

## PUBLIC SERVICES AND TRANSPORT WORKSHOP

IER Conference

The New Spectre Haunting Europe:

The ECJ, Trade Union Rights and the British Government.

Saturday 28th November 2009, Main Hall, TUC Congress Centre.

Billy Hayes, General Secretary, CWU; John Hendy QC and Prof Keith Ewing

Prof Keith Ewing briefly introduced the meeting. 75 delegates attended.

Billy Hayes spoke at length about the liberalisation of public services throughout Europe citing the example of the liberalisation of Royal Mail which happened under the maxim of *efficiency of service* but is a vivid example of the European Postal Directive. The British Government has remained a strong voice for deregulation in Europe.

The idiocy of the European Postal Directive is testified in the example in Ireland where An Post (Ireland's national mail service) has bid to deliver mail in Northern Ireland but Royal Mail can not deliver mail in the Republic of Ireland. The UK postal market has been opened to its economic detriment.

The full-blown privatisation of Royal Mail has been prevented by action taken by the CWU but that isn't to say that action is needed urgently to battle job losses. The so-called *modernisation* of Royal Mail has been replaced with what Royal Mail management now call *transformation*- the moves of the UK Government outshine those of the most right-wing governments in Europe. For example, in France, Nicolas Sarkozy, the French Prime Minister, has refused to privatise La Poste (French national postal system) and has afforded La Poste significant state subsidies to ensure it is held in public ownership.

Billy spoke about his belief that unions needed to maintain their relationship with the Labour Party; the wins from Warwick and Warwick II were key to maintaining Royal Mail in public hands especially given the tremendous threat the ECJ judgements represent.

John Hendy QC began by citing from the Parliamentary Committee Report of the 1906 TUC Congress. The report commented on the demands laid out in the 8 questions asked to all Parliamentary candidates and which included 'Are you a trade union member?' and 'Do you support TU policies?' Of the 51 respondents to the questions, 31 were elected as the TUC played a crucial role in the 1906 election and can still be a powerful force in elections.

John gave extensive details of the Laval, Viking, Ruffert, Luxembourg and BALPA cases, citing the specific 'business freedoms' that articles in the judgments.