

CWU @ P&B

produced by CWU members at Pell and Bales

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MELT THIS PAY FREEZE!

1. 2009 saw the first pay freeze for Pell and Bales staff, apart from the callers – who had their wages frozen from 2002 to 2008.
2. Pell and Bales cut the pay rates for new callers in London in 2004 that meant that callers in Bedford were paid more.
3. Following a vibrant union campaign where 120 joined the union in London, the first pay increases were awarded to Pell and Bales staff in London of £1 per hour bringing us into line with Bedford.
4. In 2007, Pell and Bales opened their Kingston call-centre. Pay rates are currently £7.50 per hour for days, evenings and weekends for level 3 callers. The London Living Wage, as recommended by the London Mayor's office is currently £7.60 per hour. Currently there are no Kingston callers on Level 3, and most are paid no more than £7 per hour
5. In 2008, Pell and Bales opens a call-centre in Brighton. Any workers from nearby PTF, a rival company to Pell and Bales in the Not-For-Profit sector that joined P&B took a pay cut. Still many Brighton callers are paid £10.50 per hour both day and evenings / weekends for Level 3. (This has since been cut to £9 per hour)
6. In London - a Level 3 caller receives as much as a Level 2 caller for the daytimes - £7.50 per hour. Rewards for increased performance only applies for the evenings and weekends it seems.
7. Probationers with agencies are paid as little as £6 per hour. The training rate of the minimum wage of £5.80 per hour continues into the first week of calling with NL Recruitment
8. The vast majority of experi-



enced callers in London are on Level 2. For a 35 hour week, split evenly between Days and Evenings / Weekends, a London caller will earn just over £15,000. Even if you get to Level 3, the basic salary will still not be any more than £16,500.

9. Despite inflation slowing in the past 18 months, housing costs, council tax, fuel bills and transport costs have all increased significantly since the wage cuts and 6 year pay freeze.

Pell and Bales made a Gross Profit of £5.9m in 2009 and donated less than one percent of their profits to charities.

CWU Pell and Bales believe a just pay settlement would be to:

- Harmonise all the pay rates across the company, all Pell and Bales callers are benchmarked against each other, so a Level 2 in Brighton should not be paid more than a Level 2 in Kingston
- Start with the best rates in the company – ie the initial pay rates in Brighton and use those as the benchmark for all Pell and Bales callers.
- Increase all these rates by £2 per hour
- Sunday calling to be paid at a further £2 per hour
- Calling between the hours of 9.30pm and 9.30am to be paid at time-and-a-half

CHARITIES IN FUNDRAISING SHOCK!

Another exclusive from the News of the Screws

A sordid, evil underground group named “The Callers” are asking people to help people that might be worse off than them – our intrepid reporter Lunchtime O’Loan exposes these filthy communists with their ideals of helping others

There is an enemy within our midsts. The phone rings. It could be a relative with some important news , or even more innocently it might be a friendly chap from a reputable satellite TV company wishing to inform you of a fantastic introductory offer on all the sports and movie channels, a HD box and a Marks and Sparks voucher.

Instead it’s a thief trying to get you to part with your money with no benefit to yourself.

I spoke to a frail victim of these deceitful bastards and here’s the full transcript:

Victim: “Well, she asked me how I felt about the earthquake in Haiti. I said its terrible...”

LOL: “Yes, that’s awful..asking you to be concerned about people you know nothing about”

Victim: “No, I said its awful what’s happened to people there. I don’t know how I’d feel if my family had been trapped under rubble, or lost their home, or didn’t have enough to eat...”

LOL: “Errr, well...but they did ask you, a poor frail old pensioner...”

Victim: "I beg your pardon, I'm only 60 and I'm as fit as fiddle, I'm part of the local ramblers association, what age are you... do you swim 20 lengths every morning..."

LOL: "Alright, old fella, stop going on...how much did these thieves ask you for?"

Victim: "Ten pound a month"

LOL: "The heartless bastards. This is what the News of the Screws are trying to expose, these scum..."

Victim: "I said I couldn't do a tenner, but would five be alright..."

LOL: "They tricked you..."

Victim: "I mean, I have a few pints lunchtime after me swim and one less would probably do me a favour"

LOL: "...and they conned you into giving your bank details..."

Victim: " Always happy to give me details, I do everything on Direct Debit, I've no problems."

LOL (turning to his colleague) "I thought you said you had a willing punter...(tape turned off)"

[That's enough of that – Ed]

The man ultimately responsible for the disgraceful attack on our workforce that appeared in the News of the World on 14 February, Rupert Murdoch, Chairman of News Corporation, cares so much for pensioners that even though his wealth is reputed to be in the region of £4bn and he is on the Forbes List as being the 131st richest man on the planet that he pays as little as possible to public funds.

In 1999, *The Economist* reported that NewsCorp Investments had made £11.4 billion (\$20.1 billion) in profits over the previous 11 years but had not paid net corporation tax. It also reported that after an examination of the available accounts, NewsCorp could normally have been expected to pay corporate tax of approximately \$350 million. The article explained that in practice the corporation's complex structure, international scope and use of offshore tax havens allowed News Corporation to pay minimal taxes.



News of the World: not the highest journalistic standards

Murdoch and his family and pals that run his media empire are no friends of working people. His media outlets from The Sun and the News of the World to Sky and his rags around the world have attacked the trades unions of his own workers. The Sun and the News of the World are no more than a handbook for every sexist, homophobic and racist bully.

CWU Pell and Bales rejects the filth peddled by these media barons and fully supports any worker that is damaged by their sensationalist nonsense.

NL RECRUITMENT

NL Recruitment is an agency that specialises in recruiting staff for many employers in the Call-Centre industry such as Sky and Morgan Stanley. NL advertises positions for workers in Customer Services, Fundraising, Tele-Marketing in London, Surrey and the North East.

Pell and Bales is one of NL Recruitment's major clients in London.

Feedback from callers with NL is mixed.

One new caller said of NL that "they are very friendly and always happy to help with any problem you may have".

Another caller was unable to attend the final training and NL was able to reschedule this with P&B.

However, there have been some problems with NL.

- NL gave some new callers the impression that they had got a job with Pell and Bales when they were confirmed for training. It was only when arriving at Pell

and Bales that they discovered that they would have to pass training.

- Many callers are confused by the pay and holiday structure and would like a document that explained this in more detail
- A separate company ISS provides the payroll service for NL. They are based in Guernsey and therefore have no UK tax liabilities. ISS does however tax callers employed by NL. NL callers, not NL, have 4% of their wages (the lowest in Pell and Bales) deducted for this "service". That is why it is important that NL callers ensure that they claim their holiday entitlement and retain train and bus tickets, as travel costs can be claimed back. It is possible to claw back more than the 4% lost this way.

The issue of Pell and Bales using an agency which in turn uses an offshore payroll company that charges low-paid callers was raised by the CWU at a Staff Reps meeting a few years ago. Initially management told us that if they established that an agency they used charged callers for the payroll service they would end the contract with that agency. Once they had spoken to NL, at the following Staff Reps meeting they said that NL callers could be potentially better off. NL Recruitment became the sole agency for recruiting callers when Pell and Bales in-house recruitment team was disbanded in April 2009.

Our position is that if ISS are not paying UK tax, they can afford to waive the fee charged to NL callers and pay the lowest-paid callers a decent rate, decent holiday entitlement and re-imburse travel costs.

The CWU continues to campaign for all agency callers to be paid at least the London Living Wage, as recommended by the Mayor of London's office of £7.60 per hour

If you are an agency worker at Pell and Bales and need some advice—let us know.

CWU CAPITAL BRANCH CALL- CENTRE WORKERS AND HACKNEY LMHR PRESENT...



**Friday 23rd April from 8pm,
Old Blue Last, Shoreditch**

Bands, DJs, Acoustic and more

The organisers say all the acts have equal billing – they're all great! Here's where you can check them out:

Upstairs – Mr Ghost's Hot Steps, Vinyl Stitches, They're All Projects, Because We Can, Castle Radio.

Downstairs – DJs Kill Lights - acoustic sets to be confirmed.

Entry: £5 suggested donation

Never has there been a more important time in the fight against fascism and racism.

Nazi Nick Griffin, the BNP leader, hopes to use his *Question Time* appearance to further increase the respectability of his fascist organisation and challenge for the seat in Barking at the General Election, where the BNP already have a number of councillors.

The racist English Defence League have many fascists and convicted football thugs in their ranks and are using Islamophobia to build a street-

fighting force to terrorise local Asian and ethnic minority communities.

In Stoke, where the EDL were not challenged, these thugs rampaged through the streets attacking Asian people.

In Bolton in March, Unite Against Fascism (UAF) and Love Music Hate Racism (LMHR) mobilised to stop them.

We need to keep building the fight against the fascists. Many unions that call-centre workers are in, such as PCS, CWU and Unite, are affiliated to UAF and LMHR.

From the Love Music Hate Racism website -

"We use the energy of our music scene to celebrate diversity and involve people in anti-racist and anti-fascist activity as well as to urge people to vote against fascist candidates in elections."

Get involved in your local group and help stop the Nazis and racists gaining ground.

www.uaf.org.uk

www.lovemusichateracism.com

COMBATIVE ATMOSPHERE AS CWU AC- TIVISTS MEET

The first conference of CWU reps in the non-recognised sector epitomised the spirit of the new, young and combative activists in the movement.

One of a number of guest speakers, Professor Phil Taylor, Strathclyde University, set the tone for the conference by railing against BA union-buster Willie Walsh. He explained how our class is facing a serious attack on our services and education. Neo-liberal workplace models were developed in call-centres, and activists in these workplaces needed to organise. Increasingly the call-centre models with targets and performance management are being used right across industry and more so in the public sector.



solidarity works: pat carmody reinstated at P&B

Tracy, a rep from a major mobile phone company in the West of England, told the conference:

"This union is going to have to change, union activists in our non-recognised workplaces are coming through"

Her contribution was not only met with applause by more than 60 delegates from more than 20 companies, mostly call-centres, but vindicated by John East, CWU National Organiser, who stated:

"There are 65,000 CWU members working in telecoms. Just 45,000 now work in BT. 20,000 are in non-

recognised workplaces like your own.”

Julie, who also spoke at last year’s CWU Conference organising fringe meeting, explained how she and Tracy had organised a committee of 20 to take the union forward. Julie is less than half the age of most of those that run CWU branches, and taught others in a workshop about how to involve new and younger people. In Julie and Tracy’s workplace, the committee has set up a “mentoring / buddying scheme” so that more experienced activists can develop the greener activists in dealing with disciplinaries, grievances, recruitment, etc

Another major theme was building a network of activists from the conference. Delegate after delegate spoke about the importance of building this network to exchange ideas and information, but also as a foundation to defend CWU activists. Two activists at the conference had been sacked in the past two years but re-instated after high profile CWU national campaigns.

There were a variety of experiences from the conference. Some delegates felt isolated in their workplace. Graham, from Liverpool explained how he was the only rep in his workplace, but the weekend had given him more confidence and ideas about building a group of activists around him. His sentiments echoed those of so many at the conference “I now know I can educate my workmates.”

Mitchell from Northampton said: “I felt cut off, but I now know lots of activists trying to do what I do.” Owen from Merthyr said: “We are the people that are taking this union forward nationally. I learnt so much, particularly from Tracy and Julie. We need to encourage all workers to stand together. The stories of how people are being mistreated and how people have stood up to bullying bosses is inspiring.”

Call-Centre Worker is another network that we can use. Most, if not all the delegates, took copies to use in their workplaces.

It is not owned by any one union, but seeks to link call-centre workers

across the land in different unions.

A charter for call-centre workers was agreed at our first meeting last year.

If you want to share any of your experiences, please email london-callcentres@gmail.com

We will share them (anonymously) on callcentreworker.wordpress.com

£150 was raised at the conference for the BA strikers and many left their contact details for Unite Against Fascism.

Names of delegates have been changed for obvious reasons.



For more info on the Communication Workers’ Union phone Tom on 07894 461713 or Pat on 07913 701042

cwupandb@gmail.com

P&B DRUGS & ALCOHOL POLICY

by Emily Gosling

We’ve all been there: after that ‘just one more’ pint you wake up with a pounding headache, slight nausea and a nagging twinge of embarrassment. But while it’s not hard to work out the signs of a hangover, the issue of how alcohol and drugs are viewed in the workplace is slightly more cloudy.

In fact, did you know that Pell and Bales even *has* an alcohol and drugs policy? Well, neither did any of our union reps until recently.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) says that all organisations can benefit from agreed policies on drug and alcohol misuse.



These should be part of the overall health and safety policy and drawn up in consultation with employees.

The adverse effects of alcohol and drugs in relation to the workplace are obvious: absenteeism, accidents, low productivity and unpredictable moods are clearly not desirable at work. However, aside from the encumbrances to the company, and issues of workers’ conduct, the abuse of alcohol and drugs is equally something that the union feels is a health issue.

Though the Pell and Bales official policy states that the company “encourages and will support any member of staff that comes forward with a problem to seek help from specialist services”; and that it will be “deemed primarily as a health issue rather than a disciplinary matter”, the elusiveness of the policy itself means that the availability of this support is perhaps not as widely recognised as it could be.

The HSE recommends that drug and alcohol problems be recognised as medical conditions that are potentially treatable. They feel the workplace should provide the means for those who have a problem to seek and be offered help in confidence.

The CWU reps and Staff Reps will be pushing for a new policy that pushes the ‘health’ over ‘conduct’ aspect of the issue further to the fore. They feel the policy should do more to direct staff who have a problem, or think their colleagues may have a problem, to organisations websites that may be able to help. A clear policy on the issues would clearly help enforce this kind of understanding.