

Dave Joyce Final Farewell Speech April 2024 To CWU Conference v2

Thanks Chair and thanks Dave our General Secretary for allowing me to say goodbye to you all at my last CWU Conference - having never missed one since the CWU's creation.

I turned 70 last September and having postponed my retirement on more than one occasion in the past, I decided for my good and I owe it to myself and my family who want me to retire to call it a day and the time's now right to let the final curtain fall on a long career and what's been a good innings.

I just completed a final farewell tour of our ten Regions to deliver a final report and to say a personal thanks and goodbye to all the senior Health and Safety Reps across the Union - my army of colleagues, supporters and friends who I've worked with for the nearly three decades that I've been at CWU HQ.

It's been an honour and a privilege to lead our Union on the crucial subject of Health, Safety and Environment since the CWU was formed in 1995 and our huge list of successes and the great progress we've made in that time is a record second to none.

Looking forward to the future, getting the re-design and restructuring of health and safety organisation within the Union right is crucial as we face the future and the vital imperative need to re-shape our structure in order to survive as a standalone Union whilst at the same time protecting health and safety and building on the great legacy and solid foundations created over our 30 year history - throughout that time of which I'm proud to have been there from the start as NEC National Health and Safety Committee Chair for 8 years and National Health, Safety and Environment Officer for 20 years.

I began working life in Royal Mail in 1971 fresh from School as an Apprentice Mechanic working on the Royal Mail and BT Fleets and went on during my career to do a number of jobs, part time postman, distribution driver and of course I joined the Union on day one – Trade Union and Labour routes in my family ran deep with my dad a GMB Rep working as a subway inspector in London and my mother a Tailor and Garment Workers Union member working in London's East End Sweat Shops in her younger years.

I served the Union at every level from a Unit Rep, Assistant Branch Secretary, Branch Secretary Regional Secretary, NEC member and then National Officer – and ended up doing the job I always wanted to do – National Health and Safety Officer of my Union – after I saw so many terrible accidents and fatalities, I really wanted to change things and worked at that objective all my career.

And with the great team that worked with me in the Health and Safety Department (the late Steve Mann and Gerard Harkin my two Policy Assistants for two decades and Louise Pietrakowska my Secretary) we took the CWU from the 'also-rans' to one of the most highly respected Trade Union on Health and Safety in the TUC and Labour and Trade Union movement.

We've built a comprehensive training programme for Safety Reps, providing the staged training programme, up to diploma and degree level and that's paid off, delivering a record of awards and recognition second to none – which is a **true credit to our Union and something we can all be proud of;**

- **We've won the TUC Safety Rep of the Year Award 5 times**
- **The Scottish TUC Safety Rep of the Year Award**
- **The Irish TUC Safety Rep of the Year Award twice**
- **The Wales TUC Safety Rep of the Year Award**

- **The South West Region TUC Safety Rep of the Year Award**
- **The Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH) – Achiever of the Year Award**
- **The Institute of Occupational Safety & Health (IOSH) – Health and Safety Project Award**
- **The IOSH Work-Related Skin Cancer Campaign Award**
- **The RoSPA – Workforce Involvement in Safety and Health Award**
- **The RoSPA – Safety Award for exceptional contribution to Safety and Accident Prevention**
- **The “Inside Out/ Mental Health First Aid England” – Workplace Mental Health Top Awards - both the organisation award and Individual Award.**

Beating off all the UK’s major employers and other Trade Unions to win those accolades.

There can be no higher cause for trade unions than saving lives and preventing injury and ill health at work – no higher calling than doing so by becoming a Safety Rep. The CWU will never rest on the issue of health and safety. Through our Safety Reps, like many here today we’ll work to achieve, healthier workplaces with a lower risk of accidents, aiming to ensure that our members are able to leave work every day as healthy as when they arrived.

I can also look back on so many successful, high profile campaigns over the years,

- **The Acoustic Shock Campaign which led to the modification of Call Centre Headsets being fitted with noise attenuators to stop hearing damage.**
- **The Working at Height campaign to stop fatal overhead network falls.**

- The Lighten the Load Campaign which brought in Weight Controls in Royal Mail on bags, pouches, trolleys, trucks, containers and trays along with mandatory training.
- The "Tyred" Campaign we supported following a number of fatal crashes - resulting in the Government banning HGV tyres over 10-Years old being fitted to Vehicles, buses and coaches.
- The Introduction of Rehabilitation Centres and a support programme to assist those suffering musculoskeletal, manual handling injuries.
- The procurement of £8.5 million pounds worth of anti-terrorist suspect package detection and analysis equipment following 9/11 and the weaponised anthrax letter attacks which killed 13 US Postal Workers and establishment of the CBRNE National Committee with government departments and emergency services.
- The Asbestos campaign that led to the 2012 Asbestos consolidated Regulations and the Diffuse Mesothelioma Compensation Fund for exposed workers.
- Our CWU Mental Health Strategy and the introduction of our own in-house Mental Health First Aid Trainers and training programme
- Agreement with Royal Mail Group on an Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy.
- Our Stress Risk Assessment Agreements with employers—the best in the Trade Union movement.
- The Low Level Letter Box Campaign to avoid musculoskeletal and back injuries which achieved the adoption of a Private Members Bill in the House of Commons and the Agreement of all four UK governments (England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland) in writing to change the Building Regulations across the nation and Ban Them.
- The Introduction, provision and funding for Personal Attack Alarms for all UK Postal Workers.

- The major changing of Royal Mail and Parcelforce Uniforms and PPE over to clothing made of fabrics and materials that have been designed for sun protection and tested to confirm its Ultraviolet Protection Factor (UPF) to protect our members from Sunlight rays of ultraviolet (UV) sun-ray radiation, that can lead to sunburn, premature skin aging and skin cancer.
- The first ever CWU Mens and Womens Health Packs.
- The first ever Women's Menopause Policy in Royal Mail Group.
- Working with "Jo's Trust" Cervical Cancer Charity to successfully campaign for the introduction of HPV inoculation for Women to reduce and eliminate Cervical Cancer risks.
- And of course we the CWU changed Legal History when we achieved major changes to the Dangerous Dogs act to protect Postal Workers for the first time in UK history in 2014.
- We're still campaigning on Asbestos and Dogs and the new threat Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete or RAAC where we've succeeded in getting a nationwide Buildings Structural Engineering and Fabric Assessment programme in place with employers.

Looking at the Political Landscape the Tories spent 20 years attacking and deregulating health and safety until 76 people died in the Grenfell Tower disaster and they then spent millions re-regulating the very fire safety standards they've spent years deregulating and undermining but still omitted to include workplaces in the new regulations despite calls from the TUC and Trade Unions.

A Labour Victory at the next General Election later this year is crucial for Trade Unions and working people – just look at the

Tory Attacks and HSE Cuts that's had a catastrophic impact on workplaces in the UK. The primary problem at the HSE is that funding has been 'slashed' by 45% since 2010 and the organisation 'hollowed out' diminishing the Enforcing Authority's ability to police and enforce workplace safety standards - reducing it to a 'Paper Tiger.'

I've written to Keir Starmer and the Labour Shadow Cabinet team with 40 demands on much needed health and safety changes and requested meetings to develop the proposals. Let's look forward to a Labour Victory at the General Election later this year - it's been a long time coming!

THERE'S 6 MILLION TONS OF ASBESTOS IN 1.5 MILLION UK BUILDINGS AND THAT'S THE WORST IN EUROPE! it's far from 'Yesterday's Problem' and remains a present day threat to thousands of working people's lives. And now we face the problem of RAAC in UK buildings and workplaces.

Challenges continue to face us daily with Employers, Senior Directors and Managers causing no end of problems with their hard-nosed productivity, efficiency, performance and 'profit before safety' strategy.

There's a lot to be said about the power of standing up for what you believe in and choosing to be yourself no matter what the world and some bosses want you to be.

The purposes of life for me has been to be compassionate, helpful, to protect and promote the safe working and wellbeing of our members and to have made some difference during my time.

I want to sincerely thank all the ASRs and USRs for the fantastic job you do, standing up to promote and protect the best interests

of our members - many times in difficult circumstances in the face of adversity and sometimes even threats and intimidation - and thank you for the great personal support you've given me over the last 30 years.

Our Union is going through very rough waters at present but we've come through tough times before and we're moving in the right direction and keeping the Union on course - keeping Safety Reps at the heart of the organisation at all levels, keeping the CWU as one stand-alone Union with aims to grow and consolidate but to do that we must modernise and move into the future and not live in the past and we need to move forward united not divided and not try to obstruct necessary change because doing nothing isn't an option.

Don't let the harbingers of doom persuade you that the best is past and from here it's all downhill. There are opportunities to re-shape the Union, re-group our forces and move forward and upward into the future looking outwards not inwards. No matter what your history has been - your destiny is what you create today!

Well - here we are - and for me the time has come - the time you sometimes hope would never arrive is upon us. Life is a vapour and we have no promise of tomorrow but a good man's life is never quite ended - something of it always remains to touch and illuminate others lives and it's what you leave behind when you're gone that's important.

My aim has always been to burn brightly in my circle of influence and leave a legacy - I hope and pray that I've done that and I leave this Union with a satisfied mind.

Thank you all and farewell.