



The Journal of the **Communication Workers Broad Left**

11/2011

9 June 2011

CWU CONFERENCE DEMANDS ACTION AND LEADERSHIP

CWU Telecoms & Financial Services conference highlighted the ineffectual leadership that currently exists in the telecoms section of the union. The motions on the agenda clearly reflected the anger and frustration felt by many members in the telecommunications and financial services sectors, who have been hit hard by the economic downturn and financial crisis.

Whilst a motion calling for a one day general strike was carried unanimously at the General Conference - in defence of jobs and conditions, and against cuts - when it came to the telecoms conference agenda the majority of the Executive could not even conjure up the courage to support motions calling for the pay claim in BT to at least set out to restore pay to the level it was two years ago. Executive opposition to motions 26 and 27 on BT pay gave a real indication of how remote the majority of them have become from the members and their needs and aspirations.

However, members need to know that the Broad Left supporters on the Executive – **Gus Alleyne, Steve Catterall, Maria Exall, Gary Heather and Jeffrey Till** – support and fight for the members aspirations for inflation proofed pay and pensions, work-life-balance and a performance management style that treats people with dignity and respect. Indeed, these Executive members forced the Executive to change its position from opposition to support for motion 29 calling for improved management style and industrial action if BT management do not mend their wicked ways.

Strong policy was passed instructing the Executive on issues such as contractual overtime, iPOP and parking at home policy. Pay and pensions improvements, while clearly important to members, took a back seat due to the horrendous problems members are facing with **PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT**, which dominated the telecoms conference agenda.

Before the debate began on performance management, a guest speaker, Professor Phil Taylor, laid bare its academic underpinnings that he described as a “pseudo science”. He went on to point out that bullying and harassment at work were driven by organisational objectives for cost reduction and maximisation of the rate of profit. And that performance management in these circumstances was shorn of a sense of “welfarism” for employees. Union intervention is therefore essential to organise collective opposition to performance management that is detrimental to union members.

Indicating just how detached they are from the members concerns, the misnamed “Left Activists’ Network” (LAN) Executive members voted to oppose motion 49 which called for BT to stop misusing procedures to manage staff out of the business. When it came to the actual conference vote, the motion was overwhelmingly carried by delegates - with a

message to BT to return to proper training and development. The Executive have been instructed to lead a campaign to expose and stop BTs bullying approach, with a collective response from members using protests, and the use of industrial action if necessary. The BT AGM in London on the 13 July presents an ideal opportunity for the union to step up its campaign against BTs unjust and inhumane performance management of its loyal and hardworking employees.

There were many motions submitted on the misuse of contractual overtime in Openreach. Motion 9 was carried, which called for an agreement by 31 December that COT will only be used in “emergencies” or the union will ballot members for industrial action. One of the reasons why the Broad Left opposed the SDT agreement was because of the correct perception that the requirement to work COT would be abused by Openreach and that our members would suffer the consequences.

Conference congratulated – and will hopefully learn from - CWU members in Adecco (Virgin Media) in Liverpool for gaining trade union bargaining rights, and supported their drive to increase their basic remuneration called for in motion 23. Supporting members in O2, we gave full support to motion 25 for prioritisation of automatic pay progression on the same basis as NewGRID. And we need to step up CWU organisation to protect and advance the pay and pensions of our members employed in financial services.

We agree with the concerns raised by delegates at conference on Sunday that the circulation of a slate by the LAN on the 11 May for the forthcoming Executive elections was both premature and arrogant. This was purely to gain electoral advantage, and is undemocratic. The LANs contempt for CWU procedures was such that they could not even be bothered to wait for the rules to be agreed before putting out their slate of Executive candidates. Frankly this smacks of a centralised clique running the union, and gives the lie to LANs rhetoric of networking and listening to union members.

The CWBL will of course be publishing our own slate of Executive candidates when the union has agreed the procedures. We have welcomed the participation of CWU members in the democratic process of deciding who the CWBL recommend in the Executive elections. It is also essential that Branches give serious consideration to who they want to represent their members on the new National Negotiating Teams in the various companies and business units.

Members are rightly concerned that in recent years the Executive has given into BT on pension reductions, flexible attendance patterns, pay below inflation and contractual overtime, all having a detrimental impact on working conditions and work-life-balance.

There are, however, Broad Left supporters on the Executive who are in touch with the membership, rather than management’s flexibility agenda, who voted against these adverse changes. When the time comes, please get your Branch to consider nominating and supporting them, and other Broad Left supporters, in the Executive elections.

In the meantime please contact us with any union issues that your Branch members are concerned about. We truly want to listen and work collectively with CWU members.

JOIN THE BROAD LEFT AND JOIN THE CAMPAIGN FOR A FIGHTING LEADERSHIP

To join the Broad Left please email: thebroadcast@btinternet.com