

Letter to Branches

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General Secretary: Dave Ward

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Date: 18th August 2015

TO: ALL BRANCHES WITH POSTAL MEMBERS

Dear Colleague

POST OFFICE: PANORAMA BROADCAST – “TROUBLE AT THE POST OFFICE”

Further to LTB 533 dated 17th August.

No doubt Branches and members will have been shocked by the revelations in last night's Panorama show – “Trouble at the Post Office”. In this regard, please see the following press release which we have issued this morning. The press release summarises our position in calling for a full judicial inquiry and ultimately justice for Postmasters. The Post Office needs to come clean in respect of the way it has treated hard-working Postmasters who are evidently victims of injustice.

Press Release – CWU Demands Justice for Postmasters

The Communication Workers Union (CWU) has repeated its demands for direct government action and a full judicial inquiry into the Post Office's “outrageous” treatment of hard-working Postmasters.

In a hard-hitting report for the BBC's Panorama programme last night, investigative journalist John Sweeney probed cases of people having been prosecuted, and in some cases imprisoned, solely on the basis of questionable computer data indicating cash shortfalls.

***Andy Furey**, the union's national officer for Post Office workers, said: “BBC viewers across the nation, many of them Post Office customers, will have been shocked by the harrowing stories of Postmasters being prosecuted by the Post Office on accusations of ‘theft’ with apparently zero evidence of any actual money being taken.”*

Sweeney looked at three case studies of Postmasters in different parts of the country – in Anglesey, Hampshire and Surrey – who each said that they had experienced difficulties with the ‘Horizon’ computer accounting system, but had been blamed, and prosecuted, by the Post Office for the apparent ‘cash shortfalls’ that the system had indicated.

In two of the three cases, the individuals had been sentenced to imprisonment for the alleged ‘offence’ – despite no actual money having ever been discovered, or any real evidence put forward against them.

“If what the three Postmasters said in the programme is accurate, then it's really quite shocking that people can be treated in this way – and the Government must now urgently intervene to ensure that the Post Office doesn't attempt to sweep these problems under the carpet,” Andy insisted.

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Facebook: Dave Ward CWU



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The CWU has consistently called for action on this issue, which has also been raised on several occasions by Members of Parliament – in particular the former North Hampshire MP James Arbuthnot, who featured on last night's programme and called for the chief executive of the Post Office to resign.

Last month, in response to questions on this matter in the House of Commons, Prime Minister David Cameron admitted that the Post Office's own internal inquiry into the affair had "not satisfied many Members on both sides of the House who have seen individual constituency cases and want better answers."

Mr Cameron went on to say that he would instruct one of his Ministers to convene a meeting of key stakeholders to "discuss their concerns and see what should happen next" and that he hoped "it would not be necessary to have a full independent judicial inquiry to get to the bottom of this issue, but get to the bottom of it we must."

*Commenting on the issue, CWU deputy general secretary **Terry Pullinger** said: "The Prime Minister is quite right to say that the Post Office's own inquiry has been unsatisfactory – but a meeting of stakeholders will not resolve this matter.*

"There must be a full judicial inquiry and the whole culture of the Post Office needs to change. The Post Office is part of the fabric of this country and the CWU is more determined than ever to challenge the Government and the Post Office to grow and restore confidence in this much-cherished institution.""

Ends

Notes to editors:

The CWU has around 200,000 members and is the largest union in the UK postal industry, representing employees of the Post Office, Royal Mail, BT and other postal, telecoms and financial services companies

Last night's BBC Panorama programme can be viewed on BBC IPlayer here:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/b0675m1j/panorama-trouble-at-the-post-office>

Branches are encouraged to use this press release with your local media contacts.

Further developments will be reported.

If you have any questions in relation to this LTB, please contact Lea Sheridan -

GRO

Yours sincerely

Andy Furey
Assistant Secretary

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