One union, one magazine, one voice

P10/11 Members fighting for their pensions, jobs and network

POST OFFICE DISPUTE

P12/13 SEE SENSE OFCOM
Members urged to 'get involved' as CWU mobilises against any splitting up of BT and Openreach

P14/15 UNITING OUR MOVEMENT
CWU members made a big impact and won strong support at the TUC and Labour Party conferences

P16/17 DOOR-TO-DOOR TRIAL
Four Royal Mail offices in the Reading area are trialling new door-to-door delivery methods

WATCH ACTIVISTS LOBBY THE POST OFFICE PENSION SCHEME TRUSTEES IN THE CITY
Times change – but the need to be in a union doesn’t

Labour veteran and inspirational NHS campaigner Harry Leslie Smith warns that the social progress he’s seen in his lifetime is under threat as never before.

It’s been almost a hundred years since I was born in a Barnsley slum that formed around a nearby coal mine, like infection grows on a dirty, open wound.

My dad was a miner in that pit where he hewed coal for pennies a day to try to keep his family warm and fed.

At the time of my birth, life was not pleasant for the average citizen in Britain. In 1923 our country was a land of hardship extremes because, while the working class lived little better than domestic farm animals, the elite existed in a tax-free world of stately homes.

However, no matter how difficult the daily grind was for my dad he saw hope for the future.

A TRIUMPH OF BELIEF

He saw hope because his father was a proud socialist and a member of the NUM who understood that trade unionism was not only about changing present labour conditions but also establishing an unmistakable legacy of fair pay in the workplace.

My dad, knew that to belong to a union was a right that came with responsibilities. That’s why he went onto the picket lines during the 1926 General Strike; so I could see, as he told me much later on, “how good men stand together to defend the rights of all who struggle in this rough-and-ready world.”

Even though the miners in that General Strike lost their battle against the pit owners, the unbreakable spirit of the trade unions that participated in that conflict galvanised a generation to stand strong and united against right-wing governments that sought to break the will of unions and their members at the behest of big business.

DON’T LET THEM PUT THE CLOCK BACK

Today, our country is on the precipice because of Brexit, neo-liberalism and an economic system that has been so corrupted by the desires of the 1 percent that it no longer benefits adequately the 99 percent.

Harry Leslie Smith is the author of five books including Harry’s Last Stand and his latest book, Don’t Let My Past Be Your Future, will be published in 2017.

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A sharp rise in bullying and harassment complaints and conduct-related ballot requests have the union’s sounding alarm bells.

Speaking to The Voice, the union’s assistant secretary Ray Ellis said: “It certainly appears that we’re getting a reversion to bad old behaviours by Royal Mail managers in some areas.

“Having local disputes in recent months is a relatively high level – and those are all dismissals, we have several other current ballots on other disputes as well – and this is a clear indication of a much more aggressive line being taken by the company.”

Ray, who is the national officer for disciplinary issues affecting all postal members, added: “As well as the surge in local disputes, we’ve also seen a 25 per cent increase in bullying and harassment cases – the majority of which are alleged bullying of GPOs by managers. They’re taking a much harder line with our members,” he continued, saying that in many of the recent instances, a penalty lower than a dismissal would have been expected.

Current conduct code procedures were recently looked at in detail through a formal joint review, which concluded at the end of last year, but the union does not see the procedures themselves as the root cause of the problem.

Ray said: “We’re going to raise this issue at the next CWU HR group meeting of our divisional reps and senior field officers and put together a policy document for the Postal Executive.

“CWU will be demanding that Royal Mail recommit to strengthening employee relations and will seek concrete action that ensures that people are treated fairly and decently at work.”

Sharp rise in conduct cases sparks CWU concern
news in brief

The CWU has announced that the number of receipted Free Shares is running at 78% of the 2013 share offer, which runs until April 25, 2018. CWU Secretary Sally Bridge explained: “The process is moving well, and we are encouraging members to respond as quickly as possible to the offer.”

The CWU is keen to ensure all members have received their share offer, and will be writing to all who have not yet responded. The CWU has also issued a reminder to members to sell their shares via the RM Employee Shares helpline.

A new feature on the CWU website has been added to help members understand the tax implications of selling their shares. The feature includes a calculator tool to help members work out how much tax they will pay on their sale of shares. The calculator can be accessed at www.myroyalmail.com/employee-share-offers.

AWARDED

The CWU has been awarded the Pay and Skills campaign promoting the benefits of CWU membership.

500

THE NUMBER OF TESCO MOBILE MEMBERS WHO’VE BEEN TUPE’D FROM O₂ TO CAPITAL

Successful TUPE protections have been put in place for Tesco Mobile Capita contract workers in Preston, Blackburn and Bury following CWU negotiations affecting 500 former O₂ members (see September’s issue of The Voice). On top of this, Capita are already looking to expand the contract in Bury bringing in more than 80 new jobs – and potentially yet more CWU members.

Assisted secretary Brendan O’Brien said: “The TUPE deal and the new jobs that are likely to follow in Bury are very good news. However, the union needs to remain vigilant to make sure that the TUPE deal is honoured. The more members we have, the more able we are to hold Capita to account on this and other workplace issues.”

The push for new members is also on at an unification of Deems Valley, Yorkshire, where the South Yorks branch has been running a high-profile newspaper advertising campaign promoting the benefits of CWU membership.

Union recruitment drive gears up

ADDRESSING ANOMALIES

The CWU has won through in key negotiations with BT Facilities Services (BTFS), resolving a number of pay anomalies for Fabric Technicians, providing a framework for upskilling and progressing to higher salaries and laying the groundwork for similar deals for other grades.

Before this breakthrough, the Fabric Technician role, which covers maintenance of BT property, comprised a wide range of skill levels from fully qualified colleagues (either through formal qualification or length of service) to a lower skilled, handyman type role. There was no differentiation in the pay band to reflect the range of skills or competencies – a situation that had arisen out of various inherited TUEP arrangements.

The CWU has agreed to proposals to create two new roles based on skill level: General Technician and Engineering Technician (Fabric), to replace the current Fabric Technician. Those suitably qualified will be automatically allocated to the Engineering Technician (Fabric) role.

Assistant secretary Sally Bridge said: “This is very good news indeed and puts in place a far more skills-based structure. We had a situation where people were doing very different work, from the unskilled to the complicated, but were receiving the same pay.”

“Although this review addressed the situation of 120 people, its implications are much wider. The new structure will set the tone and framework for similar adjustments to other grades too.”

Full story at www.cwu.org/voice/

Breakthrough for BTFS Fabric Technicians has wider implications

ORGANISING IN CAPITA

The CWU is on a drive to build its membership strength in Capita and recruit more members to the union following a negotiated TUPE deal and the announcement of new jobs.

500

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Full story at www.cwu.org/voice/

Caution urged on RM shares

October 15th 2016 marked three years since the free shares offer to all eligible Royal Mail employees, and here, CWU deputy general secretary postal (DGSP) Terry Pullinger updates Voice readers on the significance of this anniversary.

The shares were, “in part, to sugar the pill of privatisation,” Terry begins, adding that, “to date, eligible employees with the maximum allocation of 832 free shares have received around £430 in dividend payments, before tax.”

Under the terms of the share incentive plan (SIP), employees can keep their shares for as long as they like while they remain a Royal Mail employee, he explains and points out: “Those wishing to hold onto their shares need take no action – they will stay in the SIP and continue to receive any dividends while employed in Royal Mail.”

From 15 October 2016, employees have the option of selling their first allocation of free shares, for the first time, and receiving a cash payment based on the RM share price. However, although selling shares is a matter for the individual, those looking to cash in and sell their shares – after October 15 2016 and any time before October 14 2018 – will be liable to pay income tax and national insurance on the whole cash amount received from the sale.

Basic rate taxpayers will need to pay 20 per cent income tax and 12 per cent national insurance (NI), while higher rate taxpayers will pay 40 per cent income tax and 2 per cent NI (assuming the full amount of NI at 12 per cent has already been paid).

Our DGSP makes the point that, “ultimately, as stated already, what members choose to do with their shares after October 15 is a personal decision, but the union wanted to make members who hold shares in the SIP, and who are planning or considering selling, to be fully aware of the significant tax and NI they will have to pay following the sale which is likely to reduce any payment by around one-third.

And, he continues: “Members should also be aware of the union’s continued attempts to enact the terms of Motion 42 from 2016 Annual Conference, which seeks to coordinate the use of shares held by our members through the establishment of an advisory committee and amendments to the Trust deeds. “Set out below is a table containing Royal Mail’s own recent advice to employees, which explains how the SIP works in relation to the 2013 free shares,” says Terry. “We would, however, make it clear that the Union is not offering its members any financial advice in this article.”

Members may want to seek independent financial advice before making any decision. Those with questions can phone the RM Employee Shares helpline free on 0800 012 12 13. More information at www.myroyalmail.com/employee-share-offers

** HOW THE SHARE INCENTIVE PLAN WORKS FOR 2013 FREE SHARES **

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Will I receive dividends?</th>
<th>Keep your shares</th>
<th>Sell your shares between</th>
<th>Sell your shares after</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>You will continue to receive dividends</td>
<td>You will not receive dividends on any shares you have sold</td>
<td>You will not receive dividends any shares you have sold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Will the value of my shares be affected by future changes in share price?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will I have to pay tax and NI on the shares when I sell them?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will I have to pay capital gains tax when I sell my shares from the sip?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can I direct the SIP trustee on how to vote on my behalf at AGMs and other shareholder meetings?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Dividends are paid to shareholders who are on the shareholder register on the dividend record date. This date is normally a few weeks in advance of each dividend payment.*
CWU secures safeguards over shift changes at Santander

IMPACT MITIGATED

Following a decision by Santander to close its call centres earlier each evening, the CWU has negotiated important safeguards for those most financially impacted by the change. Although many staff are glad to see the back of the unpopular later hours, from 5pm rather than 6pm, a considerable number, especially part-timers, will suffer a significant drop in income from the loss of unsocial hours.

The three-month compensation deal will be equivalent to the total unsocial hours payments received for September, October and November, or if higher, the monthly average (multiplied by three) over this year to the end of January.

“Despite our objections to Santander’s decision, we insisted on this because we wanted to make sure that no-one will lose out if they have worked fewer unsocial hours for any reason over the autumn period,” John explained.

Everyone impacted will also have two one-to-ones with their manager. The first to discuss what the implications will be for them, and, after a period of consideration, a second attended by their union rep to agree a solution.

“Following the joint first meeting, they will be able to lay down a new shift pattern that they believe will work best for them, financially and in terms of work life balance. They will be supported by the union every step of the way.”

NEW CHARTER SIGNED

Santander has become the first major employer of CWU members to sign the ‘Dying to Work’ Charter – a TUC initiative that aims to ensure that terminally ill workers are treated with dignity and given the support they need to continue in the workplace for as long as they wish.

Amongst those present at Santander’s signing ceremony, which took place at the bank’s London HQ on October 3 (pictured), was CWU NEC member and ALGUS National branch secretary Debbie Cort who negotiated the successful approach to Santander that led to the company becoming the first UK bank to put its name on the dotted line.

‘Dying to Work’ at Santander

SWISS POST CONTRACTS

Following meetings between CWU and Swiss Post at the end of September, it looks highly likely that more agency staff will be given a permanent contract.

CWU assistant secretary John East said: “We pointed out that the company hasn’t been meeting its obligations in terms of moving closer to a 90 per cent permanent to 10 per cent contract ratio – in fact not even fulfilling an 80/20 balance.

“They agreed that this situation was bad for both the contract staff and for Swiss Post. So we expect more positive news soon.”

Three-paragraph article about new charter

More staff upheaval as BT railroads site moves

CONSULTATION LACKING

A shock decision by BT to close yet another contact centre, sourcing around 100 people from Wolverhampton to Sandwell, has again taken place without proper consultation with the CWU.

The move comes hard on the heels of an earlier highly-handed decision regarding a similar number of staff, who were bluntly informed that they were being shunted from Blackburn to Accrington, endangering the jobs of 50 longstanding agency staff.

Both Blackburn and Wolverhampton came under the BT Wholesale & Ventures main line of Business (LB3). Blackburn is GDSB and Wolverhampton is Wholesale Assistant secretary.

Brendan O’Brien said: “Again, this is BT Consumer seeking to expand its operation while another LB3 consolidates onto other sites around the country.

“Those affected here are of a higher grade than those in Sandwell and all will have their NewGRID salary and pension protected.

“However, the manner in which this move is being conducted is far from satisfactory and many members in Wolverhampton are both angry and dismayed.

“Considerable upheaval is being caused to members as a result of another internal BT reorganisation which has been driven through. These sorts of decisions cause stress and disruption to all those involved and the CWU is once again dismayed at the lack of full and meaningful consultation.”

The CWU is holding ongoing meetings with the affected members and they are being supported by local branches.

“Although the closure of the Operator site in Blackburn has been confirmed it has been given an extended life to the middle of January, when a number of members will leave with a payment.

CWU steps up fight for agency workers post Brexit

VIGILANCE NEEDED IN CHANGING LANDSCAPE

The CWU has campaigned long and hard, with some considerable success, for fair and equal treatment of agency workers – the ‘poor relations’ of the UK’s workforce.

The UK’s decision to leave the EU presents one of the guarantees of the hard won EU Agency Directive, which resulted in the UK’s Agency Worker regulations – on which the equal pay the CWU managed to secure for longer-serving Manpower workers is based.

There are serious concerns that the departure from the EU could result in the repeal or watering down of these regulations, but the CWU is pledging to do everything in its power to fight against this.

Assistant secretary Sally Bridgeman said: “We’ve got a Tory government for the foreseeable future and the implications of Brexit to deal with. It’s a new and potentially even more hostile landscape.

“The law regarding injustices like payment between assignments (PBA) contracts – that excludes agency workers from equal pay and allows contracts as little as one hour-a-week when not on assignments – is not going to change any time soon.

“It’s clear that we must continue the union’s ongoing vigorous campaign to secure a fair deal for agency workers, and fight to get these sorts of loopholes in equal treatment legislation closed.

“We have been successful in the past and we can win these battles in the future. In 2014, BT Consumer offered permanent BT contracts to over 400 agency staff who had worked for the company for over two years. Progress can be made, and we will continue to put maximum pressure on companies like BT and Manpower.”

Full story at www.cwu.org/voice/

SWISS POST PAY OFF

Both Blackburn and Accrington have been confirmed closed. It is not yet clear what a number of members will leave with a payment, or where they will be relocated.

Full story at www.cwu.org/voice/

PRODUBAN HOLIDAY PAY

A clash over holidays at Produban has been averted following urgent talks with management.

An agreement was reached with Santander in October 2015 to the effect that, along with Santander and all subsidiaries – Geoban, Isban and Produban – would implement improved holiday pay arrangements in line with EU regulations.

CWU assistant secretary John East said: “This was carried through at Geoban and Isban, but our members at Produban reported that it had not yet been implemented there.

“The union called an urgent meeting and, following some crossed wires over timings and backdating, and a conversation with Santander, the situation was rectified.”

The holiday payments will be implemented in January 2017 and backdated to July 2016.

Full story at www.cwu.org/voice/

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“They agreed that this situation was bad for both the contract staff and for Swiss Post. So we expect more positive news soon.”

Full story at www.cwu.org/voice/
As The Voice went to press, news broke that Post Office Pension Scheme Trustees had narrowly voted to approve company proposals to close members’ defined benefit pensions. The Government’s own words, is the best-funded scheme in the country.

Calling on the Government to over-rule and reverse the decision, CWU general secretary Dave Ward said: “The Post Office’s decision will cost our members thousands of pounds in their retirement. “It’s wholly unjustified and we’re seeing a publicly owned company effectively stealing money from people who have diligently saved for their retirement. The Government cannot wash its hands of this.”

Dave highlighted the scheme’s financial health, pointing out that it currently “has a surplus of £143 million and, in the Government’s own words, is the best-funded scheme in the country.

“We remain in dispute with the Post Office over these plans, together with thousands of job losses and the privatisation of Crown Offices across the country,” he continued, adding that a second round of national strike action was now looking inevitable.

PENSIONS PROTEST

Just a few weeks before the controversial announcement, CWU activists had been joined by colleagues from the Unite union as they lobbied Post Office Pension Scheme Trustees entering a crucial meeting in central London. And the joint CWU/Unite lobbyists spoke out their message in a quite literal way, with each person holding up a large letter, and, collectively, reminding the custodians of their retirement funds that “You can save our pensions’.

In a light-hearted way of making a serious point, two of our activists dressed as comedy ‘robbers’ holding pension ‘swap’ bags – representing in metaphor how many scheme members feel the senior Post Office leadership is going to ‘rob’ them.

Outlining the plight that members face, CWU assistant secretary Andy Furey said: “It will cost our members thousands of pounds in their retirement and is akin to stealing our members’ money.

“The fact is, it is an absolute outrage as the pension is in a healthy surplus and there is absolutely no need or requirement to close the scheme down.”

A one-day national strike had taken place earlier in the month, when CWU members in Crown Offices, Supply Chain and Admin grades struck for the day, alongside Unite/CMAs members in supervisory and managerial grades. Speaking from a lively picket at the country’s biggest Supply Chain depot in East London in the early hours of Post Office Day of Action in mid-September, Andy Furey said: “There has been some really positive news from our Supply Chain members and we’re looking forward to an equally determined response from our Admin and Crown Offices members as well.”

CWU area rep Rob Jones, standing alongside Andy, said that the turnout had been “magnificent,” with some 200 members here on strike and that management had deployed their so-called ‘rapid deployment teams’ to try to take vehicles out.

ACROSS THE COUNTRY

From Glasgow, depot unit rep Alan McGlachlin reported: “It’s been solid here and it’s all gone well. The feeling up here is that enough is enough and we’ve got to make a stand – we can’t just roll over.”

Depots in Birmingham and Newcastle also saw lively pickets, and unit reps Kevin Grieve and Keith Gibson warned that the workforce was not prepared to tolerate the worsening situation within the business and highlighted members’ ‘determined’ spirit.

MARK WORTHINGTON,

unit rep from another big city depot in Manchester, which also strongly backed the action, said: “Fruanchising is privatisation and we need to get that message across.” He added: “We need to stay with the external market, but it must be managed right.”

And in South Wales, Rob Jones reported: “It has been a solid day here and it’s all gone well. The feeling up here is that enough is enough and we’ve got to make a stand – we can’t just roll over.”

Depots in Birmingham and Newcastle also saw lively pickets, and unit reps Kevin Grieve and Keith Gibson warned that the workforce was not prepared to tolerate the worsening situation within the business and highlighted members’ ‘determined’ spirit.

And Terry Pullinger praised the strikers, saying that taking action was a “sign of courage” and that there was “nothing more honourable” than representing fellow workers and that “we’ll take all means necessary to get a right result.” Terry added.
Members are being urged to visit their MPs, send letters to local press, and share the union’s position widely on social media, as the CWU mobilises its grassroots campaign against any attempt to split Openreach from BT.

**SPECIAL FOCUS** Decision time on BT’s future

Members are being urged to visit their MPs, send letters to local press, and share the union’s position widely on social media, as the CWU mobilises its grassroots campaign against any attempt to split Openreach from BT.

**STAKEHOLDERS WERE GIVEN UNTIL THIS MONTH (OCTOBER) TO SUBMIT THEIR RESPONSES TO THE JULY REPORT – THE CWU SUBMITTED ITS RESPONSE LAST MONTH (SEPTEMBER) – AND THE REGULATOR IS NOW CONSIDERING THE CONTRIBUTIONS AND PREPARING TO PRODUCE ITS FINAL REPORT.**

**WE NEED TO WORK HARD AT NATIONAL AND LOCAL LEVEL TO ENSURE THIS GREAT BRITISH COMPANY, AND OUR MEMBERS WHO WORK FOR IT, ARE NOT DAMAGED BY ANY REGULATORY CHANGES.**

Summarising the union’s position, Andy said: “There are major issues in the Ofcom proposals that, if implemented, may have a substantial impact on the pensions, terms and conditions and job security of all members – particularly those in Openreach, but potentially all BT employees. It will also impact on BT’s future investment plans for roll-out of fibre Broadband for the whole of the UK.”

Setting out the specifics, he told us: “Ofcom want to separate BT and Openreach’s assets which could have implications for the financial position of BT Group, this in turn will lead to a transfer of members from BT to Openreach. It will also affect BT’s ability to support and meet its liabilities in the BT Pension Scheme.

“On pensions, the proposals could cause a weakening to the BT Pension scheme covenant, resulting in BT having to make higher repair payments to a scheme that’s reported to be up to £3bn in deficit. In addition to this it could also mean that our members in Openreach can no longer be active members of the BTPS.

“It will also almost certainly affect the Crown Guarantee which dates back to privatisation in 1982 and ensures the pension scheme is protected by the Government in the unlikely event that the company goes under.”

**TUPE OR NOT TUPE?**

The union has further concerns over employment rights, particularly if a TUPE (transfer of undertakings and protection of employment) scenario occurs with regard to Openreach staff. It is not entirely clear whether a TUPE situation will happen – the latest soundings from Ofcom indicate that an alternative is being considered – but Andy warns that a full TUPE of all 32,000 BT Openreach employees would be “the largest of all time, extremely complex and hugely expensive. It would also create inflexibility in a way that could seriously undermine our members’ job security in Openreach and across BT,” he added.

An example of this is the current facility for BT employees to transfer from different parts of the business during periods of restructuring, which assists in resolving surplus situations and thereby addressing compulsory redundancies. The inflexibility created by a full TUPE could make future surpluses much more difficult to resolve.

“In a wider context, it’s also our view that the plan risks damaging the UK economy by undermining the development of the national telecoms infrastructure,” Andy continued, reaffirming that only an integrated BT can deliver the broadband infrastructure the UK needs.

“And the complexities and the associated costs of any legally separate company, in both time and resources, would divert money and effort away from Openreach’s ability to modernise the network and make it available for every customer.”

**BEWARE VESTED INTERESTS**

The Digital Communications review has become highly political with BT’s market competitors urging the regulator to recommend full separation of Openreach from BT.

The review has created some hysteria and opened an door to criticise BT for lack of speed, investment and service. It has also triggered wild claims that BT is paid billions to maintain the network but isn’t delivering. You may have heard about the latest self-serving campaign by TalkTalk, Sky, Vodafone and others, which can be found at: http://www. fixbritains-internet.co.uk/page/speakout/ fixbritains-internet.

Back in June, Andy issued a hard-hitting rebuff to a “hit-point plan” that had been published by the bosses of Sky, TalkTalk and Vodafone UK calling for full separation of Openreach from BT. Andy comprehensively took apart each and every one of their arguments with his detailed reply, saying: “We’ve tried to move away from the constant criticism of BT, to understanding what’s at stake here for 45,000 employees and the future of the UK’s broadband infrastructure. Although BT customer service certainly needs improvement, the arguments for separating BT have been motivated by self-interest, rather than the interests of UK plc and the workers who deliver the broadband.

“BT needs to concentrate on (a) how it reaches the final few in hard-to-reach areas of the UK, (b) how it implements a realistic Universal Service Obligation and (c) how it makes real progress on customer service?”

**SPEAK OUT FOR COMMON SENSE!**

Last month, every BT member received a detailed home mailing from the CWU and reps have also been sent a further communication with a series of suggestions as to what they can do to further the aim of keeping BT and Openreach together.

BT members are being asked to make arrangements to visit their local MP and discuss with her or him the effect that Ofcom’s decision may have on their future and that of every other BT employee in the constituency. “Please speak to your MP regardless of which party they are from,” urges Andy, adding: “Remember, their job is to represent you, as a constituent.”

Letters to local press are often very effective, and members are also being asked to do this – particularly in response to any critical articles or reports.

“Letters to local papers are noticed by members of the public and by elected politicians,” said the deputy general secretary “and also, please send out and share the union’s position on social media as well – it’s important we use every means available to get our message out there. “And, if anyone needs more information, please contact your local CWU representative, or contact us direct here at HQ – there’s something for everyone to do, so please participate if you can.”

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UNITING THE MOVEMENT...

CWU made a major impact at both the Labour Party Conference and the TUC, winning strong and broad support for our key campaign priorities and playing our part in rebuilding, unifying and strengthening our movement...

C
ference contributions from the CWU included general secretary Dave Ward setting out the need for a New Deal for workers in the UK and a positive industrial and economic strategy for the nation. Deputy general secretary (T&FDS) Andy Kerr moved a motion on behalf of Labour’s NEC — to which he has just been elected vice chair — committing the party to improve party organisation and encourage greater membership engagement.

Senior deputy general secretary Tony Kearns, meanwhile, made an impassioned contribution calling for The Sun newspaper to be banned from Conference on account of that paper’s appalling treatment of Hillsborough victims.

The union’s London political secretary Alan Tate spoke on the crisis in housing, Amarjit Singh, from our South East Wales Amal Branch, contributed to the international debate — making the point that governments who intervene abroad must take responsibility for the consequences — and Glasgow Amal’s Hugh Gaffney talked about how Scottish Labour is shaping up to meet the political challenge north of the border.

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As well as the re-election of the party leader Jeremy Corbyn, and his well-received speech, he asked delegates to commit to organising a “major national demonstration in 2017 on a new deal for workers and to develop a common bargaining agenda for TUC affiliates to tackle insecure employment models across the UK.”

The protest should aim to be as large as possible, he explained, saying: “It’s great that we come here and share our views, but when we leave here, we’ve got to talk about the action we’re going to take.”

On the subject of developing a common bargaining agenda, Dave said that, while different unions, of course, have, and will continue to have, their own sectoral issues relevant to the specific industries their members work in, a common bargaining agenda can also identify those contractual issues that are common for all workers.

The general secretary highlighted the huge variety of insecure employment contracts that have become increasingly common across the UK in recent years, saying: “It’s not just zero-hours contracts” — and pointing to fixed-term contracts, contracts without sick pay, without holiday pay, and without pensions as examples.

The Congress also unanimously backed Post Office workers’ fight to defend their jobs and pensions and secure the future of the network, after a passionate appeal from deputy general secretary (postals) Terry Pullinger.

With thousands of CWU members set to take their first day of strike action later that same week, Terry said: “Politicians talk, but trade unions act and that’s what we’re doing.”

“We will stand up and defend our members and defend the Great British Post Office.”

The motion sought to ensure that none of the current set of rights at work are either repealed or weakened as we leave the EU and that the trade union movement is recognised as a key stakeholder in the Brexit negotiations, while another key clause was for a guaranteed right to remain for EU nationals legally resident within the UK.

Maria highlighted the various strands of equality legislation that could, potentially, be under threat in the coming period. “We need to protect access to justice at work,” she said, urging Congress to pledge to resist “the threat of turning back the clock” on discrimination law and cited examples from all of the equality strands.

Kate Hudson, CWU Midlands regional secretary, focussed her contribution on the need to ensure occupational pensions are protected and resist “the threat of turning back the clock” on discrimination law and cited examples from all of the equality strands.

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A wide range of other issues were also covered during the four-day event, from reforming theUC’s various industrial sectors and also touching upon important social issues, including housing – a memorable debate that CUWU delegates made their TUC debut this year – Becca Hutton and Jonathan Bellshaw, who addressed the half on young workers’ pay and work capability assessments respectively.

Amarjit Singh, from our South East Wales Amal Branch, contributed to the international debate — making the point that governments who intervene abroad must take responsibility for the consequences...
Can unaddressed mail items – known in the industry as ‘door-to-door’ and normally abbreviated to ‘D2D’ – be delivered more efficiently and more profitably? This is the big question currently being trialled at four delivery offices in the Reading (RG) postal area.

The Voice joined CWU acting outdoor secretary Mark Baulch, executive member Tony Bouch, and local area reps and managers visiting two of the units conducting the trial – rural Hungerford and the growing town of Wokingham.

Mark Baulch explained to us that the company’s stated intention was to trial collating the items by machine, whilst also finding the best method to reduce ‘D2D cold-calling’, which is the term used to describe occasions when unaddressed items are the only items delivered to a particular delivery point.

“Both the union and the business share the aspiration to complete the daily duties efficiently, in terms of time and resources, to generate revenue, keep work in-house and develop new services and products, whilst protecting jobs,” he continued. “We also want to reduce ‘D2D cold-calling’ as much as is reasonably possible, which is why we agreed to this trial.”

The current trial restricts D2D delivery to just three of the six service days – Wednesday, Thursday and Friday – those days being generally busier postal days than Saturday, Monday and Tuesday respectively. “Their thinking is that on busier days, there is a wide range of scepticism as to whether this new method is the right way to approach customer demand – it’s in everyone’s interest to grow the business to protect jobs,” he said.

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Mark Baulch told The Voice: “From the feedback we’ve received so far, and from what we’ve seen and heard, there is a wide range of scepticism as to whether this new method is the right way to approach the objectives that we all share and we hope that these views – and alternative suggestions – will be taken on board.”

Tony Bouch agreed and, referencing other ongoing trials at Walsall Delivery Office on multiple bundle and optimised mail preparation work, he said: “The way D2D is processed through automation, and then the delivery specification, is fundamental to the success of this way of working.”
The CWU has reached agreement with BT about rolling out the new attendance patterns in the Sales and Retention areas of BT.

**Consumer** This is a key part of the implementation of the Transformation Agreement, which has generated hundreds of new UK-based jobs, while at the same time sharing out evening and weekend attendances between all advisors.

Advisors employed by BT will be able to express a preference for a variety of attendances, including a five-day or four-day week, a nine-day fortnight or a three-day week for part-time workers.

**Outsourcing:**

The new Royal Mail Group Stress Risk Assessment process and Royal Mail Stress Toolkit have been developed by senior people in the business, the union, and also while CMA to provide early support for members if they are overwhelmed and in distress, explains CWU national health, safety and environment officer Dave Joyce.

Through this new approach, work-related stress is recognised as a potential hazard to health,” he continues, “and all of us are committed to managing work-related stress in a proactive manner to reduce the personal impact on members of the workforce.”

The Stress Toolkit is accessible on a specially constructed page of the Royal Mail Group Health and Wellbeing intranet site, where all the documents will sit and it forms the basis for the Online Stress Tool.

“CWU very much welcomes this positive initiative, which we helped shape through positive involvement and consultation at every stage,” says Dave, adding: “We strongly encourage members to use this service if they feel under stress.”

**A time for ACTION**

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**Half-marathon man raises £750 for Paul Maloney**

Postie executive member Andy Hopping has raised a further £750 for the Paul Maloney support fund by running this year’s St Albans half-marathon.

“I felt absolutely shattered after the run, but it was worth it to help Paul,” he told The Voice, as he proudly held up his giant cheque, representing donations from members of his own South Central Branch and officers and staff from CWU HQ.

As we have previously reported, in September 2015, Paul Maloney was severely injured in a criminal assault leaving him in a coma for over a month and resulting in him becoming wheelchair-dependent for the rest of his life. But the CWU was quick to resume his work of representing Birmingham CWU members, who re-elected him as branch chair earlier this year.

To fund the specialised equipment and building alterations that Paul needs, a financial appeal was launched by Birmingham Branch, with a memorable speaker from the CWU Annual Conference and an indoor triathlon by Divisional rep Paul Kennedy among the highlights.

Andy said that the bikers made sure that Paul’s appeal is still in people’s minds and that he wanted to run the half-marathon to do my bit for this excellent cause.”

Birmingham Branch secretary Steve Reid congratulated Andy on completing the 13-mile challenge – which he did in just over two hours and within the first 40 finishers – and said: “A massive thank you to membership from Paul and his family to Andy and to everyone who’s donated.”

**Relations with EE back on track for Action Month**

The CWU is delighted that union leafleting is resuming at EE after a shock blow to good relations in September when CWU ‘access’ days were suspended.

The situation was then resolved just in time for the start of October’s Action Month big recruitment and organising push.

CWU assistant secretary John East told The Voice: “We were very surprised and disappointed to be told in September that our agreed leafleting of one day a month was to be cancelled for the month. EE is a wholly owned BT subsidiary and we do not expect to encounter this sort of thing.”

**A new £50m call centre to get started in South Wales**

B t is expected to start recruiting in the autumn in South Wales to work under its new outsourcing contract, which has generated hundreds of new UK-based jobs, while at the same time sharing out evening and weekend attendances between all advisors.

Advisors employed by BT will be able to express a preference for a variety of attendances, including a five-day or four-day week, a nine-day fortnight or a three-day week for part-time workers, explained CWU assistant secretary Nigel Cotgrove.

BT began briefing advisors in Sales and Retention in September, followed by its preference exercise in October. Full implementation of the new patterns is expected in April 2017.

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Full story at www.cwu.org/voice/
Honouring Gerry Ryan

A Plaque has been unveiled at Croydon Town Hall in memory of former CWU NEC member Gerry Ryan, who died in January 2015, aged 57, after a six-year battle with cancer. Gerry, a telecoms engineer who for many years served as a highly respected Labour councillor on Croydon Council, was an inspirational trade union organiser. He played a huge role in the CWU’s success in achieving the membership numbers and the trade union structure that ultimately persuaded BT to agree to a recognition agreement covering the wholly-owned subsidiary, BT Facilities Services.

Amongst those joining Gerry’s family at Croydon Town Hall to celebrate his immense contribution in both the political and TU arenas were CWU general secretary Dave Ward, deputy general secretary (T&FS) Andy Kerr and Postal Executive member Alan Tate – a close friend and colleague of over 30 years standing.

Alan told The Voice: “Gerry was a family man and passionate trade unionist who got involved in politics to try and improve life for his fellow residents. I can honestly say it was an honour and a pleasure to have known and worked alongside him.”

International spirit - for CWUHA

IN JULY 1936 a military rising was launched in Spain by a group of military generals aiming to overthrow the Republican government, elected only five months previously. Between 1936 and 1939 over 35,000 people from over 50 countries, left their homes to fight against fascism. More than 2,900 of these came from Britain, Ireland and the Commonwealth, of whom over 500 were killed.

To commemorate the 80th anniversary of the start of the Spanish Civil War and the bravery of the International Brigadistas, last month’s CWUHA annual Longmynd Hike adopted an ‘International’ theme. John Turnbull of the Mid Wales the Marches & North Staffs Branch said: “Out of respect we flew the International Brigade flag over the campsite plus member’s flags from various countries who have now settled in the UK. “Brexit has made some feel vulnerable living in the UK so, to show our solidarity with workers around the world, flags from many nations, including the EU flag, were also raised.”

Retrospective sponsorship money was still being collected for CWU Humanitarian Aid by the intrepid reps, CWU members and families who took part in the 20-mile hike. John concluded: “CWUHA demonstrates a similar spirit to the International Brigades in helping orphans in other countries. Please share that spirit by donating to https://mydonate.bt.com/charities/InternationalHike.

TRIBUTE TO TIM

HEARTFELT TRIBUTES HAVE been paid to longstanding Capital branch officer Tim O’Reilly whose funeral place on October 4. Tim represented members for almost 25 years before his retirement in October 2016. His many achievements included the launch of a highly successful union learning centre in central London. General secretary Dave Ward told The Voice: “Tim showed great dedication to his members over many years and he will be missed by many friends and colleagues throughout the union.”

The Voice is delighted to introduce a page for our younger members, for the first time ever. Moving forward, this page will feature articles from youth reps, members and guest writers. The youth are not the future – they are the present...

Becca Hufton
Kent Invicta Branch member

Becca spoke to Congress for her first time when she seconded a motion on fair pay for young workers at TUC 2016.

Citing her own experiences as evidence of the pressing need for unions to organise and recruit among younger workers, she told delegates in Brighton: “I’m lucky my job pays more than the Living Wage and that I have a trade union-negotiated job and because my job enables me to become a CWU industrial workplace rep.”

Becca, who has served as a shop stewards rep at Medway Mail Centre for two years, compared her situation to that faced by the majority of workers her age today, saying that, for too many of them, decent and fairly paid employment is not a part of their lives.

“Unions like the CWU and others are prioritising recruitment and organisation of young workers,” continued the 23-year-old, saying: “When you meet someone in casual employment, ask them to join a trade union. Organise and mobilise them to join with us and fight for fair pay, terms and conditions.”

Currently, National Minimum Wage legislation applies lower rates to younger workers and this motion called on the TUC to back campaigning to end these age-related exemptions and apply a principle of equal pay rates for equal work. Becca explained to The Voice: “I was really pleased to have the chance to second this proposition and also it was great to stand on the main stage after this debate with young reps from other unions holding up our Movement of Young Workers banner,” she said, adding that the TUC general secretary Frances O’Grady had also joined them on the front platform and endorsed the initiative.

Dan Lewis
Kent Invicta Branch activist

Dan was awarded the TUC Youth Award in recognition of his work recruiting, organising and representing members and this year. The Voice caught up with him at Labour Conference, saying: “The stuff we’ve put forward this week has scared the Tories.”

He told us his intention while at the Labour Conference was to “network with young members of our union, of Labour, and of other unions and to exchange ideas and information.”

“It’s about connecting with young members and getting to other unions about some of the work they do with younger members. I said Dan who is one of over a dozen CWU reps at the 2,000-strong Santander financial centre in Bootle – a position he has held for the past four years.

Dan’s message to other young members is: “It’s vital that we keep up all the good work we’re doing in the CWU – such as the annual young members’ education event for example – but also equally vital that we’re always open to trying new ideas.”

“Of course the new Young Members’ conference platform is a wonderful opportunity to bring young members a new sense of inclusion as well,” enthused the 27-year-old.

Dan was equally impassioned about the youthful ‘people-first’ policy programme that began to take shape at the Liverpool conference, saying: “ ‘The stuff we’ve put forward this week has scared the Tories.”

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Becca Hufton

We spoke with two young CWU reps at the TUC and Labour Party conferences – Becca Hufton and Dan Lewis – and asked for their reflections on the two events and their message to other young CWU members.
“Remember 1971” - the seven-week national postal strike

“Remember 1971,” words which would resonate among members and officials alike in the years that followed the first all-out national postal strike. 45 years on, Charlie Pullinger reports on a dispute that still resonates today...

The industrial action, which spanned three months, began when postal workers demanded a minimum 15 per cent increase on their basic pay and, when a far lower offer was returned, they decided to withdraw their labour in defiance. The then UPW’s Executive Council announced a national strike which began on January 20, 1971. The task would prove to be a difficult one against the backdrop of a newly elected Conservative government that had already enforced a periodical wage freeze.

From the outset the union found itself up against both the Government and the employer, both of whom proved to be defiant throughout. A heroic stand it was indeed, in the face of being ‘locked-out’ of employment and in the knowledge that they were not receiving any income whilst undertaking industrial action.

The length of the dispute caught many by surprise. Most in the highest echelons of the union expected the mere mention of an all-out strike to be enough to secure a deal with GPO management. This proved not to be the case, with the Government – realising the impact on commerce and industry - authorising private mail companies to break the Post Office's monopoly of postal deliveries. Although many private companies adopted mail delivery during this period, many were female members, who held on to their jobs out of their branches in a show of solidarity. The strikes were well supported throughout, with large numbers of striking workers attending rally meetings every Thursday at London’s Hyde Park.

“...we would march from our East London district office every Thursday, from Bow all the way to Hyde Park. Striking workers would join us from other depots along the route in a big show of solidarity.”

BRIAN LEE

CWIU retired member Brian Lee, who was actively involved in the union at the time, tells of his first-hand experiences. “We would march from our East London district office every Thursday, from Bow all the way to Hyde Park,” he recalls. “Striking workers would join us from other depots along the route in a big show of solidarity.”

The unprecedented open-ended strike lasted for 47 days, costing the union dearly with funds depleting with each passing day. Many criticised the wider TUC movement for not coming to the aid of the strikers financially to carry on the dispute. With the UPW on the verge of bankruptcy, its then general secretary, Tom Jackson, recognised the genuine possibility of the union being lost forever. At the eleventh hour a ‘reipple’ settlement deal was struck that was overwhelmingly supported by members who returned to work on Monday March 8, 1971.

Brian Lee recalls: “Tom Jackson didn’t have a choice. All the money had been spent, we had no money to run the union, we were in danger of losing the headquarters’ premises and the union would have been finished.”

Despite having given up significantly less than what had originally been demanded, many believe that both the gravity of the action taken, and the outcome of a subsequent enquiry, paved the way for healthy improvements in pay and terms & conditions in the years that followed.

Perhaps the greatest and most enduring legacy of the 1971 national strike, however, was the message that went out loud and clear that the union was willing and able to stand firm for members - and not a force to be trifled with.

Fallout from the EU Referendum campaign and the ultimate Brexit vote dominated the agenda at the CWU Black Workers’ Conference in Leicester earlier this month. No less than six motions were debated on the subject, most of which focused on widening divisions in communities since the referendum.

Senior deputy general secretary Tony Kearns highlighted the role the media played throughout the campaign. The media were obsessed with the anti-immigration message, dominating front covers of national newspapers, which led to an upsurge in disgraceful and abhorrent racism,” he told delegates. Delegates condemned such behaviour and debated how to combat xenophobia and racism in the aftermath, beginning with tackling workplace racism.

Head of equality Linda Roy welcomed delegates to the CWU’s Disability Conference in Leicester earlier this month by questioning the Government and its “severe cuts” to welfare and disability benefits. Describing the impact on people with disabilities, Linda said “The most vulnerable in our society are being scapegoated and made to pay.”

Referring to a recent United Nations report in which ‘serious concerns’ were raised about the disproportionately adverse impact austerity measures are having on disabled people, Linda said: “The United Nations report was so damming in its verdict that the UK’s austerity measures are in breach of the UK’s international human rights obligations.”

Linda went on to warn “of hard times ahead” for those with disabilities or from other disadvantaged groups, but also conceded that “tough times don’t always last – tough people do,” especially when they have the support of their trade union.

Conference gave a standing ovation to special guest speaker, Birmingham Branch chair Paul Maloney, with his family in attendance, who also told of his personal struggles with “this penny-pinching government” after the traumatic injuries he received just over a year ago. (See page 19).

Despite submitting “extensive medical records” to Birmingham City Council confirming that he suffered a collapsed lung, a broken back and a bleed to the brain, Paul shocked delegates by revealing that officials had “turned down” his blue badge request.

Brexit dominates Black Workers’ Conference

Conference & Pride EQUALITIES

This year Jersey Pride become ‘Channel Islands Pride’ as a result of neighbouring Guernsey holding its first-ever LGBT parade earlier this month, that was seen by equality campaigners as a significant step forward.

And comedian Francesca Martinez topped the bill at an “innovative and enjoyable” equality conference held by CWU Jersey Branch to coincide with the week’s events.

Local branch secretary Leigh Devine told The Voice: “Our event was a mixture of politics, music and comedy and everyone who was there said they thoroughly enjoyed themselves – there was some great, positive feedback.”

Francesca was absolutely wonderful and we also heard some classic rock covers from a local group called The Engine, as well as a range of speakers from the CWU and from other organisations. “We want to put on a festival along these lines in the future, alongside other trade unions on the island through our trades council,” Leigh added.

Pride in the Channel Islands

FULL DISABILITY CONFERENCE REPORT AT www.cwu.org
ed mainly by Asian women, the Grunwick dispute of 1976-78 challenged not just stereotypes but also the ethos of the predominantly white, male trade union movement of the day and, in the process, inspired a generation to speak out against injustice. Amongst the tens of thousands who flocked to the cause of the Grunwick strikers and their inspirational leader, Jayaben Desai, were postal workers from the then Cricklewood branch of the UPW. Twice their refusal to deliver or collect mail cut the jugular of the mail order photo processing operation, but the solidarity action triggered bitter recriminations.

Those came not just from Grunwick itself and the Post Office - which locked out the Cricklewood workers even though they offered to work for nothing, if necessary, to maintain postal services to ensure that an entire community didn’t suffer on account of one fervently anti-union businessman - but also from the national union.

After hastily backing the then legal secondary action against Grunwick being conducted by the Cricklewood branch (which always had the unequivocal support of the union’s London region), UPW headquarters subsequently backtracked in the face of threats of sequestration orchestrated by the fiercely anti-union National Association of Freedom - even attempting to discipline and fine the leaders of the Cricklewood branch.

Incredible though that seems now, the way that a small local dispute with a strong moral underpinning got caught up in wider political forces, elicit strange and conflicting responses from the then Labour government and even the TUC, is perhaps easier to understand in the context of the time.

In the heady days of the late 70s the Callaghan government was facing industrial unrest on a grand scale and a looming electoral challenge by Margaret Thatcher’s resurgent Tory party that was already honing plans for its subsequent attacks on the trade union movement. As such, the Grunwick dispute arguably became trapped in a wider schism in British society in which the nuts and bolts of a small local dispute was swamped by the power of solidarity.

When the SPG (Special Patrol Group) were deployed to the Grunwick picket line by the police, the strikes’ ultimate ‘defeat’ was laid to rest the ghost of the UPW’s treatment of militant workers and the power of solidarity.

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I write to ask why is there never anything about us mobile telecoms engineers. I have little doubt he would have thought differently had his side won.

He goes on to say “we live in a representative democracy.” Hardly so when it takes four million votes to elect one MP from a particular party.

The main issue among the electorate was immigration. All the political parties had no desire to talk about it, not even the Tories. It was forced on them in the end by the public opinion and LIAB. The public like to snap at the ‘lefty’ people by calling them racists, particularly if they want to reduce immigration. I certainly not a racist, but I sincerely believe this country has too many people in it. Just look at our traffic jams and housing shortage. I would not, however, be so heartless as to want someone back to the country they came from if they arrived here legally.

It’s interesting to note that the question of the pro-EU trade union movement was so eager to see elected as its leader, but never desired anything that would have reflected the changes to the environment in which the company operates and the reality of the union is obviously to defend members’ interests.

While we’re often constrained in what we can report, we’re working on an article for the next issue that will reflect the changes to the environment in which the company operates and the opportunities that may arise.

Senior deputy general secretary Tony Kearns responds. Bob Harris raises some interesting points, but, unfortunately for him, none are factually correct. I argued earlier that the problem is a choice, whether he likes it or not, 650 constituencies electing MPs is by its very nature a representative democratic structure. He may not want to acknowledge that, but it remains a fact. Likewise his claim that it takes four million people to elect one MP – the largest

Referendum reflections

Giving his thoughts on the outcome of the EU referendum (back page of the last issue of The Voice) Tony Kearns does not think that a referendum is a good way of resolving issues. I have little doubt he would have thought differently had his side won.

Next is his well-worn and well-discredited “Britain’s full” argument. The major reason for the increasing population in the UK is fertility, not immigration and will continue to be so for a long time. The UK is “fuller.” If Bob wants to describe it thus, because people are living longer. All evidence backs this up. Bob’s biggest mistake though is to somehow confuse a few traffic jams with this perceived overcrowding. Routinely, studies have shown that there are a number of factors that cause traffic jams. On motorways the major reasons are sharp braking, unnecessary lane changes, lorries overtaking and road works. Elsewhere, the real cost of driving has reduced over the years with very little noticeable expansion in road building. So more people drive their cars because the alternative, public transport, is not integrated, offers a reduced and in some rural areas no service at all. Add to this that we’re offered a completely underfunded and unreliable train system in many parts of the UK and it’s no wonder people take to their cars and this perceived overcrowding. Routinely, studies have shown that there are a number of factors that cause traffic jams. Bob Harris’ biggest mistake though is to

Brexit spin-off

Brexit is a golden opportunity for the renationalisation of Royal Mail and other public services in Great Britain. That’s because when the UK exits the EU it will also exit the requirement to abide by some of the most damaging rules imposed by Postcomm and latterly Ofcom which are 90 per cent driven by Brussels – their purpose to enforce EU legislation on public services to prepare them for the open market. Brexit potentially opens the door to renationalisation it returns all decision-making on economics, trade and regulation of the UK market back to Westminster. As such, Labour and the TUC could – and, in my view, should – work towards passing a Parliamentary Bill that brings Royal Mail back into public hands. That Bill would not only protect postal services but it could also protect the Post Office and maybe even reinstate GPO status! Parliament would be totally accountable once again for the future of a cherished national institution.

Dave Allen, Bristol

General secretary Dave Ward responds: As Dave says, Brexit presents opportunities the Labour movement should campaign on. When it comes to competition and privatisation in the postal industry, however, UK governments have gone far beyond any requirements imposed by the EU and further than what other European countries have done. So, in coming out of the EU, what we need if we’re going to see Royal Mail renationalised is as before: a progressive government here in the UK. This is what we all need to fight for.

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General secretary Dave Ward responds: As Dave says, Brexit presents opportunities the Labour movement should campaign on. When it comes to competition and privatisation in the postal industry, however, UK governments have gone far beyond any requirements imposed by the EU and further than what other European countries have done. So, in coming out of the EU, what we need if we’re going to see Royal Mail renationalised is as before: a progressive government here in the UK. This is what we all need to fight for.

BREXIT SPIN-OFF

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Under the Act, most new local authority tenancies will be on a fixed-term basis – from two to 10 years – a regulation that will also apply to many ‘succession’ tenancies as well, while the so-called ‘pay-to-stay’ clause will significantly increase household costs for many tenants.

‘Pay-to-stay’, as it has been dubbed by campaigners, will oblige local authority tenants with a household income above £31,000 – £40,000 within London – to pay an extra 15p for each pound over that benchmark.

CWU senior deputy general secretary (SDGS) Tony Kearns highlighted this particular clause of the Act – which is scheduled for introduction next year – during a debate on the issue at the TUC last month.

Supporting a composite motion committing the TUC to campaign against the negative impacts of the Act – and highlighting the CWU’s contribution to the composite, which stressed the need to campaign against ‘pay-to-stay’ in particular – Tony told Congress: “This is an opportunity for the TUC to say we stand with working-class communities and we’ll take this fight all the way until we’re successful.”

The ‘pay-to-stay’ clause was “a tax on working-class communities,” he said, and explained that “councils will have to bear the cost of this, but the revenues will go to central government,” which meant that this amounted to a transfer of wealth away from working-class people and communities.

Speaking to The Voice in further detail last week, Tony said that he was pleased the TUC had unanimously approved the motion on housing and also that the Labour Party had promised to abolish the Housing and Planning Act if it wins the next election.

The UK’s chronic housing crisis had been “mostly caused by failure to build council houses,” the SDGS explained to us, highlighting estimates by housing experts that between 232,000 to 300,000 new homes every year are needed to adequately address current levels of need.

But the response to the crisis from this Government – and from successive governments – has been “lamentable,” Tony continued, saying: “Local authorities used to build council housing, but this has all but stopped and now, new homes are more likely to be built by housing associations.”

But a significant source of new-build funding used by housing associations – capital subsidy from government – has also recently been cut by “more than £8 billion,” he explained, describing this as “an act of political will that further exacerbates the crisis we face.

“This is the nonsense of everybody being in this together, working harder and the noble idyll of bettering oneself clearly comes with a heavy cost to pay if you happen to be a council tenant.”

The Voice also spoke to CWU London divisional representative Mark Palfrey, who is also an active member of his local tenants’ association in south London, and he predicts that the impact of the Housing and Planning Act on many CWU members “will be massive.”

Describing the legislation – particularly ‘pay-to-stay’ – as “Poll Tax II,” Mark says that it “went under the radar” when it was introduced into law, at a time when everyone’s attention was focused on the EU debate and referendum.

“We defeated the Poll Tax by long and active protests and we now need to come together and campaign like we did back then,” says Mark, who adds: “This is an attack on the fabric of our communities.”

🌟 As The Voice went to press, housing campaigners from across the UK were preparing to hold a national Axe the Act event in central London aimed at creating a unified, nationwide housing justice movement. The Voice will update readers on this issue in forthcoming editions.