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To: All Branches

Dear Colleagues,

CWU Condemns Prime Minister Boris Johnson's Tory Party Speech Throw Away Joke Comment on Dog Bites Through The Letterbox - (Bite-Back Campaign and Low Level Letter Box Campaign – Joint CWU/RM Letters To Boris Johnson Prime Minister and to Christopher Pincher MP, Minister for Housing, and Lord Greenhalgh, Minister for Building Safety and Communities):

The CWU Health, Safety & Environment Department has criticised Prime Minister Boris Johnson's irresponsible 'joke' comments, opening his speech to the Tory Party Conference this month.

PM Boris Johnson thanked Conservative Party activists for "prodding leaflets through the letterbox and into the jaws of dogs".

The prime minister may have decided to add the usual joviality to his speech but in reality this is not funny and no laughing matter. The prime minister's throw away comment right at the beginning of his speech is infuriating and will not have been welcomed by CWU Royal Mail delivery members across the country, who have worked through the Coronavirus pandemic as government designated 'essential workers', currently supporting and delivering the government's Covid-19 Test Kit programme nationwide.

There have been 2,500 recorded dog attacks on postmen and women across the UK in the last year and since 2013, over 650 postal workers have been attacked and bitten by dogs while posting mail through the letterbox, causing injuries – some cases have resulted in the loss of fingertips, dangerous infections and even amputations.

On top of that we have to wrestle with the justice system to get irresponsible dog owners held to account in some cases when the Police, CPS or courts let our members down. A case recently had to be taken to the High Court of Appeal to win the right for the dog owner to be prosecuted after a member had a finger bitten off through a letter box.

We are also waiting for government to deliver on their promise to regulate and ban 'Low-level letterboxes' which pose a daily risk to the health and safety of Royal Mail's 90,000 postmen and women CWU members. Bending or stooping to deliver mail to low letterboxes is a big issue for members, especially with hundreds of thousands of new houses being built annually. The Union has been campaigning for years for enforcement of European Standard EN 13724

which sets a minimum and maximum height of 700mm (2ft 3in) and 1700mm (5ft 6in) from floor height respectively.

Following a Low-Level Letterboxes Ten Minute Rule Bill in early 2019, the government announced that low-level letterboxes would be considered as part of the Building Regulation Advisory Committee's review of building regulations in support of our campaign and the minister reaffirmed the government's commitment to prohibiting low level letterboxes in September 2019. However, a year later we are still waiting and we, the CWU, have to challenge builders all over the country in the absence of a new law which we were promised.

Low level letter boxes are a combined safety risk for back and limb strains plus dog bites.

The CWU are once again calling for:

- A review of parts of the Dangerous Dogs Act and its enforcement.
- For the government, the Housing Minister and Minister for Building Safety to implement the promise to ban low level letter boxes once and for all.

Three Royal Mail Group/Communication Workers Union letters jointly sent to Boris Johnson Prime Minister, Christopher Pincher MP, Minister for Housing, and Lord Greenhalgh, Minister for Building Safety and Communities are attached for Branch information.

Yours sincerely



Dave Joyce
National Health, Safety & Environment Officer