

Regional Secretary's Annual Report 2016

As always, I would like to begin by thanking all the Regional Officers, Branch Officials and our Organisers for all their hard work and support throughout the year. 2016 was another challenging year for the union and the whole of the Labour movement. A special thank you to Angela and Dan. Trust me without them the region would not be the force it is, especially with the limited time and resources.



All of the Regional sub-committees have worked tremendously hard on behalf of Branches and for their members, and I would again ask that all Branches make it a priority in 2017 to not only support the work of these committees, but importantly to ensure that they send delegates to the meetings.

The North West Region was once again at the forefront of promoting and supporting the CWU's industrial and political campaigns. Something we should all be very proud of.

It's important that I say a thank you to all the 'Usual Suspects' who turn out to represent the CWU at rallies and elections... you know who you are!

In 2016 the region actively engaged with numerous campaigns, attending conferences, rallies, organising stalls and publicity material for the:

- Trade Union Bill
- Ofcom & BT Openreach
- Peoples Post Campaign
- Peoples Post Bus Tour
- Post Office Closures and strikes
- Delivering superfast broadband
- Labour Leadership Election (failed coup)
- Keeping Your Post Local
- Postal Workers Day
- CWU & Proud campaign
- Raising Awareness of Unfair Competition - Parliamentary Event
- NW Labour Conference
- NW TUC Conference
- North West CWU Regional Conference
- Women of Today event
- Organise appeal for CWU members effected by the floods
- Refugee Appeal
- Maylor candidates elections
- European Referendum

In January - Thanks partly to the Region's intervention, CWU BT members received well deserved recognition for working flat out to get flooded telephone exchanges back up and running in Cumbria to restore service and keep communities connected whilst facing highly testing conditions. During this time CWU Lancs & Cumbria worked closely with management and members to ensure Health and Safety was a priority when coping with the floods.



CWU North West Appeal for Members affected by the Floods in Lancashire and Cumbria - Thanks to the National appeal requested by branches and the Region, over 30 members working in Cumbria, Lancashire and Bury received much welcome financial support from their union. Many areas saw unprecedented levels of rain and up to 7 foot flooded areas.

Barry Bowes, Branch Secretary North Lancs & Cumbria who visited the areas affected by the floods said "It is heart-breaking to see the impact of flooding, especially on our members who for some Christmas is virtually cancelled this year".

A big thank you to those CWU Branches and members in the region who responded to the appeal.

2nd Reading of the Trade Union Bill in the House of Lords - Hidden in the Trade Union Bill is a clause that is deliberately designed to cut off trade unions' financial support for the Labour Party. The Tories want to be in power for a generation, and are fixing the system to make that happen. They're making it harder to register to vote, and are redrawing the Parliamentary map in a way that benefits them.

This Bill is little more than an attempt to end opposition to the government by clamping down on all of our rights to democratic protest and bankrupting the Labour Party.

Dave Ward, CWU GS

The CWU welcomed the Competition and Markets Authority's clearance for BT's takeover of EE, and looks forward to the opportunities it will bring employees and customers.



An agreement with the CWU and BT resulted in the company creating 1,000 contact centre jobs in the UK.

Responding to a report from MPs on Openreach Andy Kerr, DGS(T) said "We firmly believe that this report is badly researched, ill-judged and has no concept of both the physical and geographical challenges in providing a super/ultra-fast broadband infrastructure. "There is no credible rationale nor logic in breaking up BT. This would cost hundreds of millions of pounds which could and should be invested in broadband".

2016 National Youth Conference hosted in the NW at the Mechanics Institute, birthplace of the TUC. The region puts on a charity event for delegates & visitors and raises hundreds of pounds for CWUHA.



CWU Retired Members descend on Manchester for the 2016 National Retired Members Conference at the Mechanics Institute in Manchester

Post Office announce large-scale Crown office franchising...

CWU slams “ill-judged” BT break-up demand.....

In February - CWU condemns Post Office's shock announcement that the company plans to close their defined benefit pension scheme. The scheme is in surplus – not in deficit. So not only is this all extremely unfair – there is no financial case for the changes either. The CWU pledges to strongly oppose these unfair and unjustified changes.

#CWUandPROUD
North West Region
www.cwunorthwest.org @NWCWU

The CWU in the North West pulled together an ambitious programme of events over Hearts Union Week using the theme 'CWU and Proud'. The region targeted over 25 workplaces with A3 banners delivered direct to workplaces, as well as stickers, polo-shirts and big PVC banners, proclaiming #CWUandProud. Our efforts resulted in a significant level of engagement across all of our constituencies and thousands of members used the #CWUandProud hashtag online, even out trending #HeartsUnion

It is clear that the CWU played a leading role in publicising opposition to the Bill, which has been recognised across the movement. I would like to thank all branches, representatives and members who took part.



CWU NW Conference - The North West Region held its 2nd Annual Conference at the Mechanics Institute in Manchester.



All regional sub-committees held their AGM's in the morning followed by the Regional Committee AGM where the region paid special tribute to Richard Morgan who was stepping down as Regional Chair after over 15 years at the helm. The one-day event drew over 90 CWU reps and activists from across the region to debate key priorities for the year ahead.



After receiving presentations from Dave Ward, CWU GS and Tony Kearns, CWU Senior DGS delegates broke into discussion groups to discuss the question *'What do we need to do to create our future and become a union that is more responsive and closer to its members, can achieve internal and external growth and is fit for purpose for the foreseeable future?'*



Each of the groups decided on three priorities to help the CWU redesign the union....The North West is the first region to introduce a conference style event for its representatives a model that is now been adopted by other regions.

This conference-style event allows a cross section of representatives to see the union in a broader context; to understand how we all fit together and how certain issues affect us all, as well as gaining a better understanding of cross-over between sub-committees, and the opportunity to discuss how we tackle these issues as a united region.

New Regional Chair elected - Call centre worker **Dan Lewis**, a member of the Bootle Financial Services branch, was elected chair of the CWU North West Region just five years after joining the union as a new recruit at Santander in Bootle. Then aged 21, Dan quickly decided he wanted to get actively involved in the union



and within months he'd become a rep on the call centre floor.

Involvement in CWU Youth quickly followed - in tandem with a burgeoning interest in politics that saw Dan campaigning with his local Labour Party. In May 2015 Dan was elected to Sefton Borough Council (Labour, Blundellsands Ward) and at last autumn's TUC Congress he was awarded the movement's prestigious Youth Award.

Dan has achieved so much in his 26 years - mainly down his boundless energy, passion for social justice and the support of his branch Bootle Financial Services.

One thing's for sure - it's going to be one hell of a ride with Dan at the helm!

In March - North West TUC conference held in Liverpool...

In April - CWU & Euro Referendum

The CWU voted overwhelmingly to back a position of remaining in the European Union for the upcoming referendum.

"We've had enough of the Boris and Dave show. This referendum is about our jobs, our rights at work, our homes, our public services and the prices we pay in the shops. We cannot let it be hijacked by a right-wing agenda"

Dave Ward, CWU GS



Branches in the North West launch ' Keeping Your Post Local' campaign in response to Royal Mail's "dash for cash" by selling off local Delivery offices.

In May - CWU call for Post Office board resignations in protest at government cuts as a further 1,100 job losses shows a service in crisis

CWU announce their support for Steve Rotheram MP to be Labour's candidate for Liverpool Metro Mayor and Tony Lloyd for Greater Manchester Mayoral candidate.



In June - The UK voted to leave the European Union, shocking the world and revealing a divided country. Britain voted to leave by 52% to 48%, but Scotland and Northern Ireland all had a majority for remain. England and Wales voted out.

CWU GS Dave Ward "What's crucial now is that the whole labour movement unites in shaping the outcome of what taking back control of our country should really mean".

National Pensioners Parliament - The Annual Pensioners' Parliament was held in Blackpool 14th to 16th June. The conference opened with a shuffle through the streets from the Tower to the Winter Gardens. This was well attended by branches from the North West and we put on a good show of banners and flags. The main speaker was Richard Burgon MP for Leeds East.



In July - The CWU Peoples Post bus tour rolls into Manchester and St Helens. Local politicians, including Tony Lloyd, Greater Manchester interim Mayor, join Post Office Workers to raise awareness of the crisis facing the Post Office which is pursuing an aggressive closure and privatisation programme. The public and politicians queue up to sign the giant 20 foot postcard on the side of the bus. The postcard carries a message asking the government to “protect the heart of the High Street”.



CWU serves notice for Post Office strike ballot....

CWU respond to Ofcom recommendation on separation of BT and Openreach... Andy Kerr, CWU deputy general secretary,



said: “Ofcom’s recommendations on Openreach today recognise the practical benefits of retaining the division under BT Group ownership. However we are concerned that the legal separation option being proposed will bring significant costs and uncertainties for the pensions of all

BT Group employees and will also mean the biggest ever single TUPE of staff – at 32,000 people.

In August... CWU nominates Jeremy Corbyn for Labour leadership.

It's policies like Jeremy's announcement on extending the recognition for trade unions which the CWU believe will make a real difference to the working lives of millions. Jeremy also supports the renationalisation of Royal Mail and the repealing of the anti-trade union laws, besides offering a real alternative to austerity.

CWU welcomes the High Court decision to allow 130,000 members a vote in the Labour Leadership....

CWU rejects Royal Mail pension closure.....

“It is very concerning that the recent press articles, which have prompted this statement, give an impression of *fait accompli*. Royal Mail will need to bring far more imagination into these on-going discussions and should be in no doubt that the CWU will use every means at our disposal to encourage the company to think again and secure an agreement that defends our members incomes and dignity in retirement”.

Terry Pullinger, CWU DGS(P)

Members of the CWU in the Post Office vote overwhelmingly in favour of strike action following a series of announcements of cuts to jobs, services and staff pensions.....

In September.... Thousands of Post Office staff walk out on strike against attacks on their job security and pensions and in defence of the Crown network and Supply Chain.

In October.... National Post Office strike.....

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

Ready...steady...ACTION MONTH... The CWU's annual month-long focus on organising and recruitment across the telecoms and financial services sector swings into gear with branches across the region pulling out the stops to make young workers the key focus of this year's hive of activity.

In November - The CWU pledge to fight the closure of the Intelligent Processing Solutions Ltd (iPSL) site in Bootle. iPSL has announced that the move to image processing of cheques mean its future working plans assume closing seven of its nine sites including Bootle sometime during 2018.

Government launch public consultation on the future of the Post Office....The CWU makes submission and also launches Postcard campaign,



which respond to the consultation. Every branch were asked to collect signatures over the next few weeks. The postcards call for an immediate halt to the cuts and a fundamental change in direction from the Post Office to protect



our members' jobs and what is a cherished public service. The region targets Labour party and other unions conferences/meetings.



At the request of the Regional Secretary, all major unions join the campaign as well as local Labour parties resulting in getting thousands of extra postcards signed. Some branches, including T&FS branches, hold street stalls and target large workplaces. Even one of our service providers, Pellacraft get involved.

Preston City Cllrs fully supporting the CWU "Save Our Post Office" campaign.



CWU packs a punch at Labour's North West Conference



CWU delegates to the Labour North West Conference in Blackpool worked non-stop lobbying Labour MPs, councillors and the 1,000 rank and file Labour Party members in attendance on all the key issues that the



union is currently addressing.

These include the current Post Office dispute, the union's warnings to Ofcom about the dangers of it pursuing a BT break-up agenda and a raft of other CWU campaigning objectives, including the union's drive for better pay and working conditions for Call Centre Workers.



Other issues highlighted by the CWU included delivery office closures, with delegates also promoting the union's demand for a 'New Deal' for workers as well as various ongoing campaigns including the 'Housing for All' drive and CWU

Humanitarian Aid's current Syrian Refugee appeal.

The CWU's motion, calling for a 'New Deal for Workers', was moved by the Regional Secretary, Carl Webb and seconded by GMB Political Officer, Neil Smith, with Carl poignantly asking Conference: "Have you ever heard anyone on the doorstep or workplace say - 'these employment rights, we have too many of them?'" Carl added:



"Previous Labour governments did not do enough to reverse the cruel anti worker legislation introduced by Thatcher... in fact only Bulgaria and Lithuania has worse workers rights in Europe than the UK". The motion was carried unanimously.



Brian Kenny, CWU Mersey Political Officer seconded a motion on Child Refugees, on behalf of the CWU. During his speech, he paid tribute to CWUHA for the tremendous work it has already done in this area, including organising convoys to refugee camps in Hungary and Turkey. That work is now being augmented by a major initiative to deliver two contained loads of desperately needed aid to Syrian refugees in Lebanon this Christmas.

The CWU's North West No 1 branch political officer, Ian Moran, was successfully elected onto the Conference Arrangements Committee, whilst regional secretary, Carl Webb, and CWU Political Officer, Sandra Walmsley, were elected onto the Regional Board.

In December- Monday, December 12th marked the 5th National Postal Workers Day and **Mayoral Labour Candidates** Andy Burnham and Steve Rotherham joined national and local politicians to recognise the hard work that post men and women do year round to keep the postal service running.



The Regional Secretary writes to all North West MPs enclosing a copy of the poster and a draft press release. The response was very pleasing with many MPs getting into the spirit of the campaign.

As part of the day the Regional Secretary and North West No1 branch joined Todmorden Labour party members to protest against the proposed closure of their sorting office.



A big thank you to those branches and workplaces that support the day and their members.

CWU take further strike action in fight to save the Post Office...



Members working at Accrington Delivery Office take industrial action over bullying... Local Labour MP, Graham Jones joins the picket line in solidarity with our members and berates managers. All postal branches in the NW contribute to a strike fund.



In 2016 branches in the region once again ran an ambitious training programme with over a hundred reps attending regionally ran courses. Targeting training for new reps, is, has, and will always be, a key priority for Branches and the Region.

The North West Regional website - Chris Ingram continues to do a fantastic job looking after the Regional Website, which is a good source of information for our reps and members. The site highlights national and regional campaigns that you will not see on the national website.

Chris is always looking at ways to improve the site, so if you have any ideas, please do not hesitate to contact him at: kris.ingram@berlin.de

Social Media - 2016 saw an upsurge in the use of social media to promote the union's campaigns regionally.

Social media is just one of many communication tools that can be used to communicate with our members, but you still can't beat face to face meetings and having well informed representatives in all of our workplaces.



The **CWU Regional Mini Bus** was kept busy in 2016 - Transporting reps, placards, banners and flags to rallies, marches and festivals. It has also been used to help recruit new members. Unfortunately, the mini-bus is currently off the road and a decision will need to be taken as to whether we scrap it, or

seek financial assistance from branches to have it repaired and spruced-up. At present we are the only region to own a vehicle, though others are following our lead.

Carl Webb
Regional Secretary