MAY SCREWS IT UP AS LABOUR MAKES PLEDGES TO CWU MEMBERS

• NATIONALISE ROYAL MAIL
• £££ FOR BROADBAND
• A NATIONAL POST BANK

The VOICE can exclusively reveal that Theresa May is anything but strong and stable as the Labour Party has announced a series of manifesto commitments that deliver on key issues for the CWU. Alongside our industry campaigns it has pledged to end the housing crisis, put £6bn into the NHS and protect the triple lock on state pensions. Read more inside...
Labor's Bold Political Vision

By stark contrast, whatever people have felt about the Labour Party in the past, it is now offering the boldest vision of any political party since the Second World War. For CWU members it has committed to renationalising Royal Mail, putting significant investment into superfast and ultrafast broadband, setting up a Post Bank, halting the Crown Office and Probate and setting up a Care Bank, slashing council cuts, putting in place a real living wage and setting up a new scheme for dealing with payday loan companies.

Alongside this, Labour is now putting forward a wider agenda for a better Britain, including scrapping the agency workers’ loophole. All of this, and more, is set out in the manifesto that is available to download now.

Labour is the only party with a plan to deliver fundamental change. A National Education Service; 100,000 council homes a year; renationalising rail, water and energy; £6bn extra for the NHS; investment to grow the economy outside London and a crackdown on a labour market that operates like the old wild west.

In the EU referendum last year the country voted to ‘take back control.’ Labour’s manifesto will deliver this for working people, without the fear and division courted by the Tories. Put simply, the status quo is neither acceptable nor sustainable. In the fifth richest country in the world, don’t let anyone tell you decent housing, jobs, pensions or social care should be out of reach. Don’t let anyone tell you that our economy can’t be made to work for the many not the few.

Whatever the outcome of this election, it’s time for the trade union movement to step up to the plate. All unions need to come together and develop a major strategy to tackle insecure employment and in-work poverty head-on. I’ll be saying more on how we do this in my next column.

May/June 2017
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People’s Politics

Our children deserve a better Britain!

Shadow Secretary of State for Education Angela Rayner ‘closed the show’ at CWU Annual Conference’s People’s Politics event (see page 19) with an inspiring speech, which won cheers, a prolonged standing ovation, and inspired people to work for a Labour election victory...

Neve did I think I’d be stood in front of you today – a girl from a council estate who was told I’d never amount to anything.” Angela began, opening up to the audience about her early life and the challenges she struggled to overcome.

“When I was growing up, my mum couldn’t read or write, so when I went to school I wasn’t school-ready and I was already behind my peers.

“Of course, I didn’t understand that at that age. I didn’t understand the life and the opportunities that were stolen from me or from my mum,” she explained.

The Ashton-under-Lyne MP spoke of how, as a teenager “I was looking for love and I ended up pregnant at 16” and that she had “left school with no qualifications and left a bit of a waste of space.”

“I felt ashamed. I felt I’d let everyone down, including my parents.”

But having her baby boy, Ryan, in 1997 made her determined to build a better life, she told her audience, using her own life story to illustrate how absolutely essential are the public services that many of us take for granted.

OPPORTUNITIES UNDER ATTACK

The National Health Service gave her son, born at 23 weeks, “the opportunity of life.” The availability of council housing meant she and Ryan had a home, and the welfare support that this small family unit received enabled Angela to study and find a pathway to overcome the thought of so many of our own young people may not have the chance to build a better life.

For CWU members it has committed to renationalising Royal Mail, putting significant investment into superfast and ultrafast broadband, setting up a Post Bank, halting the Crown Office and Probate and setting up a Care Bank, slashing council cuts, putting in place a real living wage and setting up a new scheme for dealing with payday loan companies.

But, with the NHS under attack, adult education becoming another victim of austerity, and local authority care being privatised, Angela’s worry is that today’s young people may not have the chance to build a better life.

Her own vivid memory of herself as a vulnerable and disadvantaged young woman who needed the help and support that only a decent society can provide, and the thought of so many of our own young people in similar situations today, and tomorrow, is what spurs her on politically. Angela explained.

“I ask myself, what opportunities would the Angela Rayner of today have?” she pondered aloud, and, to loud cheers, revealed that “every day I’m in Parliament, when I stand at that Dispatch Box, I never forget that I’m here standing up for the Angela Rayners of today and those people who need our support.”

She urged everyone to “make sure that we stand up for every single parent in the UK. The Great British public want fairness, they want to work hard and be able to live.”

The election on June 8th is “about what we want for Great Britain,” Angela pointed out, setting out the stark choice facing voters.

“We want an Labour Government like the 1945 Labour Government? It’s not a pipe dream... ANGELA RAYNER

Do we want another Labour Government like the 1945 Labour Government? It’s not a pipe dream...

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**Four Pillars campaign gets set to travel the country**

Royals Mail’s latest annual accounts show that, despite tough trading conditions and unfurl competition, the hard work and extra effort of CWU members have delivered another strong set of company results. But the solid financial performance also exposes the injustice of the company’s current plans to abandon our agenda for growth and stability, cutback on investment and pursue a race to the bottom on pay and conditions.

At a time when the company has declared £1.2 billion in profits, £800m in cost savings and paid out another £225m in dividends, it is grossly unfair that they are choosing to attack members’ terms and conditions on grounds of affordability.

Indeed, the latest results show the company has the financial platform to deliver the CWU’s Four Pillars of Security.

Since privatisation, Royal Mail has made almost £3 billion in profits and shelved out £800m in dividend payments to shareholders.

But the company need to get their priorities right, turn their focus away from short-term shareholder interest and honour the promises they made to the CWU at the time of privatisation to protect terms and conditions, maintain our agreements, safeguard the USOs and deliver the added investment needed to secure long-term growth and innovation in the business.

Our members have delivered success and they deserve their fair share of the reward.

Terry Pullinger

DEPUTY GENERAL SECRETARY (POSTAL)

There’s much to do - but also a renewed sense of collective purpose and positive developments too on some fronts

Job security for members in D2 is another key priority - as is achieving better new-starter pay and attendance improvements to the much inferior BT Retirement Savings Scheme.

So, there’s much to do - but also a renewed sense of collective purpose and positive developments too on some fronts.

There will be no risks to members’ future job security or terms and conditions when they transfer into Openreach Ltd.

Andy Kerr

DEPUTY GENERAL SECRETARY (TFS)

### Stark message to Telefónica

The CWU has sent a clear message to Telefónica that it will fight ‘by all means necessary’ any move towards compulsory redundancies as the company moves towards a stock market flotation of Q2.

Following the collapse of the £10.3bn takeover by Hutchison, three years of uncertainty and a major reorganisation earlier this year in which 383 CWU grades were put at risk of redundancy, delegates at the union’s Telecoms Industry Conference in April unanimously committed the Executive to place job security issues centre stage in any discussions with the company.

Proposing the motion in the name of the TFS’s Executive, assistant secretary Sally Bridge insisted the ‘stakes were high’, citing Telefónica’s long track record of outsourcing, offshoring, cost cutting and job shedding.

"During the recent consultation period we got extremely close to the very thing that the union fears the worst, which is compulsory redundancies," Sally pointed out.

"We cannot assume that the latest wave of reorganisation will be the last... and we need to instil our message into Telefónica that we will, if necessary, fight to save our members’ jobs."

Full story at: www.cwu.org/voice
Negotiations demanded on Workforce 2020 contracts

WE NEED TO TALK, BT TOLD

Negotiations are to be sought with BT in an attempt to improve the terms and conditions of staff employed on NewSRD Workforce 2020 contracts. Telecoms & Financial Services Conference delegates unanimously committed the union to the ultimate goal of eradicating disparities between the terms and conditions of the workforces employed since September 2004 and their longer-serving colleagues. There was a general acceptance, however, that the union’s initial aim must be to seek to narrow the gap as far as and as quickly as possible.

Proposing the composite motion on behalf of the TFLS, Executive, deputy general secretary Andy Kerr stressed that, while the union had agreed to the introduction of Workforce 2020 TelCoPs in 2004 with the specific aim of bringing previously contracted out work back into the union’s control, it was important to examine whether or not the long-term aim must be to eradicate PM altogether.

“We knew this was going to be difficult. But not at all the campaign,” acknowledged Mark Elwin of West Yorkshire branch in moving the motion. “We must also remind ourselves and BT about our ultimate aim, let’s give performance management, the red card – let’s kick it out!”

Pointing out that the huge increase in the number of members active on Workforce 2020 compared with the 2000 figure had made it even more obvious that “different members have different circumstances,” the motion concluded: “For things to change to a different picture. Venturers Voice Services – paint a very different picture. We are not going to happen overnight, but we need to start these negotiations with BT as soon as possible.”

Fight continues to address BT performance management woes

ABUSES STILL RIFE IN SOME AREAS

The ending of performance management (PM) in its current form within BT must remain one of the union’s top priorities, CWU Annual Conference has agreed. Telecoms & Financial Services delegates overwhelmingly supported a motion praising efforts of CWU national negotiators to address the punitive and counter-productive elements of a system that is destroying lives and damaging the business to boot – while also reiterating existing existing concerns that the long-term aim must be to eradicate PM altogether.

“We need to remember that those 8,000 jobs would not be in place had we not agreed this contract. We did the right thing then, but we always said that at some point we would come back looking for improvements. Let’s get out and campaign for that now!”

Seconding the motion, Jonathan Young of South London, Surrey and North Hampshire branch pointed out that “different members have different issues”, with Workforce 2020 contracts, with discrepancies in pay, hours, annual leave and sick leave all causing varying levels of irritation dependent on personal circumstances.

Liam Reed of South East Central, himself a Workforce 2020 engineer, confirmed that for him, it was less about pay and more about “hours worked, sick pay and other terms and conditions” – and Jacqui Stawarz of Lanarkshire & Cumbria agreed that the 37.5 hour week was the biggest single bugbear amongst Workforce 2020 members at Accrington call centre. Jonathan concluded: “This is going to be a long process, and it’s not going to happen overnight, but we need to start these negotiations with BT as soon as possible.”

Our Wage in Retirement proposal

Over recent weeks, as part of the Four Pillars campaign, deputy general secretary (postal) Terry Pullinger and his senior CWU negotiating team have been in talks with the business on the future of pensions in the company. The Voice asked Terry for an update...

“Rather than propping up two flawed pension schemes currently in existence, the union has proposed an end to the current tiered pension provision and for everyone to belong to a new, genuine Wage in Retirement Scheme (WinRS) from April 2018.

The new scheme aims to preserve the best elements of a defined benefit scheme – fixed contribution rates and guaranteed benefit outcomes – and scrap altogether the inferior, defined contribution scheme.

Terry Pullinger tells The Voice that, “our ground breaking and innovative WinRS proposal, developed in association with First Actuarial and supported by a growing body of industry experts, academics, politicians and financial commentators, not only meets the union’s objectives to secure a decent income and retirement security for all our members, but will provide a lasting pension solution that addresses all the company’s concerns around managing future pension costs and long-term risks.

However, despite conceding that all of the WinRS modelling and figures are robust, that a new growth-based investment strategy is possible with the company working for at least the next 20 years, Royal Mail has argued that it is “unaffordable” and “too risky.”

But, Terry points out that the company’s arguments “simply don’t stand up to close inspection.”

“On affordability, the company has again chosen to prioritise short-term cost considerations, by seeking to cut overall pension costs and completely de-risk future pension liabilities,” he explains.

“Royal Mail is effectively breaking the pension promise made at the time of privatisation, when it commited to safeguard the future of the RMPF and maintain annual employer pension contributions to at least £400 million,” our DGSP continues.

On investments, Royal Mail is arguing that it is “too risky to invest 100 per cent of pension money in diversified asset such shares” – at present, most of the company’s investments in the RMPF are in low returning bonds.

But Terry says this misrepresents the union’s proposal, which is based on a “reasonable, alternative investment strategy and a diversified portfolio with a large allocation to growth assets that will deliver better long-term returns and better pension outcomes for members.”

And Royal Mail has not only conceded that a different investment strategy is possible but it plans to do exactly that with its own cash balance scheme, he points out. On the question of risk, WinRS is fundamentally predicated on long-term risk management, with funding checked annually and the benefits adjusted where necessary to match the return on the assets – as a result, there is no need for Royal Mail to do-risk the assets.

As the scheme is open to all employees, and assuming Royal Mail is confident in the scope to manage the scheme within its fixed contribution rate, the primary reason for running a DC scheme, cost control, is met. The DC scheme could therefore be closed and the new scheme could receive new entrants.

“Instead of placing all current RMPF members into the DC scheme, the company has proposed its own complicated cash-balance, lump-sum scheme,” says Terry.

“But the orchestrations that the business has sent out in its own communications to staff comparing members’ pension outcomes between the DC and cash-balance scheme are misleading – they should compare current DB benefits with the outcomes from the DC or cash balance schemes.

“The simple fact is: the outcomes from both of Royal Mail’s proposed schemes will still mean members receive vastly inferior benefits to those provided by either the current DB scheme or WinRS,” Terry adds.

Based on our actuarial advice, the CWU remains convinced that WinRS is more cost efficient than either of the current schemes or the newly proposed cash balance scheme, it can be managed within the fixed contributions provided by the employer and employees and will deliver far better benefit outcomes than any DC alternative.

“We are determined to expose Royal Mail’s dogma and deliver a fair equal and secure wage in retirement pension provision for all,” our DGSP concludes.
Better training needed, Openreach told

‘SINK OR SWIM’ UNFAIR

Disregard at the woefully inadequate training being given to current Openreach recruits erupted into a heartfelt plea for action on behalf of new joiners who are effectively being left to ‘sink or swim’ in the cruelest of ways.

On the final day of CWU Annual Conference speaker after speaker told of their sorrow and concern for inexperienced and often young workers who are being sent out into the field with little idea of how to do the job – yet still being subjected to the idea of how to do the job – yet still being subjected to the current situation is not just placing intolerable pressure on new joiners but harming the company to boot as network quality and customer service is inevitably suffering.

Stressing that the problem is primarily one of desperately inadequate follow-on training as recruits are ‘let loose on the network’, rather than a criticism of the ‘fantastic job’ carried out by regional and satellite schools, Davie concluded: “I hope that the managers sitting upstairs in the gallery have listened to what’s been said very carefully indeed.”

Andy insisted that he was “absolutely confident we can get the safeguards right” – stressing that a number of assurances have already been verbally given by the company, but he added: “If we can’t get a written binding agreement we’ll campaign amongst our membership and ballot for industrial action.”

INDUSTRY NEWS

Telecoms & Financial Services

Binding safeguards demanded on Openreach separation

An unequivocal message has been sent to BT that cast iron guarantees are needed on the union’s continued ability to collectively represent members across the whole of BT Group before the legal separation of Openreach can occur. Simon Alford reports

Smaller TUPE of around 31,000 Openreach staff to a new legally separate wholly-owned subsidiary now isn’t a certainty – following Ofcom’s welcome decision to rule out a fully-fledged break-up of BT – the union is insisting it expects TUPE negotiations to culminate in an agreement that defends the interests of members across BT Group.

Safeguards being demanded cover not just members’ terms and conditions, but also free movement of staff between BT and the re-named Openreach Ltd – including redeployment rights as defined in NewGRID. Unanimously backing an emergency motion in the name of the Telefonic Executive, delegates at CWU Annual Conference agreed that it must be made crystal clear to the company that, along with any attempt by BT or Openreach Ltd to use legal separation as a vehicle to undermine Ts&Cs – and that any company failure to agree the binding safeguards the union is demanding will be met with still resistance, including industrial action if appropriate.

CROWN GUARANTEE VITAL

Proposing the motion, deputy general secretary Andy Kerr started by insisting that the union will not accept the transfer of a single member over to Openreach Ltd until the so-called ‘Crown guarantee’, that has covered the BT Pension Scheme (BTPS) since privatisation, is “absolutely buttoned down and extended to Openreach Ltd.”

Turning to Telcos, Andy added: “We’ve made it clear to BT that we expect those people to move over in a seamless fashion – they move from one day working for BT Plc to the next day working for Openreach Ltd. Nothing should change, and that’s what our posture has to be.”

There will be just one set of pay negotiations for all NewGRID members with BT Group next year, the year after that and forevermore as far as I’m concerned. What we also need to get in place, however, is a guarantee that people will still be able to be redeployed across the piece – from BT Plc to Openreach and vice versa.”

Andy insisted that he was “absolutely confident we can get the safeguards right” – stressing that a number of assurances have already been verbally given by the company, but he added: “If we can’t get a written binding agreement we’ll campaign amongst our membership and ballot for industrial action.”

Biggest TUPE in History

Seconding the motion, Bill Dixon of South London, Surrey & North Hampshire referred to legal separation as “the most monumental thing that has happened to BT since privatisation in 1984” – pointing out the need to get the safeguards right has been demonstrated by the divergence of terms of NewGRID grades in O, following its divestment and also the union’s experience in EE (see page 13) and BTSF (see page 22).

“It’s going to be the biggest TUPE in history – and the CWU has to ensure it’s the best TUPE in history for our members,” Bill concluded.

Praising the fact that the safeguards being demanded are so wide-ranging and comprehensive, Angela Teeling of Greater Mersonsey & SW Lancs joked that “if Carlsberg did motions it would be a bit like this one!” – but added with deadly seriousness that it was down to the union to “drive this forward” because when it comes to defending members’ interests “BT isn’t going to do it itself.”

On a positive note, however, in a special address to TelEFS Conference delegates, Openreach CEO Clive Selley insisted that Openreach’s legal separation posed no risk to network job security and no agenda from the company to leverage change to CWU members’ terms and conditions.

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Tracking ILM data abuse

OPENREACH WARNED

A stern warning has been delivered to Openreach that it risks triggering a dispute if clear management breaches of the agreed protocols on the use of ILM tracker data don’t cease by the end of August.

Telecoms & Financial Services Conference delegates unanimously committed the Executive to challenge Service Delivery with assurances have already been given to current Openreach recruits being sent out with less than four weeks’ training” and sometimes being buddied by colleagues with less than six months’ experience themselves. Hannah Williams of North Wales & Chester Combined

recalled pulling over when she’d driven past a new recruit working on a cab box, only to find out that he’d been there for three hours desperately trying to work out something that she was able to tell him in seconds. “It’s really sad that these guys are being sent out without the training they need, as well as the fact that they’re often scared to call their managers for help.”

Adding his own voice to the clamour for change national officer for Openreach Davie Bowman pointed out the current situation is not just placing intolerable pressure on new joiners but harming the company to boot as network quality and customer service is inevitably suffering.

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Full story at www.cwu.org/voice/

SAFETY PROCEDURE FLAWED

Pressure must be placed on Openreach to follow its own protocols that state that engineers should be alerted when they are allocated work in a ‘high risk area’, CWU Annual Conference has agreed.

With speakers citing evidence that this isn’t always the case – and also reporting long delays with regards to back-up being provided to covering jobs in locations designated ‘two-person working areas’ – delegates unanimously backed a Coventry branch motion committing the union to seek to tighten procedures designed to prevent engineers carrying valuable equipment being left vulnerable to attack.

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Deputy general secretary Terry Pullinger praised the “inspirational spirit of unity” among delegates as he brought the curtain down on CWU Conference 2017 in Bournemouth last month…

CONFERENCE ROUND-UP

HUNDREDS OF UNION MEMBERS, REPRESENTING THOUSANDS OF CWU MEMBERS, SPENT THREE DAYS WORKING HARD IN DISCUSSION, DEBATE, AND DECISION-MAKING, SETTING THE CWU’S INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY FOR THE COMING YEAR.

Topping the Conference agenda this year were the two top issues facing the union’s postal members – our Royal Mail national negotiations and the ongoing fight to thwart the attack on our Crown Post Office network.

After delegates had unanimously backed the Executive’s Four Pillars strategy, (see page 4), attention turned to the struggle being faced by our Post Office members, with a proposition aimed at intensifying the fight to thwart management’s franchising and closure programme.

SAVE OUR CROWNs

Assistant secretary Andy Furey paid tribute to the growing resistance to the destruction of our Crown network and the unprecedented attacks on the terms and conditions and job security of our Post Office members, as he moved the motion on behalf of the Executive.

Andry strongly praised members, who have taken six days of strike action, organised local protests and have won strong public support, and he also thanked general secretary Dave Ward and deputy general secretary Terry Pullinger for their “steady support and leadership.”

“Our members are under attack and they are facing a bleak future,” he said, going on to highlight a recent membership survey that had returned “enormous” 93 plus percentage majorities on a number of questions, including a vote of no-confidence in the national Post Office management.

After outlining the union’s ongoing strategy, and the activities planned for the coming period, Andy concluded: “We have the ability to make a difference, but we do need to return to a Labour government as it is the best way to thwart management’s franchising and closure programme.

Organised by residents opposing any Crown Office Campaign events near you – and please come along and show your support.”

ORGANISING

Several motions focussed on the vital task of increasing CWU membership, density and organisation, both within Royal Mail Group and in the wider delivery and logistics sector.

Mark Greenhill, secretary of Leicestershire Branch, moved a successful proposition instructing the Executive to run a recruitment campaign aimed at employees of courier, panel and mail companies outside of Royal Mail Group.

Mark suggested that, on top of the normal organising and recruitment activities, the CWU should promote itself to these individuals through advertising in transport magazines and other publications “advertising the benefits of joining the CWU.”

Responding to the motion on behalf of the Executive, Shelley Banbury said that the leadership was in favour of extending the union’s organising and recruitment strategy to other companies, but insisted: “If we do not commit to this, branches have the responsibility to accept the membership of new employees.

“Following Conference, we’ll sit down and list the target companies,” Shelley said, adding that a campaign along these lines can only work “with the right strategy.”

Conference also adopted a resolution committing branch officers, area reps and unit reps to working with the union’s regional organisers to carry out the CWU’s organising and recruitment agenda with Royal Mail Group.

Moving this motion, South Central Postal branch secretary Chad Croom told delegates: “As a branch secretary, I’m involved in recruitment and we’ve got a very good relationship with our regional organiser. Only by working co-operatively in this way can the union achieve its targets on recruitment, he pointed out.

Speaking to this debate, Shelley Banbury highlighted the success of the union’s recruitment and organising work within RMCI, telling delegates that non-membership within the business had been brought down from 26,492 to 18,990.

“It’s important to remember that recruitment is everyone’s responsibility,” she stressed, and highlighted the importance of making sure that the CWU sends a representative to every induction session of new employees.

SAFETY ISSUES

A motion calling for the union to negotiate with Royal Mail to extend accident reporting to accidents occurring while travelling to and from work was carried by Conference, following a debate which highlighted some recent tragic incidents.

Rumford, Amala area safety rep Ryan Ward told delegates of a friend and colleague who had been run over and killed, and of two other members who had been left with physical disabilities after being the victims of accidents.

“We suggest that Royal Mail should return to the negotiating table on this matter,” he said.

And a proposition urging the return of the “red line” maximum load height indicator in all trailers, including double deckers, to tackle the “increasing number of accidents involving items falling from the back of trailers” won the support of delegates.

Speaking in support of the motion, regional parcels organiser Mark Walsh said: “There is an issue here. Some people are having to wear safety helmets to open the doors.”

Nicola Willmer, from Kent District, told Conference that “incidents of falling objects have increased and loads are getting heavier” and added: “It’s not just a hub issue, it’s hub to depot and depot to hub.”

And Highland Amal branch delegate Craig Townell warned: “Something needs to be done because someone’s going to be seriously injured.”

CHALLENGE AHEAD

In total, delegates discussed, debated and voted on 154 motions, from the protection of allowances, workplace discussions and facilities to the equal rights for new starters, apprenticeships and important discussions on the rights of members with physical and mental health difficulties and ensuring appropriate reasonable adjustments are made.

On the last day of Conference, delegates gave emotional ovations to Bob Crow, Phil Brown and Ian Ward (see page 16) and after this, Terry Pullinger gave his closing speech, telling the audience: “I think this has been an excellent Conference.”

On the final day of the Union’s 69th annual Conference, Terry Pullinger addresses delegates.

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Nicola Willmer, from Kent District, told Conference that “incidents of falling objects have increased and loads are getting heavier” and added: “It’s not just a hub issue, it’s hub to depot and depot to hub.”

And Highland Amal branch delegate Craig Townell warned: “Something needs to be done because someone’s going to be seriously injured.”

CHALLENGE AHEAD

In total, delegates discussed, debated and voted on 154 motions, from the protection of allowances, workplace discussions and facilities to the equal rights for new starters, apprenticeships and important discussions on the rights of members with physical and mental health difficulties and ensuring appropriate reasonable adjustments are made.

On the last day of Conference, delegates gave emotional ovations to Bob Crow, Phil Brown and Ian Ward (see page 16) and after this, Terry Pullinger gave his closing speech, telling the audience: “I think this has been an excellent Conference.”

On the final day of the Union’s 69th annual Conference, Terry Pullinger addresses delegates.

Only by working co-operatively in this way can the union achieve its targets on recruitment, Pullinger said.

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On the final day of the Union’s 69th annual Conference, Terry Pullinger adds
New focus needed on BTFS anomalies

REVIEWED ACTION PLAN

A revised approach to tackling the myriad of different terms and conditions that exist in BTFS, stemming from multiple TURPs into the previously outsourced facilities management provider that was brought back in-house by BT in 2012, has been agreed by CWU Annual Conference.

Following the company’s refusal to agree to the union’s request for wide-ranging talks to harmonise a raft of TURPs within BTFS to those in BT, as demanded by last year’s Conference, the new approach was evinced by assistant secretary Sally Bridge in her report to the Conference delegates.

Bournemouth this year:

Proposing a motion which commits the union to prioritise the tackling of anomalies within BTFS itself – including those covering overtime, annual leave, sick pay and maternity leave arrangements – Sally explained: “It’s clear that a blanket approach on this matter is unlikely to change the stance of BTFS and we therefore need a different approach – one that concentrates on those areas in which we can make progress and standardise matters in certain areas.”

Conference unanimously agreed.

Delegates also committed the union to undertake a full review into BTFS’s pension arrangements, with the aim of enabling the subsidiary’s employees to join the BTRSS.

Bruised in bereavement by BT

SPECIAL LEAVE WOES

Shocking examples of cases where members have struggled to get special leave granted following the loss of a close family member or friend prompted Telecoms & Financial Services Conference delegates to unanimously instruct the Executive to tackle the issue head on with BT Group.

Proposing the motion, Trevor Davison of North East branch told Conference: “A few years ago my mother died. At the time my twin brother and I were on the same team and our manager asked us if it was necessary for us both to go to her funeral. Dave Kaufman of South East Central branch recounted how his branch recently had to intervene to secure special leave for a member in Kent to arrange his mother’s funeral in Yorkshire – and Martin Shaw of Meridian branch cited examples of members in Consumer being told they would have to ‘payback’ the time taken off.

Laurence Smith of Greater London Combined highlighted other cases where members have had to dig in their heels to be allowed special leave to attend the funerals of friends or their partners’ relatives, with managers questioning the closeness of non-blood ties.

“Branding such instances as ‘shameful’,” Executive member Dave Tee pledged: “We’ll open discussions with BT to address this unfair and heartless practice.”

Full story at www.cwu.org/voice/

Recognise the goal

An apparent upsurge in anti-union activity amongst some elements of EE management – as evidenced by an increased hostility during the policy meeting to be held at CWU Annual Conference. Delegates unanimously committed the union to ensure the legal rights of members are respected, particularly with regards to:

■ The right to union representation in meetings
■ The right to choose their representative
■ The right of members and reps not to suffer detriment or harassment because of their membership or their activities on behalf of their union
■ The rights of workplace reps to reasonable time off to represent members

Supporting the Tyne & Wear branch motion on behalf of the Executive, assistant secretary John East stressed it was “scandalous” that the CWU was having to remind a BT subsidiary about its obligations under employment law.

“BT are allowing anti-union elements to run EE at a rate of knots as far as local and level and has to stop,” he stressed.

Full story at www.cwu.org/voice/

Hostile stance stiffens resolve at EE

The CWU is determined to prevail despite the efforts of some anti-union managers.

FIRM RESPONSE NEEDED

The CWU’s alarm at BT’s consumer-use of offcall centre services provider Convergys to handle “Help” calls from its Stockport and Dublin contact centres was reiterated at CWU Annual Conference amid “serious suspicions” that what Consumer originally claimed to be a short-term solution to a specific direct recruitment shortfall is becoming open-ended.

Despite Consumer’s promise at the start of this year to “review” the situation in March that review remains elusive, despite pressure being applied by CWU national negotiators.

Pointing out that the Transformation Agreement had at its heart the aim of facilitating the return of outsourced and offshored work to BT’s UK call centres, assistant secretary Nigel Cotgrove stressed: “Our members changed their attendance patterns to secure long-term BT jobs in the UK. It was a difficult agreement to reach, changed the lives of many and has been a difficult process, but it was the right thing to do. We cannot now allow BT’s use of Convergys to undermine this agreement.”

TFS Conference delegates unanimously agreed with Nigel that a firm CWU response is needed to ensure that Convergys “doesn’t become a Trojan horse.”

Delegates also passed a series of motions committing the Executive to seek improved attendance options in BT Consumer as part of the Transformation Agreement’s review process and to address difficulties relating to bank holiday attendance and the Exceptional Change of Hours’ process.

Full story at www.cwu.org/voice/

‘Trojan horse’ concerns over Convergys
Reassuringly, the CWU has always been a union for people who work. Terry Pullinger, its industrial deputy general secretary, told The Voice that “we must ensure that our members’ interests are protected.”

The union has a strong track record of standing up for its members, especially in the telecommunications industry. Terry Pullinger described the CWU as “a union that stands up for workers’ rights” and highlighted the importance of trade unionism in protecting workers’ rights.

The CWU has consistently fought for better pay and conditions for its members, and in doing so, it has become a powerful voice for working people. Terry Pullinger noted that the CWU’s commitment to its members is what sets it apart from other unions.

The CWU has also been a leader in the fight for trade union rights, and has helped to ensure that workers have a say in the workplace. Terry Pullinger said that the CWU has been “at the forefront of the struggle for trade union rights” and that it is committed to ensuring that workers have a voice.

The CWU has a proud history of standing up for workers’ rights, and its members are proud to be part of a union that is always there to fight for them. Terry Pullinger said that the CWU is “a union that is proud of its history and that is always there to fight for its members.”
Bob Browne said: “I’m going to end with something rather different, because I’ve got no intention of saying goodbye, because I’m not going to die.”

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**Election looms large at CWU Annual Conference**

**SETTING THE AGENDA**

Some 700 branch representatives from every corner of the UK gathered in Bournemouth at the end of April for five days of lively debate on all aspects of union policy at CWU Annual Conference 2017.

Just a few days before Conference began, Prime Minister Theresa May had called the snap General Election and, on the first day of deliberations, delegates unanimously adopted an emergency motion committing the union to campaign vigorously for a Labour victory.

In her opening address, CWU president Beryl Shepherd recalled opening Conference in 2015 by referring to “the backdrop of a forthcoming general election” which was set to have “a significant impact on the lives of our members,” but insisted that this election “will provide opportunity for change here in the UK and we must unite and seize that opportunity.”

On the same theme, general secretary Dave Ward stressed the union’s determination that the election agenda must address the whole range of domestic, economic, and social issues – and must not become just another re-run of last year’s EU membership referendum.

“Inequality is rife in this country and it falls upon our movement to do something about this,” he stressed, urging delegates to “get behind the Labour party and work as hard as we can to deliver a new political settlement for the UK.”

**HUGE ELECTION ISSUE**

A passionate defence of the NHS was delivered by CWU Annual Conference with the union unanimously committing the union to take centre stage in the campaign to save a national treasure.

Amid mounting evidence of a full-frontal attack on the founding principles of the health service by the current Tory Government, speaker after speaker lambasted a “cut, slash, despise and privatise” agenda which, left unchecked, threatens to destroy the towering achievement of the post-war Labour administration.

Reaffirming existing CWU policy that the NHS must remain publicly owned, publicly funded, publicly accountable and free at the point of delivery, delegates agreed the union must campaign and organise “with real determination” against creeping privatisation and vicious cuts that are bringing an internationally respected organisation to its knees.

Dave Ash of South London, Surrey and North Hampshire branch told of an organisation that is “being deliberately run into the ground” by vested interests and ideological dogma.

“Soon, very soon, we will all be left with a very stark choice – going along to a sick row NHS, where you might be dead by the time you are seen, or take out private health insurance,” he warned.

Judy Griffiths of Coventry branch agreed. “What we’re witnessing is the demolition of the infrastructure of our society by a ruling class that’s determined to remove the services won by working people in the desire to increase their wealth,” she said.

“They, of course, can access healthcare privately, so ‘free at the point of need’ is not an issue for them.”

Lashing out at “disgusting” but increasingly determined efforts to make some groups pay for NHS treatment received, Jack England of Great Western branch insisted: “To me the best thing about this country is that you can get the treatment you need from the NHS whether you have a penny to your name or not.”

Supporting the motion on behalf of the Executive, general secretary Dave Ward stressed that is not an issue for the point of need’ “with real determination” to save a national treasure. “We finally have an opportunity to stop it right now, and his witty repartee with an onlooker showed why she is becoming a regular at public events.

“The NHS will never be the same again so we have to seize it.”

**Fighting for our NHS**

**Ken Leach** Film director

“This is a pivotal election – the fight won’t stop whatever the outcome. We need to think about what sort of society we want our children to live in after us. The NHS is vital to that. We need to take our society back.”

**Davey Johns** Actor

“…taking on the Tories is the window to the future and the NHS is a huge part of what that future looks like.”

**Jeremy Hardy** Comedian

“If the Tories get a renewed mandate things will get even worse. We need to be a country with good infrastructure and good public services won by working people in the desire to increase their wealth,” she said.

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“The NHS will never be the same again so we have to seize it.”

**Steve Gribbin** comedian / musician

“People need to think about what sort of society they want to live in after us. The NHS is vital to that. We need to take our society back.”

**Matt Abbott** Street poet

“My dad’s a postal worker and a CWU member so tonight’s been a highlight of my career.”

**The Voice**

Spoke to performers at the 2017 People’s politics event, at Conference in Bournemouth, to hear their views on the upcoming General Election.

**Tom Slade** Comedian

“…the Tories have everything to lose. People have had enough!”

**Francesca Martinez** Comedian

“We finally have a Labour leader who’s totally committed to challenging a system that breeds inequality and suffering. There’s no room for cynicism and apathy if we had a healthy media Corbyn would be walking this.”

**Tez Ilyas** Comedian

“I hope we can model the all-new ‘Panteon’ CWU packet.”

**Great Britain and give the Tories a run for their money!”**

**People’s Politics CONFERENCE 2017**

Conference-goers this year were treated to an evening spectacular, as event organisers surpassed last year’s ‘People’s Politics’ event with 2017’s ‘People’s Politics’.

A lively mix of music, politics and laughs allowed all ages and genders to relax, unwind and enjoy the fun with a few beers after some busy conference sessions.

After a message video from general secretary Dave Ward, comedian and host for the evening Jeremy Hardy welcomed the audience and telling them to expect “an extraordinarily mixed bill of people on tonight.”

First up was actor Dave Johns – the eponymous lead of last year’s award-winning ‘I, Daniel Blake’ – who soon had the crowd laughing with his wry observations on life, and his witty repartee with an enthusiastic young child in the audience.

Daniel Blake director Ken Loach followed. Johns on stage and attacked the way that benefit claimants are being treated, asking: “What is the crime for which hunger is the punishment?”

Political speeches, from Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell and Shadow Education Secretary Angela Rayner (see page 3) further reminded everyone of the importance of the coming election.

Time for music, and singer Grace Petrie showed why she is becoming a regular at CWU events, while Steve Gribbin’s more unorthodox style mixed pop classics and comedic themes and Voice of The People street poet Matt Abbott, wowed the crowd with his memorable lines.

Another returning 2016 act, Francesca Martinez, once again proved popular and there was time for two other comedics, Tom Slade and Tez Ilyas, before our own class act of the evening, Tony Kaarni, showed his light-hearted side with some terrific one-liners – and even received a few wolf-whistles for modelling the all-new ‘Panteon’ CWU packet.
Gig economy' must be challenged

Bogus self-employment contracts are not just brutally exploitative of millions of workers trapped in the so-called ‘gig economy’, but also represent a massive threat to the terms and conditions of millions of directly employed workers whose firms are being placed at a competitive disadvantage. CWU Annual Conference has agreed.

Delegates unanimously committed the CWU to work with other trade unions that are seeking to tackle the relentless rise of an employment model in which workers who are misleadingly categorised as ‘independent contractors’ are only paid for the ‘gigs’ they do. Such contracts are especially prevalent in the courier, taxi and food delivery industries – and just as is the case with exploitative zero-hour contracts, proponents of the ‘gig economy’ claim that people can benefit from the flexibility of being able to choose when they work. In reality, however, the real advantages of this employment model are weighted heavily in favour of the companies that use it.

Not only don’t they incur staff costs when demand isn’t there – but their workers’ bogus self-employed status means they have no protection against unfair dismissal; no right to redundancy payments and no right to paid holiday or sick pay. Critically, ‘gig economy’ workers aren’t even legally entitled to be paid the national living wage for the hours they work.

Successfully moving the CWU Conference motion that places the CWU at the heart of a united trade-union fightback. Mark Harper of Nottingham & District Amal pointed out that number of workers who classify themselves as ‘self employed’ has rocketed from three million in 2005, to five million today.

Colin Bell of South London branch cited the rampant rise of bogus self-employment within the parcels industry – recounting an extraordinary case of exploitation where an Albanian driver who’d been injured while on duty was not only deprived of sick pay but also ended up being forced to pay for an alternative driver!

Deputy general secretary Terry Pullinger concluded: “In the parcels industry we believe Parcelforce is now probably the only parcel company that is directly employing workers – that’s the scale of the problem we’ve got.”

Full story at www.cwu.org/voice/

Hate crime upsurge

General Conference delegates also unanimously committed the union to mount a campaign to highlight a post-Brexit vote surge in hate crime and to pressurise the Government to put in place safety nets to protect vulnerable groups in our communities.

Proposing the motion on behalf of last autumn’s CWU Black Workers’ Conference, Amarjite Singh of South East Wales Amal said: “Hate crime was already here – but Brexit and the referendum opened Pandora’s box.”

Executive speaker Mahmood Ali agreed, lamenting the way in which some in the Leave campaign had “blamed immigration for virtually all of the ills of our society” – a toxic message that was, at worst, laced with blatant Islamophobia and the stoking up of fears over the refugee crisis.

“It was opportunism in its worst form,” Mahmood told delegates, adding: “In the weeks after the EU referendum hate crime incidents rose by 58 per cent, and in July 2016 the incidence of hate crime went up by 41 per cent compared with July 2015.

“These incidents have included assaults, arson attacks, heads of pigs thrown into mosques, verbal abuse, and the list goes on.”

Strongly backed the proposition and said: “We now have to prepare for a workers’ agenda for coming out.”

Ryan Rochester, from Coventry branch, noted that the meanings of words seem to have changed, saying: “Save-driving is called ‘performance management’ and fascism is called ‘populism’.”

And Midland No.7 branch delegate Andrew Hickernell insisted: “We’ve got to make sure we vote for workers’ rights in the coming election.”

And moving the second motion, Merseyside branch delegate Brian Kenny made it clear that “the vote to leave was not a vote to roll back hard-won rights we fought for years to achieve” and Barry O’Hanlon, of London No.7 branch, explained the need to “go beyond us leaving the EU.”

“Let’s forget Brexit. We had a referendum, we’re coming out and the focus must be on protecting workers’ rights,” he added.

Supporting the call on behalf of the NEC, Bill Taylor slammed the Conservatives for having “spent the last six years attacking workers’ rights – from tribunal fees to the TU Act.

“We must do all we can to campaign for a settlement that keeps protections of workers’ rights at its core,” he stressed.

Acting general secretary Tony Kearns praised the movers of the motions on this subject, saying: “The moves of these motions have got this spot on – condemning the scapegoating of immigrants and warning of the attack on workers’ rights.”

“As the late Tony Benn said: ‘There’s no final victory as there is no final defeat – just the same battle to be fought over and over again, so toughen up’.”

H&S ‘bonfire’ fears

The EU withdrawal negotiations also have the potential to impact on health and safety at work regulations, national officer Dave Joyce warned Conference.

Speaking in favour of a motion from four regional health and safety forums, Dave said: “Since the election was called, leading Tories, bosses and the right-wing media have wasted no time in calling for a bonfire of safety regulations.

“Everything they do puts wealth before safety,” he added.

“It’s up to us now, going forward, to continue to fight for health and safety at work.”

OLD INJUSTICES NOT FORGOTTEN

Two highly emotive issues from the 1980s were discussed by delegates, who unanimously backed the Orgreave Truth and Justice and the Total Eclipse of the Sun campaigns.

Giving the Executive’s backing to the first of the two motions, deputy general secretary Terry Pullinger recalled how the Thatcher government of that time had declared ‘war’ on the nation’s miners.

When strikers gathered to picket a coal supply plant at Orgreave in Yorkshire, they were met by 6,000 police, who kettled them in a field, charged them and then batted them as many of them as they could.

“It was legalised state violence but not one police officer was ever prosecuted or even disciplined,” stressed Terry.

“The miners fought for every single one of us, now we need to support them.”

Acting general secretary Tony Kearns, meanwhile, made an emotional appeal to delegates to support the Total Eclipse of the Sun campaign, which aims to spread awareness of the infamous June 1984 Miners’ Strike clash at Orgreave, to the nation’s children.

Tony recalled how he had been a spectator at that FA Cup semi-final between his favourite Liverpool team and Nottingham Forest, and of the friends he had amongst the 96 victims.

He reminded the audience how the Sun had falsely claimed that Liverpool spectators had urinated on the victims, stolen from them and fought with police, stressing: “Their families didn’t deserve to be told those lies.

“For these reasons, there should be a total eclipse of the Sun,” he insisted.

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Agenda

Setting the post-Brexit agenda
Loyal BT service forgotten on retirement?

The withdrawal of free broadband and various other perks from BT employees when they retire from the company represents a snub to loyal and longstanding employees, including free expert legal advice if required. Subs, which stand at £1.35 per month for those contracted-out (and £4.97 monthly for those contracted-in), also mean you’ll continue to receive the benefits they are often forced to, due to stop using BT services, but do not want to.

TRIPLE LOCK DEFENDED

Despite opposition from the company, delegates backed a Youth Conference motion calling for a triple lock, a measure to protect pensions for longer-serving retirees. 

Young members led the charge for a report to be compiled into the damaging psychological impact of BT’s performance management (PM) regime and inadequate training on young members.

The motion would have been more appropriate on the Telecoms Conference agenda anyway – a majority of General Conference delegates backed a Youth Conference motion calling for a new study following a series of impassioned contributions by young speakers.

Full story at www.cwu.org/voice/

Psychological report demanded in effect of PM in BT

Young members won General Conference support for their stance on training and performance management in BT before industrial deliberations even began.

Young members led the charge for a report to be compiled into the damaging psychological impact of BT’s performance management (PM) regime and inadequate training on young members.

The sensitive issue of the triple lock remains an extremely timely subject with branch responsibilities.

An agreement reached between the company and the CWU’s T&FS constituency of the NEC no later than July of this year, which will look at a range of issues affecting our retired members, including voting rights, 

Full story at www.cwu.org/voice/

Youth officers call for Royal Mail release time

Our union’s young members noticed up a notable victory in Postal Conference, when they persuaded delegates to overturn an Executive recommendation on release time for branch youth officers.

Speaking for the motion, Ellie Long, a youth officer from Mersey & SW Lancs branch argued that it was unfair that there was an agreement covering youth officers in BT, but not in Royal Mail.

DIFFERING VIEWS

“In a merged branch – we’ve got BT members as well as Royal Mail members. And if we were to stand down as branch youth officer, a BT member took over, they’d get more time to do what I do now.”

Opposing the motion on behalf of the Executive, Steve Jones said that he had spoken in great detail with the T&FS deputy general secretary Andy Kerr to understand exactly what agreement had been reached with BT and he told Conference that it was not as straightforward as those backing the motion were suggesting. 

“Nothing for productivity. This is money that could have been better spent actually training people so they can achieve their full potential.”

Dan Harris of Great Western branch hit out at a toxic mix of micro-management and poor training. “The expression 'the blind leading the blind' is extremely relevant as every day I see new recruits forced to coach new recruits,” he said.

“I’ve witnessed first-hand young members break down in front of me because of the way they were treated.”

Dan Harris of Great Western branch continued. “It’s become abundantly clear that management style practices within the company are having a profound effect on young workers both mentally and physically myself I have had plenty of sleepless nights due to this issue.”

“A lot of the work I do now.”

Erin Brett of Mersey branch concluded.

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Proposing the motion, Jamie Monsma of Midland Group said that although there was an agreement covering youth members, committed the motion would have added little to existing research and that the progress had been made.

The withdrawal of free broadband and various other perks from BT employees when they retire from the company represents a snub to loyal and longstanding employees, including free expert legal advice if required. Subs, which stand at £1.35 per month for those contracted-out (and £4.97 monthly for those contracted-in), also mean you’ll continue to receive the benefits they are often forced to, due to stop using BT services, but do not want to.

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Proposing the motion, Jamie Monsma of Midland Group said that although there was an agreement covering youth members, committed the motion would have added little to existing research and that the progress had been made.

The withdrawal of free broadband and various other perks from BT employees when they retire from the company represents a snub to loyal and longstanding employees, including free expert legal advice if required. Subs, which stand at £1.35 per month for those contracted-out (and £4.97 monthly for those contracted-in), also mean you’ll continue to receive the benefits they are often forced to, due to stop using BT services, but do not want to.

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Mobilising for mobility

Government cuts that have seen more than 17,000 disabled people robbed of allowances for a variety of mobility aids since 2013 are to be forcefully challenged by the CWU.

Annual Conference delegates in Bournemouth unanimously committed the union to campaign for a review of the current points-based system on which funding for mobility aids ranging from walking sticks to electric wheelchairs, scooters and specially adapted cars depends.

Proposing the motion on the behalf of the CWU's Disability Conference, Jonathan Bellshaw of Lincolnshire & South Yorkshire branch insisted the union had to "champion those who sometimes aren't able to champion themselves".

Disability Advisory Committee member Tony Pedal of York & District Amal agreed: "This is about dignity and respect and giving disabled people a better quality of life," he insisted.

Stressing there was something worrying and sick with a Government that was prepared to remove mobility aids from the disabled, national equality officer Linda Roy concluded: "They are robbing people of their independence."

Full story at www.cwu.org/voice

Rushed pension changes need rethink

WOMEN'S PENSIONS INJUSTICE

Fairer transitional state pension arrangements are needed for women born on or after April 6, 1951, CWU Conference agreed, amidst mounting concern that thousands of women who are now approaching retirement have been given insufficient time to prepare for the currently equalised state pension age.

While accepting the principle of men and women receiving their state pension at the same age, delegates committed the union to lobby the Government on behalf of a generation of women who've been affected by not just the initial change, but also by subsequent hikes in the state pension age affecting both genders.

Amid fears that poor communication of the changes by the DWP means that thousands of women are still unaware that they won't qualify for a state pension until years later, speakers warned of a ticking time bomb under which many will face serious financial hardship.

As terrifying evidence of the unfolding horror continues to emerge - with survivors sharing accounts of savage beatings and being tortured in homemade electric chairs to force them to give up names - the CWU is writing to the Home Secretary asking that gay men from Chechnya fleeing this persecution be given asylum.

Proposing the emergency motion at CWU Conference, Laurie Smith of Greater London branch hit out at Vladimir Putin's refusal to question the Chechen Government demands for it to apologise to the republic for suggesting that gay men in Chechnya - and elsewhere - are the only human rights abuses.

"We've got to do something about what's happening in Chechnya - the world's got to wake up," stressed John Monks of North West London branch.

National equality officer Linda Roy concluded: "I could never have imagined when I took up this job that I'd be seeing reports of concentration camps being used as the sole medical procedure requiring the current brutality and elsewhere - and also to support Amnesty International's work against such human rights abuses."

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CONDEMnation of persecution

The CWU has sent the strongest possible message of support to victims of brutal homophobic persecution in Chechnya amid rising international concern that a human rights catastrophe is unfolding in the ultra-conservative Russian republic.

Delegates at CWU Annual Conference unanimously supported an emergency motion condemning a state-orchestrated round-up of gay men amid grim accounts of torture in concentration camps and even executions.

Despite official Chechen Government denials of the existence of such camps, the republic's president, Ramzan Kadyrov, is on public record as having sworn to eliminate the country's gay community.

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Proposing the emergency motion at CWU Conference, Laurie Smith of Greater London branch hit out at Vladimir Putin's refusal to question the Chechen Government's denial of a purge that was initially brought to the world's attention by Russian newspaper Novaya Gazeta.

Thats newspaper is now being subjected to a desire to make abortion as "difficult as possible" to obtain.

Abortion Act needs updating

DUAL CONSENT 'DISCRIMINATORY'

The requirement for women to secure the consent of not only two but two doctors before having an abortion is "outdated, discriminatory and condescending", CWU Annual Conference has agreed.

Committing the union to lobby all political parties for change in the 50-year-old law that categorises abortion as the sole medical procedure requiring double consent, speakers pointed out that the BMA has been demanding just such an amendment since 2007.

"No other medical procedure requires the agreement of two doctors, making abortion law increasingly out of step with the emphasis on patients being in charge of what happens to them," explained North East branch delegate Jean Sharrocks.

Proposing the motion, which had been forwarded to General Conference by last autumn's CWU Women's Conference, Jean pointed out the double consent stipulation had apparently been motivated by a desire to make abortion "as difficult as possible" to obtain.

Marag Rose of Scotland No 5 hit out at the inherent implication that women are simply "a vessel for a foetus", adding that "choosing an abortion is often the least worst of several bad courses of action" for the women involved.

Vera Kalyae of Wolverhampton & District Amal concluded: "The law should have no place in determining what should be a private decision by the individual. Men don't have to have two doctors' consent for a vasectomy so why should a woman have to jump through hoops to get an abortion?"

"The only person who should have the final say is the person who is pregnant," she said. Delegates unanimously agreed.

Outrage at Chechen gay purge

Terrifying evidence of the horror continues to emerge - with survivors sharing accounts of savage beatings and torture in homemade electric chairs...
Our members aiming for Parliament

Among the thousands of CWU activists out knocking on doors and delivering leaflets in the General Election campaign are four of our members who are standing for election themselves...

Hugh Gaffney

Matt Kerr and Hugh Gaffney are our Scottish contenders, aiming to top the poll in Glasgow South West and Coatbridge, Chryston & Bellshill respectively.

Matt tells The Voice that he is fighting a “relentlessly positive” campaign as he goes out “chapping doors” in this former shipbuilding heartland.

And he’s particularly enthused by Labour’s detailed plans for rebuilding the shipbuilding sector, through the creation of a new, publicly owned British Investment Bank. “This area used to be dominated by the shipbuilding industry,” he says, adding: “We still have the Govan Shipyard, which employs a couple of thousand workers, but overall it’s far less than the tens of thousands of people who worked in this industry in the past.

“But we still have the skills here, and the docks, and the local university is a leader in various technologies – so we could positively transform the area with high-skill manufacturing of wind turbines for example,” he enthuses. “And we all need to move on,” he says, adding that public-sector cuts have resulted in significant job losses in the area.

“Now I get the feeling local people may be turning against independence. Independence is not going to come and we all need to move on,” he says, adding that, although he opposed Brexit in last year’s EU vote, that decision is likewise “done and dusted” and now “we’ve got to focus on jobs, public services, the NHS, our economy and those down-to-earth issues.

“I’m getting a great response to this from local people – and I reckon my chances are improving.”

MEANWHILE, IN ENGLAND...

South of the border, Chris Webb faces a tough fight to prise Blackpool North & Cleveleys from Conservative control, a battle in which he needs to overturn a 3,340 majority.

This seat was held by Labour between 1997 and 2010, but the boundary changes post-2010 increased the number of Conservative voters, Chris explains. “We’ve got a strong campaign here and we’re focussing a lot on what the local council has done to protect people from Conservative and Liberal Democrat down-to-earth measures.

“The council here has kept open all the libraries, leisure facilities and children’s centres. And also, every primary school child has a morning breakfast,” he states proudly, explaining that he focuses on this theme of high-quality Labour governance in his doorstep conversations.

And a few miles down the coast, Julie Gibson is aiming to turn South Ribble, from blue to red, as she chases down incumbent Siobhan McDonnell’s 5,945 Conservative majority.

“There’s no evidence so far of the Conservatives’ claim that they’re winning support in the north either here or in Blackpool, our North West contenders tell us, saying: ‘We haven’t seen much of them out or about, or seeming to be honest.’

Although taking this seat will be a ‘challenge’, Julie says it’s one she’s looking forward to and that “the response on the doorstep has been warm and friendly.

“And I’m saying to people that we need Labour in to make sure we get a good post-Brexit arrangement going forward that will protect jobs, and save our NHS, education and public services.”

Chris Webb and supporters

Matt Kerr

Julie Gibson

Hugh Gaffney

A MANIFESTO FOR THE MANY

Senior deputy general secretary Tony Kearns outlines the reasons why the forthcoming General Election represents a ‘once-in-a-generation opportunity’ to place the needs of the many over the greed of the few.

Being present at the Labour Party manifesto launch, I was proud to see a manifesto that speaks to the needs of our members and to the rest of the people in our country.

THE MANIFESTO PROMISES...

■ To restore public ownership of Royal Mail – taking it away from the shareholders who are taking dividends at our members’ expense

■ To halt the Crown Office closure programme that our members have fought long and hard for

■ To invest in superfast and ultrafast broadband – investment that will maintain thousands of our members’ jobs

■ To keep the state pension triple lock – that will guarantee financial security for 15,000 of our retired members.

A CHOICE BETWEEN TWO OPPOSITE VISIONS

Make no mistake, our union used its link with the Labour Party to make no mistake, our union used its link with the Labour Party to deliver for you, where it matters, in your place of work.

But more, much more than that, the manifesto is about standing up for the rest of society, for those condemned to using food banks, for those who want the education of their children not to be dependent on where they live or their family background.

It’s a manifesto for those who need proper social care and a properly funded National Health Service.

In short, this is a manifesto that looks after the many and not the few.

The alternative is five more years of a Tory government, reducing police and firefighter numbers, letting the rich and big business dodge paying their fair share in tax. Five more years of a government that has pushed the National Health Service to the brink of destruction.

We can have five more years of the planned poverty that they call austerity or we can make a change.

We can be the ones who take back control of public services, owned by the public and run for the public as opposed to squeezing the workers in those companies to work longer and harder for less whilst those at the top get more and more, and dodge paying their taxes on that gain.

Labour’s manifesto shows that there is now a clear alternative on offer to our members and the rest of the people of the UK.

Here is an opportunity to take the power in this country away from an ever-richer elite – an elite who are immune to the everyday problems our members face – and return power to where it belongs, with the people.

There is a simple choice between a party on the side of the people or a party stuck where it always has been – in the back pockets of the rich and global corporations. It’s a choice between a party that will serve the people and rebuild the country, or a party who would carry on dismantling the country to serve themselves.

THIS IS YOUR CHOICE...

Choose increasing workers’ rights,

Choose no tax increase for workers,

Choose to save the NHS,

Choose decent state pensions,

Choose to end homelessness,

Choose people before bankers and big business,

Choose free school meals for primary children and an education service for all.

Once in a generation the opportunity comes along to make a difference, to make the country change for the better – this General Election is that opportunity.

Choose the many and not the few.

Chose Labour on June 8.

Here is an opportunity to take power away from an ever-richer elite

TONY KEARNS @TKearnsy

FOR GENERAL ELECTION UPDATES FOLLOW US ON TWITTER: @CWUNews @DaveWardGS and on Facebook: The Communications Union
TORIES TO MAKE FOX HUNTING AN OLYMPIC SPORT

Dave Ward misses penalty as Chelsea relegated
see page 60