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FIGHT FOR 'NEW WORLD'

BILLY HAYES
GENERAL SECRETARY

We're beginning to see what the Con-Dem cuts are doing to the educational aspirations of working people. Sure Start and Bookstart are both facing savage cuts, new school buildings have been shelved, education maintenance allowances have been slashed while university tuition fees are trebled. Add to that, cuts to vocational courses and day centres for pensioners and you have cuts from cradle to grave! Even informal learning becomes more difficult as libraries are closed and the BBC website is cut.



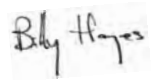
Education makes a real difference to employability, earning potential, our children's education, health and social cohesion. There is no justice in cutting it when the

bankers who caused the crisis still award themselves obscene bonuses and avoid paying tax.

Despite these challenges, our ULRs still manage to deliver learning opportunities for our members. I know they'll continue to do it – and the world will be that much better for their contribution.

On the 75th anniversary of the Spanish Civil War it is worth remembering the words of Buenaventura Durruti, of the *Confederación Nacional del Trabajo* (CNT): "It is we the workers who built these palaces and cities... we can build others to take their place, and better ones!

"The bourgeoisie might blast and ruin its own world before it leaves the stage of history. We carry a new world here, in our hearts."



People power overcomes adversity

TRISH LAVELLE
HEAD OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

I am writing this introduction after the largest demonstration of workers in London for decades, and in the midst of the most unfair, unnecessary and ideologically driven cuts to our public services in generations.

Union learning may seem relatively small and inconsequential when compared to the dismantling of the National Health Service or the loss of frontline public services for millions of people. Yet, in actual fact, the role of properly trained and educated trade union activists and ULRs will take on even greater importance in the workplace in the coming months.

Despite the savage cuts to education, ULRs are out there continuing to deliver to the most vulnerable and insecure in the workplace, organising courses that give our members the skills they need to face the future and helping those who are leaving the business to find new employment opportunities.

In this edition of *Communique* you will hear the stories of ULRs making a difference to our members' lives each day, through introducing new ways of learning and through better use of online resources, through sourcing free or very low cost courses and through coaching and mentoring people at work to make sure that they can up-skill and gain greater confidence. It is inspiring that despite all the attacks on education, our ULRs have risen to the new challenges and refused to allow it to detract from their mission.

People power is winning in Wisconsin and in Tahrir Square, and it won in London on March 26. But people power is not just about huge demonstrations, it's about people coming together collectively on quite a small scale and doing extraordinary things every day. Our ULRs are a great example of this sort of people power and I think that we can be confident for the future of CWU learning that whatever is thrown at us, we now have ULRs who can face it and overcome it. Power to the people!

T. Lavelle



World Book Day promotes reading together

Proactive discussion about books has great benefits, says **Graham Kingston**, Lead ULR, North West Central Amal

[EVENT]

"*Trouble on the Heath* by Terry Jones was very amusing with a great twist and a happy ending"; "I enjoyed *Jack and Gill* by Lucy Cavendish, and definitely wasn't expecting the ending"; "I didn't enjoy *Follow Me* by Sheila O'Flanagan – it was tediously written".

These were just a few of the comments received following the launch of World Book Day and World Book Night at the Royal Mail Manual Data Entry Centre (MDEC), courtesy of the short questionnaires that participants were asked to complete (with each one being entered into a

free draw for a Flash Drive or Book Token).

The book I chose to give away for the night event was *A Life Like Any Other* by Alan Bennett, which tells of his unusual childhood and youth in Leeds, and particularly with the way he dealt with his mother's depression.

The 10 'quickreads' supplied for the day event are still eagerly being read by members across the shifts, with quite a few members planning to read them all over the next couple of weeks.

The MDEC Management supported the event by purchasing the

'Employer's Pack', which included a bookcase and promotional material and they will also be receiving feedback from the ULRs proving how beneficial it can be to engage with staff on this level and on such an enjoyable subject!

Although there is a great deal of work involved in preparing for such a seemingly straightforward promotion such as World Book Day, it is certainly worthwhile, when you see the enjoyment and proactive discussion that is generated by such an event at all levels.

In my opinion, if just one person discovers they have an as-yet hidden flair for reading, then all that effort is more than justified.

I hope other ULRs around the country will have similarly positive reactions to such events!



GEOFF HODGE RECEIVES ULR AWARD



CWU ULR Geoff Hodge received an award for bringing learning to his colleagues at a celebration of 10 years of union learning.

Described as "a majorly effective and an inspirational ULR", Geoff, who is CWU ULR at BT, based at Goonhilly, was recognised for "unending energy and enthusiasm", and it was suggested that all BT employees should "consider themselves lucky to have him". Typically, Geoff was more concerned that he was doing his best for his colleagues.

The celebration, held at the Headland Hotel, in Cornwall, was attended by TUC officials including Tom Wilson and heads of local industry as well as learning providers, and of course ULRs and their colleagues.

The celebration included awards in several categories, which all saluted the efforts of employers, learning providers and those who support the major efforts of "those on the ground" – the ULRs.

Along with other ULRs, Geoff's efforts have contributed enormously to the convergence funding received from a joint partnership between the RDA and European Social Funds.

His efforts to bring more than 60 new learners onto courses at various levels was also recognised.





CWU members debate at the STUC Everyday Skills Conference

Leonardo helps organise event

VISIT

Thirteen different languages were spoken at a question and answer session at the Cardiff Mail Centre recently.

CWU ULRs at Penarth Road recently played host to a group of European visitors, who were very interested in workplace learning.

The group dropped in on a British Sign Language class, and were full of admiration. They also attended a question and answer session, which involved 13 languages being spoken so that everyone attending could be involved!

The visitors were in Wales as guests of the Wales TUC with European funding provided by 'Leonardo', which is part of the European Commission's Lifelong Learning Programme. This project funds organisations to share expertise in vocational education and training across Europe.



Event write on track



LEARNING

Members organised a workshop on creative writing at an STUC event for everyday skills for the digital age.

CWU members Michael Gribbin and Stephen McGrath, CWU ULR Willie Ferry, Workers Educational Association member Craig Finnie and Glasgow University lecturer Alan McMunnigall were among those that attended the workshop, on February 23, and showcased the Key 2

Learn centre, which introduced creative writing classes back in the summer of 2009.

Michael said: "I have always been interested in writing and I found the Key 2 Learn creative writing course and its tutor, Alan McMunnigall, excellent. He gave me the confidence to develop my own writing skills."

“The Key 2 Learn creative writing course was excellent”
Michael Gribbin

Michael also spoke about the writing competition that took place in his mail centre, which he won, and how it led to an invitation to the Glasgow Aye Write Festival.

He also promoted his k2l Writing Group website (www.k2lwriting.co.uk), which he hopes will lead to more people getting involved.

Overall, the event received very positive feedback from ULRs, and organisers, and was considered among the best!

Michael said: "The whole experience – the writing class, the competition and the workshop – has been invaluable.

"Helping setup the writers group and the website has not only given me valuable experience but it has also given me the desire to participate more fully in the union.

"I not only hope to become a ULR but I also want to help as many members enjoy the same chances that I had to develop skills."

Members sign up at Six Book Challenge launch

BOOKS

A World Book Day event and Six Book Challenge was held at Mount Pleasant in March.

Mount ULR

Anita Forrester organised the event, and Finsbury Library, the Reading Agency and Unionlearn gave presentations and signed up

members to the Six Book Challenge – in total, 15 members signed up.

Men at Work author Mike Gayle and Finsbury Library's Pamela

Quantrill also gave talks.

LPW Vic Paulino said: "In these times of austerity, alternative learning initiatives like this are important."

Skyscraping backdrop to union learning event

LEARNING EVENT

A half-renovated and half-derelict Franciscan Monastery was the venue for a 'Supporting Union Learners' event in February.

The event, which included presentations on 'What's New in Supporting Learners', 'Sharing Local and Regional Information', 'Skills for Supporting Union Learners' and 'Progression for Reps', took place in Gorton Monastery, just a mile from the centre of Manchester.



The monastery is currently raising funds to complete the renovation by hosting corporate and private functions in what was once the nave of the main church, although other areas of the building are also accessible (and well worth a visit).

The event attracted unions from around the North West, with the CWU represented by North West regional project worker Ray Atkinson, lead ULR North Lancs and Cumbria Paul Newsham, and lead ULR North West Central Amal



Graham Kingston.

The day was interspersed with quizzes and questionnaires, as well as a very interesting role-play by Lesley Houghton, Ian Borkett and Louisa Shaw (Unionlearn) on how NOT to be a ULR!

In general, the full day seminar was very well received – and the lunch laid on was

excellent (as is always the case with Unionlearn functions) – but the poor sound quality and fluctuating temperatures of the venue did sometimes detract from the interesting topics.

Our thanks goes to the organisers and the staff of the monastery for what proved to be a most interesting and informative day.

BSL taster course a double success

TASTER COURSE

Members of the CWU Colchester and District postal branch and the South East Anglia branch (Telecoms) are showing what can be achieved when branches work together on learning.

Currently members from both branches are attending a 10-hour British Sign

language taster course, which has been supported and partly subsidised by the branches. This came about after learning open days in both Colchester and Brentwood where taster sessions were run on BSL.

Following great feedback, lead ULRs for the branches, Charlie Bloomfield and Maxiene Fraser,

thought it would be a good idea to run a joint course locally.

Sharon Cox, a member from BT in Colchester, said: "After only two weeks we can already sign our full names, where we work and what work we do, where we live, and ask and answer questions about our families. It has been really interesting and enjoyable."

New roles for Eastern Region

APPOINTMENTS

Two new officers were appointed to the Eastern Region learning committee at this year's AGM – chair Richard Wilkins and secretary Maxiene Fraser.

Vic Paulino said: "This committee is growing in strength and the learning agenda within the region is in very safe hands. I congratulate them both."

InBrief

The Skype's the limit

On March 9, the secretaries and chairs of the regional learning committees met with the education department in Bournemouth to discuss current issues affecting the learning agenda. Everyone took part in workshops, and learned about the wonders of the new CWU education website. Although Trish Lavelle was unable to attend the meeting in person, with the help of Skype technology she appeared via video call.

More London learning

The Greater London combined branch are planning to open a third learning centre in BT Colombo House, in the later part of 2011. The branch covers a big geographical area and already has two learning centres open and active at Edmonton and Ilford with PCS using both as a joint initiative. Learning project worker Vic Paulino said: "John Porter and Colin Carter are a credit to the branch for their relentless work on behalf of members' learning needs, I'm proud to be part of such a progressive branch."

ST DAVID'S DOUBLE WIN

FLOWERS AND FELLOWSHIP

The Wales national learning committee held their 2011 AGM on March 1, at the Chester mail centre - but they didn't let a small fact like geography stop them celebrating Welsh achievements!



Welsh daffodils adorned the table and Welsh cakes were enjoyed with a nice cuppa at the Wales national learning committee AGM.

There was further cause for celebration as the CWU 2011-2014 bid to the Wales union learning fund had also been successful. This means

learning that has been taking place in workplace learning centres throughout Wales will be able to continue with ULRs and their networks continuing to develop for the next three years.

Trish Lavelle, CWU Head of Education and Training, and Roger Jones, Development Officer WTUC, were both in attendance and Sally Joyner, lead ULR Shropshire and Mid

Wales branch – winner of the prestigious Ken McKenzie award – was again elected chair of the committee. Joanne Deans, learning co-ordinator South Wales branch, retained the role of secretary for the third year.

Jacky Morrey, secretary of the Midlands learning committee and lead ULR for Mid Wales, the Marches and North Staffs, also attended



CWU JOIN PCS IN CARDIFF

PCS (Wales) held their annual ULR event in Cardiff this year and two CWU project workers and three CWU ULRs were lucky enough to be invited.

The event, held on March 10 and 11, was formally opened by Steve Donoghue, chair of the PCS Wales education forum. This was followed by a short informative presentation on 'Using Modern Media to Learn and Campaign' by Jeff Evans. Jeff used video footage, taken on the previous weekend at Cardiff's 'Say No to Cuts' rally, and showed how it was now available on YouTube. This was followed by a lively presentation by John James who was actively looking for green-minded reps to attend courses that he will run on behalf of the WTUC in North and South Wales in May.

Lisa Derrick from Shelter Cymru then took the floor explaining how it provides services to people in housing need, aimed at addressing both crisis need and longer underlying issues. It offers independent advice, advocacy and legal representation, and its core advice service is provided in 21 of the 22 local authorities in Wales.

Sian Wibling, WTUC President, followed this by giving an outline of the new ADAPT or REACT 11 scheme, which will replace REACT funding available for training or re-skilling for those who have been made redundant. Peter Harris, PCS Wales secretary, followed this with a presentation linking ULRs and campaigning.

Several workshops were run during the event, with the ULRs being split into

groups so that they could all attend some on day one and the remainder the following day.

Then came what all the ULRs were waiting for – the ULR awards! These prestigious awards are given to those ULRs who have worked tirelessly to bring learning to their members, whether it's GCSE Maths, engaging in book swaps or making balloon animals. Kim Johnson, CWU project worker for Wales, presented the awards and enjoyed meeting the ULRs who received them.

Day two started with an interesting presentation by Emma Wallis from Learndirect. Workshops followed, and feedback was given by all the groups. As one of the workshops was dealing with aims and objectives of the new WULF project, the information gathered will be utilised by the project manager in their action plan.

Deri Bevan from Wales TUC then took the floor and gave information regarding Adult Learners Week. He explained that although NIACE Dysgu Cymru had no funding they would be advertising what unions were doing throughout the week and would be providing online templates for posters for unions to use to advertise their events.

Lastly, Jayne Smith, PCS learning services officer, took the floor and announced that their 2011-2014 WULF had indeed been successful and that she was looking forward to working with the CWU over the next few years.



and brought with her copies of Alan Bennet's *A Life Like Other People's* – one of the books printed for World Book Night 2011.

Up to 40,000 of these books have been printed and these, together with 24 other titles, will make a staggering one million books to be read, enjoyed and shared.

● For further information please log onto www.worldbooknight.org



THE ULR AWARDS ARE GIVEN TO THOSE WHO HAVE WORKED TIRELESSLY TO BRING LEARNING TO THEIR MEMBERS, WHETHER IT'S GCSE MATHS OR MAKING BALLOON ANIMALS



NEVER OFF DUTY, EVEN ON HOLIDAY!

South East No5 branch ULR **Parminder Kaur** proves her ULR skills are capable of being transferred across the globe as she offers a helping hand to school children in the Punjab region of India

Parminder Kaur, South East No5 branch lead ULR, has proved that CWU representatives never stop being reps – even when they are thousands of miles away on holiday!

During February, Parminder was taking a well deserved holiday with her family in India but a visit to a school, where her sister sponsors four children, inspired Parminder to get involved and put her CWU training into action.

Lack of resources

Parminder, who was on holiday with an old friend and colleague of the South East regional committee, Gemma Banks and her partner Tom Bell, were moved by the poverty and lack of resources at the school.

The Jalalpur Primary School, Hoshiarpur, in the Punjab region of India, has only one blackboard and very few tables and chairs for the 100 students.

The few resources they do have are old and in a poor state of repair, even though the cost of replacing these items seems relatively inexpensive.

Parminder explains: "Some

Right: Teachers at Jalalpur Primary School have to be resourceful with few resources

800 rupees, roughly £11, would buy a table and chairs to seat three children but the school does not have the resources available to them to buy the things they need."

Learning aids

While on site, Parminder, Gemma and Tom donated sports equipment and helped the children with lessons in English and Maths. The trio improvised by using learning aids downloaded onto their iPhones from websites they were familiar with in the UK. They accessed many of the learning sites from the links and resources on the CWU education and training website.

Parminder said: "I really enjoyed my time at the school and helping the children. They were very polite and so well behaved. It was good fun and very rewarding, but the lack of resources was shocking for me. Most children at the school do not have anything in the way of learning aids or equipment. The school is in a rural area at the heart of a farming community and many of the families cannot afford to send their children to school so they miss out on any kind of formal education.

“It reminds us of how lucky we are to have the resources and opportunities we have and that we should not take them for granted or let them be taken away”

“What we take for granted and see as one of our fundamental rights is financially beyond many of the families there and sadly their children miss out on an education. The teachers are very resourceful in the way they teach the children and use the limited resources to full effect but it reminds us of how lucky we are to have the resources and opportunities we have and that we should not take them for granted or let them be taken away.”

Help and support

Parminder and Gemma are determined to continue their sponsorship on a long term





basis and intend to return next year to offer more help and support to the school.

Parminder continued: "I want to raise enough money to donate a laptop for the school, as well as fundamental learning equipment such as textbooks, exercise books and pens. As a ULR, I have been trained by the CWU to get learning to whoever needs it, wherever they need it and helping the children here is just another strand of what I do as a ULR."

● For more information, or to make a donation, contact Parminder on mobile: 07795 822049 or email: parmindersingh@yahoo.co.uk

Right: Parminder (centre) with Jalalpur Primary School pupils



Below right: Parminder (centre) is determined to go back and offer more help to the children



SUPPORT IS PROVIDED FOR LEARNERS IN GLASGOW



Glasgow delivery office staff finally get the chance to learn

More than 40 staff can now access a range of courses in the workplace including IT and Spanish

UNO DOS TRES!



Royal Mail delivery office staff in Glasgow now have the opportunity to access learning.

Up to 83 staff based at Glasgow G1-G4 Baird Street delivery office were initially surveyed in October 2010 to ascertain their learning needs. More than 60 per cent of surveyed staff indicated they wished to access learning in the workplace with 27 members of staff requesting basic IT courses.

Staff started basic IT courses in January 2011, delivered by

Cumbernauld College and funded through the SUL ESF Learning Fund.

“Over 60 per cent of surveyed staff indicated they wished to access learning in the workplace”

A further 21 learners indicated their interest in accessing a Basic Conversational Spanish course which also started in January 2011. This course was delivered by Reid Kerr College and similarly received funding from

the SUL ESF Learning Fund.

With no on site ULR recruited yet, ULRs from the KEY 2 Learn Centre have supported this site after negotiating additional release time to arrange courses and provide support to learners on both courses. This was not an easy task as there are two separate lines of business involved. It did, however, show Royal Mail’s commitment to supporting the CWU in providing learning opportunities to all members employed in Royal Mail.

It’s particularly hard for delivery offices to offer courses to members because these sites have fewer staff, limited facilities and set opening times, and these are all problems ULRs have overcome.

The funding

available via the SUL ESF Learning Fund also gave the CWU the flexibility required to provide equipment at the delivery office to enable IT courses to be delivered.

It is envisaged that further courses will be provided by the CWU either on site or for staff to access courses at the nearby KEY 2 Learn Centre.

The CWU can now show that there is a demand from delivery office staff to access learning and that this demand can be met.

Up to 21 learners took part in a Basic Conversational Spanish course, which received funding from SUL ESF Learning Fund



'ALL ABOARD' FOR MAIL CENTRE STAFF

CWU branch lead ULR at South West No7 **Sandra Absalom** held a huge learning event in October that inspired hundreds of workers to make the most of their skills

The CWU branch lead ULR, **Sandra Absalom** offered Royal Mail staff lots of events during a mammoth tour of learning in October to try and get them "on the rails for learning"!

Centred on the Mail Centre's Isambard learning centre at Swindon and supported with funding from Unionlearn, Sandra came up with the ideas and put on the events with help from fellow ULRs and New College Swindon.

“This is about giving something back to our members and helping them to improve”

Mary Scott from New College ably assisted Sandra in her mission to give her colleagues the benefits of new skills. New College has a long association with the CWU in the South West, and continues to demonstrate its commitment to education at a number of sites over the last few years. Mary Scott also expressed her delight that so many new students were attracted to the college.

Events on just one day at Swindon (Thursday October 21) included practical instruction in Indian head massage, aromatherapy, Spanish and introductions to digital photography, online skills tests and many other

accessible courses.

Along with regular tutors from the college, John Williams and David O'Brien who were on hand to assist with practical help, and Sandra and her partner Paul Horwood were kept busy all day welcoming staff into the centre and making sure they got the most from their visit.

Aiming to give a welcoming, open and festive feel to the site, the centre was decked out with balloons.

Sandra was able to use her skills in IAG (Information Advice & Guidance), acquired when she successfully studied for a Level 3 NVQ in the subject, to its full extent during the sessions.

She said: "This is about giving something back to our members, helping them to get the most from their skills. Ultimately, anything we can do to help them improve on their skills we will try and do."

For some, it was their first visit to the learning centre, and the tutors saw many new faces.

With both the ULRs and tutors on hand they were introduced and able to experience basic IT skills too. Some people got their first ever email account, and many will be coming back to learn further IT skills.

Even Sandra exceeded her own high expectations of signing on 50 people to



Above: Sandra helps people with IT at her learning event in Swindon

UKonline by attracting more than 100, doubling her target figure.

With the aid of the 'Celebration of Learning' funding, people who signed up were rewarded with a selection of CWU pens, torches and calculators.

"It's hoped that seeing these in the workplace might make others curious and also spur them into visiting the learning centre!" said Sandra.

CWU South West learning project worker Phil Sutton was full of praise for Sandra and all her efforts and fully commended her energy and commitment to members at the event.

He said: "I was really pleased to be on hand to witness the kind of enthusiasm that Sandra and her colleagues were able to generate.

He added: "I feel it's great to be able to give back something to our members and Sandra and her team were able to demonstrate this objective in a very real way at this event."



ULR'S SUPPORT MEMBERS AT NINE ELMS

The CWU has managed to secure learning events and opportunities for staff at Nine Elms Royal Mail even though many obstacles were thrown in its path



Left: Tutor Kirsty Dunlop helps Nine Elms staff at the learning centre

Despite closures and cutback ULRs from London South West Postal branch have worked tirelessly to bring learning to Nine Elms Royal Mail staff.

Learning events kicked off with an open day in March 2010 – running until 2am in order to access all shifts – and Royal Mail was keen to work with Westminster College, who said they could deliver the courses members needed. The event was a big success with 150 members signing up for courses. With the support of the branch, a training room with 12 computers and a broadband connection was secured and courses (mainly basic IT and intermediate IT) were offered for 20 weeks.

Targeted for closure

Another open day was then held on January 7, 2011, where another 130 members

were signed up and registered with Westminster College. As Nine Elms has been targeted for closure, and many members will be taking voluntary redundancies, the branch wanted Westminster College to incorporate CV writing and interview skills too.

Westminster were of the view that due to government funding issues they could no longer provide any courses free of charge. This was not an acceptable outcome and the branch decided to review its options.

It met with Lewisham College on February 1, and the college was brilliant. The branch is now starting three courses on February 17: one basic IT and two intermediate IT classes of two hours duration each over 10

weeks. If more members come forward it will then look at running two full days a week. All courses will be provided free of charge and be adapted to suit the members' needs.

Education for life

Lead ULR John Downey (who has now completed ULR 1 & 2), has worked tirelessly with the London project worker to ensure members have been given every opportunity to further their education and life skills – much of it in his own time. John has now secured full release from Royal Mail for the duration of the 10-week programme. The programme will then carry over for as long as is necessary to up-skill the members and non members at Nine Elms.

Vic Paulino said: "I would like to thank John Downey and Paul Cox, the branch secretary, for their commitment to getting this project off the ground and Rossina Harris from Lewisham College for stepping in quickly and releasing tutors Kirsty Dunlop (pictured) and Graham Ferris, and for all their patience and hard work.

He continued: "We've had many obstacles put in our way at Nine Elms but the branch, the college and I have been determined to overcome them and the members will benefit from all that has been achieved."



COURSE CHANGE

Funding issues have led to a change in the ULR I and II courses

NEW UNION LEARNING REPS COURSE

Several ULR courses have been combined into one single course giving ULRs the chance to learn all the relevant skills within one year and gain an understanding of how they fit into the CWU. So far, the trials have been successful



The new ULR course 'guinea pigs'!

Due to the changes in both funding and certification via the Qualification Curriculum Framework (QCF) it was necessary to revise the CWU ULR courses last year.

This meant not only did the ULR I and II need to be revised into a single two-week linked course, to fit the credit framework, but that the existing short courses would neither be funded or accredited.

It was therefore decided to take the best elements of the existing ULR I, ULR II and Union Skills for ULRs and

combine then into a single course. The new courses were developed ready for trials last year. The ULR I was trialled in Exeter and, on the whole, was successful – although a couple of the activities needed streamlining. The ULR II was trialled at Alvescot using ULRs who had taken the old ULR I. Again, feedback from the tutors and students was taken and some amendments made, although mainly in relation to the running order.

The new ULR Stage 1 was run in its current

form at Alvescot in February with 13 new ULRs from several regions, and the Stage 2 will run during the week July 11-15, 2011.

There is a five to six month gap between the two stages to give ULRs a chance to develop and embed the skills taught during ULR Stage 1 (such as the Role of a ULR, ULRs and the Law, Learning Needs, Information, Advice and Guidance and Mapping) before moving on to look at learning provision, negotiation and other skills in Stage 2.

It is hoped that more

regional or cross-regional courses may also be run.

The course will also give ULRs the knowledge of where they fit into their branches and the CWU structure and how they can work with their branch and other reps.

Further ULR courses, such as Communication Skills for ULRs, were being considered but these will no longer be possible in the current format and climate. However, the number of ULRs interested in a communications skills course may enable a regional course (open to all reps and branch officers) to be organised.

There are also plans to develop some short workshop style courses which can be run at regional learning committees.

The initial workshops will be developed from some of the new sessions in the ULR course but the CWU also hope that ULRs and regional learning committees will indicate possible workshop subjects.

WULF PROJECTS HAVE BARK AND BITE

Unions came together in March to celebrate the achievements of the Wales Union Learning Fund, which has seen many older members rekindle a love for learning

March saw a gathering of learners, ULRs, project managers, providers, employers and Wales TUC to celebrate the success of WULF projects over the last two years.

Up to five unions gave presentations highlighting the diversity of courses and the innovative ideas they used to encourage learning in the workplace.

The CWU promoted their 'Ymlean Gyda'n Gilydd (Forward Together)' project, featuring two learners who gave an overview of their personal learning journeys.

Miriam Suleman, a nightshift worker from

Royal Mail works at Cardiff Mail Centre and has been a CWU member for nine years. She became interested in learning again through the British Sign Language (BSL) course, promoting communication between deaf and hearing people. Miriam had personal interest in this course as she not only works with colleague who is deaf but also has a brother who is deaf. Miriam completed two courses at the learning centre and, having increased her self-confidence, started a two-year BSL course, funded by the CWU via WULF and supported by Royal Mail.

Miriam explained that BSL

5K

...the number of 50-plus people who have enrolled on apprenticeship schemes over the last four years

is a unique language with its own grammar and learning – and “it was just like starting again!”

During her presentation she said: “I would encourage everyone to take advantage of the Life Long Learning programmes their employer and union offer in order to extend their education and to master new skills. Without their support I would never have engaged in this new challenge or the new goals that I've set myself.”

Janet James, a ULR from South Wales branch, explained that she was asked to become a ULR by one of her colleagues at the BT site in Newport. She recently completed a PowerPoint course through the WEA and has enrolled on an European Computer Driving Licence course provided by Learndirect, both funded by WULF. Janet believes that as a ULR you should be an ambassador for learning and cannot do this unless you become an active learner yourself.

She said: “I have been inspired by the way learning has changed my life. I never ever thought at the grand old age of 47 I would be back to learning new skills. I would always be the one to shy away from anything challenging but my confidence has grown immensely.”

Both speeches were met with rapturous applause from the audience. Well done!

Left: Kim Johnson far right with Jan James (left) and Miriam Suleman (middle)



BEATING BOUNDARIES

Fra Martin, ULR and acting branch secretary for Northern Ireland Combined, tells *Communiqué* about his recent initiative to help embattled children of Gaza

I was invited to attend a meeting with an activist who recently returned to Ireland from the last land convoy to Gaza.

The story he told me of how young children caught up in the conflict are being denied the right to educational opportunities because of the lack of educational resources, left me angry and saddened.

We take these resources for granted as a basic right and yet it is denied to so many, and I decided to pen a motion for submission to our AGM.

Overcoming obstacles

On hearing this story, our branch committee decided to invite the activist to address our meeting, and this generated probably one of the best debates we have had for a long time.

At the meeting he gave an in-depth overview of the conditions in Gaza and spoke of how he became involved in bringing aid to the city.

He also gave a detailed account of the obstacles they had to overcome on their journey.

At the end of the debate the

motion was agreed, which instructed the branch to work with our sister unions and like-minded organisations to organise a land convoy that would bring aid to our brothers and sisters in Gaza by late 2011.

Where there's a will...

Further to the motion, the branch has established contacts with our sister unions and we are now in the process of establishing a co-ordinating committee to take this forward.

There is still a lot of work to be done to achieve the motion in full, and the events currently being played out in the Middle East could easily have an impact on our ability to achieve what we need. However, I believe if there is a will to implement something positive, then there is always a way to do it.

Goal getting

I am confident we shall achieve our objective and the momentum that has been created thus far has mushroomed beyond my expectations.

The support of like-minded people within the trade union movement has been immense and it underlines, for me, that charity does not just begin at home.

If justice is our goal and education is the key, then by standing in solidarity with the people of Gaza I am sure that we can achieve our goal.

W.O.W Exhibition



Learn photo skills on new course

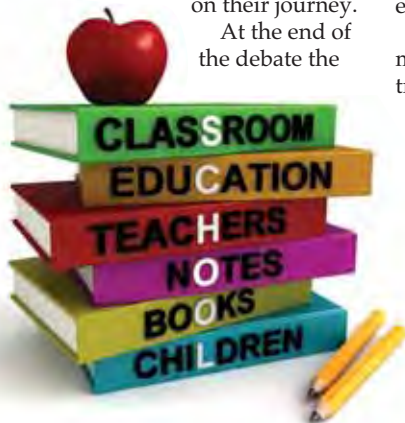
Proposed new Photoshop classes in the mail centre are proving a hit with the membership.

ULRs are saying they are being inundated with requests to join the course, and this has to be due in no small part to the high profile the CWU is getting through its involvement in the trade union exhibition taking place next month.

The CWU has been actively promoting this for the past few months and the quality of the contributions in the medium of poetry, short story writing, digital photography and painting, is a demonstration of the amazing talent members have but have never before been able to get recognition for.

The exhibition itself is based on a collaboration of the trade unions from within the Northern Ireland union learning fund coming together to demonstrate to the community at large that trade unionists are not just one-dimensional strikers but are creative constructive and caring, playing a vital role in society as a whole.

It is hoped that visitors to the exhibition of the World of Work will be inspired and seek the extension of lifelong learning opportunities to their communities and, of course, to encourage workers to join trade unions.



FIGHT THE
CLOSURE OF
INVALUABLE
LIBRARIES



Fight the funding cuts by joining the protests against library closures

Government cuts in funding for libraries are barriers to education and ULRs need to combat them

BARRIER TO BOOKS

Last year the CWU education department produced a booklet entitled *More Than Just Books* that highlighted the many valuable services provided by libraries throughout the UK.

The booklet focused on the important role libraries play in providing learning opportunities in local communities, and it's worth reminding ourselves of some of the services on offer from local libraries:

- Free internet access
- Adult learning courses
- Children's story time and events
- Homework clubs and revision groups
- Arts and crafts
- DVD/CD lending
- Local history
- Local events information
- Ancestry
- Reference
- Self help book scheme (formerly 'Books on Prescription')

Under threat

Many libraries, and the services they provide to local communities, are now under threat – not because people are not using them or because they don't provide value for money, but because they are seen as an easy target by the government.

No thought has been given to the impact these closures

will have on educational opportunities in local areas, in particular deprived areas, and no recognition has been given to the part libraries have played in tackling the shocking literacy and numeracy problems highlighted by Lord Moser in his 1999 report. Libraries have become victims of the anti-public service coalition.

Unfair ideology

The attacks on public services has seen thousands of people protesting against cuts. These cuts are seen by the majority as unfair and attributed to ideology rather than necessity.

At New Cross Library, in South East London, protesters taking part in a 'read-in' resolved to occupy the library overnight. Other events have included a rally outside Bolton Central Library and a flash mob book reading

at Cambridge Central Library. In Milton Keynes, where library users emptied the library of books in protest against plans to close it down, clearing all 16,000 volumes from its shelves. These are the type of activities that we should all be getting involved in.

ULRs play a major role in breaking down the barriers to learning and have been responsible for helping thousands of people to gain new skills and qualifications. Now learners face a new barrier: government cuts.

ULRs have a role to play in challenging cuts as they would challenge any other barrier. ULRs should be finding out what cuts are proposed in their local area and what impact they will have, and then take a full and active part in the many organised local protests.

