

## CWU calls for more Women to make their mark

The CWU is committed to embracing changes that will, hopefully, see more women becoming involved with making an impact in the CWU.

We are concerned that not enough of our women members are playing an active role in the Union, which means that we are not as representative of our membership as we could be. One of the reasons for producing this newsletter is to ask the question: 'Why is this the case?'

The CWU is currently made up of around 250,000 members, of which approximately 20% are female. Our members are mainly employed in Postal, Telecommunications, and Financial industries and we work for hundreds of different employers, some with better conditions than others.



**Professor Mary Davis made an inspiring speech to Women Activists at the 2006 Women's Conference**

But, unfortunately, what is usually common in all our workplaces is that women are still faring much worse than their male counterparts in terms of overall pay and conditions. This is despite several pieces of legislation being enacted over the last 30 years, or so, to redress this imbalance; such as The Equal Pay Act, The Sex discrimination Act and Part Time Workers Regulations

The CWU has been involved in a number of campaigns and projects that have highlighted some of the major hurdles that women face in the workplace, such as action on:

### **Gender job segregation**

Women tend to be funnelled down particular occupational pathways and it is no accident that these jobs tend to be lower paid, lower status and lower valued than 'traditional male' jobs.

### **Gender Pay Gap**

Despite equal pay for work of equal value and other legislation, women are still being paid less per hour than their male counterparts for very similar work, they have less access to overtime and bonus payments, and are less likely to get promotion.

### **Domestic responsibilities**

Despite women making up 50% of the working population, the vast majority of domestic and caring responsibilities still lie with women. Access to quality, affordable childcare and lack of access to flexible working hours remains a huge barrier to women's advancement.

### **Public Bodies**

Women are 52% of the population yet they remain woefully under represented on public bodies, in local and National Government

(exceptions are, thankfully emerging with the Wales Assembly and the Scottish parliament), on company boards, as representatives of interest groups and public opinion. Indeed, women are overall, less likely to be in positions of power and influence than men, and, yes, women are still under represented within trade union hierarchies too.



**Grace Mitchell, one of the CWU's leading female officers**

### **Special points of interest:**

Helping victims of sexual harassment in the workplace. Do you know where to turn to for support?

See back page.

# Too few Women in the higher echelons

We only have to look at our own Union structure to see how great the challenge is.

Although the problem has been slightly alleviated by the election of two women on to the postal NEC there is still room for great improvement.

The Telecoms constituency fairs slightly better. It must be recognised however that far fewer women work as telecom engineers and this is one of the points we are trying to make about job segregation. BT and other Telecom companies should be doing more to encourage women to take up engineering work.

There is a more healthy proportion of women in post from the clerical constituency though again, taking the flip side of job segregation, this is not surprising as women employees predominate in the call centre and office working environments so this is to be expected.

We have seen some excellent developments in recent years with our own Jeannie Drake being elected as the TUC president and subsequently chairing the TUC Conference earlier in the year. It was a great honour for the CWU and for her to be bestowed with this responsibility.



*Jeannie Drake, Deputy General Secretary for Telecoms*

## Effective Organisation

The CWU believes it is important to maximise the female involvement with the CWU structures. This effectively means not only more women getting more active in the Union but recruiting any non-Union female members. If you know a non-member pass them a copy of this newsletter so they can see what the CWU is doing for its female members.

● The date for the next CWU Women's Conference will be Saturday, 20 January 2007. Venue to be confirmed.

HARASSMENT HELPLINE  
0800 107 1909  
email: [cwudignityandrespect@firstassist.co.uk](mailto:cwudignityandrespect@firstassist.co.uk)

## Working towards Proportionality

It is well known that workers who belong to a recognised trade union are likely to enjoy better pay and conditions, health and safety and a better working environment overall than people without access to unions in their workplace.

Our union is run mainly by our activists who are volunteers. They have many skills and attributes that help the CWU make gains for its members in the workplace and in wider

society. However, it is important to ensure that we are truly representing the needs of our members.

The CWU want more women members to come on board and help the CWU drive the agenda on equality issues as well as having an input into all the union's other work.

Please read on and find out how you can get involved.

WOMEN IN THE CWU  
"The Union needs YOU"

# CWU Women's Conference 2006

The 2006 CWU Women's Conference took place earlier this year at the Library Theatre in Birmingham.

Lots of issues, all relevant to helping the female cause, were debated and there were some excellent speeches made from first time speakers. Have you ever thought that this could be you we are talking about?

There were 66 Branches at the Conference and including visitors and delegates, there were about 150 people in attendance, which was a record turn-out.

The Conference proved in no uncertain terms that there is a new generation of female activists waiting in the wings.

We would strongly encourage every single female CWU member to consider a role in the CWU. Naturally it won't be for everyone's liking though for some of you it could be the start of something very exciting.

A copy of the Conference will hopefully be available on DVD in due course and this will be communicated via your branch.

There were a number of guest speakers at



***CWU's National Equality Officer, Michele Emerson with Public and Commercial Services president, Janice Godrich.***

the Conference and as this Newsletter has already mentioned, one of the speakers, Mary Davis, gave a truly inspirational speech encouraging women to stand up and be counted.

Other speakers included Jeannie Drake,

who is also featured in the newsletter, Janice Godrich the PCS President, Susie Scott from the Black Country Living Museum and lastly our very own General Secretary, Billy Hayes who largely echoed the sentiments of Mary Davis.

## Developing Union Policy

The Equal Opportunities Department and the Women's Advisory Committee are keen to see CWU Branches playing their part in the development of Union policy that will help to make our Union more representative of its members.

This approach applies to all of the equality strands and not just for women.

If you have an idea about a motion for

Annual Conference then make a note of it and have it submitted to your Branch meeting as this is the forum where Branches will decide what motions are agreed to be sent in to CWU HQ.

If any members need general advice on how to submit a motion please contact our department by calling 020 8971 7388 and we will be happy to offer advice in this area.

*"The CWU want more women members to come on board and help the Union to drive the agenda on equality"*

## We want to hear your views—what do you think?

The CWU is launching with this newsletter a questionnaire that we want all our female members to fill in.

We will be looking to get an insight into the issues that you feel the Union should be tackling hard.

Some of the questions we will be asking will be trying to find out what more the Union can do to make the prospect of getting involved in your Union more attractive for you.

We will also want to find out what

specifically you find a big turn-off in terms of why you wouldn't consider a union role.

Your views are very important, so please take the time to complete the questionnaire overleaf.

# CWU Women's Survey

This survey is going out to every single female member in the Communication Workers Union. The CWU is committed to ensuring that the Union is representative of its membership. We want to know if you have considered playing a more involved role in your Union. If you have but you felt uncomfortable – let us know. Please answer the questions honestly and return them back to us by **FRIDAY, 29 SEPTEMBER.**

**CWU, Equal Opportunities Department, 150 The Broadway, London, SW19 1RX**

<b>Question 1</b>	Do you know the name of your local CWU Branch?	YES/NO
<b>Question 2</b>	Do you know anyone on your local CWU Branch Committee?	YES/NO
<b>Question 3</b>	Have you ever been a union workplace rep, if so please state brief description of title.	
<b>Question 4</b>	Do you have any concerns about being a Union rep? If so please elaborate briefly in box provided.	
<b>Question 5</b>	What do you think the Union could be doing to encourage more women to get involved with their Branch or Region?	
<b>Question 6</b>	In a follow-up to Q3 if you have been a rep in the past and have left please state the reason why you left that role. Please elaborate briefly in box provided.	
<b>Question 7</b>	The CWU Women's Conference took place earlier this year in Birmingham. Were you aware that it was taking place? And if so please state how you were made aware.	YES/NO
<b>Question 8</b>	Would you be interested in attending a 1-day Women's school specially designed to give you an insight into how the CWU works?	YES/NO
<b>Question 9</b>	What issues do you feel that the CWU should be tackling hard in terms of trying to make a difference for a female Union membership?	
<b>Question 10</b>	What is the name of the company or employer you work for?	
<b>Question 11</b>	On the subject of Sexual Harassment do you feel confident the CWU is able to support you through the processes in terms of registering your complaint and seeing it through to an eventual internal conclusion? Please expand on your answers as necessary.	
<b>Question 12</b>	Have you ever been a victim of harassment on the grounds of your gender, or received any other inappropriate comments which made you feel embarrassed and affected your dignity at work? If so did you report it and what was the outcome if you did?	
<b>Question 13</b>	What do you believe the CWU can do to better support victims of sexual harassment? Are you aware of the National Bullying & Harassment Helpline which is advertised on every single copy of the Voice and is also in this newsletter?	
<b>Question 14</b>	Have you received a copy of the CWU's Dealing with Harassment members guide booklet?	YES/NO