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WELCOME

DAVE WARD
GENERAL SECRETARY

The equalities agenda has come under increasing attack over recent times.

At the time of the last Labour government the Equalities Act 2010 came onto the statute book – marking some significant gains for working people. Yet as this edition of ‘The Word’ reflects there seems to be a real slowing of momentum, when it comes to achieving the goal of creating a more equal society.

So we learn of the growing gender gap in pay between women who become mothers and their male counterparts, black and ethnic minorities are more likely to be underemployed than their white counterparts and Muslim women are the most discriminated against in the workforce. Sexual harassment, particularly against younger women, remains commonplace in the workplace.

The Brexit vote also could see the removal of certain equality protections that have come to British workers via the EU. The trends identified above could grow even worse with rogue employers backed by a right wing Conservative government able to further attack worker’s rights.

So there is much to be done. There has been progress made on the equality agenda but recent events certainly underline growing threats. It is important to remember that many of the great advances in equality across society have been attained as a result of the struggle of trade unions. It has been a successful collective effort. We have made major gains but now the time has come to not only defend those gains but seek to push that equality agenda ever further forward.

There is still a lot to be done before we truly become an equal society.

LINDA ROY
EQUALITIES DEPARTMENT

Hello everyone, welcome to the second edition of our equality publication, ‘The Word’. The first issue was sent out during annual conference and the feedback we have received has been really positive.

Well done to everyone who contributed. It is our intention to build on this positivity.

Equality Day at annual conference was also successful. Equality is an important area as it affects everything we do; the mentoring scheme is coming together; training has been given to mentors and mentees and this will progress over the coming months. Some of you will be reading this magazine as we are going into the Equality conference season, if you have not attended any Equality conference(s), I would encourage you to come along and experience the conference(s).

The Equality conferences give our members the opportunity to have their say on issues which affect them in the working environment. It’s an opportunity to directly influence CWU policy and motions – as all motions that are carried are acted upon by the relevant advisory committee, and this forms their work for the coming year.

The face of the CWU membership is changing and it is vital that you are part of that change, so come along and join us, join in the debates, you may find it interesting and worthwhile.

Linda Roy
BAME WORKERS A THIRD MORE LIKELY TO BE UNDEREMPLOYED

A TUC report has found Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) workers are a third more likely to be underemployed than white workers.

Figures from the Office for National Statistics show that for the first quarter of 2016, BAME workers faced an underemployment rate of 15.3%, compared to a rate of 11.5% for white workers.

The TUC analysis came just after the Equality and Human Rights Commission found that BAME workers also face higher unemployment rates, lower pay, and are underrepresented in senior roles.

West Ham United’s first Premier League match at their new London Stadium was used by a trade union and football supporter-backed campaign to highlight the ongoing horror of Qatar’s World Cup preparation.

Thousands of migrant workers have been exploited building the infrastructure for the 2022 tournament – with many deaths.

The protest at the London Stadium marked the start of a series of days of action by Playfair Qatar, the TUC’s campaign with the Football Supporters’ Federation to raise awareness of the exploitation and abuse of rights faced by workers in the Gulf state.

Campaign coordinator and TUC policy officer Stephen Russell said: “This stadium was at the heart of the safest Olympics ever — no-one lost their lives.

“If these standards can be applied for the Olympics they can also happen for the World Cup.

“As a mega-sporting event it stands in stark contrast to the situation in Qatar where hundreds, if not thousands, of people are at risk building both the infrastructure and stadiums.”

It has been well documented that some 1,200 migrant workers have lost their lives while preparing for the Qatar World Cup. However, the Qatar Ministry of Health has estimated that there could be 7,000 deaths before a ball is kicked.

Treasurer of Southern and Eastern TUC Colin Bull questioned why Qatar has failed to match the good health and safety record of the Olympic stadium in London.

“There are two or three deaths a day in Qatar,” he said. “I don’t see why they cannot adopt the same standards we have in this country.”

Jonathan Havard, a West Ham supporter and national secretary at maritime union Nautilus, declared that the Qatari authorities cannot be allowed to plough over workers’ rights unimpeded.

“Whatever faults West Ham might have, there is a unionised workforce here and health and safety is a priority,” he said.

Stephen highlighted that FIFA has the power to put pressure on the Qatari government to ensure that proper health and safety and work conditions are applied, though football’s world governing body has continually ignored calls from the ITUC, GMB and Amnesty International to strip Qatar of the tournament.

“It is making no effort to reform,” Stephen added. “Qatar continues with the Kafala system which binds people in jobs for five years, unable to quit and go to another employer or even just to leave and go back to their families.

“I am not sure what FIFA stand to gain from refusing to act. If FIFA doesn’t take action in Qatar, as the only remaining agency able to compel the Qatari — who clearly have no interest in reforming themselves — then they will have blood on their hands.”
MUSLIM WOMEN THE MOST DISADVANTAGED

The Parliamentary Women and Equalities Committee have found that Muslim women are the most economically disadvantaged group in British society.

Figures suggest Muslim women are three times more likely to be unemployed jobseekers than women generally, and twice as likely to be economically inactive.

Many Muslim women in Britain face a “triple penalty” impacting on their job prospects – being women, being from an ethnic minority and being Muslim, the committee suggested.

It cited Office for National Statistics (ONS) figures for 2015, which found 35% of all Muslim women from 16 to 64 were in employment. By contrast, 69% of all British working-age women were in employment between March and May this year.

The starkest comparison was in the proportion of women who are classed as economically inactive – that is, unemployed and not seeking work.

The 2015 ONS figures found that 58% of Muslim women were economically inactive. By contrast, 27% of all working-age women in the UK were economically inactive between March and May.

The percentage of Muslim women unemployed and seeking work was 16%, the ONS found – compared with 5% of women nationally.

The unemployment rate is calculated as a percentage of those who are economically active.

The report cited Demos’s analysis of the 2011 Census which found that nearly half (44%) of economically inactive Muslim women are inactive because they are looking after the home; this compares with a national average of 16% of women who are inactive for this reason.

The report cited a number of contributing factors, including family pressures, Islamophobia, recruitment discrimination and language barriers.

The committee called on the government to introduce a plan to address the inequalities by the end of the year. It also called for name-blind recruitment to be introduced.

“Without more well-paid, part-time jobs and affordable childcare, the gender pay gap will take decades to close.

“We need to see a step change in government policy and employer attitudes if we are to fix this problem.”

The IFS report suggested that the difference may be down to women with children working fewer hours and consequently missing out on promotions and gaining less experience while men race ahead.

Fawcett Society chief executive Sam Smethers said: “We are wasting women’s skills and experience because of the way we choose to structure our labour market.

“Part-time workers can be the most productive, yet reduced hours working becomes a career cul-de-sac for women from which they can’t recover.”

MOTHERS FACE A WIDENING PAY GAP WITH THEIR MALE COUNTERPARTS

The Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) found that while the overall gender pay gap had narrowed over the past two decades, women with children were falling behind.

Carried out for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation charity, the study found that average hourly pay rates for women are currently around 18 per cent lower than for men.

But it also found that once women started a family, the gap widened year after year so that by the time their first child had reached the age of 12, their hourly pay was 33 per cent down on men.

TUC general secretary Frances O’Grady said: “It is scandalous that millions of women still suffer a motherhood pay penalty,

“Many are forced to leave better-paid jobs due to the pressure of caring responsibilities and the lack of flexible working.

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“Many are forced to leave better-paid jobs due to the pressure of caring responsibilities and the lack of flexible working.
A new study conducted by Ipsos Mori has found the public attitude to immigration in the UK has grown more positive over the past five years.

Among those surveyed, some 45% believed that immigration has been good for the UK economy. Only 38% agreed with that last year, and only 27% in 2011.

Similarly only 38% of people think that immigration has made it harder for ‘native Britons’ to get a job, rather than 48% last year and 62% in 2011.

Saira Grant, Chief Executive of the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants, said:

“The British public are growing tired of the media and political rhetoric that demonises immigrants. The government has an opportunity to move beyond arbitrary targets and to start work on a principled and just migration system that recognises the contributions that immigrants make to the UK irrespective of the Brexit vote.

“Immigration policy and law should be founded on evidence, should be clear and understandable, and should ensure the benefits of migration are reinvested in our communities. Today’s net migration statistics show the great need the UK has for immigration. We should start building a system that works both for migrants and those already in the UK.”

BURKINI BAN OVERRULED BY FRENCH COURTS

The attempt by a number of French towns to ban the Burkini was ruled as unlawful by France’s highest administrative court.

The ruling came after pictures beamed around the world of two armed French policemen standing over a Muslim woman on a beach insisting she take clothes off.

The international outrage brought forward many images including those of nuns playing in the waves and divers in wet suits lying on beaches. The blatant discrimination against the Muslim women was clear for all to see.

The ban had initially been imposed by 15 towns across France.

BRITISH PUBLIC GROWING MORE POSITIVE ABOUT IMMIGRATION
TIME TO STAND AND FIGHT ON EQUALITY

The TUC’s commitment to equality runs through everything that we do. It’s the cornerstone of the new campaign plan that we launched at Congress in September. It’s cast in a starker light than ever in the aftermath of the vote to leave the EU.

Our movement has shown great strength, unity and resilience, and we’ll need it more than ever in the coming years. Our recent activities – including the TUC research and campaigning on sexual harassment, the motherhood pay penalty, underemployment of BAME workers and disabled people’s employment – all show that we still face an uphill climb but much is being done by the union movement to address this.

The TUC publishes an annual Equality Audit and this year it comes at a time when unions face an unpredictable and challenging climate for bargaining on equality. Despite the challenging times, unions continue to make progress in bargaining for equality, whether it is equal pay, flexible working, pensions or bullying and harassment.

On women’s rights, we know that women who become mothers before the age of 33 earn 15% less than those who haven’t had children. Younger mums are also more likely to experience poor treatment in the workplace – and that affects their earnings. A fifth of mums under the age of 25 said they were dismissed or were treated so badly that they were forced out of their jobs because of pregnancy or maternity leave, compared to one in ten mothers overall.

It is scandalous that millions of women still suffer a motherhood pay penalty. Many are forced to leave better-paid jobs due to the pressure of caring responsibilities and the lack of flexible working. Without more well-paid, part-time jobs and affordable childcare, the gender pay gap will take decades to close.

We need support for more equal parenting roles to stop women being held back at
Employers must be clear they have a zero tolerance attitude to sexual harassment and treat any complaint seriously.

and Minority Ethnic Groups (BAME), one third are more likely to be underemployed. The Equality and Human Rights Commission reported that despite improving educational attainment, BAME workers with degrees are two and a half times more likely to be unemployed than white workers with degrees. Moreover, black workers with degrees are paid 23.1% less on average than white workers with degrees.

The TUC has called on employers to publish ethnic monitoring reports on underemployment, hiring, promotion, and training and to use standardised, anonymous job application forms for new hires; establish clear, written procedures for dealing with discrimination at work and advertise opportunities for training, extra hours, and development such as deputising and secondments to all that we do.

Employers must be clear they have a zero tolerance attitude to sexual harassment and treat any complaint seriously.

work; free childcare from the end of maternity leave to help younger mothers with less seniority and lower pay to stay in work after having children; better-paid jobs to be available flexibly (job shares, part-time working, compressed hours), to prevent women getting stuck in low-paid, part-time work after having children.

Most importantly, we need better enforcement of legislation against discrimination linked to pregnancy and childbirth. There are wider concerns for women in the workplace.

Research published by the TUC shows the extent of sexual harassment women in the workplace are being subjected to. More than half (52%) of women, and nearly two-thirds (63%) of women aged 18-24 years old, said they have experienced sexual harassment at work. Sexual harassment shames and silences the victim, it is undermining, humiliating and can have a huge effect on mental health. It has no place in a modern workplace, or in wider society.

Employers must be clear they have a zero tolerance attitude to sexual harassment and treat any complaint seriously. Government must abolish employment tribunal fees to give more people access to justice – it currently costs £1,200 to take a case to court. The government must extend the full range of statutory employment rights to all workers, regardless of employment status or type of contract, to ensure that women on zero-hours contracts or agency workers are protected in the workplace.

For workers from Black and Minority Ethnic Groups (BAME), one third are more likely to be underemployed. The Equality and Human Rights Commission reported that despite improving educational attainment, BAME workers with degrees are two and a half times more likely to be unemployed than white workers with degrees. Moreover, black workers with degrees are paid 23.1% less on average than white workers with degrees.

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The government must take measures including developing a comprehensive race equality strategy, expanding workers’ rights to include temporary and part-time workers and eliminating tribunal fees, especially for discrimination cases.

For disabled workers the employment gap between disabled and non-disabled people remains stark. In 2015 the disability employment gap was 33.6%. I know through talking to disabled workers that stigma, prejudice and discrimination makes it harder for disabled people to stay in work. The TUC’s Manifesto for Disability Equality and accompanying guidance is a tool for trade unions to ensure disability equality in the workplace.

At its heart is the social model of disability – a fundamentally different approach from the medicalised model that has for so long dominated much public understanding of disability. The social model of disability sees the individual first, it doesn’t medicalise people by their impairments but it seeks to remove the barriers disabled people experience. The manifesto sets out what is needed to achieve this in employment, social care, transport, politics, arts and culture, and in social security. It is a tool to help trade unionists and others to resist government policies that hit disabled people badly, and to negotiate improvements in the workplace.

In the case of LGBT rights, the TUC has campaigned to highlight the current inequality in survivor pensions. I have raised this issue both in the media and within government and the opposition. We know that the inequality in survivor pensions is not acceptable and will continue fighting for justice in this area.

The work of trade unionists is vitally important. I want a movement that is dynamic, responsive and relevant to all workers. That is why we must stand together to defend and advance equality, through all that we do.
EDITOR’S COLUMN

TO FIND OUT MORE AND GET INVOLVED
CONTACT equality@cwu.org

WELCOME
KATH KELLY
EDITOR

Welcome to the autumn edition. We live in very turbulent times, within our politics, which will hugely affect women and equality issues. Issues that the CWU are proud to defend.

Linda Roy and her department along with the advisory committees are all working very hard trying to tackle the issues faced on a daily basis by CWU members.

I would like to thank all involved for their dedication and hard work in creating this magazine and a special thank you to those who have written an article. Anyone interested in sending an article, and I encourage you to do so, please forward to muthakelly@hotmail.co.uk.

Finally I look forward to meeting new and old delegates at Women’s conference in Leicester on 8 November.

K. Kelly

WORKING CHANCE

Lisa Hubbard, senior support officer at Working Chance, explains what the organisation does to help women ex-offenders

Working Chance is the UK’s only recruitment consultancy for women with criminal convictions. Our mission is to empower women ex-offenders to become financially autonomous through employment and move from a life of exclusion to one of contribution. We achieve this by offering a first-class, specialist recruitment service with wrap-around resettlement and rehabilitation support.

Women with criminal convictions are one of the most isolated, stigmatised groups in the UK today. Our beneficiaries tell us the real punishment starts when they finish serving their sentence and try to find a job. Many employers won’t even offer an interview to a woman, if they know she has a conviction, with the result that fewer than one in ten report a positive job outcome within one year of leaving prison. Without any prospect of supporting themselves or their families, many women ex-offenders are condemned to a spiral of rejection, low self-esteem and dependency which all too often ends in re-offending.

We help women to secure quality, paid jobs by providing them with practical employability and life-skills training, comprehensive disclosure training, social welfare support and introductions to employers. In addition to professional recruitment consultants, we employ practitioners trained in debt and benefits, domestic violence and housing practice. We build women’s confidence and help them overcome their barriers to employment so that they are able to move on from their pasts and pursue fulfilling careers.

Our focus on the quality of our job placements is a crucial part of our restorative recruitment vision, as well as our success. By matching our candidates to employers’ vacancies, we are able to create life-changing opportunities for women with convictions, while helping employers to source talented and resilient employees.
TWO THIRDS OF YOUNG WOMEN HAVE EXPERIENCED SEXUAL HARASSMENT AT WORK

A report by the TUC has found that two in every three young women has experienced sexual harassment at work.

The report, “Still just a bit of banter”, found that more than half (52%) of women, and nearly two-thirds (63%) of women aged 18-24 years old, said they have experienced sexual harassment at work.

The survey found sexual harassment at work taking many forms, from suggestive remarks, jokes about a colleague’s sex life, circulating pornography, to inappropriate touching, hugging or kissing, or demands for sexual favours.

In the vast majority of cases (88%), the perpetrator of the sexual harassment was male, and nearly one in five (17%) women reported that it was their line manager or someone with direct authority over them.

The survey also found that around four out of five (79%) women who said they experienced sexual harassment at work did not tell their employer about what was happening.

Of this group, some thought reporting it would impact negatively on their relationships at work (28%) or on their career prospects (15%), while others were too embarrassed to talk about it (20%) or felt they would not be believed or taken seriously (24%).

The study is also the first to include the opinion of women who identify as black, minority and ethnic origin (BAME) who say they have been harassed at work. More than half (52%) said they have experienced sexual harassment in the workplace.

TUC General Secretary Frances O’Grady said: “How many times do we still hear that sexual harassment in the workplace is just a bit of ‘banter’?

“Let’s be clear – sexual harassment is undermining, humiliating and can have a huge effect on mental health. Victims are often left feeling ashamed and frightened. It has no place in a modern workplace, or in wider society.

“Employers must be clear they have a zero tolerance attitude to sexual harassment and treat any complaint seriously. It’s a scandal that so few women feel their bosses are dealing with the issue properly.

“Anyone worried about inappropriate behaviour at work should join a union to make sure they are protected and respected at work.”.

THE FACTS

- The researchers found that nearly one in three (32%) of women have been subject to unwelcome jokes of a sexual nature while at work.
- More than one in four (28%) of women have been the subject of comments of a sexual nature about their body or clothes at work.
- Nearly a quarter (23%) of women have experienced unwanted touching at work – like a hand on the knee or back.
- A fifth (20%) of women have experienced unwanted verbal sexual advances at work.
- Around one in eight (12%) women have experienced unwanted sexual touching or attempts to kiss them at work.
"The Olympians" is a selection of great women, whose inspiration has left its mark on history. Others could easily fit the roles described herein and they are also to be remembered and honoured.

AFRICA
ETHIOPIA
DERARTU TULU (B. 1972-)

Derartu was the first black African woman and first Ethiopian woman to win an Olympic gold medal. In the 1992 Olympics in Barcelona, Derartu won the 10,000 metres event. Eight years later she repeated the feat, winning gold at the Sydney Olympics in 2000. From humble beginnings, Derartu has made her mark on history.

AMERICA
SIMONE BILES (B. 1997-)

Simone was the first woman to win four gymnastics golds in a single Olympic Games since 1984. At her Olympic debut in Rio de Janeiro (2016), Simone came away with five medals: four golds and one bronze. A combined total of 19 Olympic and World Championship medals, Simone ranks as the most decorated American gymnast and is probably unlike any other gymnast we have seen, and still only aged 19.

ASIA
HONG KONG
LEE LAI-SHAN (B. 1970-)

Lee was the only athlete to win an Olympic medal in Atlanta in 1996 representing Hong Kong, before it was transferred to China in 1997. Lee’s Olympic gold in the women’s windsurfing, changed the history of her country. Lee remains the only person to win an Olympic gold medal for Hong Kong.

EUROPE
SWITZERLAND
HELENE DE POURTALES (B.1898 – D.1945)

Helene was the first woman to compete at the Olympics and the first female medallist. She won gold at the 1900 Olympics in Paris, as part of the crew of the Swiss sailing team boat Lerina. She won gold in the first sailing race of 2-3 ton class and silver in the second sailing race of 2-3 class.

LATIN AMERICA & THE CARIBBEAN
BRAZIL
RAFAELA SILVA (B.1992-)

Rafaela was the first Brazilian woman to win a gold medal for her country in a World Judo Championship (2013). Rafaela was the first gold medallist winner for her country at the Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro (2016) when she won the under 57kg judo title. Rafaela’s triumph at Rio is a resounding victory for the favela community, where life is tough, violent, unequal and racially divided.

MIDDLE EAST
MOROCCO
NAWAL EL MOUTAWAKEL (B.1962-)

Nawal was the first Moroccan woman to win an Olympic gold medal. She won the inaugural women’s 400 metres hurdles at the 1984 Olympics in Los Angeles. Her win signalled the breakthrough for aspiring sporting women in Morocco and other Middle Eastern countries to participate in international sports. Nawal’s achievement won her the congratulations of King Hassan II of Morocco, who declared that all girls born on the day of her victory were to be named in her honour.

THE REFUGEE TEAM
SYRIA
YUSRA MARDINI (B.1998-)

Yusra was representing the first ever Refugee Olympic Team under the Olympic Flag. Yusra competed in the 100 metres butterfly and freestyle swimming at the Rio games. The 10-person strong team should be applauded for their bravery and courage.

All contenders at the Olympics are champions. Through determination, courage, bravery and often difficult circumstances they achieved what many of us would find impossible to do.

In the final part of the “Women from Around the Globe” series, Pauline Granstan looks at women’s contributions to the Olympics.
CWU WOMEN INVOLVED WITH FOOTBALL IN THE NORTH EAST OF ENGLAND AND MOLDOVA

Trish Vollans tells how the CWU North East women’s committee is offering their full support for the region’s female football team

The CWU North East Regional Women’s committee are currently supporting a local North East ‘girls’ football’ team.

The team was started by Andy Parish, lead Union Learn Rep from the Hull mail centre.

Andy approached the committee asking if we could support a local girls’ team by sponsoring them with a football kit.

The committee were keen to get involved, so agreed to meet the team coach and purchase their kit.

The girls now proudly wear a CWU sponsored training kit. The committee visited the girls whilst training in July.

The girls’ U14s football team, named Pinefleet Wolfreton are coached by Mark Calvert, a CWU member and Parcelforce driver from Hull.

Mark is an ex professional footballer who played for Hull City. He is now putting his knowledge to good use, and getting the results to prove it.

“It is very rewarding being involved with coaching young people and seeing them improve, which builds confidence, but the financial challenges of running a community club is very difficult,” said Mark.

Participation is the most important factor for all the girls at the club, but last season was a particularly successful one for the under 14 age group as they won the league and cup, as well as three summer tournaments.

Pinefleet is a brilliant, community based female football club that provides training and playing opportunities for girls between the ages of 7 to 16 for the juniors and also have a ladies team at open age, currently approximately 70 juniors and 15 adults participate.

The aims and objectives of the club are to provide the opportunity for children and adults to play organised sport in a safe and enjoyable environment, whilst having fun.

As a Charter Standard club Pinefleet Wolfreton adhere to strict guidelines and back the ‘Respect’ and ‘Kick Racism’ campaigns. The club is also entirely run by volunteers.

At the time of compiling this, Pinefleet Wolfreton Girls’ U14s sit at the top of the league! Girls’ football is on the rise here.

HELPING WOMEN’S FOOTBALL IN MOLDOVA

Trish Vollans tells of her involvement with the CWUHA and how the charity is helping to improve girls’ football chances in Moldova

Community girls’ football is very new in Moldova, only last year did two villages in the Chisinau region put together two teams in their schools, “Viva Sport” in Mihaileni and “Costesti- Prut” in the village of Costesti.

This is significant in the development of girls’ sport in Moldova as it is not due to the lack of commitment by school coaches, but more the lack of equipment.

The CWUHA agreed to sponsor the girls and boys teams. So on 21 May 2016, the teams received their first ever football kits, along with a variety of sports equipment. This day was also special as it was the first community based football tournament in Riscani, Moldova. All the children received medals and certificates of diplomas for their achievements. The girls clearly enjoyed the day and there was some great football too!
Graham Taylor’s new book charts the long neglected role Ada Salter played in ethical socialist politics of the early 20th century.

Before reading this remarkable book I had very little knowledge of the groundbreaking work of Salter.

Taylor chronicles the humble Methodist, Liberal Party and temperance movement influences on her early life in Raunds Northampton. She became a ‘Sister of the People’ and social worker and tutor to the poor in Bermondsey, London.

Salter became an activist in the Independent Labour Party; being one of the first women in the UK to be elected a councillor. She became London’s first woman mayor in 1922, at the time of the women’s suffrage movement.

Ada supported the trade union movement throughout her life, supporting women factory workers during the Bermondsey uprising; striking London dockers and cab drivers.

Taylor’s painstaking research introduces the high profile characters Salter interacted with during her remarkable journey. These include the Pankhursts, Mary Macarthur, Ramsay MacDonald, and Herbert Morrison.

There was also Ada’s family, close friends and colleagues such as her husband Dr Alfred Salter and her daughter Joyce – who sadly died from scarlet fever aged eight in the Bermondsey slums.

Ada was influential during the 1920s on the ‘ Beautification Committee’ covering the ‘dreary’ Bermondsey with poplar trees, gardens, flowers and playgrounds, as she and her doctor husband improved the health and wellbeing of the Bermondsey poor.

Those of you with a love and interest in social, socialist, trade unionist and women’s movement history would benefit greatly from following Ada’s story; learning of the legacy she left us with and the huge difference she made in people’s lives; and why the revival of ethical socialism is important today.
Here’s hoping you enjoy reading this issue of the Word. The Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Advisory committee has been hard at work this Pride season. They have travelled the length and breadth of the UK promoting the CWU’s values of equality. Our banner states that there is definitely ‘no place for prejudice’ in today’s society. We all need to stand up against inequality, wherever we find it. Perhaps we might support a work colleague or even demonstrate at Yarls Wood Detention Centre. Also rolling out are extra options in the ‘my details’ area of the CWU website so please keep an eye out for that.

This year the committee has been working very hard with the regionals to raise our profile and help with any LGBT advice you may need.

At our very first meeting it was decided that we needed to set up a working party. The main objective was to raise the profile of the committee and try to strengthen our working relationship with the regionals.

It was agreed that this working party would be made up of committee members: Jason Reynolds, William Byrne and Keith Tyrrell.

We tried to be as flexible as possible because just three people were supporting this working party and we didn’t want it to fail.

The Pride events will usually happen at a weekend, so some may not be able to attend all activities.

We have also had help from the following committee members Theresa Clark, John Monk and Suzy Bewick as well. The working party would like to thank them for all their help. As you can see we have had a great pool of resources which has been used within the last six months to promote this committee.

The working party originally agreed to attend just four pride events this year: two big ones and two smaller ones (Birmingham, Brighton, Bournemouth and Reading).

In the event we were able to attend more – see below.

- Birmingham 28 May
- Portsmouth 19 June
- London 25 June
- Bournemouth (Bourne Free) 08 July
- Newcastle (Northern) 16 July
- Glasgow 20 August
- Croydon 28 August
- Reading 3 September
- Jersey 17 September

We would like to thank all the regionals / branches that have attended these events as well. We have gathered lots of your useful information to help plan for 2017.

We believe it’s really important that our members and branches show their support when we are coming to your branch area. Don’t be shy.

TO FIND OUT MORE AND GET INVOLVED CONTACT EQUALITY@CWU.ORG

CWU at Pride

Jason Reynolds tells how the CWU members got involved in Pride events this year

CWU flying the flag for Pride

Theresa Clark

CWU flying the flag for Pride

Theresa Clark

Theresa Clark
Visitors to the CWU website will soon notice a change to the ‘My Details’ area where personal details are stored. Currently individuals are able to amend addresses and add details, such as ethnicity. Soon sexual orientation will be able to be added together with gender identity and disability.

These days we fill in monitoring forms that routinely ask about characteristics such as ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, disability and marital / civil partnership status. These characteristics are protected from discrimination under the Equality Act 2010.

Public sector organisations, including trade unions have a duty to consider the needs and requirements of people when developing and delivering services. So, monitoring how services are delivered is a vital way to prove that they are meeting these needs and requirements.

It ensures LGBT people are given access to services, and that access is equal and there are equal opportunities at work.

There are a number of benefits from declaring this information. Although we know more LGBT people these days; most organisations lack basic evidence on how many of their employees fit the category. Consequently, they are unaware of the experiences of LGBT people within their organisations.

Monitoring has enabled organisations to slowly find out this information and build on the evidence. This enables organisations to ensure our differing needs are being met and where this is not happening take action. It also ensures LGBT people are given access to services, and that access is equal and there are equal opportunities at work.

It can also help create a culture of openness at work and change culture in workplaces to allow them to be more inclusive.

We are therefore encouraging our members to complete your personal information, once the system change is launched. Look out for forthcoming comms. As with all organisations the CWU has to ensure data they collect is always kept confidential and stored in line with the Data Protection Act.
GAY RIGHTS ARE HUMAN RIGHTS

Merlin Reader looks at the growing discrimination against LGBT migrants and refugees

The UK is currently undergoing a four yearly review of human rights. The report from the previous review highlighted the treatment of migrants and refugees as unacceptable. Unfortunately, the government has continued with its treatment of refugees in precisely the way it was told not to. So for example, people seeking asylum, or whose right to residency is in dispute, can be held in ‘detention centres’ indefinitely. Even though they have committed no crime, nor been charged. This includes women and children. Despite this being a breach of human rights, it still happens. The longest publicised detention was of a woman for five years.

For LGBT asylum seekers, the political climate has made the situation very difficult. They are asked to ‘prove’ their sexuality. One lesbian was asked for pictures of her having sex with her girlfriend. Another was told she couldn’t be a lesbian because she hadn’t had a girlfriend for two years. Gay men have been advised to ‘just be discreet about your sexuality, when we send you back’.

The majority of countries (around 70) where homosexuality is illegal are former British colonies. Even where it is legal – or at least, not technically illegal – LGBT people face persecution.

In Brazil, trans women face violence, sexual abuse, and a number are murdered every year. Even in the UK, after homosexuality was legalised in 1967 (in very restricted circumstances – over 21s, only two men and in a private house), laws against ‘public indecency’ were still used by the police to arrest and prosecute gay men looking for partners for well over 20 years. This still happens in other parts of the world – Egypt is an example, where homosexuality is not illegal in law, but ‘indecency’ is. It is now being reported that gay dating apps are being used by police there to entrap gay men.

The whole debate about migration means that LGBT people seeking asylum have to ‘prove’ that they are LGBT and liable to persecution in their home country. So many are deported, often to an extremely unpleasant life, living ‘underground’ on next to nothing. And having attempted to get asylum, the authorities in their ‘home countries’ are often aware of them and therefore they are at far greater risk of arbitrary arrest, vigilante attacks, beatings, rape and murder.

There are regular campaigning events concerning the issues of detention and deportation. Demonstrations, passenger intervention on flights, mass emails, phones and faxes to airlines and embassies have prevented some deportations from occurring. There have also been demonstrations of up to 2,000 strong outside Yarls Wood detention centre.

Gay men were ‘illegal’ in the UK once. Why should a person be ‘illegal’ living here, because of where they were born? No human being is illegal, and we need to show solidarity with refugees and migrants and join the various campaigns to support them.

One lesbian was asked for pictures of her having sex with her girlfriend. Another was told she couldn’t be a lesbian because she hadn’t had a girlfriend for two years.
Sally Wilson
I am a postwoman in the Castlemilk Delivery Office in Glasgow. I have worked for Royal Mail for just over eight years and been elected as the women’s officer for Glasgow and District Amal for four years. I am a member of the CWU Women’s Advisory Committee and the LGBT Advisory Committee. I also represent the CWU on the Scottish Trade Unions Congress’s LGBT and Workers Committee. I volunteer for LGBT Scottish charity, LEAP Sports Scotland.

John Monk
I am vice chair of the LGBT advisory committee and a member since 2011. I have been a union member since 1982, a rep since 1986 and currently LGBT and disability officer for London and West.

I’m currently an internal auditor for BT Fleet. I have been most active recently with formulating the ‘tackling LGBT bullying and harassment in the workplace’ presentation – which the committee are currently taking out to the regions.

I’ve also been a proud carrier of the CWU banner at pride events this year. I enjoy travel, going to theatre and gigs, and baking.

Merlin Reader
I’ve worked in Royal Mail for 19 years and been a union rep for 17. I have been openly gay for 25 years. I have had a lot of experience in dealing with LGBT (and other) issues. I’m quite political. Hobbies include reading (historical, science, political, sci-fi), swimming and travel.

Tara Morgan
I have worked for Royal Mail since 1988. This year I was voted onto the LGBT Advisory Committee and am the only trans member at the moment. I am part of Royal Mail’s steering group for trans people. I was lucky enough to attend the CWU LGBT conference in Leeds in 2014, where I met Kate Stewart and Des Gibbons. They encouraged me to apply for the LGBTAC after hearing of the abuse and discrimination I had suffered in my workplace. Trans people have little support and have nobody to turn to for help. I will endeavour to communicate the support that is out there, as we are never alone.

Theresa Clark
Initially, I worked as a delivery officer at Grimsby but a serious injury, means I now work in the callers office. I was voted onto the LGBTAC last year as there were vacant positions and I’ve been voted on again in the election this year. I have been a union member for most of my working life – GMB, Transport & General Workers and for the past 13 years in the CWU. It’s only been within the last couple of years that I have put myself forward as a representative.

The CWU have helped keep me in work on a few occasions due to my degenerative health condition. If it wasn’t for the union I can’t imagine where I would be now.

William Byrne
I have worked for Royal Mail since 1988. I work at Glasgow Mail Centre in Priority Services and am also a workplace coach.

My most important role within the CWU is being a member of the LGBTA committee. This involves helping LGBT+ people and promoting the CWU’s values of equality on Pride marches around the country.

One of my major concerns is that our LGBT+ members are afraid of coming out of the closet. It is important to me, as a member of the committee, that our membership is free to be whoever they are!

I also carry out health and safety inspections within BT building for the CWU as a union safety rep.

Jason Reynolds
My first real involvement with the CWU was when I stood for election as my local work place rep within Television Media & Content (TVM&C) in 2011 – now known as BT Sport. I also carry out health and safety inspection within BT building for the CWU as a union safety rep.

I joined my branch Capital in November of 2012. Then in early 2013 I became the BT TSO lead representative within my branch. This role involves working with other London branches to engage with management to improve members working conditions etc.

This is the first time that I have served on the LGBT committee.
Amarjite Singh and Greg Amissah mark the 40th anniversary of the Grunwick dispute and question what has really changed for black workers

The theme of the Black workers conference this year is 40 years on. As the chair, I thought it was important to look at our achievements and struggles – especially the Grunwick workers, who were predominantly low paid Asian women, who built up a strong bond with the Union of Postal Workers (UPW) during the strike.

The guest speaker at conference will be Norman Candy, whose role before retiring was policy advisor to Dave Ward, then Deputy General Secretary (Postal), and whose service to the union dates back 40 years.

Many people in Britain remember 1976 as the hottest summer on record; others will remember it as the summer of discontent for workers at the photo processing company Grunwick in north west London.

The conditions were intolerable. Workers had to ask permission to go to the toilet, with overtime compulsory. On Friday 20 August 1976, a group of workers led by Jayaben Desai, walked out in protest when a manager told them off for “chattering like monkeys and that they were not in a zoo”.

They decided enough was enough and wanted to defend their dignity and rights. They soon realised that having a trade union at their workplace would help them to fight for better rights and so joined APEX (Association of Professional, Executive,
The workers began to demand that Grunwick should recognize the workers’ right to join a trade union and have that union take up any issues the workers may have with the factory owners. In those days, trade unions were all led by white men – both women workers and non-white workers often found it very hard to win support from their unions. Many migrant workers felt that the unions were racist and failed to challenge the management practice of keeping down the wages of women and non-white workers. But something special happened at Grunwick.

After Jayaben and her co-workers spent a few months picketing outside the factory, the cause of the Grunwick strikers was taken up by the wider trade union movement. By June 1977 there were marches in support of the Grunwick strikers, and on some days more than 20,000 people packed themselves into the narrow lanes near Dollis Hill tube station.

Grunwick operated a mail order service to develop photographs. People sent their film rolls by post and the workers at the Grunwick developed and printed them, then sent the photographs back by post. The nature of the work meant that there was a close working relationship between the postal workers and the workers at Grunwick. The Union of Postal Workers strongly supported the Grunwick strikers’ cause and on 1 November 1977 the union voted to boycott postal services to and from Grunwick. With this support victory seemed to be within the grasp of the striking women.

Meanwhile, as the dispute had been going on for some time, the government appointed a committee of enquiry headed by Lord Scarman to hear evidence from the workers and the factory owners. The government thought that, based on the evidence, they would be able to make some recommendations which would help to find a solution to the strikes. The Scarman Inquiry recommended that the owners of Grunwick should recognize the trade union and give the sacked workers their jobs back. The management rejected these recommendations.

By now the government were getting nervous about the number of people who were coming out to support the strikers. The police began to come to the demonstrations in large numbers and used violent, heavy-handed tactics towards the people who were protesting. The press covered these events – but, as usual were not on the side of the workers.

Both the TUC and APEX felt that the dispute could not be won and wanted to pull back. They effectively withdrew their support. But Jayaben and the strikers were not about to be told what to do, even by their own union.

They mounted a hunger strike outside the TUC headquarters on a cold day in November 1977. But even this action could not change the unions’ mind, and so they had to call off the strike. The strikers felt abandoned and disillusioned with the trade union movement. As Jayaben Desai commented “Trade union support is like honey on the elbow – you can smell it, you can feel it, but you cannot taste it”.

After two long years of struggle, the Grunwick dispute ended in defeat for the strikers. But according to Jayaben, “not everything was lost because of us, the people who stayed in Grunwick got a much better deal”. When the factory moved, the van used to come to their home and pick them up because it was difficult for them to get to the new place. Can you imagine that? And they got pension rights as well. That was because of the struggle. Sadly, Jayaben died in 2010.

The following might sound controversial, but the question 40 years on from Grunwick must be has anything changed for black workers when it comes to trade unions and their structures. We are still badly under-represented. Yet our proposals for reform and positive advancement are not seen as part of the solution to that but as part of the “problem”. Steps forward have been few and slow. But as our friend and colleague Bob Crow used to say: “If you fight you won’t always win. But if you don’t fight you will always lose”. So let’s get off our backsides and fight to keep what progress we have won and to fight for an even better future for black workers.
“Lurid immigration front pages sell papers,” said a journalist, who had just joined the Daily Express. This was years ago, when I asked how he could join such a paper when it ran so many asylum scare stories. The response was dispiriting: every time an asylum front page was run, sales increased. The argument was difficult to refute in economic terms but when it comes to the other roles of the media, such as to educate and inform, it represented a clear failure.

The positive side of immigration has failed to register in public consciousness as a result of the way the subject has been covered in the media. The government’s own figures show a net migration of 250,000 a year boosts annual GDP by 0.5%. This means more jobs and tax revenues, more funding for schools and hospitals and a lower deficit. Many jobs created over recent years have been done by migrants, with figures from the Office of National Statistics showing that three quarters of employment growth for the year to August 2015 being accounted for by non-UK citizens. In a country with a rapidly ageing population and skills shortages migration is vital to the ongoing health of the economy.

These are facts you won’t find in much of the media, which seems determined to present a totally negative view of migration. Most tabloids will print that a migrant has committed a crime on the front page, sending a subliminal message: migrant equals criminal. There is also negative coverage of ‘migrants on benefits’. What’s lacking is any balancing good news: taxes migrants pay to the exchequer, the huge benefits flowing to the education sector, diversity, and the positive stories of migrant workers contributing to our health, education and social services. This means many readers have a totally negative view of immigrants.

Not everything about migration is positive of course. Over the past 20 years it has been badly handled by successive governments. Labour allowed migrants from EU accession countries to enter the UK with few controls. There were no minimum standards of pay, terms or conditions of work, so migrant labour could come in and undercut the indigenous workforce. The failure to set and enforce minimum standards meant that migration effectively became an incomes policy to keep wages down. This bred resentment – many of the problems today could have been avoided had those minimum standards been enforced.

The result of a public debate on immigration driven by a media trying to sell product and pander to racism in the process has been to poison the public well on the subject, so the starting point for any discussion on migration is the reduction of numbers. So success on immigration amounts to cutting the numbers that enter the country.

Our responsibility now is to repel that anti-migrant racism. One way is to start telling a more positive story about migrants, not the lopsided hysterical view that may sell papers but also has pernicious consequences. The media has a duty to report the good news on immigration, and politicians must join that discussion. The politicians, too, must stop migrant labour being used to undercut indigenous workers and encourage them to join unions. They must also use the revenues generated by migrant labour to provide services that migrants and the wider community need and deserve – including housing. It is late to be making these moves with the racist genie already out of the bottle, but a start has to be made, otherwise we will all be staring into a particularly unpleasant looking abyss.
Lonnie George Johnson dreamed from an early age of becoming a famous inventor. Johnson’s father, a skilled handyman, had taught his children to build their own toys – a hobby young Lonnie took seriously.

Lonnie grew up in Alabama, USA, during a time of legal segregation. He attended an all-black school and in 1968 he represented his high school in the science fair. Lonnie’s creation of a robot he named “Linex” won him the first prize at the fair. As the only black student at the fair this was an incredible achievement at that particular time.

After unloading the aid, we went to the outskirts of Calais. It was very desolate, there was a high fence protecting access to the camp. As we got nearer, we saw police and mainly men walking up and down the side roads near the camp. It was quite nerve racking because we didn’t know what to expect. We were told not to take any photos and to be careful as there are no laws in these camps – so we could be at risk.

We started walking into the camp; there were shacks on each side. Some people have very little and then some people are very enterprising but the most vulnerable are dependent on people like Claire to distribute aid to help them survive.

I only walked so far into the camp and then I turned round. It is hard to imagine what it is like walking through this terrible place, I just had such a hollow feeling of how hopeless this Jungle is. That is why it is called “the Jungle” – that is what it really is.

Twice a day Care 4 Calais delivers aid, like food and clothing. How do you decide if you only have 20 pairs of trainers, who to give them to? Who gets a hoodie? Who gets a pair of jogging trousers? If there are 12 sleeping bags, how to decide who gets a sleeping bag? There are over 5,000 people in the Jungle, how do you make the decision who gets help? On one day Care 4 Calais took 1,000 jogging bottoms into the camp and within 15 minutes they had vanished.

Claire went to Calais from Liverpool to see how she could help. She has never returned to Liverpool but stayed to help. Claire has to fight every day to help people and it has taken its toll on her. I keep in touch with Claire and try and give her support when she needs it. She is a truly remarkable wonderful woman, trying so hard to help people who have very little.

This is just part of my experience, the CWU have been back since and intend to go back again. It was a very emotional time and if you can help, please, please do. If you want to help, go to Care 4 Calais, where you can make donations.
Welcome to this disability conference edition of The Word. This year has been very busy both in the various lines of business and the political arena. We have seen some changes that will have a major impact for all our members and may have caused some uncertainty. We, as an advisory committee will continue to work with the Equal Opportunities department and ensure that we keep our members advised of any changes that may affect you.

We have also seen an increase in our disabled members having difficulty getting time off for hospital appointments. Linda Roy has written a very informative article which will be of benefit to both members and reps alike.

National equalities officer Linda Roy outlines the law regarding paid time off relating to medical appointments.

I do get fed up of hearing how our members are being treated, when they have a disability and are asked to use annual leave or make the time up to attend hospital appointments.

Section 20 of the Equality Act 2010 imposes a duty on all employers to make a reasonable adjustment to any provision, criterion or practice applied by them, or physical feature of their premises, that places a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage.

The Equality Act 2010: employment statutory code of practice lists examples of steps that an employer may have to take in order to comply with this duty. The examples given include “allowing the person to be absent during working or training hours for rehabilitation, assessment or treatment”. However, the code says nothing about payment for such time off. What is reasonable for the employer to do will depend on the circumstances of the particular case.

Relevant factors to consider will be the size of the employer, financial resources, the terms of the employee’s contract, whether or not the employer normally pays employees for time off work to attend medical appointments (and for time off for other reasons such as sickness absence), the amount of time off that the disabled employee requires and the cost of paying for the time off.

In essence, unless there is some tangible and concrete reason why it would not be reasonable to pay the disabled employee for time off to attend medical appointments, payment should be made. Even if it is not the employer’s normal practice to pay employees who take time off to attend medical appointments, it may be reasonable to make payment in the case of an employee with a disability. Section 13(3) of the Equality Act 2010 makes it clear that it is not discriminatory against other employees to give special treatment to a disabled employee.

I hope this will assist our representatives when assisting our members.
I have a confession to make, I am suffering from depression? This is something that took me a long time to come to terms with.

Over a number of months I had been feeling ‘low’ however it got worse. I started thinking about suicide. I was struggling to cope with things. I wanted to sleep but couldn’t, then every few weeks I would crash and sleep for up to 16 hours.

I had lost interest in lots of things. My mind was like a fog. Sure, I managed to function and do my job but it left me feeling exhausted. However, during a short child-free break away I opened up to my wife and told her how I felt.

I called the Employee Assistance Programme. I will be undergoing counselling in the autumn.

I decided to make an appointment with the doctor. I broke down as I told her how I was feeling. The doctor asked me to fill in a questionnaire. She discussed various anti-depressants. The one she wanted to prescribe she couldn’t due to it increasing appetite which would impact on my trying to lose weight. I wasn’t sure whether to be offended or not when she said because I was a big man that she would start me on 25mg dosage. We agreed I would go back at the start of September to see how things were going.

I then wasn’t sure what to do. My wife explained to my son in a child-friendly way what was going on. But I didn’t know who else to tell, so there were a couple of things I did. First, I phoned another rep at the branch who knows some of the issues that I have been going through. It felt good to talk. In turn, I told the other officers in the branch. I have to say they have been great - very supportive.

I have also tried to encourage those who have mental health issues to be open and honest and don’t be ashamed, but here I was ashamed in many ways to let out my little secret. I wasn’t sure how to or indeed should I say anything to anyone else. I sent my mum and brother a text to let them know of all people, always happy to have a laugh and joke, always happy, nothing ever a problem. So I mulled it over, then decided to turn to social media.

It just so happened that my wife had written a blog when she went through a bad spell a few years ago but never published it. So she updated the blog and put a bit in about me (www.hopebubbles.wordpress.com). I simply shared it on my Facebook accounts and twitter with a comment “please read to find out what’s going on with me just now”.

I am at early days of dealing with my big black dog, sure I have moments where I can’t feel the dog and I hope in the future I will no longer have a black dog but I can’t tell what the future holds. What I do know is that I will continue to be open and honest about it.
WHAT PRICE IS TOO MUCH FOR TREATMENT?

Richard Hirtsch looks at how NICE operates in drug allocations

With people living longer lives and medical advancement being made daily, the question is what price is too much?

Everolimus is a drug to fight against advanced breast cancer, advanced kidney cancer or neuroendocrine tumours of the pancreas. One heart-breaking story is of a person who was taking the drug but stopped for surgery. They expected to start again after the operation but were told the pause meant that he was no longer eligible for funding. Where there is a proven success from these drugs on patients with cancer, should we not use them?

The independent National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) was introduced by the Government in 1999. All drugs and treatments that are available on the NHS are decided by NICE. In Wales, The All Wales Medicines Strategy Group make some decisions but mostly keep to the advice given by NICE. In Scotland and Northern Ireland they have their own separate organisations.

NICE was set up to avoid what was known as “postcode lottery”, where eligibility for treatments could be decided according to where you lived.

So, since NICE took over, everyone is able to benefit from treatment or drugs that have been approved.

NICE weighs up the cost-effectiveness and quality of life, and takes advice from experts, health professionals, patient organisations and other interested parties so unfortunately not every drug or treatment can be approved.

Pharmaceutical firms also play a part as the cost of drugs to the NHS is significant. The concern is that with financial pressures more and more treatments will be turned down due to cost.

CHILD AUTISM AND THE POSITIVE LIFE

DAC member Des Gibson looks at how dogs can contribute to the lives of people with autism

There are more than half a million people with autism in the UK, around 1 in every 100 people. If you include their families, autism touches the lives of over two million people each day.

Over 7,000 disabled people in the UK rely on an assistance dog. Assistance dogs have been shown to make a remarkable difference to children with autism and their families. Often reassuring children with autism and helping with their behavioural difficulties.

Self-esteem is often boosted by a welcome companion, as well as preventing children from bolting whilst out in the community.

Everyday life for autistic children can be confusing, frightening and lack meaning. They often find understanding and communicating with others particularly difficult, which can in turn leave them feeling isolated.

Assistance dog charities are often oversubscribed with long waiting lists.

There are a few charities providing assistance dogs, such as Support Dogs – supportdogs.org.uk they provide online personal stories along with video www.youtube.com/watch?v=BFV_uTZXkKc
Disability rights campaign says Corbyn is best

As the Labour leadership election dominated the headlines recently Jeremy Corbyn received a substantial boost from well-known disability rights campaigners DPAC (disabled people against the cuts)

The support came in a letter dated 25 July 2016, signed by over 700 people who live with a disability, are carers or supporters of DPAC. Available at: dpac.uk.net/

With 20% of British people and over six million voters, registered as disabled, this was seen as a major endorsement of Jeremy Corbyn’s bid to become labour leader once again.

This support is monumental as DPAC have never backed any particular political party in the past.

Corbyn and John McDonnell were praised for their past support for disability causes, often attending disability rights protests.

Corbyn’s stance against welfare cuts and the support of the Independent Living Fund were cited by DPAC and their supporters in the letter.

Des Gibbons DAC Member

Ridiculous Burkini ban

How incredible to see the once tolerant land of France being reduced to a scene where a police officer can stand over a Muslim woman insisting she take her clothes off. You could not make it up. That was the scene in Nice last August.

If this ludicrous act of intolerance was in some way intended to deter terrorism – it won’t work. This act shows France effectively giving into the tyranny of the terrorists, reducing the human rights of its citizens at the behest of the perceived threat.

The call of give me your liberties and I will provide security has been the cry of dictators down the ages – it would be sad to see the great nation of France succumbing to such a call, and in the process destroying the very liberties it has fought for so many centuries to preserve.

Peter Briggs, East London

Ed: The French courts later decided the actions taken against Muslim women were illegal

Let’s Talk About Bullying & Harassment

During a recent CWU Equalities conference, a delegate asked Linda Roy (National Equalities Officer): “What can or will the union do to assist a colleague in my unit who is being bullied in the workplace?”

Before providing details of both the CWU Bullying & Harassment Helpline and the relevant company bullying and harassment helpline, Linda asked the delegate: “what have you been doing to help them?”

This question was met with some resistance as the delegate attempted to explain that it was not their place to tackle the issue and that it was the responsibility of those around them.

The point of this letter is to remind us all that we all have a role to play in tackling bullying and harassment within the workplace. It could be as simple as trying to step in and diffuse a situation at the time, or after witnessing something you feel was inappropriate, asking the recipient if they are OK. You may not feel confident in challenging colleagues directly, but that does not mean you have no responsibility to assist.

Bullying and harassment is a serious issue and it should always be remembered that “one person’s banter is another person’s bullying”.

Dignity and respect towards colleagues and customers should be maintained by all.

If we all stand up and challenge inappropriate behaviours, in the future we may eradicate racism, sexism, homophobia, bi-phobia, transphobia, religious, ageist and disability related discrimination from the workplace.

Change comes from within and all members should recognise that if they adjust their own behaviours and challenge those of others, it could result in more harmonious working environments.

If you wish to talk to the CWU Bullying & Harassment helpline in confidence, please call 0800 090 2303

Michelle Dunn (not real name)