WE SHALL NOT BE MOVED
GET IN TOUCH...

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<tr>
<th>CWU HQ – all enquiries</th>
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<td>150 The Broadway,</td>
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<td>Wimbledon, London</td>
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<td>SW19 1RX T: 020 8971 7200</td>
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In most cases your branch should be your first point of contact. Details are on your membership card.

Harassment Helpline

0800 090 2303

Have you changed your address?

Please inform CWU about any changes to your membership details. There are three different ways to update your membership details:

Option 1 – Log into the members’ only section of the CWU website (www.cwu.org), using the username and password you have previously been sent, and change your own details.

Option 2 – Contact your branch secretary with your new details.

Option 3 – Contact CWU HQ on 020 8971 7447 or email your new details to membership@cwu.org and we will make the necessary changes.

Please help us help you – keep your details up to date.

UNIONLINE

YOUR TRADE UNION LAW FIRM

CWU Legal Services: UNIONLINE

0300 333 0303

UNIONLINE is the CWU’s very own law firm offering members and their families a fast route to free, comprehensive legal advice.

To register a claim or for any legal advice call UNIONLINE on 03000 333 0303

More information at www.unionline.co.uk

Editor The Voice

Karl Stewart

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Design The CWU

Cover image © 2019 CWU members

With thanks to this edition’s contributors, Norman Candy, Lynn Lambert, Mick Kane, John Hart, Gemma Walsh and Alan Jones.

CWU DEATH BENEFIT

In accordance with the terms expressed in CWU Rule 4.1.11 from the 1st October 2019 the CWU Death Benefit payment increased to £839.

The latest from Dave Ward, your General Secretary

As we approach the end of the year we are dealing with some huge issues both industrially and politically.

The judgment in the High Court granting Royal Mail an injunction against the union’s strike ballot is an outrage. The judge upheld Royal Mail’s claim on the basis that our campaign interfered with people’s right to vote – this despite the fact that out of 110,000 members balloted, not a single employee made a complaint.

Our reps and members can be proud of the campaign they ran to deliver the biggest Yes vote the UK has seen for years and, when an employer can get an injunction against a 97 per cent yes vote, it shows how much trade union laws in this country are totally rigged against ordinary workers.

Let me be clear, the union will never be moved in our opposition to what the Royal Mail Board are doing and we know that our members remain solidly behind us. Our plans to fight back are up and running and we will win this dispute. There is one simple truth that Royal Mail can never face away from – if the workforce is united, they will never be able to implement their plans for the future.

The judgment underlines the need for fundamental change and the General Election offers an opportunity to deliver this. Our members will make their own minds up, but there can be no doubt that Labour is putting forward a radical platform that will deliver for our jobs and industries, as well as fundamental societal issues that will improve life chances for millions.

On the world of work, it would repeal the anti-trade union laws that have been used against us in the courts. It would end insecure employment by banning the low-cost employment models that have left over 14 million people in this country living in poverty. And it would look to the future with a pledge to deliver a 32 hour or four-day working week in a decade.

On telecoms, we have now secured a major pledge to bring the broadband-relevant parts of BT into public ownership, delivering on one of the longest-standing policies this union has. The plan to rollout free full-fibre networks across the country within a decade would mean massive investment in jobs and the industry and we have secured important commitments that would not just guarantee jobs and terms and conditions but allow us to enhance them.

I also want to be clear that for members working in other parts of the industry or not covered by the proposals, our absolute commitment is to raise terms and conditions and create the race to the top on overall employment standards across the sector – make no mistake, Labour’s plans for the world of work will deliver this.

These things sit alongside the pledges Labour made in 2017 to renationalise Royal Mail – which would mean getting rid of the existing board and honouring our industrial agreements – and setting up a new publicly owned Post Bank bringing new revenue into postal services.

On all of these fronts I believe this is a winning agenda for our members. The battles we are currently facing – such as the dispute in Royal Mail and the threat of compulsory redundancy in BT – underline just how important it is for us to secure change.

Please consider these huge gains when you come to cast your vote.

Dave Ward

GENERAL SECRETARY

“The battles we are currently facing underline just how important it is for us to secure change.”

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Robust response to prospect of CRs

The CWU’s determination to defend the union’s fundamental red line on compulsory redundancies in BT has always been absolute – but today our resolve is being tested as never before.

An emergency branch forum has recently taken place at CWU HQ to discuss the union’s response to news that 367 loyal employees in the Enterprise division have been formally placed ‘at risk’ of losing their jobs.

This is undoubtedly the most serious challenge the union has faced since the 1987 national strike – but I’m also certain that it is BT, and not the CWU, that needs to reflect on the wisdom of an approach that risks triggering an entirely needless industrial relations showdown.

From the outset the CWU has pledged to work constructively in line with a track record that stretches back more than 30 years. Using tried and tested mechanisms contained in long-standing bilateral agreements, there has not been a single compulsory redundancy in any part of the business where the CWU is recognised.

And the union is adamant that the stated surplus of 367 posts in Enterprise today could be dealt with through a combination of voluntary leaver packages, redeployment and reskilling.

Yet, to date senior management has refused to rule out compulsory redundancies. What that intransigence is based on is, as yet, unclear – but either way, our response has been robust.

Last month we Registered a Formal Disagreement over management’s failure to provide information it is required to give under various collective agreements (and sometimes by law) before finalising proposals that could lead to compulsory redundancy.

Simultaneously, a massive CWU information-gathering exercise to mitigate any potential compulsory redundancies, is underway, designed to prove beyond doubt that they are unnecessary and morally unjustifiable.

In the background, however, we’ve made it abundantly clear to management that even one compulsory redundancy involving a CWU member will trigger a national BT Group-wide ballot for industrial action.

• For further details, please See article on Pages Eight & Nine

Andy Kerr
DEPUTY GENERAL SECRETARY (T&FS)

Even one compulsory redundancy involving a CWU member will trigger a national BT Group-wide ballot for industrial action.”

Working hard to protect members’ jobs

The union is also working hard to try to prevent compulsory redundancies among EE members, whose jobs are under threat at two Tyne and Wear sites.

EE has announced that it wants to cut 80 workers from its Doxford and North Tyneside buildings, and company chiefs, like their BT Enterprise counterparts, have refused to rule out compulsion.

CWU assistant secretary Nigel Cotgrove tells Voice that the union’s initial reaction to the announcement has been “first and foremost challenging the whole rationale” for this decision, pointing out that both units provide skilled and valuable customer and operational support.

“The company has yet to explain how these job cuts can be justified,” he told us, adding that the union’s priority – as always in such situations – will seek to ensure that any job losses are on a voluntary basis and to maximise remaining jobs and redeployment opportunities.

Nigel is also concerned at how the job cuts would impact on the staff remaining with the company, highlighting in particular workers at EE’s other sites, saying: “The move of work could also put additional workload and pressure onto the Darlington and Greenock members.

“We have not got any answers yet, and have asked EE to defer individual interviews until members have responses on these important questions.

Members invited to these key interviews are allowed to take their CWU rep with them and I urge all members to take up this option,” he concluded.

Consumer attendance

In BT Consumer, a set of briefings updating staff on the progress of negotiations to improve attendance patterns in contact centres will now not involve CWU reps.

Explaining the decision to suspend formal involvement by CWU reps in the Team-Based Scheduling Roadshows, Nigel Cotgrove told Voice that this was a “principled stance” by the union in response to the ongoing uncertainties over possible compulsory redundancies among BT Enterprise members.

“BT is threatening compulsory redundancies for the first time ever,” he explained, adding: “As a union we cannot stand by and let BT treat any of our members in this way. It might be Enterprise today, but it could be Consumer tomorrow.”
We always have the odds against us & we always have to fight

This dispute, particularly the recent High Court judgement against us, has exposed the real struggle that we’re engaged in for the representation of workers.

The anti-union laws that have come onto the statute since the 1980s were put in place to attack workers and help the employers and there’s no doubt they’ve certainly made life more difficult for trade unions over the years.

But we’re a fighting union in every workplace, maybe other unions are not in that position, but the CWU has a grassroots strength everywhere and in all parts of the UK.

And that has been our great strength in being able to consistently campaign for and win ballots for action when they’ve been necessary – as we did this year and in 2017, as well as back in 2009 and 2007.

But the High Court verdict last month showed that, even when we follow every single dot and comma of their anti-union laws, fully adhere to them in every respect, win a majority far exceeding the thresholds in terms of the result and the turnout required, even then, the employers get granted an injunction preventing action.

When over 80,000 people participate in a ballot and they can just trample all over it because a General Election is on – despite there being no law against industrial action during an election – it’s clearly yet another case of the establishment acting for the millionaires and against the workers.

But this has always been the case. The establishment, the employers, the ruling class have never wanted you to have a voice, or to have any rights.

We always have the odds against us and we always have to fight even to get heard at all.

The whole history of the trade union movement is a history of struggle. And it’s been this struggle that has made a difference – winning pay rises, better terms and conditions, pension rights.

The millionaires and fat-cat CEOs want to drive working people back to the mid-19th century – but we’re a thorn in their side.

And We Shall Not Be Moved

Terry Pullinger
DEPUTY GENERAL SECRETARY (POSTAL)

“Our whole history as a trade union movement is a history of struggle.”

CDC Pensions unaffected by dispute or election

In the Queen’s Speech in October, reference was made to the Pensions Bill which would enable our new pension scheme for all our members to be introduced, this was an historical moment for this union and the product of non-stop work and lobbying since we reached our agreement in 2018.

But as we all know, just a couple of weeks later, Parliament was dissolved and the general election was called, and we also have the still unresolved industrial dispute with the business – so Voice asked DGSP Terry Pullinger where this left the pensions situation, particularly the CDC-Wage in Retirement scheme that the union and Royal Mail agreed upon 18 months ago.

“As regards the industrial dispute, I’m pleased to confirm that this particular ‘pillar’ – which was Pillar One: A Pensions Solution For All – is not in dispute,” he replies.

“Our shorter working week, legally binding agreements keeping the company integrated, and a mutually agreed redesigned operational pipeline – our other three pillars – are the key issues in our dispute, but the company has not moved away from its full commitment to the pensions pillar.”

On the question as to whether the dissolution of Parliament affects the progress of the legislation needed for CDC, our DGSP assures us that, “although of course there will be no progress until the new House of Commons has been elected, there is no reason to expect any major extra delay here.”

While the October Queen’s Speech does not bind future Governments, there already was a full cross-party consensus on the need to introduce CDC, he explains, and adds that “the work done through the Parliamentary Consultation during the first half of 2018 and the preparatory work done in drawing up the Bill means that the new administration will have a significant “head start” and will be able to make it one of its first priorities after the election.

“Most importantly, and especially at a difficult time like the present, let’s all remember what a fantastic achievement this pensions agreement has been,” Terry points out.

“It’ll be the first of its kind in the UK and will drive pension innovation for current and future generations of working people in the UK and resurrect the principle of a wage in retirement affording dignity and security in old age.”

“And it would not have been achieved without the support of members and a strong CWU presence in the workplace.”
In their report on our ballot, the independent scrutineers from the Electoral Reform Society stated:
“...there are no reasonable grounds for believing that there was any contravention of a requirement imposed by or under any enactment in relation to the ballot.”

And
“...that the arrangements made with respect to the production, storage, distribution, return or other handling of the voting papers used in the ballot, and the arrangements for the counting of the votes, included all such security arrangements as were reasonably practicable.”

A lively campaign led by branches around the country achieved quite probably the biggest YES vote ever recorded in a national strike ballot, but was then ruled against in the most shocking High Court industrial relations verdict for many years.

As this edition went to print, the union had just formally lodged its legal appeal against that verdict, and had also responded to requests from Royal Mail Group for talks by openly calling on them to suspend, or at least pause pending the talks, their unagreed proposals – in particular the plan to separate Parcelforce, through the creation of a new limited company – so that meaningful negotiations can take place.

Deputy general secretary Terry Pullinger explained: “As I’ve made clear in other detailed communications, we have lodged a formal legal appeal against the High Court verdict and we will make arrangements to re-ballot our members if necessary, which the business is aware of.”

The union’s detailed response based mainly on Royal Mail’s request, following the High Court judgement, for talks, is a response based on the recommendations made by the independent mediator, Terry adds.

“And unless the business is prepared to do this, then there will not be the positive environment needed to properly resolve this dispute.”

Our last edition reached you before you received your industrial action ballot papers – and it’s fair to say a whole lot has happened since then!

WE SHALL NOT BE MOVED

Terry Pullinger and Dave Ward being interviewed outside the High Court last month
We stand solid & ready for action

With the company’s attempt to separate Parcelforce from Royal Mail Group at the forefront of the current national dispute, Voice caught up again with the four Parcelforce reps whom we spoke to last time.

Nimisha Vekaria, parcels section secretary from South Midlands Branch, was preparing to hold gate meetings at the giant Parcelforce Hubs in Coventry when we spoke with her just before this edition went to print.

Coventry is the biggest Parcelforce unit in the UK, with around 750 people employed at its National and International Hubs and Nimisha reports that members there “are absolutely as determined as ever in opposition to the separation of Parcelforce.

“The High Court didn’t rule against our Parcelforce ballot, which was held separately, so we’re all ready to go,” she tells us.

Nimisha came down to London for the ballot result announcement in October and she says that, when she heard the size of the majority her immediate reaction had been: “Oh wow! “I was speechless for a moment, and the sheer strength of spirit, all the hard work people had done and the unity in the union were awesome to be a part of.”

Chris Nicholas reports that “Newcastle Depot is rock-solid,” and that members there are “just waiting for the word” for action to be called.

“We’ve also had strong messages of solidarity from our fellow CWU members outside of Parcelforce when we had our Newcastle Amal Branch AGM recently,” he adds, praising our wider membership for the enormous strike vote they had delivered and what it represented.

“We’re feeling strong support from the union and Newcastle would be out as soon as we’re called.”

Parcelforce’s Central London Depot was “ready and eager” for industrial action, when Voice spoke with depot rep Marcus Hibbert.

He slammed the High Court verdict against our non-Parcelforce Royal Mail members as an example of “the law of the land violating the workers’ democracy” and told us that it had made him and his members “really angry.

“I explained to our members that the ruling did not affect our ballot and now they’re asking me every day when we are taking action.”

Michelle Reid-Hay described two different emotional reactions over the past month – tears of joy when she heard the ballot result and tears of anger and frustration at the High Court verdict.

“But our members here at the Aberdeen Depot are still going for it big time,” she insisted, and added: “We’ve also received staunch backing and pledges of 100 per cent solidarity from all our wider membership in Grampian & Shetland Branch.”

Assistant secretary Davie Robertson confirmed that the union remains intractably opposed to the proposal to separate Parcelforce and TUPE our members to the new limited company.

“Despite the events at the High Court, our Parcelforce ballots are unaffected and the CWU remains at liberty to call action in defence of our Parcelforce members,” he explained.

“As it stands any action can only include Parcelforce, however I have no doubt that the whole union stands together in solidarity and opposition to the plan to break up Royal Mail Group.”

Member-led grassroots campaigning

The campaign to get the vote out and win a Yes vote creatively combined our movement’s traditional methods with newer forms of fast and direct communication.

So, whether it was our members in delivery offices and mail centres having some fun during their breaks with some light-hearted and humorous jokes, or local activists sending important new information around their branches, the campaign benefitted hugely from rapid sharing of messages.

From the union’s headquarters, live video ‘Q&A’ sessions have enabled CWU people from all across the UK to question national leaders like Dave Ward, Terry Pullinger, Mark Baulch and Davie Robertson on issues of concern, while also providing a platform for instant discussion and debate.

“The Q&As and other live broadcasts have engaged huge numbers of people every time,” reports our union’s head of communications Chris Webb, “particularly when there’s been a significant development – such as the ballot result announcement or the High Court judgement.

“And when units started holding gate meetings, our ‘Dispute Daily’ broadcasts made sure we mentioned every one – helping to boost morale and spread the word.”

During the period when the national ballot was in process, many members decided to take their completed and enveloped ballot papers into work and then collectively post them at their nearest post boxes during their breaks.

And the shared photos of members posting their votes together have provided some of the most memorable moments of the whole campaign – inspiring images of working-class democracy in action.

“While all this was spontaneously happening around the country, here at HQ we did all we could to encourage the highest possible level of involvement in the ballot when we held National Phonebank Day,” Chris continues, adding that an estimated 25,000 members were contacted on the day.

“Around 100 volunteers – reps from branches all over the UK and members of staff – telephoned members and politely asked them if they had voted and assisted with their questions,” he explained, adding: “It was a great day and so far, it’s been a great campaign.

“With a legal appeal pending and plans for activities coming up this week, please watch out on all CWU media channels for all the very latest news and updates.”

Check the CWU Facebook page and follow us on twitter @CWUNews for daily updates, latest videos and podcasts from your union.
INDUSTRIAL SUMMARY

NO COMPULSORY REDUNDANCIES IS OUR RED LINE AND THEY CROSS AT THEIR PERIL

This is a major fight – and we cannot afford to lose,” Andy Kerr told the union’s BT branch delegates last month as he kicked off the CWU campaign against threatened compulsory redundancies in the company’s Enterprise Division.

Our deputy general secretary for telecoms and financial services members called all branches with BT members down to CWU headquarters for the emergency briefing, at which they were updated on the current situation and instructed to assist our members through this worrying time, which has undoubtedly caused unnecessary anxiety for them and could have been resolved via long-standing collective agreements.

The company’s re-organisation plans for this part of its operation initially placed 367 employees ‘at risk of redundancy’ from among its approximately 6,000 Enterprise Division workforce – who carry out customer-contact and operational support functions for business customers.

Andy reports that senior directors at BT Group level have refused to take compulsory redundancies off the table – something which has never happened before in BT.

“And I’ve told them that, from a CWU perspective, compulsory redundancies are not an option and that carrying this out raises the consequence of an industrial action ballot,” Andy said.

CWU assistant secretary Allan Eldred, who has specific responsibility for our members in this function, explained that, of the initial 367 ‘at risk’ total, the union is working hard to identify alternative placements and discover whether some within that group want to take redundancy on a voluntary basis.

“From the company’s overall perspective, this is not a large number and we’re sure alternative jobs could be found for everyone,” Allan pointed out, and insisted: “If the business does go for compulsory redundancies, it’ll be through choice and not necessity.”

Normally, the union and the business work together on such restructurings – in accordance with the longstanding Effective Deployment of Displaced Individuals (EDDI) agreement, which provides for appropriate redeployment of employees who do not want to take up redundancy offers.

But on this occasion, the company has failed to guarantee completion of the EDDI process before commencing the redundancy process and they have begun the three-stage individual consultative meetings (ICMs).

In response to this, the union has taken the first procedural step towards a national industrial dispute – Registering Formal Disagreement, specifically demanding full accordance with the legal redundancy process.

As part of the Register of Formal Disagreement, the union has called for detailed information, which could assist the avoidance of compulsory redundancies, which includes:

- Vacancies across the Group,
- Overtime levels,
- Offshored work
- External recruitment,

...which the union hopes can then be worked through on the basis of identifying alternative roles for ‘in scope’ or ‘at risk’ employees.

Should the employer refuse to adequately share the information requested, and should the employer issue redundancy notices to members who do not wish to leave, then this will trigger Group-wide industrial action balloting in accordance with the union’s 2019 Conference Policy.

Feedback from the delegates

Pauline Rourke, Edinburgh, Dundee & Borders

“‘This line of business recently moved jobs off-shore and has been treating us badly for years. This day has been coming and we’re up for the fight.”’

Chris Power, South East Central

“We’ve got around 70 affected in Sevenoaks. Not one of them has been offered another job. We should really ramp it all up and ramp it up quickly. My red line is compulsory redundancies.”
Andy Kerr reminds Voice that this motion was passed unanimously by Conference and that, because of what has happened, the union has now begun the campaign referred to.

“I can’t stress enough how much this is an issue for all of our BT members. We have never had compulsory redundancies here before and if the company get away with it in Enterprise, it will be ‘open season’ on the rest of the membership, Consumer, Openreach, all across.

“So, there are specific tasks for branches – and I’m urging all members to help their branches in carrying these out.”

All members:

- Your branch delegates have been instructed to organise all-member local meetings, so please contact your branch for details of your own event and help to publicise it among your work colleagues.

- This campaign is crucially important for all people working in all parts of the company. So, if you can help with the campaign, please contact your branch.

- If the business does give formal notice of compulsory redundancy, our next step will be to move towards an industrial action ballot across BT/Openreach. This will be a full postal ballot in accordance with the law, so please check to make sure we have your up-to-date address. If you have moved recently, please give your new details to your branch.

BT Enterprise members:

- Branches have also been tasked with contacting every ‘at risk’ or ‘in scope’ member, so if you are in this category and have not yet had contact with the CWU, please get in touch with your branch asap.

- If you’re not ‘at risk’ or ‘in scope’ yourself, but know an Enterprise colleague who is, please urge them to get in touch with their branch if they have not done so already.

BT/Openreach members, non-Enterprise:

- Knowledge of vacancies in other parts of the company may help keep someone in a job, so please tell your branch if there is a vacancy (or vacancies) in your part of the business or if someone leaves their job.

- We’re pushing BT to bring all work back to the UK. And this could help to protect members’ jobs. So, if you are aware of BT work being ‘off-shored’ within your part of the business, please pass this information to your branch as soon as possible.

Summing up the importance of the campaign, Andy told Voice: “this is a collective, pan-BT issue and we have to defend our members at risk – whether it’s 367 or one.”

And Allan Eldred added: “Unity is important. Standing together is important and fighting for these people at risk of compulsory redundancy is absolutely vital.

“We’ve got to be prepared and we’ve got to be ready.”

Una McMahon, South East Central

“I work at the Sevenoaks site and we’re the biggest number of affected people. I’m ‘in scope’ and also, as I’m a rep, I’m also representing and advising members who are as well. I hope everyone will rally round us right across the union and together we can stop compulsory redundancies.”

Kate Walsh, Capital

“It’s really good that all the branches are here. And it’s a united front, which we really need – unity across the whole union. I’m on the union’s Enterprise National Team and there are two affected sites in my branch area – Ambassador House and Monument – with over 40 members affected.”

Check the CWU Facebook page and follow us on twitter @CWUNews for daily updates, latest videos and podcasts from your union.
Eager young CWU activists from branches all over the UK headed to Manchester for an inspiring and innovative weekend of discussion, debate and exchange of ideas.

Wide our struggles and ‘greening’ our industries
“We have over six million trade unionists in this country and why can’t we all come together across the movement?” was our general secretary Dave Ward’s opening question as he kicked off this year’s CWU Young Workers Education Event in Manchester.

Dave talked about the need for a common bargaining agenda, with a set of demands for workers across all unions, industries and sectors, and of the need for better co-operation and co-ordination between the different unions, as part of the CWU’s New Deal for Workers initiative.

Looking further ahead, he put out some ideas for discussion, including the potential for the CWU to move in the direction of becoming a wider social movement, campaigning more within the communities.

Some lively debate from the floor included several campaign suggestions, and other questions, including whether our movement should aim for “one big union”, or if ‘one-union-per-sector’ might be more effective.

The conversation then moved onto environmentalism and the audience was asked for ideas on how the businesses our members work in can play their part in “going carbon-free”.

In response, several delegates made the point that converting the Royal Mail and BT/Openreach fleets to electric power could substantially reduce pollution – the two companies run approximately 48,000 and 25,000 vehicles respectively, making them the two largest commercial fleets in the UK.

And the wider point was also made that a fleet electrification programme that built all the new vehicles here in the UK could also be an important job creation strategy for the auto industry as well.

Turning the tide on the frontline
NEC member Ian Taylor and assistant secretary Davie Bowman joined our two deputy general secretaries for the industrial workshops, where attendees split into constituency sections.

Speaking to Postal delegates, Terry Pullinger said: “I envy you guys being young activists right now, with the tide beginning to turn in our direction.”

The CWU is “the strongest fighting union in the country” he continued, and praised young activists for maintaining the union’s proud traditions, while also developing modern methods and means of struggle.

In the T&FS workshop, Andy Kerr was encouraging young activists to “challenge us and challenge at your branches too.”

Industrially, it’s critically important for the union to “set the agenda of what we want to achieve – and we must get a fair share in the success of the company,” he pointed out.

Davie Bowman continued with the “challenge us” theme, saying: “otherwise we’re all too nice and cozy.

“You need to push – I want you guys to be a pain in the a**e!”

Davie also updated on the Openreach Our Hours campaign, and criticised the company’s evasive response to the union, making it clear that the CWU expects progress on this issue, saying: “We need to reach a resolution.”

As well as the Openreach hours issue, the other big subject discussed was of course the job losses within BT Enterprise.

Back in the Postal session, Ian Taylor was telling members that there is an exciting aspect to industrial disputes.

“Get involved in this dispute – you won’t feel anything more exhilarating,” he said, but then thought for a moment and sparked some laughs when he added: “Well you might, but let’s not get into that!”

Public speaking – ‘get their attention’
“I’ve learned a lot here that’s going to be really useful when I speak to members back at work,” enthused Razwan Ahmed after the Public Speaking session – just one of several interactive and challenging breakout workshops over the weekend.

The Public Speaking class was led by local Manchester City Councillor Oliver Ryan, who had people organised into a standing semi-circle and then told them to stretch out their arms and ‘windmill’ – ending with a loud collective exhalation.

Next a few tips on how to make an attention-grabbing start to their speech and then Oliver sends them off to write their intros, which they each then presented to the group back in their starting positions.

“I can get a bit nervous when I’m speaking,” says Razwan, who serves as the CWU Young Workers Officer for South East No5 Branch and works in the huge International Logistics Centre next to Heathrow Airport.

“It’s really good to be advised how to start, to break the ice with the audience and get their attention.

“All these techniques are so useful to hear about and I’ll use these when I speak to members at ILC.”
Learning from the past – to win the future

Another popular session was *Trade Union History*, during which our young members were challenged to match historic photographs with the dates on a 20 foot-long, banner-sized ‘timeline’.

From 1819 (the notorious ‘Peterloo Massacre’, which occurred just a short walk from the event’s venue), through the desperate struggles of the 1930s and then the hope of 1945, onto the upsurge of working-class organisation and the great victories of the late 1960s and early 1970s, remembering the traumatic defeat of the miners in the 1980s and right up to our current travails – each momentous historic landmark was cited.

Jasmin Lee, from Wessex South Central Branch, told Voice that “there were things in there that I hadn’t known about – none of this was taught in school.

“For example, I’d heard about the Tolpuddle Martyrs, but I didn’t know they were transported to Australia, or that there was a massive nationwide campaign against the sentences they got.

“Now I really want to go to the next Tolpuddle commemoration and find out more,” added the Salisbury Delivery Office worker.

Tell us what you need – we’ll meet the challenge

Our new head of education, equality and development Kate Hudson led the *Challenging the Status Quo* workshop, during which she set out an ambitious agenda aimed at providing the training that our new reps need.

Kate explained that the union is keen to diversify the locations and timescales as well as subjects that the union can offer and also aiming to tailor the courses to our activists’ requirements.

“We can help you decide what direction you want to go in as CWU activists,” Kate told the group, “whether that’s becoming an IR rep, equality rep or officer, or in a political direction.”

Tyne & Wear Clerical Branch delegate Quincy Raymond told Voice: “It was really nice that Kate and Lee asked us our opinions about the courses and the training we felt we needed.

“One of the suggestions I made was for a ‘Welcome Pack’, and a structured training programme or recommended syllabus for young members who want to become active as reps.

“It was good to have the chance to speak with Kate as our new national head of education and I felt that there’s a fresh and more ‘two-way’ approach coming in now – a really good thing,” Quincy added.

Mock conference – and shoe-filled plants

Sunday kicked off with the Young Workers’ Mock Conference – something we have every year and which gives our young activists an excellent opportunity to find out about the decision-making process of our union.

Motions on political affiliations and drugs policy were debated – all strictly according to CWU Conference Rules – and after lunch, we welcomed guest speaker Bianca Todd, from the Ron Todd Foundation, an organisation committed to grassroots community activism.

As an activity inspired by Bianca Todd, delegates had been asked to bring along old shoes, which they then filled with compost and plants and decorated with inspiring messages from the CWU, along with CWU hashtags and @’s, and then went out to place them in the city centre.

A great weekend – looking forward to YWE 2020

Reflecting on the weekend, event organiser Lauren Townsend told Voice: “I’m fairly new to the CWU, but I do know the Young Workers Education Event has always been a great highlight, so I wanted to work with our young workers to maintain the high quality and also bring in some fresh ideas.

“And from the feedback, people have really enjoyed themselves as well as finding the sessions and workshops very useful too – the Friday quiz night and Saturday bowling and karaoke were fun too.

“I hope they ask me to organise it again next year,” she continues, “I’ve got some more ideas… tents maybe, or assault courses… hmmm.”

“ I’ve learned a lot here that’s going to be really useful when I speak to members back at work.”

Razwan Ahmed of South East No5 Branch

We won’t drop the ball
Team EED at your service

CWU Equality, Education & Development head Kate Hudson sets out the newly merged department’s ambitious agenda...

The Equality, Education and Development Department is now fully merged and situated on the 3rd floor in headquarters. Over the last couple of months it has become even more evident as a team how the two areas complement each other to the benefit of all in the CWU.

A new way of working – a much more cohesive way of working, with significantly broader engagement of our Equality and ULR representatives is now upon us. Core issues will be pushed simultaneously in the regions and once all of the Lead roles are elected in every region, I look forward to meeting and discussing future development and strategy ideas.

I have recently been liaising with the Regional Secretaries and discussing a blueprint that will deliver an Equality & Education Event in every region throughout 2020. As a department we are hoping for a wide variety of events that will open up opportunities for representatives to learn and come together whilst helping the new Lead roles in the region to plan an event, produce timed agendas and develop their skills.

In terms of our activities, October was Black History Month and with the support of my department there have been a number of excellent initiatives. In Bristol the local Postal branch have highlighted the famous Bristol Bus Boycott so people understand better the Black History that is local to them. Whilst in Cardiff Amarjite Singh organised an event in the Welsh Senedd with the Welsh TUC and local schools where our Black History banners were prominently displayed.

A few other developments that my department has been involved in have been a Government Consultation on Sexual Violence, specifically looking at the employers’ Duty to Prevent Sexual Harassment in the workplace and extensions to Employment Tribunal limits. Working with our Research Department our union has submitted a comprehensive submission to the consultation. Unfortunately there are still major societal issues around attitudes to sexual violence. A person's appearance or being inebriated, for example are cited as an excuse to leer or sexually harass an individual. We see women MPs on a daily basis being subjected to torrents of abuse, mostly online. In addition, around seven out of ten LGBT+ workers experienced at least one type of sexual harassment at work (68 per cent) and almost one in eight LGBT+ women (12 per cent) reported being seriously sexually assaulted or raped at work.

All of this has to stop and the CWU is committed to playing our part in this.

Latest update from our two NEC Young Worker reps Erin Brett and Luke Elgar...

We’ve come onto the national executive at what is an incredibly interesting time for our union. With a huge dispute with Royal Mail, it’s been amazing watching the support from members on social media and on shop floors.

To me, it shows that our members deserve honest, dedicated reps at all levels to ensure that their spirit is used to the benefit of working people, not just in the businesses we represent but across the country.

And I think seeing the CWU take the reins of the New Deal for Workers campaign has been evidence that we’re doing what we can to ensure this is the case and also I would encourage members to spread the word to friends and family about the launching of our CWU Supporters Network.

It’s been good to get out and about between NEC meetings too. Being a lay member, this isn’t always easy as I still have to complete my delivery but I’ve been able to get to gates early on days where meetings coincide.

I’m also now going to be working on the mental health strategy group. I’ve seen what mental health can do to people and how workplace stress can impact people.

It’s going to be good getting on board with that group to see what great work they’re doing and how I can maybe bring a different viewpoint.

It was a great Education Event in Manchester and I hope as many of our young activists as possible will be able to come to the Young Workers Conference in the New Year.

Regarding the NEC, having just completed my first few meetings on the NEC, it’s definitely opened my eyes. There is a lot of stuff going on that I didn’t notice at branch level.

And it’s great that we’re able to give young worker options on the matters discussed and actually get listened to – rather than it being a token seat.

And I’m looking forward to the next NEC meetings as we go forward into the New Year and beyond.

Among our BT members, there are serious concerns on the issue of job losses within BT Enterprise and the union at all levels is pushing as hard as we can to prevent any compulsory redundancies.

We have a longstanding policy to ballot if any compulsory redundancies happen, but right now it’s imperative that all our young members fully support the branches in the campaign, which was launched nationally just a couple of weeks ago.

As Andy Kerr has said, any compulsory redundancies in any part of the business is an issue for us all.

It’s solidarity with our fellow members and also we’re protecting ourselves from the same thing happening to us in the future.
Our long-suffering nation woke up to the best early Xmas present ever…

EXCLUSIVE
Loud cheers, laughter and even a few tears of joy were heard in the early hours of this morning as news broke of Labour’s stunning General Election victory.

Once again wrongfooting the pollsters and the pundits, Jeremy Corbyn notched up gain after gain as Tory seats turned red all over the UK.

EXCLUSIVE PAGE 4

CWU members celebrated last night as Royal Mail headed back into public hands and Rico resigned, a new Postbank became a reality and broadband for all secured thousands of jobs.

HAPPY XMAS (TORIES GONE)
As you read this, the general election will just be a few days away – whoever you vote for, it's important you take this opportunity to have your say.

To my mind, there is no doubt that getting rid of the Tories and electing a Labour government would deliver fundamental change and shift the balance of forces back to working people – something we badly need to see.

Renationalisation of Royal Mail would mean protecting CWU members' jobs, stopping the break-up of the company, upholding our industrial agreements and, yes, getting rid of the existing board. It would be frontline workers, not millionaire executives setting the strategy for growth for the future.

Plans to establish a new Post Bank would also bring millions of pounds of revenue into the Post Office and Royal Mail, ending closures and supporting branches across the country.

The plans to nationalise much of BT in order to invest significantly in jobs and roll out a full fibre network across the country would deliver on one of the longest standing policies this union has. Again, it would mean money being kept in and re-invested in the organisation rather than being taken out by shareholders. And it would put our agenda – on pensions, on terms and conditions, on outsourcing, on defeating the threat of compulsory redundancies – at the centre of decision-making.

These policies from Labour demonstrate a different path for the future. This is about putting power in your hands and ending the race to the bottom we see across our sectors. It is clear to me that this is an agenda that delivers for you and your job.

**WIDER WORLD OF WORK**

In the wider world of work, Labour's plans for trade union rights will strike a chord with members of this union too, in particular with its pledge to repeal anti-union laws that have been used against us – most recently to stop strike action in Royal Mail.

Scraping anti-union laws is an absolutely crucial aspect of shifting the balance of forces in favour of working people – and this includes rights to let us get into new workplaces to recruit members and to negotiate minimum standards across our sectors to end undercutting.

Alongside these pledges it would ban exploitative zero hours contracts and bogus self-employment, ensure agency workers cannot be exploited as cheap labour and put every worker on the path to a shorter working week with no loss of pay.

Taken together these policies will reverse the race to the bottom on pay, terms and conditions and the ever-greater pressure workers are coming under to work harder and faster for less. Make no mistake, this is the most ambitious programme on employment and trade union rights we have ever seen.

And the party's wider programme is equally significant: building hundreds of thousands of council homes, halting the backdoor privatisation of the NHS, providing free school meals to all primary children, making NHS prescriptions free, scrapping Universal Credit and implementing a Green New Deal.

When I think about the life chances I had when I started out and compare them with those of my children, I know this is the agenda the country needs.

**WE HELPED CREATE THIS PROGRAMME**

We, the CWU, have been a major player in achieving what I think is an historic programme from Labour.

After the 2015 election, we told Labour that our links and our relationship with them would no longer be on a “something-for-nothing” basis. We've worked closely with Labour on policy development and explained how those policies relating directly to our members are also extremely important and popular issues with the public as well.

And through our much more assertive and proactive strategy, these policies are the result.

We set out back then to be part of changing Labour for the better – which we’ve helped to achieve – now we’ve got a chance to change our country for the better.
DON'T FORGET TO VOTE

FRIDAY, 13.12.2019 ELECTION SPECIAL

BEST OF LUCK TO OUR CWU CANDIDATES

It’s also worth remembering we have seven CWU members standing in marginal constituencies for Labour.

These are not distant political elites, but people who have worked in Royal Mail, BT and Parcelforce, who know what work is like and who face the same issues our members do on a daily basis.

It is easy to be cynical about politics and I know our members have different political views. But it cannot be said that all politicians are the same and I would take our reps and members over the likes of Boris Johnson or Jacob Rees-Mogg every day of the week.

Our political work is about giving our members a voice. And I am proud that we are doing this by working to get them into Parliament.

A MANIFESTO FOR YOU & YOUR FAMILY

In conclusion, I think this election offers our members a chance we may not get again in our lifetimes: to fundamentally change the balance of forces in our industries and end the race to the bottom on terms and conditions.

There is no getting away from the fact that Brexit is important. But on our industries – and on the range of issues from the NHS to housing – I think there is so much more at stake.

Our members can make up their own minds. But I would urge you to think about this when you vote and I would urge you to vote Labour.

Vote for Your job
Vote for Your children
Vote for Your community
Vote for Your hospital
Vote for Your country
VOTE LABOUR

Trish Vollans,
West Yorkshire Branch

We need the great policy on broadband and to get more work coming back to the UK. Also, we need industrial regeneration and to save our NHS.”

Hayden Newsam,
South Midlands

Renationalise RM and protect and defend jobs now and into the future. Keep the NHS safe – we don’t want the ‘tangerine nightmare’ of Donald Trump.’

Mick Lloyd-Davies
South Wales-Davies Branch

Workers’ rights, action on zero-hour contracts – there’s a lot of this is South Wales and we’ve got to stop it.”

Mark Harper, Nottingham Branch, Midland Region acting regional secretary

Renationalisation of Royal Mail, regenerating Post Office counters with the Post Bank. And we need the broadband policy too – good for our members’ jobs and good for the economy and for the public.”

Dan Hermitage, South Downs, Weald & Rother

Protect the future of RM by renationalisation – only way is public ownership and more of a democratic say in the business as well. We need broadband as a universal service. Got to stop austerity and workers need to have more control of their working lives.”

Winston Richards
Greater London Combined

The broadband policy is absolutely necessary for everyone and this will also help with jobs. We need a more democratic say in the workplace. A Labour government can cut out these problems and improve workers’ rights.”

Rob Wotherspoon
Bristol & District

“ We cannot stand another five years of Tory government and their toxic vandalism of our public services and our communities. This is a great opportunity to change our country for the better.”

Joyce Stevenson, Scotland No1

“ We’ve had so many years of austerity – and Labour’s the only party who will end it. Up here, calls for a second independence referendum are a diversion from the real problems Scottish people face. The SNP are only interested in a flag – nothing else.”

Ruth Meadows, Shropshire & Mid-Wales Branch

“ My wife (Katrina Gilman) is the Labour candidate in Telford. “The NHS is a huge issue here – we’ve got to save our NHS and vital services. “Also, we’ve got too many people having to use food banks.”

Hayden Newsam,
South Midlands

“It’s also worth remembering we have seven CWU members standing in marginal constituencies for Labour. These are not distant political elites, but people who have worked in Royal Mail, BT and Parcelforce, who know what work is like and who face the same issues our members do on a daily basis.”
In just a few days, voters across the UK will be going to the polls in the first December election since the 1920s.

For our Royal Mail Group members in particular, this election represents a real opportunity to change the direction of the business and bring our company back into public ownership and reunite it with Post Office Limited.

And that, above everything else, is reason enough to put your 'X' next to your local Labour Party candidate on Thursday 12th December.

Our current disagreement with the business is 100 per cent an industrial dispute to get RMG to honour and deploy the Four Pillars of Security and Pay National Agreement, including three of the central issues below:

• We're determined to stop the planned 'TUPE' of Parcelforce out of Royal Mail Group – and protect the extension of the legally binding Agreement to maintain RMG integrity going forward.

• We're demanding full implementation of the scheduled October 2019 hour off the working week without loss of pay – and honouring our agreed flightpath to a 35-hour working week without loss of pay.

• We are pursuing an agreed, rather than imposed, redesign of our operational pipeline together with an agreed programme of change which protects and enhances jobs through a strategy of growing new products and services.

When analysing why the leadership of the company has decided to renege on these and other parts of the agreed Four Pillars of Security in our 2018 National Agreement (the other Pillar, pensions, is not in dispute at this time), this can be traced back to late 2018 when we witnessed the ejection of the previous company leadership and the arrival of a new CEO with an aggressive attitude and agenda.

The fundamental reason for this U-Turn is the very nature of privatisation itself and the change from a public-service ethos to a 'maximise profit for shareholders’ mentality. Since privatisation back in 2013, over £1 billion has been handed out to private shareholders. All of this money could have instead been invested in the company, modernising our operations, equipment and all of our vehicles for example.

Those running Royal Mail Group are determined to use whatever avenues possible to protect their own agenda and sideline the union. The anti-trade union laws that the Tories have introduced have been used to run to the High Court and over-turn a legitimate and massive vote in favour of strike action.

A Labour Government will repeal these anti-union laws.

A renationalised Royal Mail Group will see the revenues generated come back into the business, to fund the necessary investments in real modernisation that can meet the needs of the public, businesses, and the nation as a whole.

This will protect jobs and create new ones for the workforce of today and of the future.

Additionally under a Labour Government, we can achieve the reunification of the Post Office with Royal Mail, which will be massively beneficial for both companies, their workers and the public whom they serve.

For Royal Mail, unification restores a crucial retail outlet, through which we can promote our services to businesses and to residents and grow new products in accordance with changing public needs.

For the Post Office, unification restores stability, revenues and a solid foundation upon which its services to the community can grow – such as community banking and so many other products and services.

From the specific perspective of our industry, our company and its future, voting Labour is the best choice in my opinion and this is the key reason why I will be voting for my local Labour Party candidate. If asked, I would also respectfully suggest that our members do so as well.

Looking wider, the general overall thrust of the party's policy contains a range of some positive strategies, which no doubt you’ll read about on the following pages – the 'greening our industries' idea, for example, could have a big impact on companies with large fleets like ours – and there’s no doubt members will have varying views on these wider issues.

But on the UK postal industry, it’s my considered view that Labour has by far the best policy offer.
Vote for jobs and full-fibre investment

BY ANDY KERR

Ambitious plans to bring Openreach and all of the broadband-relevant parts of BT into public ownership and create British Broadband to invest and rollout fibre-to-the-premises (FTTP) broadband to every home in the UK are the most exciting part of Labour’s election programme.

The new policy was one of the most eye-catching announcements of the election campaign and the boldest pledge for investment in broadband and building the full-fibre network of the future from any party, with Labour promising the people of the UK: “We are going to give you the very fastest full-fibre broadband.”

And Labour has set out the case for significant investment by explaining that, with just 8 per cent coverage of FTTP the UK lags way behind world leaders like Japan and South Korea, where over 98 per cent of premises have full fibre broadband.

Decades of neglect by successive governments, the regulator and the private sector had sunk our nation to an embarrassing 35th in the OECD’s international ‘league table’ of fibre infrastructure.

Nationwide fibre-optic broadband, available to all and free at the point of supply is, Labour pointed out, as important a universal right in today’s society as other basic utilities were to previous generations.

While the plan was greeted with enthusiasm by those who have been left with slow internet speeds, or families struggling with the cost of living, the Tories described it as “broadband communism,” but Labour’s blunt response was that the Tories would presumably describe the NHS as “health communism” and that investing in jobs and the future fibre network was part of our nation’s “long tradition of providing universal basic services,” comparing it to the establishment of public libraries in the 19th century.

The party has further argued that actually, this plan is absolutely essential in order not to fall behind in global competition, in terms of technologies. So therefore, if people ask: ‘Can we afford it?’, Labour has replied that we actually can’t afford not to do it.

And as well as its benefits for the country as a whole, the further point that I would make is that from a CWU perspective, the proposals are very good news for our members.

The sheer volume of work that this project commits to, will not only protect existing jobs, but will necessitate an expansion of recruitment and training going forward.

As well as Openreach, parts of BT Technology, BT Consumer and BT Enterprise would also be brought into British Broadband, and the Labour Party has agreed a set of principles regarding enhanced rights of workers within the new organisation, including protection of existing terms and conditions.

Pensions rights would be safeguarded, with the longstanding Crown Guarantee maintained, while a major step forward would see the insourcing of third-party-employed workers and existing agreements maintained, ensuring the threat of compulsory redundancy is removed.

This is a hugely significant policy, which is the fruit of lengthy discussions and joint work between the Labour Party and this union at the highest levels and has been worked on at great length.

Our general secretary Dave Ward has said that this policy must surely make a Labour vote an absolute must for every single one of our members – and I fully agree.

To all our members out there, my message is that we can make this plan a reality if we can elect a Labour government.

It’s over to you now – please come out and vote next Thursday.

And vote Labour.

If you want to know more about this proposal, please email: britishbroadband@cwu.org
T
he Conservative Party’s 2017 election manifesto was widely regarded as their worst ever when it came to the elderly. So bad in fact that the Conservative MP for Ribble Valley, Nigel Evans, described its policies, regarding the elderly as “like trying to steal your granny’s house after she had died” and “that the only thing missing was compulsory euthanasia for the over 70s.”

He was of course referring to their policy of introducing the so-called ‘dementia tax’, but that was not the only threat to the welfare of pensioners contained in their manifesto. They also promised to scrap the ‘triple lock’ that protects the value of the state pension and to ditch universal winter weather payments.

Following the election, which was a disaster for the Tory Party, they dropped these policies from their list of proposals which will be a disaster for the elderly.

The Conservative Party’s favourite think-tanks, such as the Intergenerational Commission and the Intergenerational Foundation have already proposed a whole list of proposals which would be a disaster for the elderly.

The Conservative Party-dominated, House of Commons Committee on Intergenerational Fairness also proposed that free bus passes and winter fuel payments should only be available five years after a person becomes eligible for the State Pension.

And, more recently, Boris Jonson’s favourite think-tank, the Centre for Social Justice has said that the UK can no longer afford the current plan to raise the eligible age to receive the state pension age to 67 in 2028 and 68 by 2046. Instead, they are proposing that in 2028 the eligible age should be raised to 70 and 75 by 2035.

By contrast, the Labour Party will protect those entitlements that pensioners currently enjoy including free bus passes, winter fuel allowances and the triple-lock. Labour is also committed to resolving the issues raised by the WASPI Women and bringing justice for those women born in the 1950s, who have been treated so badly by the changes to their retirement age.

Whatever the Conservatives, and for that matter the Liberal Democrats, promise, the history of the last 10 years tells us they can’t be trusted whatever they put in their manifestos. The Conservatives promised, just after the last election, to produce a Green Paper on the importance of social and home care for the elderly. Two years later it still hasn’t been published. In the meantime thousands of elderly and sick pensioners continue to lose their homes and savings to pay for social and home care. Only the Labour Party can be trusted when it comes to the elderly.

The Labour Party will protect pensioners’ bus passes and winter fuel allowance.

VOTE LABOUR ON THURSDAY 12th.

The Labour Party will protect pensioners’ bus passes and winter fuel allowance.

BRIAN LEE ON WHY YOU SHOULD VOTE LABOUR
Labour’s Green New Deal policy means that they are now the political party most committed to tackling climate change, with radical plans to transform and decarbonise every aspect of our society and economy.

The CWU backed the Labour for a Green New Deal campaign from the start and played a vital and leading role in helping to get it passed overwhelmingly at Labour Party Conference this September. Our National Young Workers Committee have actively supported climate activists globally and proposed the GND motion to the NEC earlier in the year, where it was backed unanimously, echoing widespread support from across the union.

Labour’s Green New Deal sets out a series of issues and resolutions, actions that the Government must take to reverse the effects of carbon emissions, and highlights how important it is that any deal and implementation be worker led, with trade unions and their membership playing a huge role in any just, green transition. What is needed here is a mobilisation of every area of the economy, through investment and regulation primarily, to really quickly decarbonise while assuring prosperity, improving living standards and ensuring good, unionised jobs for everyone.

We are already taking steps within our own union to work for both the climate and the environment. You may have noticed that your copy of The Voice now arrives in a fully compostable wraparound, and all staff here at CWU HQ have been given reusable water bottles, with drinking water dispensers installed on every floor. But we know we have to think bigger than that, and that means thinking political, as well as industrial, as the two go hand in hand. Only Labour has the organic links with the trade union movement that can make such a transition possible. No other political party in the UK has the means or appetite to deliver a worker-led just transition to renewable energy. No other political party in the UK has the means or appetite to deliver zero-net carbon emissions and support the Global South.

Our members have raised other suggestions themselves, a campaign for less packaging in parcels for example, or an idea that some union meetings could be carried out remotely, via Skype, or a conference call, to save officials travelling in from all corners of the country.

The issue of climate change and how to respond to it is multi-faceted. As Senior Deputy General Secretary, I recently produced a strategy paper to go before the NEC to agree a wide-ranging position for the CWU to play a much larger role both in the debate and campaigning within the Labour and Trade Union movement.

Such a position will not only set campaigning priorities but will also identify those areas where the issue of climate change is likely to have an impact on the industries we organise in.

Once the approach to developing our position has been set out, we will ensure those who wish to contribute to the development of our strategy have the opportunity to do so.
NOW WE'RE ALL SET FOR EURO TRIUMPH!

Who’ll be our hat-trick hero this time...

EXCLUSIVE
Labour’s stunning election win means certain glory for England in next June’s Euro Championships.

And how do we know that?
Because England only win trophies under Labour Governments

The legendary Harold Wilson (with a bit of help from Sir Alf, Geoff Hurst, Bobby Moore and a certain linesman) led us to victory in ’66.

Now Jeremy Corbyn can inspire a new generation of England heroes.
And the final’s at Wembley too!

It's coming home... it's coming home...
‘Veteran Army’ mobilises for struggles ahead

Gemma Walsh reports from CWU Retired Members Conference 2019...

“Watch out for us at General Conference 2020’

“If I do get up to the rostrum, I won’t exactly be a first-time speaker – but it will be my first time as a retired member,” says Doreen Watson from Lancs & Cumbria Branch, who was one of two delegates chosen to represent our retired members at next year’s annual conference of the whole union.

Doreen moved her branch’s motion regarding BT service concessions for the company’s retired former employees and says that “this is something our retired members deserve because they put their working lives into BT and got nothing back.”

Also looking forward to Bournemouth next April is North Wales & Marches Branch delegate Joan Moxon, who was chosen as the other retired member delegate to General Conference.

Retaining members after they retire is a key priority for her, she tells Voice, saying: “Just because you’re finishing work, don’t finish with the union” – my key phrase to them is: You are the next us.”

And she’s optimistic of Annual Conference support for the Retired Members’ Conference Motions, saying: “Hopefully, they’ll get behind us as we are 100 per cent right behind them, especially at this time with the Royal Mail dispute.”

“We need you more than ever to join our fight.”

Up next was Coventry’s Judy Griffiths, who addressed the important topic of climate change, which, she stated: “Has a huge impact on health and wellbeing” for those of all ages,” warned that, by 2050, “our oceans could contain more plastic than fish,” and moved a successful motion calling for “public ownership of companies that are destroying the planet.”

A proposition discussing the ever-increasing demand to provide a national care system that is publicly funded sparked a lively debate, with several powerful contributions from delegates, including Ken Garrad, London Postal Engineering, who voiced fears of elderly people being forced to sell their homes to afford care, while other delegates expressed concern about unsatisfactory care, speaking movingly from personal experience of friends and loved ones.

Another hot topic was the controversy over TV licence concessions. With the Government removing funding to the BBC to cover the cost of providing free licences for most over-75s, our members fear this will increase hardship amongst pensioners.

With around three million households losing out on this, Bob Collins, from Mount Pleasant International, stated that senior people often depend on TV for communication and knowledge of the world and he expressed the worry that those left without a TV licence will experience increased loneliness within the community.

Other motions passed included the need to retain membership after retirement, the idea of new wealth taxes and concerns for charges for operations such as hip and knee replacements.

‘It’s great to see so many of you here looking healthy and strong and up for the fight,” said general secretary Dave Ward as he opened his speech to our retired members gathered in Birmingham for their annual policy-making event.

A packed agenda covered issues ranging from climate change to social care, defending the free treatment principle within the NHS and pensioners’ travel and TV licensing concessions.

Service concessions for BT pensioners will be a demand taken from here to the CWU’s annual conference (Industrial T&FS) next April, along with two further motions on the national care system and a rule change (General).

With the conference taking place against the background of the Royal Mail dispute and the announcement of job losses within BT, Dave Ward referenced the importance of their support for our members in their campaigns, struggles and potential industrial action.

Describing our retired members as the union’s campaigning army out in the communities, our general secretary said: “We need you more than ever to join our fight.”

Lancs & Cumbria Branch moved the first motion of the day, calling for the BT pensioners’ concession on services, which was also recommended by the Retired Members’ Committee – RMC speaker Ernie Coggins supporting the demand and urging the branch to “make sure you get this on the pad at T&FS Conference.”

Check rm.cwu.org for all the latest retired members news and updates!
**We won’t be held back**

In the middle of this year’s Disability History Month, our NEC lead for disability, Mark Anthony Bastiani, talks about the leadership, resistance and culture themes for this year’s campaign.

“I asked myself: ‘What makes a good leader for a person with a disability?’” he begins, going through categories such as historical and current political leaders, celebrities, or campaigning groups.

Looking at historical leaders, the two most well-known are Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar, both of whom suffered from symptoms that we would now recognise as being related to epilepsy.

“But this did not stop Alexander creating one of the largest empires of the ancient world, nor prevent Julius Caesar’s conquests,” he points out.

In the present, the outgoing House of Commons had five MPs who classed themselves as having a disability – out of 650, this is less than 1 per cent, although this included our diabetic former Prime Minister Theresa May.

For Mark, the key question here is: “How many will there be in the next Parliament – and why are there not more?”

In the world of sport, our CWU disability lead cites Steve Redgrave, who won five consecutive Olympic gold medals and three Commonwealth golds while suffering from diabetes, while among celebrities, Mark points to action movie star Tom Cruise and his battle with dyslexia.

“Disabled People against Cuts (DPAC) is the campaign group I would give particular attention to,” he continues, highlighting the fact that DPAC is “for everyone who believes that disabled people should have full human rights and equality.

“It is for everyone against government austerity measures which target the poor while leaving the wealthy unscathed and refuses to stay silent about injustice.”

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**No to Grenfell victim blaming**

Offensive and insensitive” is how Ali Moosa describes the recent remarks made by politician Jacob Rees-Mogg in regards to the 2017 Grenfell Tower fire in west London.

In a radio interview just after the release of a report criticising the fire brigade’s ‘stay-put’ policy, Mr Rees-Mogg caused outrage when his comments seemed to suggest that residents following that advice had lacked “common sense.”

“I found these comments extremely concerning,” says Ali, who adds that this a fire in which the majority of victims had been from the BAME community.

“To hear Mr Rees-Mogg imply that these residents did not have the common sense to leave the burning building was, in my opinion, both offensive and insensitive on his part – but what I found truly astonishing was the radio presenter interviewing him, Nick Ferrari, did not seem to challenge Mr Rees-Mogg on this at the time.”

And of course, Mark also focuses on the CWU and the significant step forward the union has taken in electing its first NEC Disability Lead.

“Among other ambitions, my hope is to hold an event that encourages people with a disability to be at the forefront, to improve information around Reasonable Adjustments in the workplace and full access to all of our union’s communications,” he tells us.

“Whether it’s leading or representing the country, starring in movies, organising protests, standing for election, or representing people with a disability in the trade union, together we can achieve change and become leaders.”

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**BAME**

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**Disability: Leadership, Resistance and Culture**

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**Justice 4 Grenfell**

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**Equality**

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THE VOICE | WINTER 2019
When Voice caught up with Helen Cooper recently, she was busy preparing to present a talk on IDAHOBIT to a group of CWU reps.

“They’re on the union’s IDAHOBIT Training course down in Bournemouth,” she tells us, adding: “IDAHOBIT is next May and I really want us, as the CWU, to get as involved in this as we do with the various Pride events.”

The annual International Day Against Homophobia, Bi-Phobia and Transphobia (IDAHOBIT), commemorates all those around the world who have suffered discrimination, injury, or even lost their lives because of their sexuality – and also celebrates the major advances that have been made.

From Germany’s foundation in 1871, “Paragraph 175” was always the part of that country’s legal code regarding issues of sexuality. Over time, those three numerals became associated with homophobic discrimination – and also, in date form, “17 5,” or 17th May, became a date each year when gay rights protests were commonly held.

The first International Day Against Homophobia took place in 2005 (representation of bisexual and trans communities have since been included with the additions of “BI” and “T”) and events now take place each year all over the world, combining commemoration with celebration.

“I’m a ‘look for the rainbow’ person, so I want us to focus strongly on the positives of LGBT+ advances when we mark IDAHOBIT 2020,” says Helen, using the added ‘plus’ sign that the CWU’s description of this equality strand.

“This was decided at the NEC last month – as an alternative to adding ‘Q’, ‘I’ and ‘A,’” she tells Voice, explaining that this includes our intersexual, and asexual communities, as well as those who prefer to use the non-gender specific “Queer” to describe their sexuality.

“What’s most important is to ensure that our equality strand is fully inclusive to everyone who isn’t heteronormative – and that’s the priority, as this now engages fully with all those who could face any discrimination based on their sexuality or gender.

“And at a time like now, when we’ve got the big Royal Mail dispute, a developing serious industrial situation for our BT comrades, and the politics of a general election, the need for the maximum possible unity – and therefore of engaging with and including every individual from every background is absolutely critical.”

Back in 1977, a radical feminist group in Leeds organised a ‘Reclaim the Night’ march along the city’s North Road,” Jean Sharrocks tells Voice, describing the protest as “a militant response to advice from police that women should stay at home after dark because of the Yorkshire Ripper murders.”

Placards on that first demonstration demanded: No curfew on women – curfew on men and: Death to Rapists, voicing the fears of women in the region at a time when the notorious rapist was carrying out regular attacks, while police were unable to track him down.

Similar protests took place in central London and the movement spread around the country, adding pressure on police to catch the culprit, Peter Sutcliffe, who was eventually arrested in 1981 and jailed for life.

Reclaim the Night revived again as a movement in 2006, after multiple murders of women in Ipswich – crimes for which Steven Wright was sentenced – and these marches, as well as being an expression of anger, have also become an expression of empowerment by women.

Reclaim the Night events have tended to take place around the country during November in London and others in Newcastle, Sheffield, Lincoln, while other towns and cities are holding these events at different times of the year – such as Manchester, for example, where the event takes place in February.

“Today, Reclaim the Night is as relevant as ever,” says Jean, who adds that “prosecutions for sexual violence are going down, while reports of sexual assaults on the transport network are on the up, and two women a week are killed by their male partner or ex-partner.

“Violence against women continues to occur every minute of every day. Reclaim the Night allows women everywhere to make a stand – and in my region, the North East, we took a decision to support the Newcastle event, as we’ve had a presence at this for the last five years.”

As Women’s Equality lead on the NEC, Jean has been encouraging CWU women to get together in their regions and support their nearest Reclaim the Night, saying that “the more trade union involvement we can organise, the stronger the event.

“Remember, these marches are a show of strength and a collective demand for freedom from sexual violence and harassment – giving women a voice and an opportunity to reclaim the streets at night.”
National Executive Council member Carl Maden, the CWU’s representative on several international solidarity movements supporting people’s struggles for social justice in Latin America, speaks to Voice on the subject and about his visits to that troubled sub-continent...

**Crisis in Bolivia**

The removal from power of elected Bolivian President Evo Morales by the leaders of the military and the wealthier sections of society, and the increasingly violent oppression of Morales’s working class and indigenous supporters have highlighted once again the social and political volatility of Latin America.

But people have organised resistance, and denunciations of the coup have come from world political figures, including US Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and our own Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn, who stated: “I condemn this coup against the Bolivian people and I stand with them for democracy, social justice and independence.”

UK-based solidarity activists also condemned the putsch, and robustly defended Evo Morales’s right to rule after having been democratically elected by the people, while Carl Maden’s take on this situation is that the coup “is clearly aimed against the interests of the Bolivian working class and indigenous people in their fight for democratic and social rights.

“Our hearts, our comradeship and our solidarity must be with Morales and his supporters 100 per cent,” Carl has visited two of the Latin American nations which have expressed their support for Morales – Mexico and Venezuela – and in his opinion, “the same social and political forces who organised this assault on democracy in Bolivia also attacked efforts at equality and social progress in Chavez’s socialist Venezuela and are still trying to undermine his socialist successor Maduro.”

**Mexican election surprise**

And in Mexico, again it was those sections of society who do not want their extreme wealth and oligarchical power to be disturbed who tried everything they could to prevent the election of Andres Obrador in Mexico,” he continues, telling Voice about his trip there last year, when he and his fellow NEC member Mahmood Ali, were part of the UN team of international observers for that presidential and general election.

“By coincidence, it was during the World Cup and we were there when Mexico played their second-round match against Brazil. We watched the game with hundreds of others in a big city square in a lively party atmosphere,” he tells us, adding that Mexicans are “fanatical” about their football “but unfortunately, they lost.”

Obrador was standing for the presidency on a radical platform supported by a coalition of his own party, National Regeneration (“Morena”), the Mexican Labour Party (PT) and the smaller Social Encounter Party (PES) – up against the traditionalist PRI and the right wing ‘Mexico Front’ coalition.

“There had been serious concerns about potential voter intimidation and corruption and this was why international observers were asked for,” Carl continues, adding that his team visited several polling stations on election day.

“At the first polling station we went to, we had to call security because there were people from the far-right who seemed to be approaching people and also one of the voting booths was right by a window so people could see from outside – so we got that moved.”

Obrador won the presidency with 33 per cent of the popular vote and his coalition also won 306 out of 500 seats in the Chamber of Deputies, and 69 in the 128-member Senate – giving them an opportunity to introduce their radical programme of reform.

“Solidarity from UK trade unionists makes a positive difference.”
Mexican voters at the polls

Hugo Chavez's image on a flag being waved in Caracas

Carl Maden in Colombia

Chavez transformation

The first Latin American country Carl visited was Venezuela, where, in the first decade of our century, President Hugo Chavez was transforming the economy in the interests of the people.

First elected in 1998, and then again in 2000, 2006 and 2012, he also overcame a coup attempt in 2002, when sections of the military leadership, supported by big business interests and backed by the USA, arrested him and declared a new regime.

But angry mass demonstrations of the people, combined with active support from the lower ranks of the armed forces forced the plotters to abandon their attempt after just a few days and Chavez returned to power in triumph.

“He was an inspirational leader,” says Carl, “he nationalised Venezuela’s huge oil industry and used its profits for social projects out in the poorer communities.”

Housing, health and education were the priorities of the Chavez political programme, he explains, adding that hearing about this, and finding out about the UK-based Venezuela Solidarity Campaign (VSC) sparked his interest.

Struggle for peace in Colombia

Colombia is often referred to as being the most dangerous country in the world to be a trade unionist – the ITUC’s 2019 Global Rights Index reporting that there were 34 trade unionists murdered in Colombia over the previous year.

And this June, Carl was there as a member of a delegation monitoring that country’s ceasefire and peace settlement.

In 2016, following many years of conflict, almost a civil war situation in some areas, the administration led by President Santos agreed a ceasefire and peace accord with the Revolutionary Armed forces of Colombia (FARC).

During the conflict, the FARC gained full control of some areas of the country, putting many rural and more isolated communities out of the reach of central government altogether.

Under the agreement, FARC fighters agreed to disarm, while the organisation’s political wing gained political rights within the country’s legislative assembly as part of a process aimed at bringing the country back together.

But some killings have continued and, since the election of Ivan Duque to replace Santos last year, doubts have grown over the government’s commitment to the peace process, and some dissident FARC groups, including former leaders, have recently announced a return to armed struggle.

“In Colombia, we met people in the cities and also some of the FARC-controlled areas,” Carl recalls, adding that “there are 24 of these communities altogether and one of the key aspects of the peace agreement that was negotiated in 2016 is for these areas to be reintegrated with the rest of the country.

“We witnessed at first hand a real and genuine desire for peace and progress among the civilian population as a whole – although there’s no doubt that the whole process is coming under increasing strain, certainly since the change of president.”

Can you help?

“It’s crucial to have trade union support for the struggles of our comrades around the world,” reflects Carl.

“So please consider if you can ask your branch or region to affiliate to Justice for Mexico, Justice for Colombia and the Venezuela Solidarity Campaign – and be a friend of Bolivia.”

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“So please consider if you can ask your branch or region to affiliate to Justice for Mexico, Justice for Colombia and the Venezuela Solidarity Campaign – and be a friend of Bolivia.”
According to Duncan Campbell-Smith’s authoritative history of our industry Masters of the Post, there were 283,000 Post Office employees at the outbreak of the war, and over 70,000 of them enlisted in our armed services, with 3,800 of these brave workers paying the ultimate price serving our country – a sacrifice commemorated to this day in the war memorials that still exist in many workplaces. (Masters of the Post P325)

Many were prevented from joining up because of the importance of their work, or for medical reasons, while others were over the age of 41 – which was the maximum enlistment age until 1942, when this was lifted to 51.

But those who were left at home certainly did their bit as well, forming Post Office (GPO) battalions of the Home Guard, with the responsibility of defending strategically important Post Office buildings and many more, in particular women volunteers, playing an important role in the Civil Defence Services, driving vehicles while bombs were falling and fighting fires resulting from incendiary bombs.

And much more so than in previous wars, the home front in World War Two was also an extremely dangerous place to be, with 400 Post Office workers losing their lives carrying out these critical duties. (Masters of the Post P327)

Although our predecessors were all employed by the Post Office, they were in two separate trade unions – engineers belonged to the POEU (Post Office Engineers Union) and telephonists and mails workers were organised by the UPW (Union of Post Office Workers).

I’ve recently been looking through some of the wartime editions of The Journal and The Post – the POEU and UPW members’ publications respectively, and it’s fascinating to read about how our predecessors were feeling during those dark days.

While a couple of the photos here are from these union publications, most of them are from the archives of the British Postal Museum and I’m extremely grateful to them for allowing us to feature these snapshots from the past.

Both unions were very supportive of the war effort – the UPW’s 1940 annual conference unanimously passing this motion: “Conference sends to all members on active service its admiration of your heroic resistance. Conference assures our absent colleagues that we at home shall endeavour to emulate your courage and fortitude when the need arises and oppose with iron resolution those who subjugate truth and freedom.” (Post June 1940)

And in the same year, the POEU sent out a similar message, stating that “the war situation is grave, the air raids have begun and attempts at invasion are possible at any time. Our armed forces are giving all that they have to give and the same wholehearted endeavour is being put forth by workers of all kinds up and down the country. Let it be said that in the worst of times we performed our greatest deeds.” (Journal June 1940)

But they also continued their ‘bread and butter’ work of protecting Post Office workers’ pay, terms and conditions – working together in their ‘cost-of-living campaign’, which launched in February 1940 in response to the sharp increase in prices since the outbreak of war.

The campaign began with a mass meeting in central London and was followed up with similar events around the country – and the May editions of the unions’ publications reported the settlement of a substantial “War Bonus,” which significantly raised pay rates – an outcome positively greeted in The Post’s June edition as a “Round One points verdict” for the workers and a “capitulation” on the part of the Treasury. (Post June 1940)

“Even in the darkest days of the war, there was not only this determination to defeat Nazism, but a growing consciousness that, after the war, there needed to be a fairer society.”
At grassroots level, strenuous efforts were made to keep members at home and our members overseas in regular contact, with branches being asked to keep in close contact with those members serving in the forces by making sure that they were written to whenever possible and kept up to date with union business.

Arrangements were made for enlisted members to maintain their membership on the basis of a flat-rate payment, which the majority of members signed up for before they left for the forces and it wasn’t long before articles appeared informing those at home of their experiences.

And most movingly, our unions also provided news of fallen comrades, for example, the Bristol UPW Branch reported: “We are sorry to tell you that the death in action of Reg Stabbings has officially been confirmed. Flight Sergeant Victor J Baker has also been taken from us. He was killed when his bomber crashed after a mission to Germany.”

In August 1940, the Bournemouth Outdoor Branch reported that “106 members were serving with the forces, that of those who were serving in France all, with one exception had returned safely” – the exception being “Bro. WH Brooks” who had been “reported missing.”

Many of our members – particularly engineers – enlisted in the Royal Navy and the news that “Bro. CW Westbrook has been awarded the DCM (Distinguished Service Medal) for services at sea” was proudly revealed to our members, as was the sad story of “Bro. AA Leighton” who was “wounded as a result of enemy action at sea.”

And an article from the London District of the union in January 1940, headed: A UPW Branch In The Army, informed readers that the number of UPW members in one regiment was so large that they decided to elect a secretary who, on their behalf, “was able to make representation to their Commanding Office regarding Kings Rules and Regulations.”

A soldier and UPW member accused of striking an NCO told his commanding officer that he would be represented by a solicitor at his hearing. When the officer asked him how he could afford to meet the expense, he replied: “Oh my union will see to that.”

Even in the early days of the conflict, people were looking ahead to a post-war Britain, which they were determined would be different from the one that preceded it.

Several political articles made this case, with headlines like After the war – What then? (May 1941) and State Capitalism and Democracy (November 1941), making the case for a post-war society in which healthcare, full employment and a strong trade union movement would be a priority.

I found writing this article an extremely moving experience and it brought home to me again the sheer bravery of this generation of people – our members and of course everyone else in the country at the time.

What’s particularly striking is that, although the two unions representing Post Office workers were 100 per cent behind the war effort, they also refused totally to allow the employers to abuse this spirit of unity to take away any workers’ rights or drive down pay, and both the UPW and POEU continued to fully function in representation at the workplace, holding their annual conferences and also kept fully in touch with their members serving in the war – remarkable.

And something else that’s truly inspiring is the hope of building a better world. Even in the darkest days of the war, there was not only this determination to defeat Nazism, but a growing consciousness that, after the war, there needed to be a fairer society – a collective feeling that was to grow during the conflict and lead, eventually, to Labour’s transformative 1945 victory.
COMPETITION TIME

Congratulations to Lee Drabwell, from Peterborough, who won the Autumn Edition’s £100 prize for suggesting this caption to our featured photo of our Anglia Divisional Representative Barry Jennings.

A big thank you also to all the rest of you who sent in your entries – quite a few funnies, one or two slightly on the ‘rude’ side and several others suggesting Barry might have dropped his pint!

So many thanks for the laughs and please have a go this time:

CAPTION COMPETITION

Could you be a lucky winner this time?
Find the words below, get warmed up on your picket line and find the bonus word too, take a photo and send in to the new dedicated competitions email address, voicecompetition@cwu.org the first 10 correct solutions drawn out of the hat will win a CWU Bumper Goodie Bag.

Best of luck folks!

WARD SEARCH

Also big congrats to the 10 Autumn Edition Wardsearch winners:
Adrian Acland-Martin, Derby
Nicola Blackman, Wolverhampton
Gareth Williams, Chester
Sarah Webb, Bristol
Mick Hickling, Nottingham
Caroline Beer, Wrexham
Jo Hartnell, Fife
Elaine Thomas, Peeblesshire
Jason Lee, Gillingham
Kai Gold, Invergowrie

A special CWU Bumper Goodie bag has been sent to all 10.
Daves bonus word was parcels.

What is our editor thinking?
Please send your entries this time to the new dedicated competitions email address, voicecompetition@cwu.org

What is the bonus word?
If you want to nominate your own CWU rep for the next Voice CWU Rep Award, please email the new dedicated competitions email address voicecompetition@cwu.org Telling us about her or him and why you think she/he deserves the award.

The Voice CWU Rep Award Autumn 2019 - Tina Dalgarno from Perth

“We’re all delighted that our Tina has won the very first Voice CWU Rep Award,” said Scotland No.5 Branch secretary Mark Richards as he presented her with her framed certificate at Perth Delivery Office.

“She’s been in the post for the last three years and already she’s making a positive difference,” he said, adding that there are around 120 members at the unit and that Tina has been particularly helpful with the recent holiday pay claims for members.

In his nomination entry, Perth postman Nigel Mullan described her as “approachable, cheerful, energetic, reliable and hard-working – a true comrade and colleague.”

Nigel says that Tina “combines her long experience and coaching and mentoring skills, particularly with new intakes, to be an ever-present and tireless colleague working on everyone’s behalf.”

He praises Tina for “continually acting on our behalf to make the office a fairer place to work in” and also cites her as “a good ally to the growing intake of women workers here.”

“I really think she deserves to be awarded recognition of her service to the union in this office, a well-deserved boost especially at this time when we are entering a critical period.”

In My View

London’s Mount Pleasant site, where I work, has, I believe, a larger number of cleaners than any other Royal Mail unit – and they’re all members of the Mount Pleasant and Phoenix branches, which have a proud record of defending minority grades.

For our cleaners – who, like our maintenance engineers, come under the Royal Mail Property & Facilities Services (RMP&FS – formerly ROMEC) division of the business – the big issue at this time is for all of them to be included in the new Royal Mail pension scheme.

Since the property and facilities services operation was brought fully back in house in 2016, the union has been striving to ensure full and equal Royal Mail Group terms and conditions for all these members.

Our Annual Conference has agreed policy on this and we also held an RMP&FS national policy forum last year, at which this issue was foremost among the policy resolutions adopted.

In other branches it’s often the branch secretary, and this is important, because it keeps the branch’s eye on membership levels, recruitment and workplace issues.

Some, in fact most of our cleaners are part time, and some are mobile and cover different sites, so we need to encourage our reps to make sure they speak to the cleaners whenever they go into a workplace and try to recruit them into the CWU – and maybe also encourage more of them to become reps.

Another of our minority grades under pressure at this time are the Quadrant members, who run our on-site canteens and catering services. Quadrant is 51:49 owned jointly by Royal Mail Group and a private company, the Compass Group.

Royal Mail has put this contract out to tender, which means a period of uncertainty, stress and worry about the future for the workforce – who know that TUPE is not worth the paper it is written on – so could we start a campaign to try to bring these members and this function completely in-house?

A test of our union’s strength is how we represent, defend and fight for our minority grades.

Unity is strength.
Piano playing
By Lynne Lambert Nottingham & District Branch

I was literally dragged kicking and screaming to my first lesson – goodness knows what the poor teacher thought when I turned up!

I was sent for lessons because my parents had wanted to learn but had not been able to and, to them, I was ‘lucky’ to have the lessons they had been denied.

From the beginning, I found learning to read music difficult to the point of nearly impossible. It simply didn’t make sense.

Why did one hand have Every Good Boy Deserves Favour, and the other Good Boys Deserve Father’s Apples? Why couldn’t they both be the same? Why was it all about Good Boys? Where were the Girls? And whose Father has Apples?

I was lucky to have an extremely patient, child-friendly teacher, who painstakingly repeated musical facts until – suddenly – I could read music and started to enjoy playing in my own right.

My confidence was boosted by exam success. I was taught classical music and still enjoy playing it. It is very therapeutic – nothing deals with frustration like a piece of Beethoven, and Bach is endlessly reassuring, whilst Chopin just sounds so lovely.

I’ve been teaching piano and music theory for some years now, and as I work at Royal Mail for three days a week, I have time to indulge in my ‘other job’. People come for lessons for many different reasons.

Obviously, a lot of my students are children, and they are great because they are open-minded about any type of music. I have to say though, boys love playing Star Wars songs, and this really encourages them to play.

A recent adult student just wanted to play Queen, and we’ve had enormous fun playing Bohemian Rhapsody. A former colleague didn’t want to play, but wanted to learn to read music, subsequently obtaining 98 per cent in the exam.

If you are interested in learning, you really do need an instrument. An electronic keyboard is alright to start with, to see how you get on, and I have had students get to Grade 1 piano using a keyboard. Ultimately though, if you’re serious about playing, you would need a piano.

You can get refurbished pianos from music dealers, and this is worth paying a bit extra for. Alternatively, electric pianos (distinct from a keyboard) are very good these days.

Word of mouth is a good way to find a teacher, or check out your local music shop. Do however ensure your teacher has qualifications – ideally at least a Grade 8.

Whatever the reasons individuals have for wanting to learn, I remember and follow the example of my early teachers, who encouraged and nurtured my interest.

Although each of my students has different strengths and weaknesses, I try to help them get the most out of their skills – and I want my students to enjoy music as much as I do.

MMA
By Mick Kane Glasgow & Motherwell Branch

Mixed martial arts (MMA) today is probably safer or at least on a par with many combat sports such as boxing and kickboxing.

Although it can be bloody inside the cage, most of the damage is superficial and fighters do not receive the repeated concussive blows that boxers receive.

The University of Alberta’s Sather Sport Medicine Clinic researched both sports and found that an MMA fighter was more likely to suffer minor injuries but less likely to suffer concussions or fractures.

Dr Shelby Karpman, the study’s lead author, explained: “You’re more likely to get injured if you’re participating in MMA, but the severity is less overall than boxing. Most of the blood you see in mixed martial arts is from bloody noses or facial cuts, it doesn’t tend to be as severe but looks a lot worse than it actually is.”

MMA has enjoyed phenomenal worldwide growth thanks mainly to the UFC. The UFC and Bellator both regularly have events in the UK and Ireland, giving opportunities to local fighters.

To reach the top, most fighters will be a black belt in at least one martial art. The main ones practised are Muay Thai, Brazilian Jiu Jitsu, wrestling and boxing – giving fighters a range of grappling and striking skills.

The UK MMA scene is in a good place at this time. Manchester produced the first British UFC champion when Michael Bisping won by first-round knockout in 2016.

Since then, Liverpool’s Darren Till fought and lost for a world title in 2018 and currently, Leon Edwards from Birmingham is very much in the running for a title shot – while exciting young prospects, Nathaniel Wood and Jack Shore, from London and Aberdillery, Wales, respectively, have made the step up having had standout amateur careers.

The women’s division in the leading promotions of UFC, Bellator and Asia’s ONE FC are also thriving – and here again, the UK has strong representation.

Kilmarnock’s Joanne Calderwood is in the top three in the flyweight division, while Molly McCann has been in some entertaining fights since signing for the UFC last year.

MMA UK is the leading MMA site in the UK and happens to be run by a CWU rep. Peter Knox is the communications officer for Glasgow & District Amal Branch and he told me why he feels MMA is on the rise.

“MMA is now the world’s fastest growing sport and it has become a global phenomenon in a very short space of time,” he said.

“As for MMA in the UK, the success of it is mainly down to the UFC and Conor McGregor. It used to be very hard to find gyms to train MMA but now there are gyms everywhere including official UFC gyms opening in the UK.

“One thing the sport is lacking is a union for fighters. Fighters are poorly paid and some fighters have attempted to launch a union, but it hasn’t really taken off as yet.”

With MMA clubs and local events up and down the UK and Ireland at least once a month, it’s a great time to become involved.
THURSDAY 12TH DECEMBER

DON'T FORGET TO VOTE!
WE SHALL NOT BE MOVED

97.1%