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- **It's Your Union Too; Women in the CWU**
- **Help and advice from the Mail Centre's Late Shift Health and Safety Rep. This issue Margaret talks about stress and depression**
- **Women's Health. This will be a regular feature highlighting some health issues we face.**
- **A little bit of history; The Chainmakers Strike of 1910**

## SOME RANDOM STATISTICS!

There were 30.7 million females compared with 29.5 million males in the UK population mid-2005, however more boys than girls are born each year.

In 2005, 72 per cent of men and 57 per cent of women had had an alcoholic drink on at least one day during the previous week.

Girls generally perform better than boys at GCSE and at GCE A level (or equivalent) in the UK. In 2004/05, 62 per cent of girls in their last year of compulsory education achieved five or more GCSE grades A\* to C, compared with 52 per cent of boys.

All statistics from the National Statistics [www.statistics.gov.uk](http://www.statistics.gov.uk) [accessed 17/08/07]

## Women Members Newsletter

ISSUE 1

AUTUMN 2007

# It's Your Union Too!

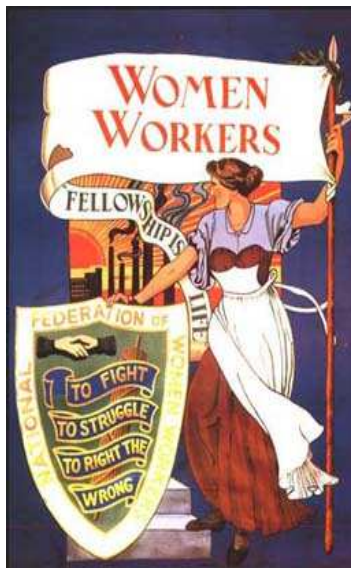
The CWU is currently made up of around 250,000 members, of which approximately 20% are female. Our members are mainly employed in Postal, Telecommunications, and Financial industries and we work for hundreds of different employers, some with better conditions than others.

The CWU has been involved in a number of campaigns and projects that have highlighted some of the major hurdles that women face in the workplace, such as action on:

### Gender job segregation

Women tend to be funnelled down particular occupational pathways and it is no accident that these jobs tend to

be lower paid, lower status and lower valued than 'traditional male' jobs.



Nation Federation Of  
Women Workers Banner

## Effective Organization

The CWU believes it is important to maximise the female involvement with the CWU structures. This effectively means not only more women getting more active in the Union but recruiting any non-Union female members. If you know a non-member pass them a copy of this newsletter so they can see what the CWU is doing for its female members.

It is well known that workers who belong to a recognised trade union are likely to enjoy better pay and conditions, health and safety and a better working environment overall than people without access to unions in their workplace. Our union is run mainly by our activists who are volunteers. They have many skills and attributes that help the CWU make gains for its members

### Gender Pay Gap

Despite equal pay for work of equal value and other legislation, women are still being paid less per hour than their male counterparts for very similar work, they have less access to overtime and bonus payments, and are less likely to get promotion.

### Domestic responsibilities

Despite women making up 50% of the working population, the vast majority of domestic and caring responsibilities still lie with women. Access to quality, affordable childcare and lack of access to flexible working hours remains a huge barrier to women's advancement.

in the workplace and in wider society. However, it is important to ensure that we are truly representing the needs of our members.

The CWU want more women members to come on board and help the CWU drive the agenda on equality issues as well as having an input into all the union's other work. Please read on and find out how you can get involved.



A postwoman doing her rounds during World War II

*“Stress and depression are the most silent and dangerous illnesses of our generation, and should be treated as any other illness”*

## It's Your Union Too (continued from front page)

The Equal Opportunities Department and the Women's Advisory Committee are keen to see CWU Branches playing their part in the development of Union policy that will help to make our Union more representative of its members. This approach applies to all of the equality strands and not just for women. If you have

an idea about a motion for Annual Conference then make a note of it and have it submitted to your Branch meeting as this is the forum where Branches will decide what motions are agreed to be sent in to CWU HQ.

If you would like more information on becoming active within your union,

or you wish to join the union, please see any of your reps, or pop over to the Gatehouse to talk to someone. I would also welcome any articles to include in a future issue of this newsletter or feedback on this issue or perhaps there is a subject matter you would like to see covered.

### Help and Advice from a Health and Safety Rep

#### STRESS AND DEPRESSION

“Women should be at home looking after the children and the house”. ----- a very out dated statement and sexist remark ----- **OR IS IT ?**

How many of us have actually sat and thought about how working full time or part time and running the family home actually affects our well being?

Do you really need that new car? Does Johnny or Sally really need the latest video game or latest craze? Do you really need that bigger house down the road?

Of course you think you do at the time, but what are you giving up to achieve these dreams?

**YOUR PRECIOUS TIME AND QUITE OFTEN YOUR SANITY!**

Stress and depression are the most silent and dangerous illnesses of our generation, and should be treated as any other illness. Stress usually creeps up on us unawares.

You go to your G.P. feeling a little run down and before you know it you are in floods of tears and

feeling foolish. What is the answer to this? You have depression.... Take some pills and get on with it. What?? Where did depression come from... I am just a little stressed. What can I do? Where do I go now?

There are no easy answers to these questions. And I am not a doctor so I have no magic cures.

There are some things however, that you can do to help yourselves.

**TALKING** to someone helps. Yes, we women are good at that topic!

**CHOOSE** someone you can trust and confide in. As a CWU Rep. **I am not allowed nor would I want to repeat anything told to me in confidence.** But it does not have to be me.

**TELL** the chosen person how your life feels very stressful at the moment.

**ASK** them if they mind listening to you, they don't have to come up with any solutions. **BUT** they may just have gone through something similar and be able to give advice. **TRY** to prioritise your problems. Deal with the bigger issues first and

let the smaller ones alone for a bit.

**DON'T** try to solve all your family's problems as well as your own (something else we women are good at). If they are grown up.... tell them to sort it themselves.

**DON'T** spend all your time at work trying to pay for your family to have a better life.

Talking to someone can very often put your problems into perspective. It may not seem so bad once you have said it. As I said before, someone may just say 'Why don't you do...' and you would not have thought of it.

If you feel yourself getting stressed, and lets face it, at the moment we are all stressed, what with the threat of closure, and the strikes, it's hard not to feel stressed, .... take a step back... take a deep breath... and **THINK**. I can get through this.

It will happen if you worry about it .... It will happen if you don't worry about it .... So there is no point in worrying about it!

Continued from page 2...

**TRY...** and I emphasise **TRY** to change your outlook on life. It's not easy, it will take a lot of willpower... but you can do it if you really want to.

**HELP** is available if you need it, so don't be nervous about asking for it. No-one is interfering in your business,

and no-one is judging you ... only yourself.

**WE** are not superwoman ... nor should we try to be... if our predecessors had known how our lives would change in the future.... Would they still have been so keen to

change the world they lived in?

I WONDER?

Help and advice is available. See your union reps.

Margaret Hill; CWU Health and Safety Rep (late shift)

# Women's Health Part 1; Back Pain

At least 100,000 women a year suffer with back problems because of work.

**Lifting and moving**  
More than a quarter of women are lifting or moving heavy loads at work. Under the Manual Handling Regulations 1992, any manual handling tasks you may be expected to do should have been assessed.

Following the suggestions below will help to prevent injuries and back pain: Check the weight of the object, and whether the

weight is evenly distributed.

Ensure the route you will take is clear.

Have a firm grip, using gloves if necessary.

Get help if

needed, either another person or mechanical equipment  
Lift with your leg muscles  
Keep the load close to your body

Move your feet rather than twisting your spine

Try to avoid lifting above your head or below your knees

### **Other causes**

Back pain can also be caused by long drives without breaks, sitting in low, soft chairs, spending long periods in one position. Your first reaction may be to take to your bed; in fact, bed rest is bad for backs.

*"At least 100,000 women a year suffer with back problems"*



## Coping With Back Pain

Keep as active as possible; swimming, particularly backstroke and front crawl, is an especially good form of exercise for back pain. Walking, cycling (not on racing/

drop handle bar bikes), yoga, T'ai Chi and Alexander Technique are also beneficial. Speak to your doctor before beginning an exercise programme, or use qualified instructors

who are aware of your problem. Speak to a pharmacist or doctor before taking medication. You may also consider consulting a chiropractor, osteopath or physiotherapist.



Correct posture for lifting items off the floor.



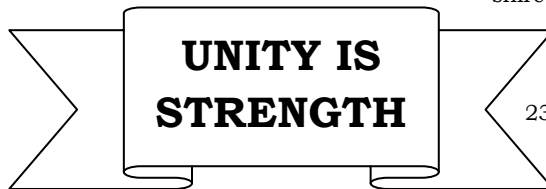
**Communication Workers Union,  
Gloucestershire Amalgamated Branch**

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Don't forget, we are still campaigning to save Gloucestershire's Mail Centre, and thereby save over 400 jobs in Gloucestershire for our, and our children's futures as well as preserving services in Gloucestershire.

You can read all about the campaign at [www.savegloucestermailcentre.co.uk](http://www.savegloucestermailcentre.co.uk) and if you haven't already, please sign our on-line petition and get all your family and friends to sign too!

Pertinent banner at the Save Gloucestershire's March and Rally on the 23rd June



## The Women Chainmakers Strike of 1910

Tired of working day and night for starvation wages, the Women Chainmakers of Cradley Heath in the Black Country downed their hammers and stood up for their right to earn a living wage.

This event, which took place in 1910, when the women, led by the founder of the National Federation of Women Workers; Mary Macarthur, and their ten week strike successfully established the right to a minimum wage.



The women chainmakers on strike in 1910



Mary Macarthur, who led the chainmakers strike

Supported internationally, the strike fund received so many contributions that a building was constructed with the surplus. The Workers Institute, as it was called, became a centre for women to meet and organise, a place to learn and to socialise.

The Workers Institute was under threat of demolition

until the Black Country Living Museum saved it, and so it was taken down and is currently under reconstruction at their site in Tipton in the West Midlands. It is hoped that once restored, it will once again be able to be used for its original purpose and thereby preserve an important piece of Trade Union history for posterity and future generations.