

## THE HISTORY OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS

<b>1879</b>	First telephone exchange in England opened at Coleman Street in London
<b>1896</b>	The Post Office took over the private sector trunk service
<b>1912</b>	All National Telephone Company exchanges taken over by the Post Office which became the monopoly supplier of telephone services throughout the UK
<b>1929</b>	Eastern & Associated Telegraph Companies merge with Marconi Wireless Telegraph Company to form Imperial and International Communications (the forerunner to Cable & Wireless)
<b>1934</b>	Imperial & International Communications re-named Cable & Wireless
<b>1947</b>	Cable & Wireless nationalised
<b>1956</b>	Opening of the first trans-Atlantic telephone cable
<b>1959</b>	First pay on answer coin box (STD), replacing Button A/Button B, introduced
<b>1965</b>	Telecom Tower opened for service
<b>1966</b>	Change to all figure telephone numbers
<b>October 1969</b>	The Post Office ceased to be a Government department and was established as a State public corporation
<b>July 1977</b>	The Carter report "Report of the Post Office Review Committee" (Cmnd.6850) published - Labour Government recommended to separate the postal and telecommunications services of the Post office
<b>July 1980</b>	Government announced its intention to restructure the Post Office and to liberalise all customer premises equipment (except the first telephone instrument) and value added network services (VANS)
<b>1981</b>	Cable & Wireless partially privatised with sale of 49% of shares
<b>July 1981</b>	British Telecommunications Act 1981 became law - postal and telecommunications services of the Post Office became the responsibility of two separate corporations, the Post Office and British Telecom, and Cable & Wireless was privatised
<b>October 1981</b>	British Telecom created as a public corporation responsible for telecommunications The supply, installation and maintenance of all customer premises equipment was liberalised, except for the supply, installation and maintenance of the first telephone instrument and the maintenance only of all Private Automatic Branch Exchanges(PABXs) except stored program control digital ones The provision of all value added network services (VANS) which BT itself did not intend to supply before 1 April 1982 was liberalised
<b>February 1982</b>	Mercury Communications Limited (MCL) granted a licence to operate a fixed link network in competition with BT
<b>April 1982</b>	The provision of all kinds of genuine value added network services (VANS)) was liberalised
<b>July 1982</b>	Government White paper (Cmnd.8610) published - proposed sale of 51% of BT and the creation of a regulatory body the Office of Telecommunications (OfTel)
<b>October 1982</b>	The process of liberalisation of customer premises equipment effectively commenced with the approval by the Secretary of State for the first five standards and establishment of the British Approvals Board for Telecommunications (BABT) General Licence for value added network services (VANS) issued
<b>February 1983</b>	Government announced abolition of monopoly on the first telephone instrument

- May 1983** Cellnet and Racal-Vodafone granted licences to operate national cellular mobile communications networks
- November 1983** Government made duopoly statement - only BT and MCL to be allowed to provide fixed link network for the next seven years
- April 1984** Telecommunications Act 1984 became law - a new regulatory Agency, the Office of Telecommunications, was established and powers were acquired by the government to privatise BT
- August 1984** British Telecom plc created as a limited company wholly owned by the State
- November 1984** Government sold 50.2% of the shares in British Telecom plc, effectively privatising the company
- November 1987** MCL allowed to provide a public call box service in competition with BT
- October 1988** Specialised satellite services liberalised with the issue of six licences
- January 1989** New mobile communications system called Telepoint launched with the issue of four licences
- December 1989** New mobile communications system called Personal Communications Networks (PCN) launched with the issue of three licences
- November 1990** Government Green Paper "Competition and Choice : Telecommunications Policy for the 1990s" (Cmnd.1303) published - start of the duopoly review
- March 1991** Government White Paper "Competition and Choice : Telecommunications Policy for the 1990s" (Cmnd.1461) published - end of duopoly review with general presumption in favour of granting any licence applications to run local or long- distance networks
- July 1991** BT and MCL licences amended to provide for "access deficit contribution" in defined circumstances
- December 1991** Sale of approximately a further 25% of BT shares
- July 1993** Sale of virtually all the remainder of BT shares with Government retaining just 0.5% plus the so-called "golden share"
- 1995** Privatisation of Cable & Wireless completed
- 1997** Governments participating in the World Trade Organisation's IT Agreement promised to reduce tariffs on IT products including telecommunications equipment to zero by January 1st 2000.
- 1998** On February 5th the World Trade Organisation's agreement on basic telecommunications came into force, an accord encompassing 69 countries which promises to liberalise markets accounting for 90% of worldwide telecoms revenue.
- 1999** The telecoms market was booming. In Europe it was driven by deregulation and in the UK by a lot of consolidation and the need for businesses to become more efficient
- 2000** Y2K bug is nothing more than a minor pest on January 1st. In April the bids for 3G mobile licences in the UK reached £22.5bn. The 5 companies who won licences were Canadian Group TIW, Vodafone, BT3G, One 2 One and Orange. BT and AT&T call off rumoured merger talks as AT&T hits financial hard times.
- 2001** The telecom industry continues to lose value on the stockmarket.
- 2002** The telecommunications market has yet to recover, and the year was characterised by cutbacks, mergers and acquisitions. Cable & Wireless and Mitel announced job losses late in the year, and Worldcom performed badly throughout after being the subject of an accounting scandal.
- 2002** In response to the revelation that the UK is lagging behind its international competitors in the take up of broadband internet access (1% of internet connections in the UK are

broadband as opposed to 14% in South Korea) the CWU launches its 'Demand Broadband' campaign. Later in the year the Government announces a £30 million fund to promote the take up of broadband across the UK. BT announces its aim to have five million broadband connections by 2006.

**2003**

The Communications Act 2003 paved the way for the creation of a new regulator for the communications industry. The new Office of Communications (OFCOM) will merge the functions of the five existing regulatory bodies the Independent Television Commission (ITC) the Broadcasting Standards Commission (BSC) the Office of Telecommunications (OfTel) the Radio Authority (Rau) and the Radiocommunications Agency (RA).

**January 2003,**

the telecommunications company NTL (whose value soared to £100 billion plus during the dot com boom) emerged from bankruptcy.

**August 2003**

heralds the end of BT's monopoly on the 192 directory enquiries service. 14 new companies are given licences to compete. Over 700 million calls are made to directory enquiries in the UK each year. A similar process in Germany three years ago saw 39 new licences allocated. At present only two of these companies operate. By the end of the first week at least one firm is laying off temporary contract workers.

The Communication Workers Union 'Pink Elephant' campaign is launched and receives nationwide coverage. The campaign is calling upon BT to rethink the planned outsourcing of around 2,000 jobs to India.

*Abridged version of the CWU Research from September 2003*