

## PRESS CUTTING

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### **CWU playing 'politics of envy' over BT strike threat**

**The Communication Workers Union (CWU) has been criticised for turning to the "politics of envy" over its threat to ballot BT staff for strike action in a row over pay.**

The CWU is today debating a motion calling for the ballot if the company refuses to raise its 2% pay offer by 4 June.

The union is demanding a 5% rise to reflect the role of staff in BT's impressive financial performance - annual profits for the year to 31 March exceeded £1bn - pointing to the expected £1m bonus for chief executive Ian Livingstone.

Andy Kerr, CWU deputy general secretary, said BT staff have experienced 30,000 job losses, a pay freeze, and major changes to their pensions, while BT is giving shareholders a 6% dividend payout and bonuses for senior executives.

"This is about fairness. BT staff have borne the brunt of cost savings and delivered the huge profits being enjoyed by the company this year," he said. "We have no problem with senior executives receiving bonuses, but we want all staff to share the success of the company."

But **Ronnie Fox**, principal of **Fox Lawyers**, said contrasting the salary increase offered to the employees with the bonus payable to the chief executive is "comparing apples with pears".

"Ian Livingstone is one of a tiny number of top executives not only capable of running a huge business like BT, but capable of running it successfully. He carries the responsibility for taking tough decisions which affect the livelihood of thousands of people. As is customary, he is incentivised by being given a series of targets to achieve with the promise of a significant bonus if he achieves them," he said.

"The comments of the CWU deputy general secretary are based only on the politics of envy and show no real understanding of the ways in which the free market governs the remuneration of the most senior executives in very large businesses."

BT has prepared for potential industrial action by asking managers to provide details of their broader skills for use in the event of disruption.