at [www.cwu.org/links/isseaton](http://www.cwu.org/links/isseaton)

**6.7 per cent from Eurest**

CWU members have voted to accept a 6.7 per cent 16 month deal from Eurest. Previously, due to trading difficulties, an earlier pay deal had been delayed for four months until September 2007. Now, as a result of an upturn in trading, Eurest have made an offer that amounts to a 3 per cent rise from 5 May with a further 3.5 per cent from 1 September 2008. The package is worth, on average, 5.6 per cent over 16 months. Full story at [www.cwu.org/links/eurestpay](http://www.cwu.org/links/eurestpay)

# Draconian & unnecessary!



Image credit: Howard Burns

A tense situation needs to be defused over 'bull in a china shop' performance management

A campaign is mounting against BT's unnecessary and draconian changes to individual performance management and appraisals, which the company is starting to impose without CWU agreement.

The Telecoms Executive has dispatched a strongly worded letter to BT which has been followed up by an agreement to meet the company again in an attempt to defuse a tense situation. The campaign to make members aware of the changes, and of the union's opposition, has begun with a home-mailing to all members directly affected at the present with the union's concerns and a summary of what to look out for. A set of guidelines has been produced for representatives, activists and members, explaining the company

jargon, the union's concerns, the "dos and don'ts" of participating in one-to-one meetings, what to watch for in the scoring process for annual performance reviews (APRs) and a check list of mandatory processes that managers must comply with when considering implementing a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP). This is available on-line at [www.cwu.org/links/btaprguide](http://www.cwu.org/links/btaprguide).

A forum in April, attended by 38 branches, confirmed widespread concern that the proposals will be used to "accelerate the rate of managed exits from the company". The reps agreed that "coercive performance management is a source of enormous concern to branch officers and members," and that performance management and

appraisals are perceived as "a weapon rather than a support."

The meeting debated proposals from the union's Telecoms Executive for an emergency motion to be submitted to Annual Conference, to be worded in the context of the latest discussions with BT.

## The changes and the union's main concerns

- The removal of informal PIPs: this is likely to lead to more formal PIPs, which is the first step on a process that may end in dismissal.
- A 'generally satisfactory' score may now result in a formal PIP, even though they used to be awarded only for scores in the bottom two of six categories (i.e 'needs improvement' or 'unsatisfactory').
- Introduction of quarterly performance reviews (QPRs) where all a manager has to do is enter a score without talking to you to explain why.
- Levelling of appraisal scores: what a manager thinks, or agrees with you, may be over-ridden and the employee might not be informed.
- New ways of managing disagreements an employee has with their manager over appraisal scores, are unfair
- In some parts of BT Operate, QPRs have started and appear not to be in accordance with the mandatory guidance to managers.

The changes, effective from April this year, are being phased in to Operate, parts of Wholesale and parts of Group, and are planned to spread to all parts of the company by April 2009.

The union has great doubts over BT's ability and capacity to deliver their proposals with competence, which brings its own issues of fair treatment for each employee.

Assistant secretary Simon Sapper said: "In our view there's the strong likelihood of PIPs and exits on spurious accusations of poor performance. A key problem is that there's no governance. There's mandatory guidance that the managers have to follow but no confidence they will do so.

"BT is being disingenuous. Morale

needs to improve and they don't have the capacity or competence to do this. 'Beating' people is not the way to improve things."

Assistant secretary Grace Mitchell explained: "The feedback from the members at the forum is that we have to make members aware of the problem and there will be moves at Conference for further action if BT do not alleviate some of the very serious concerns that the members have.

"It's not the marking on their APR that people should be disciplined for. Putting someone graded as 'generally satisfactory' on a PiP is very demoralising. It's de-motivating and not the way to get the best out of your employees."

## Openreach disciplinaries double in a year

Assistant secretary Ian Cuthbert has asked Openreach's HR director to "diffuse a very explosive situation" that has seen the unnecessary doubling of disciplinaries against engineers.

Ian is asking Jane Hobbs for a return to the discretionary approach to quality checks on engineers' work after a new and dogmatic stance means that a ten point failure automatically triggers a disciplinary 'offence'.

The percentage of disciplinaries concerning quality in 2007 was 33 per cent – more than double the 16 per cent of the previous comparable months.

"There should be an emphasis on quality, but what shouldn't be happening is that people are punished in such a severe way for something that is an over-sight. We want to work with BT to diffuse what is becoming a very explosive situation. They've not accepted that there's a company instruction to all their managers to automatically discipline, but we have written evidence to prove it," said Ian.

"This is counter-productive because there are loyal employees who have been on the job for 20 or 25 years, who have never had a disciplinary before but are now being given formal warnings – the first blemish on their career."

## Row over recognition in Northern Ireland

CWU Ireland has mounted a campaign against BT's refusal to recognise it for purposes of collective bargaining on behalf of members in Eire.

BT Ireland is run on a 32 county all-Ireland basis, yet while the UK CWU is recognised in the north, union recognition rights are denied to members of CWU Ireland in the south.

Now the Irish union is running an

advertising campaign with the message "Disconnect Discrimination" – and is urging supporters to join an online campaign for a change of heart by the company.

Commenting on the campaign to pressurise BT into a rethink, which included a demonstration outside BT's Dublin headquarters last month, general secretary of CWU Ireland, Steve Fitzpatrick, told the Voice: "It beggars belief that in this day and

age a company can so brazenly treat an entire group of its own staff within a single business operation like second class citizens.

"CWU Ireland cannot accept that it is fair or equitable that a multi-national like BT can run its business on an all-island basis and treat a large group of its staff this way – denying them a basic human right."

CWU UK Northern Ireland regional secretary, Lawrence Huston,

believes there is "no rationality" to the position being adopted by BT in Ireland, adding: "One thing though we do know is that the company does not like bad publicity, so the more public this dispute becomes the better chance there is of a successful resolution."

● For more information about the campaign and the online petition, visit <http://www.cwuconnect.org/content/view/39/3/105/>

## Protection for O<sub>2</sub> Tech members

The union is monitoring the restructuring within O<sub>2</sub> Technology division to ensure members' pay and pension rights are protected and that there is fair choice between voluntary redundancy and redeployment.

The division of O<sub>2</sub> has declared 170 surplus posts – 22 of which are CWU grades – on the back of its programme of transformation, Customer Plan II.

Assistant secretary Grace Mitchell said that, although discussions with management are ongoing, the union has been given assurance that there will not be compulsory redundancies and that no one will be forced to change contract if redeployed.

"There are still a number of assurances that we need to seek for our members, including ensuring there's a reasonable level of pay and pension protection for members on O<sub>2</sub> contracts as currently those on Newgrid contract counterparts, enjoy pay and pension protection in perpetuity," said Grace.

She added: "Of course, we are not happy that O<sub>2</sub> have declared that there is surplus, but the discussions so far have been very constructive and we are confident that people will have a real choice between leaving the company on voluntary terms, and redeployment.

"We have, however, flagged up to O<sub>2</sub> our continuing concern that higher grading is getting scarcer in the organisation and that this is an issue which they have confirmed they will discuss further with us."

## Openreach slams door on grading

After months and months of procrastination and only as a result of intense Union pressure, Openreach has finally come clean about grading. In a letter to the CWU, Ian Flynn, Employee Relations and Engagement Manager for Openreach informs us that "the outcome from the (job evaluation) exercise indicated a significant number of roles should be at a lower grade than is currently the case". He goes on to say that only a small number of roles should be at a higher grade.

Ian Cuthbert, CWU national officer for Openreach, commented: "I have, of course, written back to the company expressing our bitter disappointment but, to be honest, words barely begin to do justice to

the widespread incredulity this has provoked amongst members. This is especially so for the legions of multiskilled members whom the company so regularly praises.

"The CWU believes that, in an 'always-on' world, the skill level required to maintain the access network deserves recognition. The Newgrid agreement places a lot of importance on responsibility and the affect of an individual's actions on the company. The fact is without the skill, experience and responsibility of our membership, there would be no Openreach.

"This issue will be high on the agenda at the union's annual conference. Members should know that the debate is not whether we continue to press for higher grading

but how. Openreach has to wake up to the fact that 'Right First Time' is a two-way process. Our members will deliver, but only if they see that the company reciprocates.

"It seems," continued Ian, "that, across a range of issues, Openreach is trying its best to provoke a loyal and hardworking group of employees. On attendance patterns, on grading and on disciplines for minor quality failures, management's actions are stoking a fire that may engulf them. The CWU has always taken a responsible attitude to industrial relations but we can be pushed too far.

"Members are saying, in ever more strident tones, that enough is enough. Frankly it would be hard to disagree with them."



## Poll winner Andy gets ready to take the reins



Andy Kerr

The CWU's telecoms and financial services membership will have a new leader in less than a month,

with Andy Kerr taking over from long-standing deputy general secretary (TFS), Jeannie Drake, at the end of June.

Andy, the clear winner of a postal ballot for the post of deputy general secretary (DGS), has formerly served five terms as president of the CWU, four terms as vice president and has been chair of the telecoms executive for the past nine years.

In his first interview with the Voice as DGS(TFS) elect, Andy thanked all those who supported him and pledged to continue in the unifying leadership tradition so long espoused by Jeannie Drake.

"It is truly an honour to have been elected to the post of DGS (TFS) - and it means a tremendous amount to me that my support came from right across the telecoms and financial services membership, a level of support that I will be looking to build upon," Andy told the Voice.

"Within the telecoms and financial services department we have a great team of officers and staff, and I am confident they will afford me the same loyalty and commitment they have always shown Jeannie.

"Over the coming weeks I will be having discussions with them and the telecoms executive to establish how, as a team, we can best operate to respond effectively to the challenges that lie ahead."

Paying tribute to the "enormous contribution" made by the outgoing DGS, Andy stressed: "There's no doubt that Jeannie is going to be a hard act to follow - but I guarantee that I will be giving my all to ensure a continuity of leadership in the months and years ahead.

"It is a testament to Jeannie that she has left the telecoms and financial services section of the CWU in such good shape - and I'm sure I speak for all CWU members

in wishing her well in her ongoing work in the pensions field that resulted in her decision to step down from a role she had very much made her own."

The next issue of Voice will include an in-depth interview with Andy in which he will set out his priorities for the months and years ahead.

In the meantime, however, his message was simple and heartfelt. "Thanks for putting your trust in me - I will not let you down."

● Andy Kerr polled 5,747 of the 10,810 valid votes cast in the election for DGS(TFS). Assistant secretary Grace Mitchell secured 3,248 votes and assistant secretary Simon Sapper 1,815 votes.

● End of an era: In a final wide-ranging interview with CWU Voice as she prepares to bow out, outgoing DGS Jeannie Drake predicts future challenges but a great future for the CWU. See pages 8&9 (telecoms and financial services issue) or [www.cwu.org/voice](http://www.cwu.org/voice)

### InBrief

#### First pay deal at Airwave

An overwhelming majority backed the 4.1 per cent pay deal brokered by the CWU in its first ever negotiations with Airwave. There was 91 per cent support for the deal, which marked the union's first pay review with Airwave since it was sold by O<sub>2</sub>. Assistant secretary Grace Mitchell said: "We are delighted that the members have accepted the deal so positively and that we had such a constructive set of negotiations for our first ever pay talks with Airwave as an employer. "Also, it was an excellent experience for our reps, who were entering national pay negotiations for the first time."

#### Pay rise but fears at Yell

The CWU negotiating team won a 4 per cent increase in pay and allowances for all NewGRID grades employed at Yell. The company, however, has moved to restructure the business due to a recent downturn in economic fortunes, resulting in a drop in the share price from £6 a year ago to around £1.50 over recent weeks. Job losses of around 140 are projected. "Discussions have commenced and it is pleasing that Yell are committed to dealing with the structural change and job cuts by use of voluntary redundancies and redeployment," said assistant secretary Dave Johnson. He added the company had reaffirmed its commitment to working with the unions through the difficult times.

#### Two-year deal at iPSL

CWU members at cheque processor iPSL have backed a two-year pay deal, offering better pay and improved pensions, with a 91 per cent yes vote in a consultative ballot. Initial company proposals to bring in new lower pay scales and performance related pay have been shelved, and the agreement provides for a mixture of consolidated and unconsolidated payments as well as an increase in pensionable pay. Assistant secretary Nigel Cotgrove told the Voice: "This agreement provides our members with certainty over the next two years when the iPSL A&L contract has not been renewed, and there are continued uncertainties over the future of the Bootle site. Nigel added: "We have also ensured that there will be no performance related pay until at least 2010." Full story at [www.cwu.org/links/ipslpay](http://www.cwu.org/links/ipslpay)

#### Looking bright at Orange

A long and very constructive meeting between Orange UK's new chief executive officer Tom Alexander and CWU national organising secretary John East had just taken place as Voice went to press. Top of the agenda was an exploration as to how the relationship between the company and the union can best be developed. Further details will be reported in the next issue of Voice.

## VOICEMAIL

Elstead

Bournemouth

3★AA



A WARM WELCOME AWAITS YOU  
AT THE CWU'S OWN HOTEL  
ELSTEAD HOTEL - BOURNEMOUTH

SPECIAL RATES FOR  
CWU MEMBERS ONLY

The rates quoted already have a 10% discount  
off our normal tariff rates.  
All rates exclude bank holidays

## SPRING BREAKS for MAY/JUNE

From £40 BB OR £50 DBB  
Per person, per night in standard rooms

## SUMMER SIZZLERS for JULY/AUGUST

From £45 BB OR £55 DBB  
Per person, per night in standard rooms

## FAMILY WEEKLY TARIFF

Available on request

*Great indoor leisure facilities, great food  
and great service, all we need is your company!*

Tel: 01202 293071 Fax: 01202 293827

Email: [info@the-elstead.co.uk](mailto:info@the-elstead.co.uk)

[www.the-elstead.co.uk](http://www.the-elstead.co.uk)

# NO GIMMICKS JUST GREAT VALUE MOTOR & HOUSEHOLD INSURANCE

Special discount for CWU members and their partners  
PLUS

- Interest free monthly payments
- No administration charges
- Dedicated claims unit
- **NEW** Free identity theft helpline for household customers

Call our friendly UK based team now on

**0845 6077444**

or visit us at

**[www.csis.co.uk](http://www.csis.co.uk)**

CSIS

Civil Service Insurance Society

A not for profit organisation

- Motor
- Household
- Travel
- Caravan
- Pet
- Motorcycle
- Boat
- Golf

CSIS is authorised and regulated by the Financial Services Authority

## Feeling the squeeze

Well we've just received our latest pay cut in real terms, as yet again managers have out-negotiated the union. We have to endure the massaged figures from the Government meant to show us how well they are performing on our behalf, that they are the Government for the working person... Yea, right!

Over the past 20 years or so the pay for B2 grade has gone up about two-and-a-half times but, compared to the higher managers, that's peanuts when theirs has gone up more like 25 times. This has a big effect on prices of things we all have to buy. The annoying part is that as a percentile of the working person's wages, the lower-paid pay more as a percentage of their small income than the higher-paid on the basics that we all have to pay for – so why on earth would I agree to a pay rise linked to productivity?

BT/Openreach have yet to honour the NewGRID agreement: more skills equals MORE pay, and we have seen the appalling results from SMT and FRS.

Performance related pay will not benefit ME. I want a decent pay rise to raise my standard of living, to reverse the downward trend of the last countless years. I want an end to the threat of NOT being able to pay my mortgage; of not being able to feed and clothe the kids; of not having to have to get a second job just to survive - like some of my colleagues have already had to do.

I want the income to be able to work to live, not live to work, but the way the Government and the company are going we'll all be walking everywhere, living on gruel and tipping our hats to the gentry and saying 'thanks guvnor' when they give us a farthing tip. This is the 21st century not the 19th century.  
*Alan Howells, by email*

**Deputy general secretary Jeannie Drake responds:** I understand your concerns about the rising cost of living, especially with the recent news on the rise in the cost of food, fuel and housing. All of this puts pressure on the workforce and, as you rightly say, it is the role of the union to defend and improve our members' pay and conditions in the face of such pressures.

In actual fact, the CWU has a good record on pay in BT. If you take the official headline rate of inflation, we have not negotiated a deal that has fallen below that measure since privatisation of the company in 1984. Pay settlements in BT have also been consistently above average pay settlements for the whole economy, which has helped to keep pay in BT in the top 25% of pay rates throughout the telecoms industry. I agree there's a huge gap between boardroom and workforce pay, a disparity found throughout the private sector, but that cannot be resolved by one union alone. The issue of grading in Openreach is still very much a major and live issue on the CWU agenda (see story on page 5). We've restated the case for higher grading for multi-skilled engineers, and we're actively involved in trying to address this. It is Openreach who fail to recognise the value of their engineering workforce, not the CWU.

The CWU has always fought hard against the introduction of performance related pay in the annual pay rise in BT, and to date it has not been introduced.

I do not accept that managers have out-negotiated the union. I am in absolutely no doubt that pay increases in BT would have been considerably less over the years without the intervention of the CWU.

Finally, we recognise that you want and deserve a decent pay rise to raise your standard of living, and you have my assurances that the CWU will continue to fight to achieve that goal.

## Without the union...

I was with BT Fleet since 1981 as a technician and have been in the union for many years with the knowledge that if anything was to

happen I would have someone to call on for help.

Unfortunately I became ill in 2001 with arthritis. I carried on working until 2006, but events meant I had to take long-term sick leave. The union gave me support from day one and, after a long process, secured me medical retirement in 2008.

I'd like to thank everyone who helped me, but especially Paul Roth who put in a lot of time to talk me through the process and attending meetings, something I found very reassuring. I'd also like to thank union solicitors Edwards Duthie.

Without the union I would have faced all this on my own, so my advice to others is that it's well worth being a member. You hope you never need help, but if you do what a relief to know it's there!

*Malcolm Green, Chatham, Kent.*

## Other side of pension coin

I am writing to comment on the letter from Norman Selby in which he complains about being unable to take his pension after 40 years service without any actuarial reduction and about having to work an "extra four years". I wonder how many people, like me, are very glad to see the other side of the coin now offered? I've just turned 50 and have just got divorced after 10 years of marriage. My ex-wife will take a goodly chunk of my pension fund, so I welcome the chance to pay extra in between the ages of 58 and 60. Also, when I finally manage to sell the marital home I will be taking out the biggest mortgage I've ever had - one that I won't be able to pay off until I'm 75. Any actuarial increase achieved by working on as long as I am allowed to will be most helpful!  
*John Musgrave, BT Wholesale*

Additional letters can be viewed on our website at: [www.cwu.org/links/lettersextra](http://www.cwu.org/links/lettersextra)

## Remembering the victims of homophobia

A triangular wreath of pink carnations was laid outside the Iranian Embassy in London last month in a poignant ceremony to highlight the continuing persecution of homosexuals across the world.

The location for the CWU-organised protest - held to mark International Day Against Homophobia on May 17 - was significant because of Iran's continuing use of the death penalty against practising homosexuals.

International revulsion at what amounts to state-sanctioned murder has mushroomed after a series of executions were forthrightly supported by a senior Iranian politician.

In November last year The Times reported that the politician had told British politicians attending a peace conference that homosexuals deserve to be executed or tortured - or both. His chilling remarks, made shortly after Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad declared "there are no homosexuals in Iran," came after harrowing footage of the public hanging of two underage boys was posted on the internet.

Some international gay rights groups accuse Tehran of having executed more than 4,000 lesbians and gay men since the Islamic Revolution in 1979.

CWU national equal opportunities officer Michele Emerson told the Voice: "At the last count there were still 86 countries that legitimise persecution of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people in some way, shape or form. We need to challenge this publicly, and that is what International Day Against Homophobia is all about."



## Two-pronged attack



A new campaign to increase agency pay rates will run alongside the wider agency campaign

Notice has been served to BT that a major campaign on agency pay is to be launched next week at CWU annual conference.

That campaign will run alongside the ongoing 'Justice for Agency Workers' campaign which seeks a longer-term solution to agency injustice in the form of legislation to guarantee agency workers equal treatment to their directly-employed counterparts. (See story on page 3)

Assistant secretary Sally Bridge explains: "Despite the progress made to date in the wider campaign for equal treatment, it has become very clear that the legislative process moves tortuously slowly - and in the case of many of our members in Manpower and Kelly Services there is an injustice that urgently needs addressing NOW."

The campaign will highlight the fact some agency members have not had a pay rise since 2004 - and that while the CWU has been working effectively with the agencies to put forward cases for pay reviews to BT, most of these have been knocked back without explanation.

"The truth of the matter is that the agencies are being constrained by BT," Sally stresses. "We know that the agencies are putting forward cases for pay reviews to BT, but that these are being rejected without anyone being given an explanation or a

rationale as to the reasons why.

"As such it is the view of the CWU that ultimate responsibility for the status quo rests firmly with BT.

"Despite the company's protestations about the importance of corporate social responsibility it is turning a blind eye to the plight of thousands of agency workers whose terms and conditions it effectively controls.

"Double standards are at play here, and unless swift action is taken to solve the problem the CWU is determined to ensure that BT's role in this is fully exposed. It simply isn't acceptable for BT to continue to hide behind the technical argument that it is not the direct employer."

Exactly that point has been made in a letter to BT's group human resources director Alex Wilson by acting deputy general secretary Bill McClory.

In the letter, Bill points out that in a recent interview with BT Today, new BT chairman Michael Rake stressed that "a genuine commitment to corporate social responsibility unites an organisation, strengthens its reputation and creates vital links with the communities in which it operates. The moral case and the business case come together."

## Manx pension move



Nigel Cotgrove

An increased funding deficit in the Manx Telecom final salary pension has led to the company inviting the CWU to discuss ways of adding financial stability to the scheme.

The current valuation for the pension for those in post before July 2002 has shown an increase in the deficit despite good investment returns. The main cause of the increased deficit has been the fact that people are living longer. Higher

than anticipated salary increases have also contributed to the deficit.

The company has already indicated that it will be increasing its contributions to the pension to account for the deficit and the increased cost of future pensions, but now wants to discuss steps to help minimise the possibility of future unexpected fluctuations in company contributions.

Nigel Cotgrove, CWU assistant secretary, said: "No firm decisions have been taken but Manx Telecom has assured us that it is not proposing to close the pension for existing members. The CWU is committed to ensuring that the pension is properly funded and that it remains open for all existing members."

"The CWU will ballot the members of the pension scheme before any changes to the pension scheme are agreed," he concluded.

## Mega-progress on green van

CWU members who have admitted to being distinctly underwhelmed by an all-electric van they are trialling in London will be pleased to learn that a new environmentally-friendly contender for a future BT fleet is now being tested in Sheffield.

Despite overwhelming support for the aim of a greener transport solution, engineers trying out the French-built MegaVan had cited the plastic vehicle's flimsy feel, top speed of 25mph and security worries as areas of concern. Now, however, another electrical vehicle is being trialled - a long-wheel base Ford Transit Connect with the conventional engine replaced by an electric motor capable of propelling the vehicle to normal driving speeds.

"This is a real van - and, although it's one of a kind, other companies are now coming into the market and things are moving on dramatically," explains telecoms executive member Tom Cooper who sits on the working party which assesses BT's fleet requirements and advises on purchasing decisions.

"If the technology can be perfected and the systems and batteries prove reliable I think it is very likely that BT will be going down this line, and obviously the CWU would support that."

Tom revealed that BT is also investigating the potential of bio-fuels - in particular a form made from agricultural waste products, including brussel sprout stalks, which is shortly to be trialled on 50 specially modified vans.

● In a separate development, pressure from the CWU has resulted in the non-urgent recall of almost 10,000 Vauxhall Vivaro vans after several CWU members experienced handbrake problems when parking facing uphill.

## Computer misuse clarified



Clearer guidelines should help avoid confusion

The union has agreed revisions to parts of BT's Security and Conduct policies that deal with misuse of electronic media.

Use of BT equipment (such as laptops) by friends and family now constitutes unauthorised use. The union agreed to the change in the belief that the policy of encouraging use by friends and family has come to create more difficulties than it resolves, resulting in disciplinarys where unsuitable material has been accessed and members cannot prove they were not the culprit.

A revision regarding emails clarifies that the original author is liable for any offence caused by an email and this includes where the person offended was not the intended recipient. This might be someone checking a colleague's inbox when covering for them, or someone who has received an email forwarded by the originally intended recipient.

Assistant secretary Simon Sapper said: "Overall, we believe that the additional clarity about what BT's computer equipment and systems are to be used for is helpful and appropriate."

## InBrief

### A&L pay claim tabled

The CWU has submitted a pay claim to A&L for staff represented in bands H and K and all equivalent grades for the July pay review. The claim reflects the £400 million profit that the company made last year, the rising cost of living and the pressure and stress faced by staff. "Our claim is for a consolidated increase in pay, pay scales, allowances and pay progression rates that reflect our members' contribution to the continued success of the Group and the increase in the cost of living," said Nigel Cotgrove, assistant secretary. "The CWU is fully aware of the difficult times facing the A&L and all UK banks. However, our members deserve a pay increase that rewards their efforts over the last year."

### Young members' survey

What do YOU want from your job and how can we help you get it? Well your union, the CWU, is asking our young members just that. What are YOUR issues? It's not just about money. Is it pensions, training and career development, maternity/paternity rights or better rights for agency workers? And you can't divorce work from life can you - so what about racism, the environment, housing? Should your union have a role to play in these issues too? We won't know unless YOU tell us. If you're a CWU member under 30, please complete the questionnaire which is posted under the Campaigns section on the front page of the CWU website. The closing date for responses is June 30, 2008 - so don't delay!

### Telereal pay up

In a consultative ballot of Telereal members, there was 94.5 percent support for the recommended offer of a 4.1% salary increase for 14 months to June 2009, which will then bring the pay reviews for non-managers in line time-wise with the rest of the Telereal employees. From 2009, pay reviews will be implemented on 1 June annually. The company has agreed to backdate the rise to February 2008 instead of April in this one-off scenario. Other welcome features of the agreement include the narrowing of the pay differential between directly hired Customer Service Centre employees and their counterparts who TUPE transferred from BT in 2002 - and bringing forward to November 2008 the pay review for three-month probationers.

### Tressell honoured

A blue plaque dedicated to Robert Tressell, the author of *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists*, was unveiled on Sunday 3 February at The Old Royal Liverpool Infirmary, where the author died in 1911. The labour movement classic has been published in more than 14 countries and well over a million copies have been sold. The original manuscript is held by the TUC Library collection, and can be viewed online as part of the TUC history site. More at <http://www.unionhistory.info/ragged/ragged.php>

# END OF AN ERA AS JEANNIE BOWS OUT

For three decades **Jeannie Drake** has played a pivotal role in the representation of the telecoms and financial services membership of the CWU and various predecessor unions, but at the end of June she hands over the reins to a successor. In a wide-ranging interview with Voice editor **Simon Alford**, Jeannie told of her reasons for going, her hopes for the CWU and the challenges that lie ahead...

Most members in telecoms and financial services won't be able to remember a time when Jeannie hasn't taken centre stage in the ongoing fight to improve their terms and conditions at work.

It was back in 1985 that Jeannie - who had already served seven years as assistant general secretary of the Civil Service union the CPSA - became a deputy general secretary (DGS) of the NCU having led the CPSA's post and telecom group's merger with the POEU. In the subsequent merger with the UCW that formed the CWU, Jeannie maintained that DGS position, and she's now the union's longest-serving national officer.

"I peaked early," she jokes, referring to almost 30 years at the top of the trade union tree. It is her work in the pensions field that has now triggered her decision to step down as DGS (Telecoms & Financial Services).

It was in 2002 that Jeannie was invited by the Government to sit on the Pension Commission charged with investigating the 'ticking time-bomb' which risks consigning millions to poverty in old age. Chaired by former CBI director Adair Turner, the commission's report in 2005 led to reforms being introduced by the Government which included the establishment of the Personal Accounts Delivery Authority to which Jeannie was appointed a non-executive director.

This opportunity, together with her involvement in the Pension Protection Fund - the body set up to compensate members of company pension schemes when their employers go bust - and the Equality and Human Rights Commission, led to Jeannie's decision to step down.

"Pension reform is so important," Jeannie explains.

"A motivational factor for me was a concern as to what we're leaving the next generation. In 30 years time will the UK have a level of pensioner poverty that is just unacceptable? Looking at my children, I couldn't help but wonder what their generation will be saying in the future. Would they be asking 'didn't they see the crisis coming?' or would they be condemning us for having not done anything about it.

"I've always cared passionately about the members I've represented but I have been given the opportunity to contribute

“ I LEAVE WITH GOOD FRIENDS AND GOOD MEMORIES - AND THAT MEANS I CAN MOVE ON TO THE NEXT CHALLENGE WITH NO REGRETS ”

to addressing major problems facing ordinary people. I've been a DGS for a long time and there always has to be a successor. .

"It certainly wasn't a decision I took lightly. I've a huge affection for the people I've represented over the years. My job has been a vocation for me - so in a way I'm giving up my life's passion - but then nobody is irreplaceable.

"Life moves on - indeed it has to move on. This is not my personal fiefdom and there are a lot of very talented people in the CWU."

Jeannie knows that saying goodbye at CWU annual conference will be a terrible wrench, and admits she is particularly dreading her final speech. "It's not that I don't know what I want to say - it's whether I'll be able to say it, or say it in the way I'd want to say it," she explains.

Above everything, Jeannie is pleased that her determination over the years to keep arguments over policy as just that - and not allow them to spill into anything personal - appears to have been recognised. That has been demonstrated by the numerous kind messages she's received from across the union, even from former sparring partners.

"The personal style issue has always been big for me," she explains. "I'm one of the first to have a robust debate but not rows with people. Indeed, I think that being robust in the policy debate but not on the person is good policy for any leader to follow.

"It means I leave with good friends, good feelings and good memories - and that means I can move onto the next challenge with no regrets."

And will she keep in touch?

"Yes and no," says Jeannie. "Yes in the sense that I'll always care about the CWU and always be ready to help - but at the same time there will be a new leader and there's no way I want to impinge on that.

"I've had my time, it was fantastic, but when it's over, it's over. I want to keep in touch - but it will be in the way you keep in touch with old friends."

Jeannie concludes: "I'll miss being on the TUC General Council. I had the privilege of being president and the opportunity to campaign on so many issues. Not all the problems our members face can be dealt with by negotiating with the employer; sometimes the fight has to be taken much wider."



Getting her work-life balance wrong: A heavily pregnant Jeannie pictured during the battle against BT's privatisation with fellow campaigners including no less than four trade union general secretaries - and Buzby! "I remember my sides aching during a march through London that day and being so relieved at the end when this picture was taken," Jeannie recalls.



Generation game: Reaching out to young people. CWU-sponsored anti-racism poster competition always been important to Jeannie



Fighting job losses: Jeannie fielding a radio interview against remote sourcing in 2004

Expanding the CWU: Jeannie and her successor, Andy Kerr, celebrate recruitment successes at Carphone Warehouse with Central and West Lanes branch activists



## CHALLENGES ON HORIZON...

Given the latest wave of technological change and convergence that is even now reshaping a telecommunications industry already transformed by mobile telephony and competition, it is easy to forget that when Jeannie began negotiating for members in what was then the UK's dominant fixed line telephone provider, she was dealing with the ex-civil servants who ran the old GPO Telephones.

Living and breathing transformation of the industry ever since then has given Jeannie a unique insight as to how the changing world of telecoms has affected members. Clear pointers already exist, she told the Voice in her final interview, as to the challenges that lie ahead.

## PERPETUAL CHANGE

Perhaps the biggest challenge of all, insists Jeannie, is how to protect members' interests in a telecommunications sector where change is perpetual. "That means the leadership of the union has to fully understand that changing world," she stresses.

Comprehensively rejecting the argument that unions are essentially 'reactive' institutions and that it is not down to them to think too strategically, Jeannie explains: "If you know you have a group of members whose workstreams will disappear because the product is out of date and demand is declining, you could either sit there and say 'we'll sit tight and accept no change' or you start thinking about how we can achieve the transition of those workers into a workstream with a strong future."

Jeannie is convinced that the latter approach is the one that the vast majority of members want - and stresses that is exactly what the union's involvement in the 'Skills Challenge' discussions with BT are all about.

## MORE EMPLOYERS

Jeannie believes it is crucial that the CWU maintains its present emphasis on reaching out to new members across the telecoms industry, despite the workload and negotiating complexities that such an 'expansionist' approach entails.

"Speaking dispassionately, once it was a



Conference moments: At the NCU annual conference in 1986 (above) and conferring with CWU general secretary Billy Hayes at TUC Congress in 2006 (below)

Campaigning for agency rights: Jeannie discussing the issue with TUC general secretary Brendan Barber on the eve of a crucial parliamentary debate in February (above) and promoting the CWU's Euro-trashed campaign at last year's TUC Congress (right)

people, like these  
petition winners has

political reality that BT was going to be privatised and liberalisation would follow, we needed to organise more rapidly than we actually did across the sector," she comments. "We're onto the case now, however, and I'm very positive about the future of the CWU so long as we keep up the momentum.

"There's been some great work done in companies such as Virgin Media, C&W and many others. One of the very good things, and I give credit to our Youth Advisory team, is the work done to encourage the active involvement of young people in the union.

"One of the strengths of the CWU is that we don't operate a hierarchy of members' interests. Whether it's the fight for recognition in C&W, the closure of a factory in Cwmcarn or a pay deal in BT, the union will fight for the interest of those members with an equal passion."

## PAY

The combination of rapid change in the sector and the advent of a multi-employer situation has made pay bargaining a bigger challenge than it was

### ▲ Snapshots from a long, happy and successful career

in the past, Jeannie stresses.

"When I started negotiating, you had one big pay round that could cover nearly 250,000 employees," she points out. "Now the annual pay round is a big factory here with a long list of companies to deal with. It's a logistical exercise making sure that every pay round is covered, and that we fully understand the history of negotiations in that particular company."

That said, Jeannie insists the union should be clear that its goal is not just to defend what has been achieved in previous years but to "improve on what we have defended" - albeit in the understanding that "fight for good pay and conditions has a new edge to it".

## PENSIONS

Jeannie is convinced the battle to achieve a decent retirement income for members is far from over. "Pensions are going to continue to be a challenge - the telecoms sector is not immune from the wider pensions debate," stresses Jeannie. "Many members now have pension provision based on defined contributions and the issues for CWU should be whether

enough of our members join the schemes, and how we can increase the employer contribution rates.

"The CWU needs to use the reforms going through Parliament as an opportunity to improve things for the younger generation of employees."

## CHANGING ETHOS OF BT

Having witnessed first-hand BT first being separated out from the old GPO, then privatised, then subjected to the forces of liberalisation Jeannie is aware of subtle and gradual changes in the relationship between the company and the union. She's perturbed by a sense that the company's respect for individual employees is weakening and that increasingly managers are seeing their reports as a "two dimensional resource rather than three dimensional people".

"I've frequently commented to BT that the one mistake they must never make is to take for granted the strength of identity and commitment that employees have to the company. Really big, super-successful companies often have an internal culture that is very strong - where people get respect from working for them and know they'll be treated with respect by the firm.

"There's still a culture in BT that they want to do things by agreement, but I do worry that increasingly the company is neglecting to understand that its employees are human beings, working hard to deliver what is needed for the customer. They need to be respected and given some discretion. I think there is now a level of 'command and control' that is in danger of being quite destructive.

"You can't effectively manage change by command and control - you just get compliance, and compliance alone will never deliver the customer satisfaction levels needed for BT to succeed.

"BT is in danger of getting behaviours that are consistent with whatever the command is at that point in time. I think that's a big problem for the company - quite apart from generating the kinds of complaints, problems and issues that our members are raising with us."

## FINAL WORDS...

Asked what she thinks of as the proudest achievements of her long career, Jeannie thinks long and hard before replying. "I'm proud of so much the union has done and many people deserve recognition, so I'll give some illustrations, but the omissions shouldn't be taken as significant."

Contemporary issues include the commitment of the union representatives in an increasingly tough environment, the way the union has "picked up the baton on the agency workers issue" and the skills challenge - and a growing understanding of the importance of the equality and diversity agenda.

Jeannie recalls the union's successful

fight to ensure ongoing employment at Bootle after the sale of Girobank - a battle which saw Jeannie lobbying the then Tory government in her determination "not to be the person who wasn't able to maintain employment in Bootle".

More recently, Jeannie cites NewGRID in BT as an important hurdle successfully jumped. Without the integrated set of pay and conditions, she stresses, the CWU's ability to defend members would have been severely hampered.

And despite the CWU losing its hard-fought campaign to prevent the divestment of O2 in 2002 - a move that Jeannie still believes was a "big mistake by BT and one for which they are still paying" - she's adamant that robust action by the union helped prevent a desperate situation from spiralling out of hand.

"There was a point when it looked as if the whole company was going to be broken up," Jeannie recalls. "Most of what is now Global - then known as Ignite - was being prepared for an IPO, and they were also planning to split away Wholesale and Retail."

Jeannie's response was a whirlwind of lobbying in places where trade unionists rarely venture. "I remember going round the City of London, seeing the regulator but also a number of the big fund managers, explaining the reasons why the CWU believed this was a huge mistake..

"Had it happened it would have created huge problems for our members - but there genuinely was a time when I thought I was going to have to watch the wholesale break-up of BT and the messing up of 150,000 working lives. Mercifully that didn't occur, and I genuinely believe the CWU played a part in that outcome.

"The interests of members in O2 have remained important. While there have been some big industrial relations issues, membership has remained high and a new generation of reps has emerged.

Jeannie stresses: "I don't like to put CWU's achievements in any kind of hierarchy. I prefer to think in terms of 'what was the challenge that year' and 'to ask 'did we rise to it?'

"What I'd say is that we rose to it a great deal more often than we failed to do so. I also give credit to my PAs Barbara and Audrey who have made a major contribution to my ability to do my job."

And her advice to her successor?

"No leader should believe they alone deliver success," Jeannie responds simply, stressing the importance of involving, consulting, guiding and respecting the official team, the Executive and the activists. "We also have a great team of PAs and support staff whose contribution should be recognised, she adds.

"If you have a first class team working together, as I've been lucky enough to have, the potential for success is exponentially increased." ▼

Being told your child has a serious disability is the nightmare that every new parent dreads, but it is the way that families rise to the challenge that stands as the ultimate measure of love. **Dawn Chamarette** spoke to a couple determined not just to do the best they can for their seriously autistic daughter, but to help other families in the same difficult situation...

# ON A QUEST FOR CHLOE...

**B**T Openreach customer service engineer Jonathon Elliott is on a quest to find out all he can to help his seven-year-old daughter Chloe with her severe autism – and then pass on his knowledge to other families in BT and beyond.

To get the best possible start, Jonathon has to raise funds to learn at the world-renowned Growing Minds autism programme in Florida, where a specialist team will provide personalised assessment and training for Jonathon and his wife, healthcare worker Vicky.

Tailor-made around Chloe's unique combination of symptoms and the need to cater for the "ordinary" life of their youngest child, Kayleigh aged two, the course will help the Elliotts adapt life around an autistic child, how to help her achieve her potential, and then hold seminars to teach other parents how to do the same back in the UK.

Critical to Jonathon being able to attend the Growing Minds programme is the website he has just launched at [www.chloesquest.co.uk](http://www.chloesquest.co.uk), through which he hopes to raise the estimated £10,000 needed. It amounts to about £5,000 a week for a team of specialist advisers to provide the course. Jonathon hopes also to take Chloe to a dolphin centre where swimming with dolphins as therapy can help her communication skills.

"Chloe's condition is complicated and difficult for us too manage; she has regular temper tantrums and can self-harm. Currently she is on medication to help with her condition," explains Jonathon, 39. "Despite Chloe's condition, she has an enormous capacity for fun and love."

## LEARNING HOW TO COPE

Among other things, Jonathon wants to learn how to deal with Chloe's obsessions with certain objects and with her obsessive behaviour, how to handle her tantrums and how to unlock her potential in spite of her learning difficulties. He also wants to discover how to help her with the problems she has interacting and forming relationships.

"Chloe, can get obsessed with certain objects, such as shoe insoles. In recent months, using shoe insoles as an example, she has to have one particular insole and becomes very upset, usually ending in a big temper tantrum, if she does not have the exact one.

"Currently, she's obsessed with lifts, and if we pass a building she wants to go inside and get into a lift." It can make a potentially simple shopping trip a long and difficult experience for the whole family – made harder by the comments and stares of passing strangers who see Chloe as a naughty child.

Jonathon says that everyday living has been a case of trial and error, with Jonathon and Vicky learning as they go:



“CHLOE'S CONDITION IS COMPLICATED AND DIFFICULT FOR US TO MANAGE”



Positive resolve: Jonathon Elliott

◀ Across: Chloe: Huge capacity for fun and love despite being seriously autistic



## WHAT IS AUTISM?

■ Autism is a brain development disorder that impairs social interaction and communication and causes repetitive and restricted behaviour.

■ It affects many parts of the brain and, while the cause isn't well understood and there's no known cure, there is a theory that it is genetically inherited. Other proposed causes, such as the MMR vaccine, are more controversial and without definitive scientific evidence. (See [www.mmrthefacts.nhs.uk](http://www.mmrthefacts.nhs.uk)).

■ Parents usually notice signs in the first two years of their child's life. Few children live independently after reaching adulthood, but many become successful in other ways. Some have become great mathematicians. Others can play musical instruments with great skill.

■ More information can be found at the National Autistic Society ([www.nas.org.uk](http://www.nas.org.uk)).

"She likes routine, and so we have a big memo board on which we note everything we are going to do and we tell her what's on it. If we go out for the day and have to stop for petrol, she can have a temper tantrum if it's unexpected. She's happy if she knows what's going to be happening in the day."

Since Chloe's birth, Jonathon, a former assistant secretary of the Gloucester and North Wiltshire branch, has been given greater flexibility to allow him to attend the many assessments and meetings that have been inevitable for his daughter.

"Originally, I was working a four-day week [with longer daily hours] including Saturdays. After Chloe was born, I was allowed to go on a Monday to Friday five-day week. My manager, David Jayne, has allowed me to go to doctors' appointments and school meetings," explains Jonathon.

Flexible working to enable BT employees to deal with care and support for their family has been an issue high on the union's agenda, particularly as BT will be keen to keep its highly trained workers like Jonathon in the fold. He has worked

with the company for 20 years and Vicky works nights at a nursing home.

With BT one of the country's biggest employers, Jonathon hopes to reach colleagues as well as the wider population: "I hope to teach at seminars in this country. They say in the UK about one in 1,000 people has autism or ASD (autistic spectrum disorders). There must be a fair number of BT families that have children with autism. I'm hoping to find out how many there are. Hopefully, they will be clicking on to the website."

## EARLY DIAGNOSIS CRUCIAL

His key advice is to seek early diagnosis for your child, something he believes Chloe has benefited from. "We first noticed problems with Chloe at around 12 months old, as she did not seem to take any interest in her surroundings, make any form of eye contact, or respond to things like squeaky toys."

Blood tests proved inconclusive but regular attendance at a special nursery and observation by health professionals resulted in Chloe being diagnosed around

12 months later as having autism. Aware of the controversy around the combined mumps, measles and rubella jab (MMR), Jonathon explains that Chloe's autistic symptoms were evident before her MMR immunisation was due.

From the age of three Chloe was statemented – reports on her condition and special educational needs paved the way for her to attend a special school. At five she started school, at the Milestones School in Gloucester. "The school is fantastic and has great facilities and staff," explains Jonathon. "Chloe is in a small class with five other pupils. The small class size means each child can get one on one care, with an educational plan tailored to their individual needs. This is essential as children with autism tend to want to be solitary." ▼

● Donations can be made through the website below. The website will also eventually provide a forum for advice and self-help among people who have autism in the family. As someone who in his rare spare time is a freelance aviation journalist who makes videos, Jonathon will plot progress for all to see with an online video diary on the [chloesquest](http://chloesquest.co.uk) site.

## Reaching out to young members

The first ever telecoms and financial executive briefing specifically for youth activists took place at Edinburgh University on April 16. In the historic surrounds of one of the university's student union buildings, young CWU members from as far afield as Cornwall and Northern Ireland, debated the skills challenge as well as ideas for recruiting new members and building the future vitality of the union.

CWU national officer Brian Healy opened the discussion on skills, saying that the skills gap in the telecoms industry is one of the single most significant issues facing the union and its members today.

Jennifer Forbes from South Devon and Cornwall branch highlighted some of the problems in BT, pointing out that vocational training is not accredited and there is little forward planning for developing the skills of younger employees.

Jodie Pearce from Manchester Clerical branch said that O<sub>2</sub> and temporary employment agencies are disengaged from the issue of skills, a problem which is deepened by a lack of grading infrastructure for career progression. Suggestions for action included surveying the membership to demonstrate how seriously employers are falling short of skills expectations, and engaging through collective bargaining to secure a real commitment from companies to develop their staff.

Focussing on ideas for recruiting new members, delegates talked about the need to challenge perceptions of trade unions as being too adversarial and unrepresentatively 'pale, male and stale'. Ideas for making the union more attractive included stronger promotion of its successes, the use of innovative communication methods, and a re-branding to project a more modern, professional image.

● Full story at [www.cwu.org/links/TFSEyouth](http://www.cwu.org/links/TFSEyouth)



Standing tall: Those at the forefront of the campaign for recognition at Cable & Wireless could not have done more to achieve a 'yes' vote

## Now it's crunch time at C&W!

The CWU's long-running battle to enable Cable and Wireless field engineering workers to decide whether or not they want to be represented by a union in negotiations with the company is drawing to its climax.

A ballot is currently underway which will determine once and for all whether sufficient employees in the bargaining unit want to be given collective bargaining rights to force the union-hostile company to recognise the CWU. Time is of the essence for anyone in possession of ballot papers who wants to have a say in their working future but who has not yet voted - because all of the postal votes must have been received by Monday June 9.

The CWU campaign for recognition - which began when a group of employees approached the union asking for its help dealing with a raft of grievances ranging from outsourcing to dismay at the company's overall direction - has been fought every inch of the way by

bosses.

Over the past year the company has repeatedly gone to law to try to prevent its employees being given the opportunity to decide whether they want the protections and consultation rights that come with union recognition. Even after losing its final High Court challenge in January it did everything it could to lobby the legal body which rules on recognition issues to shift the ballot timetable to allow the business more time to counter union arguments.

Ballot papers were finally issued on May 22 after the Central Arbitration Committee agreed with the CWU that for the ballot to have any credibility it had to take place immediately after the close of a brief window during which the union was allowed formal access to staff to counter C&W's anti-recognition campaign. That campaign has been professionally orchestrated for over a year by the US-owned "union avoidance" specialist, the Burke Group, which has a long history of

union-busting activity.

Thanking CWU members within C&W for their support and hard work throughout the protracted recognition campaign, national organising secretary John East told the Voice: "The outcome will be determined in just a few days, not just by the ballot result but by the number of people who turn out to vote.

"Because of the peculiar rule in recognition ballots, which mean unions don't just have to win a majority of the vote, but that those voting yes have to account for more than 40 per cent of the bargaining unit, it's absolutely imperative that any members of the bargaining unit who support recognition do actually cast their vote.

"I'd urge anyone who has not yet voted to consider for a moment that this whole campaign for unionisation has been entirely driven by C&W employees who came to us for help - not the other way round."

## 180 FLEXIBLE

View these Postal edition stories online at: [www.cwu.org/voice](http://www.cwu.org/voice)

### ■ Defending universal services

The government's independent review into postal liberalisation, headed by Richard Hooper, has released its interim report, which is highly critical of the current situation. CWU deputy general secretary Dave Ward outlines the union's reaction to Mr Hooper's initial findings and explains our strategy going forward.



### ■ Time to bite back

Too many owners of dangerous dogs that attack our members are going unpunished. CWU national officials Dave Joyce and Bob Gibson argue that there is an urgent need for the existing Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 to be tightened up, in order to close loopholes in the law.



### ■ Fighting Post Office closures

CWU members are in the forefront of the struggle to save our nation's post office network from the savage closure programme unleashed by Post Office Limited. CWU national officer Andy Furey explains the union's opposition to the cuts and outlines a positive alternative.



## Going for growth at Pell & Bales in London

A meeting of members working for Pell and Bales will take place on June 21 on the back of a string of recent recruitment successes that look set to trigger a formal bid for union recognition.

Amid hopes that the London-based call centre company will agree to recognise the CWU voluntarily, the meeting is being held to formalise union structures at the site and to elect a local committee.

National organising secretary John East told the Voice: "The level of energy and enthusiasm of the fast-growing Pell & Bales membership is most encouraging - as is the demonstrable success of Capital Branch's recruitment and organising activity at the site.

"The forthcoming members' meeting provides a great opportunity for us to move a tremendous success story on to the next level and to demonstrate to the company that a voluntary recognition agreement is in everyone's best interest.

"I'd urge our Pell & Bales membership to turn out in force".

The meeting will take place at Artillery Arms, Bunhill Row, Finsbury, London EC1Y 8ND.

The venue is 10 minutes walk from Pell & Bales' Old Street office and around five minutes walk from the Featherstone office.

The meeting is scheduled to start at 6pm.

A buffet will be provided.



# LOANS FOR CWU MEMBERS

Stay on top with an affordable flexible loan...

...just make a quick call to 0800 24 30 24\*

or click away and apply online at

[www.loansforCWUmembers.net](http://www.loansforCWUmembers.net)

- Do you have all sorts of credit in lots of different places?
- Do you want to make just one affordable monthly payment?
- Do you need a loan from £10,000 to £100,000 for any purpose with a repayment period from 5 to 25 years?
- Call or apply on line now – we are not a call centre – our friendly experienced staff can usually confirm your loan in principle straight away.

Interest rates from 5.7% - 10.7% APR.

Our typical rate is 8.9% APR.

More than 66% of our loans are written at 8.9% or less.

\*Homeowners freephone: 8am – 8pm

Calls will be recorded for training purposes



**ARROW FINANCE**

Arrow Finance is a licenced credit broker authorized and regulated by the Financial Services Authority

THINK CAREFULLY BEFORE SECURING OTHER DEBTS AGAINST YOUR HOME. YOUR HOME MAY BE REPOSSESSED IF YOU DO NOT KEEP UP REPAYMENTS ON A MORTGAGE OR ANY OTHER DEBT SECURED ON IT.

For a written quotation, write to Arrow Finance, Freepost, Solihull B92 0BR. We are professional finance brokers, trading as Arrow Finance since 1983. We arrange loans up to 125% of house value (less existing mortgage balance). Loans are secured against your home and subject to status including credit scoring and property equity.

## INFORMATION

# ALL SYSTEMS GO AT CWUHA!

The union's humanitarian aid charity **CWUHA** is as active as ever, with missions to Eastern Europe and Africa that combine new community aid schemes with ongoing help and progress checks on existing projects.

As **Voice** went to press a convoy was returning from Lithuania, a fact-finding mission was going ahead in Tanzania and planning was underway for the September mission to orphanages, schools and hospitals in Bulgaria. Momentously, for the first time this will include volunteers from both the Irish and the UK Communication Workers Unions.

Speaking briefly to **Voice** while on the road with the Lithuania convoy, Eastern regional secretary **Paul Moffat**, said the volunteers delivered essential supplies, provided practical help and witnessed how CWUHA's previous work has helped children in impoverished orphanages and hospitals.

Preparing for the Bulgaria mission, Northwest regional secretary and CWUHA

national secretary, **Carl Webb**, said: "This year is special because for the first time we've got four drivers from Eire and Northern Ireland. We've got sponsored trucks from Eircom and An Post, to add to our usual trucks donated by BT, Royal Mail and Parcel Force. It's fantastic that around half of our 20 volunteers will be new drivers including two drivers from Simpson Millar, proving that we're going from strength to strength, with lots of enthusiasm and inspiration to continue the work that CWUHA has been doing for 13 years."

In Bulgaria, CWUHA works with One Life Bulgaria Charity and The Lora Foundation to help 'the forgotten children of Bulgaria' – those left in bleak hospitals and homes.

Meanwhile, CWUHA organiser **Alex Pearson** has been

checking progress made by the charity's projects in Tanzania, and looking into the possibility of building on past successes. So far, these include rebuilding a health centre and a school, supplying text books and providing wheelchairs for children from communities in and around Moshi.



### A match made in... Ukraine!

When CWUHA volunteer Ian Sykes from sponsorship company McBride met CWUHA 'partner charity' worker Tetyana from Everychild, a partnership of a different kind developed during a mission to Ukraine. Love blossomed between Ian and Tetyana and a few months later in July last year, the couple married. To complete the happy story, Tetyana gave birth to their daughter Sofia Anna in April. Ian told the **Voice**: "I've loved working with CWUHA. It's been just wonderful that through them Tetyana and I got together...and having Sofia is just perfect!"



## SPECIAL RATES ON HOME INSURANCE

# Looking to save on your home insurance?

As a member of CWU you are entitled to a number of great benefits and savings. In fact, you could save up to £88<sup>‡</sup> by switching your home insurance to CWU Insurance. It's yet another advantage of your membership. Plus to make things easier, you can conveniently spread the cost with monthly payments.

We even have a 15% online discount\* and a further 5% saving if you take out combined buildings and contents cover.

Call free today on **0800 013 2298** between 8.30am-8pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat for a quote<sup>†</sup>.



<sup>‡</sup>Based on independent online research by Consumer Intelligence during 01 February-29 February 2008. 10% of consumers achieve this saving with CWU buildings and contents insurance.



Call free today for a quote

**0800 013 2298<sup>†</sup>**

(please quote ref Voice 308) or visit [www.cwuinsurance.co.uk](http://www.cwuinsurance.co.uk)

CWU Insurance is provided by UIA, a company owned by its policyholders

\* Compared to the standard price you would be quoted if you call us. † Lines are open 8.30am-8pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat. For quality and protection purposes, your call will be recorded. UIA (Insurance) Ltd 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.



New frontiers: CWU leafleters target a Carphone Warehouse's site in Northampton – an example of telecoms recruitment by a postal branch

## Targeting Carphone Warehouse

The CWU's burgeoning membership in Carphone Warehouse continues to grow - boosted by a new recruitment campaign at the company's call centre in Northampton.

The latest campaign is seeking to build on impressive recruitment successes in Preston and North Acton over the last year - and comes on the back of another successful membership drive at the company's logistics and repair site at Wednesbury.

At Wednesbury the surge of new joiners has been exceptionally marked in recent months amid widespread dismay at a heavy-handed management approach.

"A big issue has been concern at quite aggressive search techniques which have been applied quite heavily and without much consultation," CWU organiser Alan Smith told the Voice.

"Quite recently searches were extended and opened up the potential of people being asked to remove their turbans, which was obviously pretty inflammatory."

One member explained: "We accept the company will carry out random searches - we're just asking them to talk to us about how they're carried

out. At the moment these searches are carried out in OUR time, at the end of a shift, and can delay us leaving the site by up to 15 minutes. This doesn't seem fair, especially given we're docked pay if we're as little as one minute late at the start of a shift.

"People at Wednesbury are joining the CWU to make themselves heard, to make their working lives better".

The latest recruitment drive in Northampton - which unusually is being conducted by the predominantly postal Northamptonshire Amalgamated branch - comes after similarly heavy-handed management interventions which saw two employees suspended for "dissemination of trade union material".

Branch secretary Mick Fitzmaurice explains: "I've recently represented two members, one of whom did nothing but send an email to a colleague with the link to the CWU website. He was immediately suspended but thankfully, with CWU involvement, we got him back with all charges dropped.

"We soon discovered that there are 300 potential CWU members who are screaming out for a trade union to represent their rights in the

workplace.

"Some employees have called us to say that they cannot even discuss the union in the workplace and fear conduct charges if seen to be reading CWU literature."

Urging the Northampton site's managers to allow employees "the right to make their own decision", Mick warned: "The company will soon realise that its employees are intelligent adults who can make a decision for themselves about who can best look after their rights in the workplace."

On April 28 the branch held its first leafleting session of the call centre (pictured), and the CWU member at the centre of the suspension storm - 32-year-old Steve Austin - believes that the company's actions in his case will have encouraged even more to seek the protection of a union than might otherwise have been the case.

"I'd be really surprised if there isn't a really good response," said the first time union member who had only filled in the membership application form days before his suspension.

"I've never been a member of a union before. Up until now I didn't think I'd need it...but I'm certainly glad I joined now."

## Building youth involvement

Significant developments towards the involvement of young branch officers in the CWU are in full swing and on course for being a beacon for the entire trade union movement.

At a forum in Edinburgh for CWU youth activists, newly-appointed youth project officer, Steve Ratcliffe, got positive feedback and additional input for his work so far on the union's trail blazing Youth Engagement Strategy (YES).

Steve has been in post since mid-February, thanks to a £80,000 government grant from the Union Modernisation Fund that is being match-funded by the CWU. Headed by assistant secretary Simon Sapper, the CWU's visionary youth strategy will invigorate trade unionism with its sharing of best practice for involving under-30s in recruiting, organising, campaigning and education.

Steve said: "A significant development is the youth officer 'tool kit'. It provides information, advice and guidance on practical activities, contacts and the CWU structure and youth officer development. One great idea that came out of the forum was for young members to be able to register their interest in a particular CWU training course on-line."

He added: "The style and format of the forums is very accessible and informal. They are an excellent opportunity for young members to get involved and shape the approach we take as a union to youth engagement."

"The forums have been a success - each time we have had a number of new young members attending and we have created an environment where young members feel comfortable to address a large group for the first time."

Commenting on the fact that the growth of the CWU's youth structure has consistently outstripped that of most other unions, Steve concludes: "The structure is far from complete, but it's fair to say we're in a better position than most."

## InBrief

### Sore head?

The CWU has joined forces with Know Your Limits, a government campaign designed to get us thinking about excessive drinking and the risks associated with it. CWU assistant secretary Simon Sapper said: "How many of us have got up in the morning and felt the worse for wear because we've drunk too much the night before? The campaign aims for a better understanding of the recommended daily limits for alcohol consumption to provide people with the facts they need make informed choices." There will be a focus on this issue at the Youth stall at Conference, and further coverage in Voice. Meanwhile, more information is available at [www.nhs.uk/units](http://www.nhs.uk/units)

### Moving things on in NI

A special project designed to harness trade union solidarity to make a unique contribution to peace and reconciliation across the island of Ireland has just drawn to a close - and the programme, supported from the outset by the CWU, has been judged a major success. The key conclusion of the 'Moving On' programme, facilitated by the cross border 'City Bridges' project, is that there is a strong appetite amongst trade union activists for open and honest dialogue about sectarian division. CWU general secretary Billy Hayes told the Voice: "I'm glad the CWU has played a prominent role in this programme to underpin the peace process." Full report at [www.cwu.org/links/citybridges](http://www.cwu.org/links/citybridges)

### Shaping NI's future

Delegates from 36 affiliated trade unions across Northern Ireland held their biennial conference in April with a packed agenda including motions on union organisation, equality and human rights. Delegates heard firm opposition to the neo-liberal trends of the devolved NI administration, but also reassuring words from the deputy First Minister, Martin McGuinness, that "growing the economy is our top priority." Delegates left having agreed an extensive programme of work for the next two years, determined to ensure the trade union movement plays a full role in shaping NI's future. Full report at [www.cwu.org/links/NIC-ISTU](http://www.cwu.org/links/NIC-ISTU)

### Lest we forget...

The equivalent of a jumbo jet-load of passengers dies every fortnight in Britain because of the failure to ensure safe and healthy conditions in workplaces. The shocking statistic was released by RoSPA to mark Workers' Memorial Day (April 28) when those killed or injured in workplace accidents were remembered in ceremonies across the country. This year's event coincided with the latest attempt to force employers to improve on their adherence to health and safety legislation - bolstering the message sent by the new Corporate Manslaughter legislation long demanded by the CWU which came into force on April 5. Full story at [www.cwu.org/links/wmd08](http://www.cwu.org/links/wmd08)

## Alvescot's infamous 'chalets' meet their end

The infamously austere accommodation 'chalets' at Alvescot Lodge have long been a talking point amongst reps attending schools at the CWU's education and training centre in Oxfordshire.

In April, however, an era ended when the bulldozers moved in to flatten the pre-fab wooden dormitories in phase one of a major redevelopment project which will result in the creation of a brand new accommodation block and restaurant.

CWU head of education and training, Trish Lavelle, admits that news of the 'chalets' demise will probably bring joy to the hearts of many former Alvescot 'campers' - but suspects some former residents

may feel just a twinge of nostalgia at the belated end of an era at Alvescot.

"The chalets were infamous because of the lack of soundproofing, the temperamental plumbing and the vast colony of rabbits who lived a few feet below them," explains Trish.

"We're all looking forward to the completing of the building work in December, but I am sure that there will also be many representatives out there who will feel just a tiny bit sad that part of CWU history is disappearing!"

Alvescot Lodge will re-open in January 2009, but in the meantime a full regional and residential training programme is continuing.



Flattened: Alvescot's chalets were a relic from an age of Hi-De-Hi style holiday camps

Voice readers  
eligible for  
csma membership

# “What’s the difference between joining csma and not joining?”



“About £150!”



If you value your leisure time, joining csma opens up a world of special interest clubs and activities.

If you value your money, membership is a no-brainer. For a start, you immediately get our invaluable Motor Legal Expenses Cover completely FREE. That’s worth £21 on its own.

Then there’s up to 30% discount on Britannia Rescue’s breakdown service.

Typical savings of £60 on a weekend break at csma-owned properties throughout the

**Our members could  
save an average of  
£150 every year.  
Join csma FREE today!**

UK. A whole host of insurance discounts available through LV=Frizzell.

And our Travelshop will help you book great deals on worldwide holidays and cruises. As well as arranging your car hire, commission-FREE foreign currency, and a load of other extras to help you on your way.

But best of all? It’s completely FREE to join. Do it now at [www.csma.uk.com](http://www.csma.uk.com) or by calling 0800 247 1568.

Typical saving of £150 is achieved through free LV=Frizzell Motor Legal Expenses Cover, usually £21, Britannia Rescue Comprehensive cover, a weekend break at a csma-owned leisure property and an overseas holiday.

**Call FREE join FREE**  
**0800 247 1568**  
**[csma.uk.com](http://csma.uk.com)**



**csma**  
it pays to belong

# ANOTHER COUNTRY?

Time has done little to numb the shock and horror felt by **Frank Isahak** when he fell foul of one of the now infamous 'No Irish, no coloureds, no dogs' notices in 1950's London. 58 years on, however, the retired BT engineer is adamant that past injustices need to be remembered for the sake of a better future. **Simon Alford** reports...

Fifty-eight years ago this month a 24-year-old apprentice electrician bade arewell to his parents in Georgetown, British Guyana, and boarded a ship bound for England. Several months later, having discovered the hard way that the 'Mother Country' was rather less welcoming than the Colonial Office advertising campaign that had attracted him and thousands of others had suggested, Frank Isahak became the first black employee of GPO Telephones in Oxford.

Not such a very unusual story, maybe, when viewed in the context of the post-Windrush surge of immigration...yet all the new arrivals were undoubtedly pioneers. Now Frank has been invited to tell his remarkable story as part of a social history project being conducted by Oxford's Ruskin College to chart the experiences of a now ageing generation who literally changed the face of Britain.

Speaking to Frank and his wife of 50 years, Deanna, what is most striking is the extent to which they believe things have changed for the better. Beaming out from a photo frame on a shelf in the living room of their Abingdon bungalow, the joyous faces of two newly-weds tell of the love, hope and optimism that the couple still retain to this day. It is only as an aside that Frank and Deanna recall how one woman in a sizeable crowd of onlookers who had gathered to gawp at Abingdon's first mixed marriage shouted out: "It shouldn't be allowed - it will never last!"

A half century later, the couple wryly point out, it is they - not the hostile stranger - who have been proved right!

Much of Frank and Deanna's strength when faced with this and numerous other brushes with racism derives from the way they have responded. "It's all about how you conduct yourself," stresses Deanna. "For us it was with pride and dignity. That demonstrates where the problem is."

Frank agrees: "When I've received any abuse, I always say hold on - that's your problem. It's nothing to do with me."

## A 'HALF WON' BATTLE

Above anything, it is a sense of optimism about a 'half won' battle that shines through as Frank recounts his story. In some ways, he points out, the England he arrived at in 1955 was another country to the one we inhabit today.

Certainly the rude awakening received by the young man who had grown up reciting 'Children of the Empire' and 'There will always be an England' in his Guyanan schooldays seems almost inconceivable today. "You've got to remember we arrived with a sense that we were coming to serve the Mother Country in her time of need," stresses Frank. "We thought we'd be welcomed - but then we found that the Mother wasn't in any mood to take us to her bosom."



“THE OBSTACLES YOU MEET CAN SOMETIMES PROVE AN INSPIRATION. THE HARDER THEY ARE THE STRONGER YOU BECOME”



▲ Pioneers: Frank and Deanna Isahak today (main picture) - and Frank shortly after his arrival in Britain

"I remember looking for digs in London and arriving at a place off Oxford Street with a notice at the door saying 'No Irish, no coloureds, no dogs'. I'd never heard of anything like that before, so couldn't interpret what it meant. I knocked on the door and a woman came out, pointed at the sign and said: "What's the matter with you? Can't you f\*\*\*ing read." I can still hear those despicable words."

Dazed and shocked, Frank walked through the night, yet in retrospect, he insists, he found the experience "an inspiration". "In a funny way it gave me determination," he explains. "I thought, right, I'll get into a position where you guys will respect me."

Mercifully, Frank's luck was about to change. A happy spell in lodgings in the East End did much to restore his faith in British human nature. During that time he learned of a government initiative to employ immigrants in GPO Telephones which was desperately short of engineers.

Several weeks later Frank reported for duty at Telephone House in Oxford assuming that, with his electrical background and high school education, his skills would be seized upon. To his surprise, however, he found himself allotted to a labouring gang. Frank is still convinced that the level of work deemed suitable for him to do had been dictated by a "fixed concept of what colonial immigrants were capable of."

Despite the awkward start, however, Frank settled down happily into the job -

and his wasted potential was finally identified by a training officer who suggested he should register for night classes in telecoms engineering.

It was during that period that Frank met Deanna, and all appeared to be going well until Frank began to realise that, despite excelling in his studies and desperately wanting to put his abilities to good use, he was beginning to hit "glass ceilings".

Throughout the 60s and 70s that continued - every desperately-wanted promotion being a struggle and only being achieved after just about everyone around him had been promoted first.

To this day, Frank is convinced he was held back by his colour - and despite his active involvement in the POEU throughout the 70s and into the 80s - when for a while he edited the branch newsletter - Frank firmly believes the union could and should have done more.

"The whole equal opportunities thing came about 15 years too late for me," Frank explains. "I don't mean to blow my own trumpet, but I was one of the best Strowger engineers - yet I seemed to carry this glass ceiling round with me."

"It was very demoralising - and, to be honest, by the mid-1980s I was frustrated and exhausted."

Dismayed he was never given the opportunity to fulfil his potential, Frank gleefully took retirement in 1991 and threw himself into community, sporting and race relations work which has dominated his life ever since.

## MUCH TO CELEBRATE

Given Frank's firm belief that his colour held him back throughout his career, his lack of regret at coming to the UK is initially surprising. The conviction, however, is borne of a sense that his somehow 'made a difference'.

Even his disappointment that the emphasis on equal opps came too late to help him during his working life is laced with delight at what has been achieved.

"When I read in the Voice about things like the CWU's race advisory committee and the black workers conference I just wish they'd started earlier," he comments.

Although racism still exists, Frank is adamant the progress made against it in recent years should be recognised.

"You can celebrate a milestone before you've reached the end of the road," he stresses.

By taking part in the social history research project, Frank hopes the experiences of the inevitably dwindling numbers of first generation immigrants who arrived in the 1940s and 50s will be kept alive for successive generations of black youth.

"I really hope that an appreciation of how difficult things were then gives a realisation that things are not so bad today, and that, in a sense, they owe it to their ancestors to do well," he concludes.

"If an understanding of what we experienced, and how we responded, can inspire black youth that have gone astray, that can only be to the good." ▼

## TRIBUTE LEON GREENMAN



# A TRUE HOLOCAUST HERO

The extraordinary life of one of the UK's most effective campaigners against race hate and fascism drew to a close on March 17 when time finally caught up with **Leon Greenman** – a survivor of no less than six Nazi concentration camps who devoted the rest of his life to exposing the horrors of the Holocaust. To mark the first international Holocaust Memorial Day in January 2000, Leon - then aged 89 - was interviewed by Voice journalist **Derek Suffling**. In a special tribute to a true humanitarian who inspired thousands with his very personal plea against the politics of hate, we here reprint that article...

Leon Greenman points at a grainy black and white photograph in the Imperial War Museum's Holocaust Exhibition.

The picture shows a group of Jews on their hands and knees in the middle of a busy street. Scrubbing brushes in hand, they are being forced to scrub the street clean by Nazi soldiers while a large crowd looks on.

"Look at the faces in the crowd," exclaims the tiny, robust 89-year-old. "They're smiling, laughing – enjoying themselves.

"We're told ordinary people didn't know about Hitler's plans for the Jews, but no-one is protesting in this picture."

Leon realises the horrors he witnessed during three years in Hitler's death camps are unimaginable to most people. But he knows that this picture – which shows one of the many mundane humiliations heaped upon Jews, gypsies, homosexuals, disabled people, trade unionists and other social groups earmarked for extermination by Hitler – is much more recognisable.

There are echoes of the same attitudes in our treatment of asylum seekers today, Leon suggests: "We shouldn't forget that racism and discrimination are what Hitler's fascism was built on."

### CRUEL TWIST OF FATE

Born in the east end of London, Leon Greenman was doubly unfortunate to get caught up in the Holocaust.

Family ties with Holland meant he took his honeymoon in Rotterdam, where he remained

while his wife Else nursed a sick relative.

Following the German invasion of Holland, Leon, Else and their baby son, Barney, were rounded up by the SS on October 8, 1942.

From a holding camp in Westerbork, northern Holland, the family was among a party of 750 Jews placed on a train for Auschwitz.

"We thought we were going to Auschwitz to work," says Leon. "But when we got there it turned out to be Birkenau. We had never heard of Birkenau, but it was one of the biggest extermination camps.

"My wife and Barney and I were together in the same carriage.

"We were shouted out of the trains and told to leave everything behind. An SS soldier came along and divided us into two groups; the women went to the right and the men to the left.

"One of the women started to cry and shout 'I want to be with my husband'. She walked away behind the SS soldier, who turned around and let his club come down on her head.

"The woman dropped to the ground and he kicked her in the tummy. Then he turned to us and counted out fifty men by placing the club on our shoulders.

"They marched us away down a long road – Birkenau is a vast piece of land – and we were made to stop by a crossroads as a truck came along.

"The truck stopped in front of us. It was full of women and children, and I saw my wife with our son in her arms. Then the truck went and I never saw either of them again."

Much later Leon learned his wife

and child had been gassed in two converted farmhouses on the outskirts of the camp – early versions of the gas chambers. Rather than being incinerated in the ovens, which were built later, the bodies were simply piled up on the ground outside and burned.

### RARE SURVIVOR

Of the 750 people who accompanied Leon on the train from Westerbork, only his 50 fellow workers escaped immediate extermination. Of those, only Leon and one other man survived the camps. Leon's physical strength and fitness meant he was never singled out for extermination, but passed from one work group to the next in the camps of Birkenau, Auschwitz and Monowitz.

Faced with such a terrifying day-to-day reality, Leon admits he almost gave in to despair – especially when he began to realise he would never see his wife and son again. He almost succumbed again during the so-called Death March, when prisoners were trooped back into Germany from the camps by their Nazi captors as Soviet forces swept through Poland.

"We were marched away from Auschwitz in columns," he explains. "The soldiers were under orders from Hitler to shoot anyone who fell, so they couldn't be of use to the Russians or tell them what had happened. If you couldn't walk properly or you fell, you were shot.

"I had gangrene in my feet. A Frenchman saved my life by holding me up when I wanted to fall."

Given what was to follow, we all have much to thank for that unknown Frenchman's humanity...

▲ Leon Greenman, aged 89, pictured in front of a photo of the chillingly iconic gate to Auschwitz

## A lifetime's work

The Holocaust completely defined the life of Leon Greenman who devoted the rest of his life to exposing the horror...

Early in Leon's time as a prisoner he saw a fellow Jew brutally beaten by Nazi soldiers. Despite not being a particularly religious person, the experience made him pray to God, promising that if he ever got out he'd devote his energies to telling the outside world about the evils committed.

Leon started to make good on that promise as soon as the camps were liberated in 1945. Stumbling down the road away from Buchenwald, Leon was stopped and interviewed by an Evening Standard reporter anxious to break the incredible story.

For the next 63 years - right up until his death aged 97 on Friday March 5 - he never wavered in his aim of helping people understand what happened during those dark days: "Someone said 'why don't you go into the school and tell the people?' I woke up. I decided that is what I must do," he said.

In 1998 Leon was awarded the OBE for his life's work. As well as numerous visits to schools, colleges and universities he also addressed many other groups, events and conferences including CWU

annual conference.

Leon vehemently believed that everyone should see the death camps at first hand and he took numerous groups himself: "I take people to where I stood, where I worked, where 50 men were hung in front of me," he told the Voice. "The truth is there."

His tireless determination to broadcast the terrible crimes committed by the Nazis earned him the respect and admiration of countless people of every religion and none - but it is perhaps fitting that in death a very special tribute has been paid by the Jewish community itself.

In an exceptional honour to a man who could not have done more to keep memories of the Holocaust alive, Leon's body has been laid to rest free of charge in the United Synagogue's restricted East Ham Cemetery where his father and two of his siblings are also interred.

"He lived most of his life without his family," pointed out Mr Greenman's close friend and confidante Ruth-Anne Lenga in a heartfelt tribute in the Jewish Chronicle. "I felt he needed to rest there."