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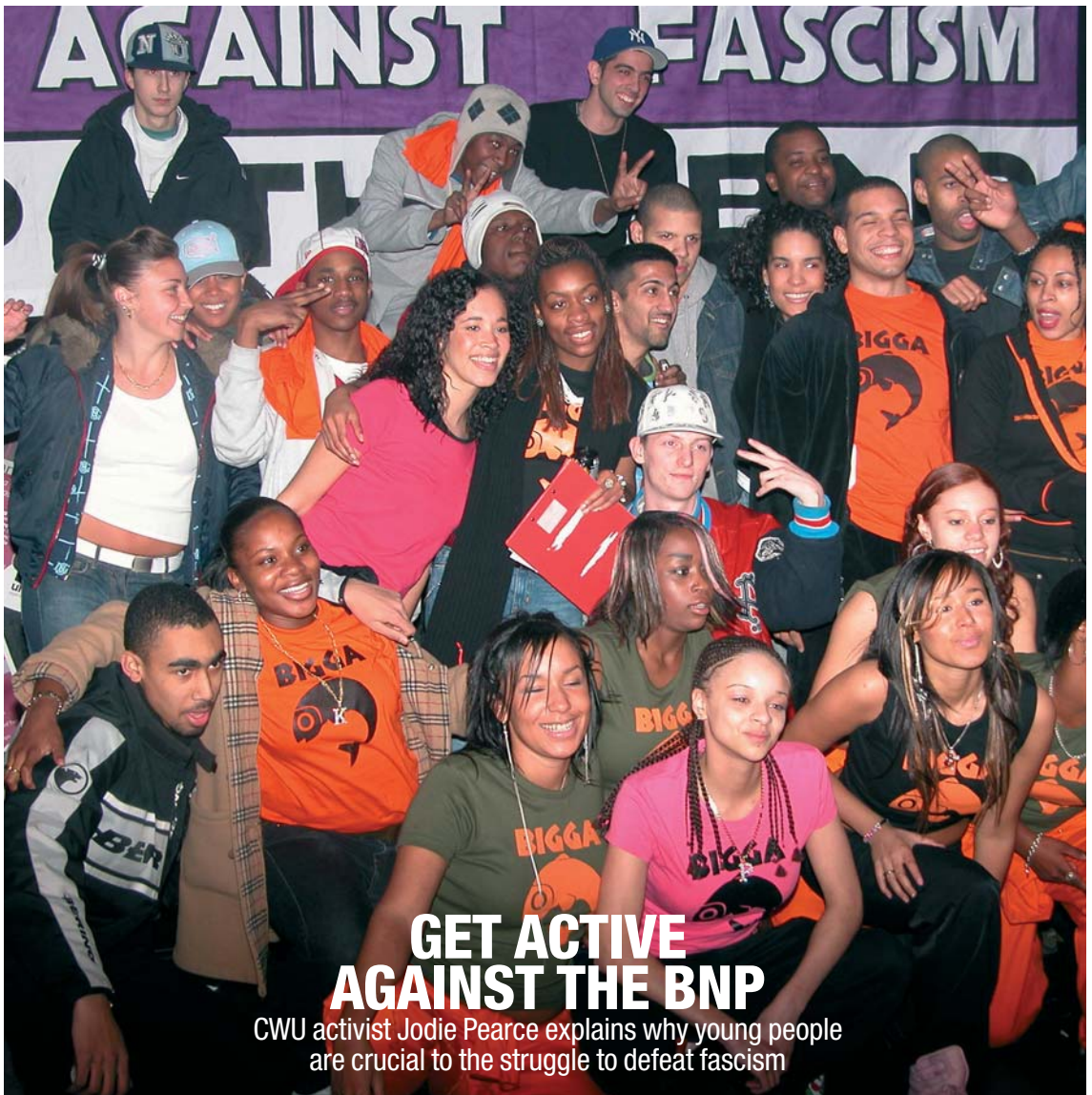
Jennifer Forbes reports back from her recent visit to the strife-torn central American nation

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YOUTH

THE MAGAZINE OF THE YOUTH ADVISORY COMMITTEE





BILLY HAYES
GENERAL SECRETARY

Billy Hayes

ORGANISATION IS KEY

It is good to see the range of activity represented in this newsletter. But at the root of it all is recruitment and sound organisation. So I would ask each of you reading this – either at conference or elsewhere three questions.

First, if you haven't got a branch youth officer or a regional

youth committee in your branch or region, what are you personally doing about it?

Second, when there is a youth-orientated or youth-inspired initiative in your workplace, branch or region, will you commit to make sure that a 100 or 200-word report of it is sent up to Jo Thair at

head office, so that we can advertise our successes?

And third, and this is perhaps most important of all, if you are already a youth officer, what steps are you personally taking to make sure that your successor as a workplace, branch or regional youth representative is in place?

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CWUYouth
Today and Tomorrow



Welcome



SIMON SAPPER
YOUTH OFFICER

Simon Sapper

Welcome to the latest edition of the CWU Youth Newsletter. This is being launched at Annual Conference 2008 in Liverpool, so it is appropriate to look back over the past 12 months. What a year!

The progress that our 27,000 young members have made, collectively, right across the CWU, is clear for all to see. Firstly there is this newsletter, which includes more contributions from more people than ever before.

Then, there is the conference agenda, in which we see more youth input, with more far-reaching and innovative proposals about how we structure ourselves to do the best for our young members, than ever before. And as regards conference itself, there are more young delegates and observers than ever before.

This has come as a result of some very hard work by many people – not just young activists.

But we can take nothing for granted. It is too easy to turn from "Hero" to "Zero". We must make sure that young members' concerns are at the centre of CWU activity - and that they stay there.

Progress



KEVIN SLOCOMBE
HEAD OF COMMS

Kevin Slocombe

Welcome to the first edition of the youth magazine that is being distributed to all of the 27,000 CWU young workers in post, telecommunications and financial services. Youth organisation is a key element of

CWU work; we have a fundamental need to grow both young membership and the involvement of young workers in shaping trade union policies and attitudes for the future. The youth committee does an excellent job organising young workers and progressing issues of those people and a young persons magazine for all is a logical next step in that progress. We want to make sure this magazine is interesting and deals with the subjects you care about. Your feedback is crucial in improving the magazine and I would be grateful if you forward your comments to me direct at kslocombe@cwu.org

I hope you enjoy the read.

SIMON SAPPER

NATIONAL OFFICER



Simon's pre-CWU Conference blog

Our CWU youth advisory committee chair Simon Sapper welcomes young members to Liverpool for this year's CWU annual national conference and reports on what has been an exciting last 12 months for young members of our union.

In approving funding for our first-ever youth development worker, our union's NEC showed commendable foresight. This followed our remarkable success in winning government funding for this from the union modernisation fund (UMF), a scheme which, it must be remembered, the Tories want to abolish, to fund our youth engagement strategy. This strategy is explained in detail elsewhere in this edition by our project worker Steve Ratcliffe.

But it is not just about funding. The willingness and commitment of the industrial DGSs – Dave Ward and Jeannie Drake – to include young activists in developing the industrial strategy of both executives has led to a higher level of engagement and enthusiasm amongst young activists – the next generation

of senior branch officers – than ever before.

We are now closing in on our goal of active regional youth networks with action plans across the whole of the CWU. And this is important because it means that youth activity is accessible for all and for those wishing to become active in the union, there are more opportunities to do so.

However, there is no room for complacency and there are still many challenges to be addressed. Still not all branches have youth officers, while some existing youth officers have an awkward relationship with other officers over facilities and support.

We still have no agreement with any employer for facility time specifically for youth activity and some among the employers, particularly in the postal sector, are outwardly hostile.

We are also on a journey in terms of our role in the union. Above all, we want youth issues to be brought into the mainstream and not left on the margins, although this "mainstreaming" can be a double-edged sword.

And we always need to be wary of becoming preoccupied with structure and position and which offices we may hold rather than the real purpose of what we are doing – campaigning, recruiting and organising.

I would like to place on record my thanks to the outgoing youth advisory committee (YAC) for its energy and enthusiasm as well as its achievements. To Steve Ratcliffe who is bringing life to the YES Project and to Jo Thair at CWU HQ, without whom none of this would happen.

In closing, I urge all young members, whether you are at conference, or in your branches and workplaces, to speak up.

I know it's not easy if you're in a position that can be intimidating, but, if something is on your mind, don't keep it to yourself. There are always people locally and nationally to provide advice and support. The only way for your voices to be heard is by taking that vital first step.



“
I URGE ALL
OUR YOUNG
MEMBERS
TO SPEAK
UP”



CWU national officer Simon Sapper (centre) standing with a group of the union's young members outside the forum

Shaping our own future and revitalising our union

The union reached a new milestone in April with the convening of a Young Activists' Forum to specifically consider industrial issues. The initiative came out of the Telecom & Financial Services Executive's Branch Best Practice (BBP) plan – an ambitious programme to share best practice that occurs in some parts of the union across all of the T&FS constituency.

One of the main aims of BBP is to revitalise the union, which means

getting many more young members involved with the union, and making the CWU more responsive to, and representative of, young people's concerns, and the forum, which was held in Edinburgh, was a key stage of that programme.

Representing a new approach by our union, young members at the forum were being asked, and expected, to contribute directly into policy.

Delegates representing our interests in BT, O2

and Manpower discussed and came up with some proposals that will be placed before the full executive on how we cope with the enormous skills challenge that will see much of the work that our members currently undertake almost totally eclipsed by technology over the next three to five years.

This is clearly a vital area, because our members' future job security depends on us getting the right deal and progressing

negotiations satisfactorily with employers.

Delegates also looked at how the CWU can appear more attractive and be more engaged with young members and potential members and, again, a range of practical proposals were brought forward.

Young people can be encouraged to join unions if we can show they promote protection at work and increase access to learning and training opportunities.

Cuba Mayday celebrations

Stephen Gribben, YAC Chair and Jo Lawton also of the YAC were privileged to visit Cuba during the recent Mayday celebrations. During their trip they saw for themselves the very different way of life which included deprived areas, schools and hospitals. They also observed local agencies in their huge tasks of building schools – lending a helping hand where they could. They both found the experience extremely rewarding and humbling. Stephen says: "I will definitely find the time to visit again it was an amazing experience that I will never forget". A full report will be in the next newsletter.



Havana is the capital city and political centre of Cuba

YAC member campaigning against BNP in local elections



Lee on the campaign trail

YAC Member Lee Fishwick joined in with efforts to fight the British National Party by helping deliver leaflets in Burnley during the recent local election campaign.

North Lancs & Cumbria branch youth officer Lee has played an active role within the area and helping to organise a recent Love Music

Hate Racism event in Preston last year.

Lee has put his principles into action by taking a stance against the BNP. At their zenith, the BNP held seven seats in the area and, through hard local anti-fascist campaigning, they have been reduced to four.

But, for local Labour councillor Andy Tatchell, the struggle, with the help of local trade union activists, will continue until there are no BNP members of the local council left in office.

It says so in the figures

New research indicates that Sheffield District Clerical branch has a higher density of young members than anywhere else – 50 per cent of their branch total – proving that size and density do not necessarily match. Second highest is Tay Branch, which organises at Sitel in Dundee, at 49.7 per cent. Manchester Clerical came in next at 38 per cent. The leading Postal

branch by density of young members was Clyde Valley Amal, with 20.5 per cent. Manchester Clerical is the youngest branch in the union with 1,068 members under the age of 30. Scotland No. 1 (953), Sheffield District Clerical (768) and Glasgow & District Amal (742) then follow. The region with the highest density of youth is Scotland at 14.1 per cent.

Youth conference 2008

This year's youth conference was held on February 27 at the union's head office in Wimbledon and attracted around 50 young activists.

A varied agenda covered topics including strengthening the links between the YAC and the industrial executives, agreeing on campaign plans in regions, on agency workers' rights, for affordable housing and on the structure of the YAC itself.

Conference agreed that the motions on

affordable housing & on the structure of the YAC will be taken onto national conference and also elected Ralph Ferret and Ian Emms to attend as YAC delegates.

Following the conclusion of the conference, two round table discussions were hosted by deputy general secretary Dave Ward and assistant secretary Sally Bridge.

Dave explained current issues in the postal sector and Sally Bridge spoke about the union's campaign for justice for agency workers.



Deputy general secretary Dave Ward

InBrief

CWU annual conference

This year the CWU youth will be out in force at annual conference. Hosting a social event on Tuesday night, a fringe event on Fair Trade and the Sustainability Agenda on the Tuesday lunchtime and they will also be running the Youth Stall throughout the whole week. The theme will change each day so come and see us every day!

Newly elected youth advisory committee

A new YAC will be elected in Liverpool and they will meet for the first time as a Committee at the beginning of July to set out their stall for the year which will include determining the workstreams that they will concentrate on and the roles and responsibilities of each member. This will all be published over the coming weeks. Keep an eye on the website for further developments.

Facebook revolution

We are on Facebook – are you? Why not add us as a friend. Search for Jo Thair.

InBrief

Tressell Honoured

A plaque to Robert Tressell, the author of *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists*, has been unveiled at The Old Royal Liverpool Infirmary, where he died in 1911. The labour movement classic has been published in more than 14 countries and the original manuscript can be viewed online. <http://www.unionhistory.info/ragged/ragged.ph>

Blow Your Own Trumpet

We need to know what you are up to! Let us know – do you have a meeting coming up? Tell us. Do you have an event to publicize? Tell us. Whatever it is and you want to sing about it – tell us. We can put it out there via newsletters, the website and bulletins.

Education Event 2008

This year's event will be taking place at the Jury's Inn Hotel in Brighton over the weekend of 10-12 October. Get your applications in now. Forms can be retrieved from the CWU website or by emailing Jo Thair at jthair@cwu.org.

SW TUC Conference 08



Ralph addressing the gathering

Regional youth secretary Ralph Ferrett attended the 2008 South West TUC conference with the aim of promoting youth activism within the labour movement across the region.

On the first day of conference, Ralph led a discussion session entitled Organising Young Members, which was well attended and generated a number of positive ideas as to how to move the union movement's youth forward.

The following day, the CWU-sponsored motion on establishing a regional TUC young members' forum was

considered by conference and, despite some reservations from the executive, the resolution was approved and we look forward to making full use of this new body to further energise young trade unionists.

As well as our successful motion, this conference has given us the opportunity to make contact with youth activists from several other unions including:

- RMT
- PCS
- FBU
- GMB
- TSSA

Therefore, we would describe the conference as a huge success.

YAC joins labour movement fight for equal pay for agency workers

YAC member Maeve Kennedy, has been running a successful campaign in the North West for equal treatment for agency workers.

Taking a leading role within her branch on the issue, Maeve has helped to take the campaign across several sites and describes the level of involvement and interest among young members as "huge."

While in Westminster, shadowing CWU sponsored MP Geraldine Smith, Maeve took the opportunity to lobby other MPs, targeting, in particular, those



Geraldine Smith MP

from the North West in the build up to the House of Commons vote on Andrew Miller's Bill, helping ensure an impressive turnout.

Maeve attended a recent Institute of Employment Rights seminar on agency workers and is hoping to work with the Working Lives Institute, which is conducting research into agency and migrant workers.

Ring off before you drive

Reaction times are about 50 per cent slower when driving and using a mobile phone and the risk of crashing is about four times higher, warns CWU national health, safety and environment officer Dave Joyce.

"There is a determined effort to improve road safety and both the Department for

Transport (DfT) and the police have appealed to drivers to switch their phones off. Drivers with hands-free devices, are reminded that they too are liable to a £60 fine and three points if they are not in control of their vehicle," he explains. "Our message to members is: 'Switch off before you drive off – Don't risk it!'"

CWU backs government initiative aimed at cutting UK alcoholism

The CWU has joined forces with Know Your Limits, a government campaign designed to get us thinking about excessive drinking and the risks associated with it, particularly in relation to personal health and safety. CWU national officer Simon Sapper said: "How many of us have got up in the morning and felt the worse for wear because we've drunk too much the night before?" The campaign also aims

for a better understanding of the recommended daily limits for alcohol consumption, to provide people with the information they need make informed choices and stay in control of what they drink.

There will be a focus on this issue on the Youth stall at conference and a feature article in the next issue of Voice. Meanwhile, more information is available at www.knowyourlimits.gov.uk

Jeannie steps down



After 30 years serving the CWU and its predecessors Jeannie Drake (above second left) retires this month.

A key issue in the future will be the "ticking pensions time-bomb," she warns. "A factor for me was a concern as to what we're leaving the next

generation," she explains, adding: "In 30 years time, will my children's generation be asking 'didn't they see the crisis coming?' Will they condemn us for not doing anything about it?"

More at: www.cwu.org/voice. 90

CWU in Edinburgh

CWU activists headed to Scotland in April for the second Young Officers Forum, launching the Branch Youth Officers' Induction Pack



Following the success of the first Branch Youth Officers Forum in January, a second forum took place on April 17 in Edinburgh, an event which saw the launch of the Branch Youth Officers' Induction Pack.

The group put forward views on the role and responsibility of each branch youth officer and also discussed the need for a skills assessment, further training requirements and an ongoing development plan.

The other main areas of

debate and discussion were climate change and sustainability, particularly what members of the union as a whole could do to "do their bit."

Discussions focussed on practical solutions such as car sharing & public transport usage, recycling and using green spaces more effectively.

A full report will be considered by the youth advisory committee and the findings will be publicised more widely in the near future.

GET ACTIVE AGAINST THE BNP

Youth advisory committee member **Jodie Pearce**, from Manchester Clerical Branch, reports on a busy month of activity campaigning against the far-right British National Party in his home town of Warrington

For the first time in Warrington, there were not one, but two BNP candidates standing for election to the council, and one of them stood in Bewsey and Whitecross Ward, where I live.

I'd received the usual nonsense from the Tories posted through my letter box, and I stuck a poster from the Labour candidate on my door in the vain hope that I wouldn't have to answer the door to hopeful Lib Dems, but I was stunned to see something from the BNP.

There's never been a BNP presence in Warrington and, once I got past my horror at receiving this, I couldn't understand why they would target my home town.

Warrington is a 96 per cent white town, with no racially

motivated crime and, I asked myself: "Surely the BNP has no platform here?"

After speaking to some of the local councillors, it seems as though the BNP fielded candidates when there was a non-white candidate standing in an attempt to gain the votes of people who would prefer someone white.

USUAL BNP TRICKS

It's also thought that this may be part of a wider agenda to garnish support in preparation for the forthcoming European elections.

The leaflet that they delivered is mainly rhetoric about crime, mentioning their belief in "Sarah's Law" – a campaign to allow public access to the Sex Offenders Register.

There are a high number of families with young children



“DESPITE LABOUR'S DEFEAT, THERE WAS SOME CONSOLATION WHEN THE BNP CANDIDATE FAILED TO MAKE AN IMPACT AND ENDED BOTTOM OF THE POLL”

► Rally against the fascist BNP

living in this ward and I'm sure those that aren't familiar with the BNP history of fascism and violence may be swung by such an emotive subject, especially as other party leaflets make reference to the addition of speed bumps in public roads and campaigning against school closures.

It seems as though the BNP has been up to its usual tricks of omitting the real agenda and working on the fears of the public.

During the election campaign, our local newspaper's website featured local anti-BNP sentiment, with comments such as: "If we let the BNP win in Warrington, we are telling the whole country we are a racist town."

But there was also some disturbing support for BNP candidates and the party



Courtesy of Unite Against Fascism

itself - "Soon the BNP will be standing in every parish, in every ward, in every council, in every shire, in every city throughout the land. So many people see the BNP as a liberation."

The North West region has a proud history of campaigning against the BNP and I felt well equipped to try and organise something with the help of the CWU RYC, especially after having attended the youth committee's education course and leafleting in Burnley last year.

SOME CONSOLATION

After seeing the damage that a BNP presence had done, it's vitally important that we all do everything we can to remind people of the dangers of complacency and inaction.

It was surprisingly easy to get hold of the local Labour

Party once I offered to help and I was glad to hear that the candidate and sitting councillor Hitesh Patel was already setting the wheels in action to ensure a good Labour turnout.

Hitesh had already done some good groundwork, ensuring that the small Asian population was registered to vote and was speaking to local residents on an almost daily basis. He was impressed by the work that the NWRYC had done in the past and was happy for the offer of help.

Unfortunately, despite all of our hard work, Hitesh fell victim to the national anti-Labour tide and lost out to the LibDem candidate Jo Crotty.

But it was some consolation that the BNP candidate failed to make an impact, finishing bottom of the poll with a paltry 8 per cent of the vote. ■



Local elections

The BNP gained a net 10 councillors making a current total of 57. The BNP polled 234,000 votes across 590 wards and was strongest in South Yorkshire. In 6 wards the BNP vote increased by more than 10% from last year. The BNP also closely missed out on 6 more seats.

London

The fascist BNP gained a seat on the London Assembly, polling 130,174, just crossing the 5% hurdle needed to get elected. This is the biggest electoral breakthrough for a fascist organisation in British politics. The BNP vote in the Mayoral election was 69,710, indicating that half of the people that voted BNP on the Assembly voted for Boris Johnson as first preference. National March Against Fascism and Racism: Saturday 21st June 2008 London

COMMITTEE REPORTS

CWU young members have been working hard over the past 12 months to build up the union's youth organisation right across the UK. Here, our Eastern, South East and South West regional committees bring us up to date

EASTERN RYC REPORT

We have spent the last year working to get as many branches as possible in the region to elect a youth rep. This has been very successful and we only have three branches now without representation – and one of these has hardly any members below the age of 30.

Over the next year, we will be looking to get the committee active across the region and the wider union movement as a whole, while also building close relationships with other regions and sharing our ideas with them.

Special thanks go the South West region and the Midlands, who have been particularly supportive over the last 12 months.

Eastern RYC are hoping to run a youth education weekend this year and plans were in place for this, but, with the temporary close of Alvescot, we are now looking for alternative venues which can meet our budget. Our region also wants to send a group to the various Workers' Beer Company events.

At this year's CWU annual conference, our region's youth movement will be well represented, with YAC member Ian Emms from

Eastern No 5 Branch as one of the two youth delegates to conference.

We are hopeful of winning support for both of our youth conference motions this week.

Please find below a list of the next regional committee dates, times and venue.

All meetings will start at 11am at Community (ISTC), Grays Inn Road, London

August 1, November 7 and February 20 2009.

We would like to extend an invitation to all members of the CWU who would be interested in attending any of the above committee dates. Any participation or expertise would be greatly appreciated.

We at the Eastern Region Committee are looking forward to the year ahead and are confident that we can build the youth movement across the Region.

SOUTH EAST RYC REPORT

Following their success in taking a full delegation to February's youth conference, the South East Region held a youth committee meeting in CWU HQ, attended by our regional secretary Terry Jackson and youth project worker Steve Ratcliffe. Half of our region's branches sent their youth officers to the meeting, which agreed an

“ WE ARE CONFIDENT WE CAN BUILD THE CWU ACROSS REGIONS ”



action plan for the committee to work on over the year.

After agreeing the plan, the Committee filled the vacant youth positions until the next election cycle, making Chris Taylor, from Kent Invicta youth secretary, with Southdowns branch's James Pettigrew as Chris's assistant and then selecting Lee O'Connor, of Meridian, to chair the committee.

SOUTH WEST RYC REPORT

An education event on Trade Unions and Globalisation was held in Newquay recently with great success.

Both experienced members



of the South West RYC committee and new trade union activists found the course extremely useful.

Guest speaker NEC member Gary Jones spoke of the repression being suffered by trade unionists in the Philippines and YAC member Jennifer Forbes, from South Devon and Cornwall branch, addressed the audience on the subject of Nicaragua. The main activity consisted of role play based on G8 summit. The committee were also pleased to welcome guests from outside the region, who all enjoyed the pirate-themed social event. **V**

▲ Top left: CWU young members enjoying the South West RYC social event

▲ Top right: Ralph Ferrett and Stephen Gribben plot further mayhem!

CWU Young Members' Survey

What do YOU want from your job and how can we help you get it?
After all, that's what unions are all about isn't it?

Well your union, the CWU, is asking our young members just that.

What are YOUR issues? It's not just about money. Is it pensions, training and career development, maternity/paternity rights or better rights for agency workers?

And you can't divorce work from life can you? What about racism, the environment and housing? Should your union have a role to play in these issues too?

We won't know unless YOU tell us

If you're a CWU member under 30, please visit:
<https://www.questback.com/communicationworkersunion/tfsesurvey/>
to complete the questionnaire.

You can also access it under Campaigns on the front page of the CWU website.

The closing date for responses is 30th June 2008.

YES PROJECT WORKER

After winning funding from the government's union modernisation fund (UMF), the CWU appointed **Steve Ratcliffe** as our youth engagement strategy (YES) project worker. Steve reports here on his work for us so far

I have been in post now since mid-February, working on the CWU youth engagement strategy (YES).

We started the project with a number of work streams and we will gauge our progress by working to various milestones that we have set for ourselves and agreed with BERR (the government Dept. for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform that is responsible for the Union Modernisation Fund).

WORKSTREAMS

Our work streams break down into four main strands, the regions, which includes focusing participation of branch youth officers (BYO), a CWU Youth standalone website, BYO Training & Development and, finally, the partnerships of CWU Youth and external

organisations.

Each of the four main strands break down into further work streams. The main point coming from this is that, in order to organise the work, we do need to have an action plan. In particular, over the last few months, and in the coming months, I will be focusing my attention on each regional youth committee (RYC) having a working action plan in place.

As it stands right now, five of the ten regions have action plans of a varying nature. Having an action plan can really help keep the RYCs stay focused and can also steer the development of those youth officers attending their regional meetings.

REGIONS ARE KEY

The RYCs are a great environment to learn more about the CWU. This is the

“
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OFFICERS IN
LIVERPOOL
”

place to ask those questions that you might be cautious about asking, and getting to know your regional secretary is really helpful because they're usually able to answer most questions or will definitely point you in the right direction.

OFFICERS' TOOLKIT

Over the next few months, I will have met with all the regions and I'm positive that every region will have an action plan in place.

As well as the work that I have been doing in the regions, behind the scenes I am working with the different departments in CWU headquarters to build the support structures for BYOs. Some of you will, by now, be familiar with the idea of having a BYO "toolkit."

We came up with the idea for a number of reasons. I have always felt there is real





▲ **Top left:** Steve Ratcliffe, right, introduces the youth toolkit in Edinburgh

▲ **Top right:** Steve Ratcliffe, CWU YES project worker

lack of understanding about what a BYO actually is or does on a day-to-day basis and I have always seen this as an opportunity not to get pigeonholed and it gave me great opportunities to explore the different areas of the CWU when I was a youth officer.

The four themes from the BYO toolkit – which was launched and discussed at the most recent BYO forum – are Agreeing a Development Plan, BYO Roles & Responsibilities, Education & Training and Self Skills Assessments.

GET IN TOUCH

A full report of the events in Edinburgh will soon be available and circulated to all BYOs that we have on our database, so, if you're not sure whether you are on the database and would like to be, make sure that you contact Jo Thair on (020)

8971-7487 or at jthair@cwu.org.

I'm looking to have the BYO toolkit ready shortly after conference in June because, with lots of youth motions going to conference this year, there may be some slight changes to make, although that will depend on the interventions of youth officers attending conference.

ENJOY LIVERPOOL

I'm really looking forward to watching the involvement of youth officers in Liverpool at CWU Conference 2008.

This will be the next real opportunity, for those attending conference, for youth officers to come together, so, if you're attending conference, make sure you come and see us at the CWU Youth Stall and please attend and support our CWU Youth fringe event.

A BIT ABOUT ME

I'm from Preston in Lancashire and I started work for Royal Mail as an indoor postal worker aged 17, back in 1994.

Five or six years later, I became involved with the CWU as an industrial representative responsible for negotiations and individual representation.

As well as industrial matters, I also developed an interest in the growing youth structure of the CWU, first at local and then at regional level and then I served on the national youth advisory committee.

After completing six months full-time secondment as the union's first-ever dedicated youth development worker, I am delighted to have been appointed as the CWU YES (Youth Engagement Strategy) Project Worker. **Y**

LINKING WITH THE NICARAGUAN YOUTH

South Devon and Cornwall Branch chair **Jennifer Forbes** reports back from her recent solidarity visit to the central American country of Nicaragua

Committee member Jennifer Forbes, who also chairs South Devon & Cornwall Branch, broke new ground by participating in the Linking Young Trade Unionists in UK and Nicaragua project.

Organised by the Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign, to which the CWU is affiliated, Jennifer was part of a UK trade union delegation visiting the central American country in February.

The purpose of the 10-day trip was to assist in the setting up of youth networks in Nicaraguan trade unions

“We mainly stayed in the capital Managua, although

we also visited the provincial town of Jinotepe and Pochomil on the coast,” she explains.

A TURBULENT PAST

Nicaragua has had an extremely turbulent history, after a popular uprising finally overthrew the bloody US-backed dictatorship of Anastasio Somoza in 1979, the nation bravely set about the task of reconstruction, developing the economy and building health, education and transport infrastructure, all the while fighting off military attacks by US-funded terrorists.

The 1990 presidential elections saw war-weary Nicaragua change course,

when right-wing candidate Violeta Chamorro defeated left-wing incumbent Daniel Ortega at the polls and plotted a more US-friendly economic and political course.

Jennifer continues: “Nicaragua is currently one of the poorest countries in the world, a situation massively worsened by the prevalence of sweatshops. Much of the population lives below the poverty line and in appalling living and working conditions.”

OUR COUNTERPARTS

With regard to our own counterparts, postal workers are amongst the poorest paid in the country and, although

▼ **Below left:** Members of the UK trade union delegation at a women's centre

▼ **Below right:** The group visit an NSC-supported community education project



telecoms workers are relatively well off, they suffer similar problems to our own members, with increasing use of temporary contracts threatening a general decline in labour standards, she reports.

But, higher up the income scale, the picture is very different, "Carlos Slim – the owner of the major telecoms company in Nicaragua Enitel – has recently been declared the third-richest man in the world.

YOUTH ISSUES

Jennifer points out that "young people often face the harshest problems, as jobs are so scarce. Many have had to leave education to work and help the family survive, while life is also increasingly hard for Nicaraguan women.

"Much of our time was spent discussing a recent change to the law forbidding any abortion-even when presented with a medical emergency, due in part to being a very catholic and sexist society," recalls Jennifer, who described her visit as "an extremely useful experience."

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Anyone wishing to know more can contact Jennifer and a fuller report on her trip will shortly be available via our website. People can also affiliate individually to Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign. And - always buy fair-trade! **✓**

Seminar to be held July 12th TUC Congress house London All welcome

Solidarity - 30 years on

Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign has been fighting to build support for this troubled nation ever since the 1979 popular overthrow of Anastasio Somoza's US-backed dictatorship



A membership organisation with offices in London and Managua, along with a network of affiliated individuals and groups across the UK, the Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign (NSC) works to address economic disadvantage in Nicaragua by providing material and moral support to partner organisations and communities and building solidarity with them. Another major part of its work is educational, aiming at raising awareness in the UK of social and economic issues affecting Nicaragua.

The campaign carries this out through tours to Nicaragua, speaker tours in the UK, campaigning and lobbying activities and distributing reports and briefings.

NSC has two current campaigning priorities. One is its Education for All campaign in solidarity with the Nicaraguan people in their collective efforts to meet the UN Millennium Development Goal of a complete primary education for all by 2015.

And the other is Fair Trade and Trade Justice, linking fair trade consumers in the UK with fair trade producers in Nicaragua and linking activists in both countries. The national campaign also supports Wales NSC, local groups and 13 towns and communities with twinning links in Nicaragua.

Working with trade unions is also extremely important and is carried out through the NSC Action Group (NSCAG), which aims to build a solidarity campaign that is national in its scope, unified in its purpose and is linked to the UK labour and progressive movements.

Apart from the CWU, the other unions affiliated to the campaign are BFAWU, BECTU, NUT, PCS, RMT, Unison, USDAW and the T&G and Amicus sections of Unite.

The campaign has worked with trade unions in both countries since the 1979 revolution and the current focus of this work is the Youth Unionists Project, which, as Jennifer has explained, links young trade union activists here with their Nicaraguan counterparts.

▲ Above: A view of the beautiful Granada Square in Nicaragua

National Youth Education Event 2008

DATE: 10-12 October 2008

VENUE: Jurys Inn Hotel, Brighton

A weekend of learning, socialising and networking
Get to know your union and fellow young activists



If you are interested in attending speak to your branch
Or email Jo Thair at jthair@cwu.org

See the CWU Youth Pages for reports, videos
and pictures of previous events