

Letter to Branches

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150 The Broadway, Wimbledon, London, SW19 1RX Tel: 020 8971 7200 Fax: 020 8971 7300

General Secretary: Billy Hayes (www.billyhayes.co.uk)

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To: All Branches

Dear Colleagues

Workers Memorial Day - DWP Public Consultation on Official Recognition - CWU Response

The CWU has welcomed the public consultation on the government proposals for official UK recognition of Workers Memorial Day. This is long standing CWU Annual Conference Policy and something the Union has been calling upon government and the Prime Minister to do since 1997.

Decades of struggle by workers and their Unions has resulted in significant improvements in working conditions. But the toll of workplace injuries, illnesses and deaths remains enormous. Each year, 2 million workers die due to unsafe or unhealthy work and workplaces around the globe. Millions more are injured or diseased because of their jobs. The CWU and other Unions across the World remember these workers, especially CWU members who have died at work, on April 28, International Workers Memorial Day. Trade unionists around the world now join us to mark this day of mourning.

International Workers Memorial Day takes place annually around the world on April 28. It is a day of remembrance for workers killed, injured or made ill by their work and a day on which workers call for safer workplaces and working conditions. The Workers Memorial Day slogan is "Remember the Dead and Fight for the Living".

Following its inception in Canada in 1984, Workers Memorial Day is already recognised as a national day in many countries around the world including Argentina, Belgium, Brazil, Luxembourg, Peru, Portugal, Spain, Thailand, Taiwan and the USA.

International Workers Memorial Day was brought to the UK in 1992 by the Hazards Campaign, which has been campaigning for its recognition along with Trade Unions including CWU and other safety campaigning organisations. The CWU first wrote to the then Prime Minister Tony Blair in 1997 calling for official recognition.

Since the early 1990s Workers Memorial Day has become the focal point for an increasing number of commemorative events involving the bereaved families of dead workers, trade unionists, the TUC, Trade Unions, Safety Representatives, the Hazards Campaign, FACK, Government bodies and Local Authorities among others.

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In 2001, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) recognised Workers Memorial Day and announced April 28 as an International Day of Action for Safety and Health at Work, which is an annual international campaign to promote safe, healthy and decent work around the globe.

2005 saw the beginning of a process to have the 28 April Day officially adopted by the UN General Assembly.

In 2009, at long last, the current Prime Minister Gordon Brown and DWP Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, James Purnell conveyed their support to all those people around the world commemorating Workers Memorial Day and announced that the government would look at how the UK could join the many other countries that officially recognise International Workers Memorial Day and confirmed that a consultation will look at how the Day could be officially recognised in the UK.

The Minister said "The fact that some people go out to work and never return home to their families is a human tragedy. Workers Memorial Day is a mark of respect to those killed and injured at work and to the bereaved. We will look at how the UK can officially recognise the day. I know there is a huge amount of support for the Day and there are many ideas for consideration, including a lasting memorial to all those killed and harmed by work activity. Recognising Workers Memorial Day in the UK would also provide an annual focal point for the importance of healthy and safe workplaces."

The CWU strongly welcomes and commends the Government's announcement and only regrets that it took the Labour Government 12 years to reach this position.

Please see attached the CWU response to the Public Consultation.

Yours Sincerely

Dave Joyce

National Health, Safety & Environment Officer



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