Official Report
of the
97th ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Held at
The Theatre and Convention Centre,
Southport
from
Sunday 7 June 2015
to
Wednesday 10 June 2015
Please note that we experienced some problems with the recording equipment (particularly on the early Sunday sessions) and that it was not always possible to transcribed the audio accurately. Where this occurs, we have put a warning. [unclear], in the text. Our apologies for these, especially if it is your contribution which is unclear, and this will be addressed before next year’s conference.
Contents

Sunday 7 June 2015

Morning Session ................................................................. 5

The National President’s Address to Conference ................................ 11

1 Rule 1.1 ............................... Branch 580 ................................. 14
2 Rule 3.1 ............................... Members’ Rights and Duties – Executive Council ................................. 15
3 Rule 5.1 ............................... Branch 582 .................................... 16
7 Rule 5.2 ............................... Greggs 580 .................................... 18
8 Rule 5.2 ............................... Greggs 580 .................................... 19
9 Rule 15.4 ............................... Greggs 580 .................................... 20
10 Rule 22.16 ............................... Branch 450 .................................... 20
Emergency Motion 3 [Rule 22.19] ... Executive Council ............................... 21
13 New Rule ............................... No 5 Regional Council ............................... 21

Sister Apryl Walcott’s Address to Conference ............................... 23

Afternoon Session ................................................................. 24

Emergency Motion 1 ............................... Branch 417 .................................... 25
Emergency Motion 2 ............................... Branch 417 .................................... 26
Richard Burgin MP’s Address to Conference ............................... 30

20 Fast Food Companies Boycott ............................... Branch 701 .................................... 37
21 Union Independence ............................... Greggs 580 .................................... 39
22 Female Membership ............................... Executive Council .................................... 42

General Secretary’s Opening Address to Conference ............................... 45

Monday 8th June 2015

Morning Session ................................................................. 49

23 Rules ............................... Branch 450 .................................... 49
24 Quitting the Union ............................... Branch 582 .................................... 50
Emergency Motion 6 ............................... Branch 503 .................................... 50
Emergency Motion 7 ............................... Branch 253 .................................... 53
27 Rights at Work ............................... Branch 215 .................................... 57
28 Rights at Work ............................... Branch 215 .................................... 59
29 Rights at Work ............................... Branch 390 .................................... 60
30 Rights at Work ............................... No 2 Regional Council ............................... 61

John McDonnell MP’s Address to Conference ............................... 62

Afternoon Session ................................................................. 69

31 Rights at Work ............................... Branch 701 .................................... 69
32 Rights at Work ............................... No 4 Regional Council ............................... 71
Mark Serwotka’s Address to Conference ........................................ 73

Composite Motion 1 ............................... ........................................ 78
40 Banking, Finance & Taxation ............................... No 4 Regional Council ............................... 80
Tuesday 9 June 2015

Morning Session ................................................................. 89
33 Health, Safety & Welfare at Work . No 5 Regional Council . 89
34 Health, Safety & Welfare at Work . Branch 711 . 90
35 Health, Safety & Welfare At Work . No 4 Regional Council . 91
36 Health, Safety & Welfare at Work . Branch 390 . 92
Hilda Palmer’s Address to Conference ..................................... 95
Willie Colquhoun’s Address to Conference .............................. 103
Sarah Woolley Addresses Conference ................................. 109
47 Government & Politics . Greggs 580 .................................... 111

Afternoon Session ............................................................... 113
48 Government & Politics . Branch 450 .................................... 114
49 Government & Politics . No 4 Regional Council ............... 116
Emergency Motion 5 . Executive Council ......................... 117
50 Education . Greggs 580 ................................................ 119
Ricky Tomlinson Addresses Conference ........................... 120
51 Education . No 2 Regional Council . 126
53 Family . Branch 215 ................................................ 127
54 Family . No 5 Regional Council . 129
55 Family . Executive Council ........................................... 131
56 Miscellaneous . Branch 450 .......................................... 133
Emergency Motion 8 . Branch 561 ....................................... 135

Wednesday 10 June 2015

Single Session .................................................................... 138
57 Miscellaneous . Branch 215 ............................................ 138
Emergency Motion 10 . Branch 347 .................................... 142
Arthur Scargill Addresses the BFAWU Conference .................. 144
58 Miscellaneous . Branch 450 .......................................... 156
59 Miscellaneous . No 4 Regional Council ......................... 156
General Secretary’s Closing Address to Conference ............... 165
National President’s Closing Address to Conference ............ 168
[Conference Closes] ......................................................... 170
Sunday 7 June 2015

Morning Session

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: … okay, is everybody sitting down? Full-time Officers? Have we got the roll call?

Brother Ronnie Draper, General Secretary: No. 1 Region, No. 2 Region, No. 3 Region, Region 4, well done, that must have been taxing for you, shoes and socks off, Region 5, Region 6 and Region 7. There’s 182 Delegates present. If anyone’s late incidentally or just haven’t turned up because they had a heavy night last night, when they do come in, will you make sure that they go to Standing Orders, the Officials who are responsible for that Region.

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Okay, a bit of logistics. I’m going to get a stiff neck by the end of the week I think, I’m going to feel like Lemmy out of Motorhead. Mobile ‘phones, can you make sure they’re switched onto silent, anybody caught using a mobile ‘phone will get sent to Standing Orders, yes, okay. There’s toilets, I think people who were here last year can point you in the right direction, they’re around here somewhere, if you don’t know where they are, ask somebody who can obviously point you in the right direction. I’m not aware of any fire drills this week, but if there is a fire, if the fire alarm does go off, I believe we’re meeting in The Hungry Horse and the first round’s on Ronnie, which I believe is just over here. Obviously if you’re going to have a fire assembly point, let’s make it a pub.

Obviously Conference this is a no smoking venue, I believe there is a place outside you can go and smoke, so welcome to Conference, welcome to Southport. Obviously, as we always do at the beginning of Conference, we would like to welcome the Worshipful, the Mayor of Sefton, which is Councillor Steve Kermode and Mayoress Gwen Kermode, I’ve pronounced, Kermode, I’ve probably pronounced your name wrong but anybody who knows me here knows I’m not very good with names, but I’d like to welcome you to our Conference and invite you to give and open our Conference for us officially. Thank you very much.

[APPLAUSE]

Steve Kermode, Mayor of Sefton: Good morning, everybody. Excuse me, I’ve got a bit of frog in my throat, sorry. Good morning, my name is Councillor Stephen Kermode and my wife is Gwen Kermode and we’re the Mayor and Mayoress of Sefton. Mr President, members of the Bakers, Food & Allied Workers, ladies and gentlemen, I’d like to welcome you to the town of Southport on the occasion of your Conference. Southport combines traditional Victorian style with sophisticated modern developments and it boasts some marvellous attractions, the excellent shops along Lord Street, Heritage Boulevard, walks on the promenade, it has some of the beautiful beaches in the country and the oldest iron pier, some beautiful and fabulous restaurants, some of which I hope you’ll be able to visit on your stay in Southport.

I was very pleased to see that your Union dates back to being founded in a city and town not very far from here, in Manchester, in 1847 and you were the first Union that had a Credit Union. You’ve also campaigned on many deserving issues, workers’ rights, zero hours and the minimum wage. I hope you carry on working very hard for your Trade Union and I wish you the best of success in the future and I wish your Conference is very successful and you enjoy and return to Southport and the Borough of Sefton. Thank you very much and have a marvellous time.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Okay, Conference as always, we’ve had, I don’t know if everybody’s seen it, we’ve had a fantastic cake made, that’s been donated to, let me see if I can pronounce this name properly, the cake is to Enda Rylands, who is the President of the Community Link Foundation, which is a local charity in Southport and of course the cake’s actually been made by Manor Cakes, which is Branch No. 258. Can we thank obviously Branch 258 for the cake…

[APPLAUSE]

Memory Lane Cakes and we’re going to present it to, I’m used to you being down there now, Ronnie.

Enda Rylands: Thank you very much and good morning and welcome to Southport. On behalf of the Community Link Foundation, I’d like to say thank you very much for donating the cake and for helping us create awareness of our local charity. We are a small local charity who raise money, so that we can pass that on by way of financial assistance to individuals, families and organisations who need it most. That could be by way of purchasing specialist equipment, it could be financial donations or even sending people on holidays that they’re not able to afford themselves. So, thank you very much for helping us to create awareness. There is some information just over on the side there, if anybody wants to pick that up a little later to find out a bit more about us and the cake is actually going to be used tomorrow at our luncheon being held in the town for Formby Luncheon Club, which is basically looking after some elderly people and treating them to lunch in the town, so the cake will go there as well. Thank you very much.
[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: John, photos. John’s ageing a little bit, so it’s going to take him a little bit longer than it used to take him. Alright, okay Conference, can I officially welcome everybody to Southport and to our Conference. Could I welcome the stall holders, we’ve got some stalls from Walkers Union, Thompsons, Watkins & Gunn, Papplan, GFTU, Lighthouse, Shrewsbury 24, Union Learner Credit Union, Hazards, I don’t know if Hazards is here today, I think it’s tomorrow, Youth Fight For Jobs, Westfields, Tamil Solidarity, I believe the Socialist Labour Party’s coming tomorrow. Can I also thank Warburtons for sponsoring the tea and biscuits and Fox’s Biscuits and also Burtons Biscuits for some of the biscuits as well. Can I also thank Sefton Council for obviously giving us these wonderful facilities and assisting us in making sure that we’ve got this venue, alright we were a little bit delayed getting in, but obviously we’d like to thank Sefton Council. Also I’ve received some messages wishing us luck … ‘Have a good healthy debate and comradeship’ from Jane Booker, ‘Hope you have a successful Conference’ which is from the Southport Labour and Project Luchi [unclear], which is a local radio station. I’ve got a message to welcome Youth Fight For Jobs, Ian Dalton and Tannis [unclear], who’s a guest of South Yorkshire Region and in appreciation for the work and help with the Fast Food Rights Campaign, also from Debbie Loy and Billie Gallagher who sent us messages wishing us luck to have a successful Conference. Also we’ve got some new branches, which is Branch 306, Tulip which is 350, Johnstone’s Just Desserts which is Branch 515 and CSM which is Branch No. 588. Can I welcome all those new Delegates and all of those from those branches that are here for the first time and obviously if you are a new Delegate and you’re not sure about how, which you probably won’t be, how the Conference runs, if you need support, there probably will be somebody sat next to you with lots and lots of experience, but if you do need any additional help and support, your full-time Officials normally sit at the end of the table, if they’re not on the door and they’re always prepared to assist you and make sure that you know what needs to be done during Conference. Can I also remind Delegates as well that 11 o’clock is when the nomination papers need to be in to Standing Orders. We’re going to change it a little bit this year when it comes to the balloting process, I’m going to call a break, but do it 10 minutes early to give the Scrutineers time to distribute the nomination papers, sorry the balloting papers, to enable people to take part in that ballot, but not when people are down here at the rostrum, so we’re going to put a break in and make it 10 minutes earlier and extend your break so you can do your balloting, discuss who you’re going to support, without interrupting the speakers. Okay, obviously now I’m supposed to remember everybody’s name up here, aren’t I and I forget them every year, I don’t know why because I know you throughout the other year, so I’m going to start at the back, we’ve got John Fitzpatrick, haven’t we got enough seats?, I’ve got John Fitzpatrick, I’ve got Dave Byrne or Butch, Mark McGarry, Lizzie, Paul McGarry, John, John that made it easy for me, didn’t it, Jason, Willie, I’ll come back to you in a minute, just in case anybody doesn’t know who you are, Joe Knapper, Sarah, John Owens, Vince, Mandy, obviously without him you probably won’t get a break, so President John Fox and of course this guy next to me is Ronnie isn’t it, is it Ronnie isn’t it?

Brother Ronnie Draper, General Secretary: It’s Ronald, according to these … [unclear]].

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Ronald, Ronald. Also on the platform today we’ve got our guest at Conference, who’s obviously no stranger to anybody, we’re really pleased and really proud that you’ve agreed to be our guest at Conference, because you’ve done so much work for us as a Trade Union …

[APPLAUSE]

and we absolutely adore you, Willie and our members absolutely adore you, so we’re really really pleased that you’ve agreed to be our guest to Conference, Willie Colquhoun. Okay, we’ve also got Scrutineers, you probably know who you are, but just to make sure everybody in delegation knows who you are. Region 1 Scrutineer is Jack Lee, in Region 2 it’s John Harding, in Region 3 it’s Damian, in Region 4 it’s Alan Scott, in Region 5 it’s Kath Suggett, Region 6 it’s Gerry Eccles, Region 7 is Dermy Best.

Okay Conference, in your packs, yes, in your packs, there’s a book in there and it’s called the Annual Report, so for new Delegates it’s the thinner book and it’s called the Annual Report. Okay, everybody got it? Obviously one of the things that we do and unfortunately we have to do every year is remember those people that have passed away. I mean obviously this year we’ve lost, if you turn to Page 63 and if you could please stand. Obviously this year’s Conference will be slightly strange, we knew last year that obviously she was too unwell to attend, but obviously unfortunately Olive passed away, so it’s going to be kind of strange because we’re all used to having Olive here and unfortunately we’ve lost Olive and many, many good people this year, but if we can pay our respects with a minute’s silence and obviously remember those people that are on that page and probably people you’ve lost or know that have died throughout the year.
Okay Conference, thank you.

Okay Conference, I’d now like to invite the new Chair of Standing Orders, Mark Brooks, to make his first address to Conference as their Chair [unclear] give him all the support we can, because it’s not an easy job, I know Olive made it look quite simple but it’s not that easy. Mark, please make your first address to Conference and welcome.

Brother Mark Brooks, Chair of Standing Orders: Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

Thank you, Mr President. Mark Brooks, Region 3, Chair of Standing Orders. Mr President, General Secretary, EC, Delegates and guest, welcome to the 97th Conference. Just to say what a difference 12 months makes, we had a Scottish Referendum and the Scotch people chose by the Referendum to stay with Great Britain, we had the sad demise of our Sister, Olive Malloy, from Region 5, she came up here and she made this job look absolutely easy, she could write a speech and keep everybody entertained, hopefully I can do half a gooder job, we lost Bill Bellamy from Region 3 and as the National President said, many others for which we actually take silence and remember them. Well, May 7th we all thought six weeks of polls, hung parliament, you get up on May 8th how wrong could six weeks of politics be, the 8th Conservative government. God knows what they’re going to do, but it isn’t going to be nice for every single one of the working class. They’re not the working class party and they never will be. So let’s hope all those who go to the Labour party and all those that are members of it choose the right leader, for in 2012 we’ve got to have another Labour government. So, without further due, would you turn to your Agendas please. Motion 1 stands, motion 2 stands, motion 3 stands, motion 4 stands, motion 5 is out of order, motion 6 out of order, motion 7 stands, motion 8 stands, motion 9 stands, motion 10 stands, motion 11 out of order and so is the amendment, motion 12 stands, motion 13 stands and motion 14 is withdrawn. That is the end of my report, thank you.

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Okay, Conference, for new Delegates, every time Standing Orders gives a report, what we ask you to do is show your hands to agree that report, so putting that report to Conference, does everybody agree? If you’re not going to vote, unfortunately what you have to do is, you have to walk to the side of the room unless you’re going to vote against, I should have added that as well, so everybody in agreement with Standing Orders report please show, thank you very much. Anyone against? Thank you.

Okay Conference, what we do now is we go through pages of the Annual Report again, so if you can get your Annual Report out. Okay, what I do is I read out the pages. If there’s anything on the page that you want to raise, you come down to the rostrum, you say your name and which branch you’re from and then raise your question on that page, okay? And we’re starting on Page 5, so [unclear] Page 8, Page 9, Page 10, the next page has got 5th – 7th November also, Page 11. Page 11, Page 12, you’re all doing very good, is it every 9? Page 13, must be taking pity on me yes, Page 14, Page 15, okay. Page 16, it’s got 4th – 6th February on the top, that’s Page 16. Page 17, Page 18, Page 19 and Page 20, okay.

Okay, in your packs, you can put that away now, your Annual Report, you can put that away and get your loose leaf ones out, which will say the Executive Council minutes held on 4th, sorry, I’ll have to put my glasses on, okay, it’ll say 5th – May, 5th – 6th May, 5th – 8th May, you’re right, it does say 5th – 8th May, everybody got them, yes? Okay, Page 1, Page 1 Pat?

Brother Pat Rowley – No. 2 Region: Mr President, Delegates. I didn’t have to ask any questions on the Annual Report because I asked most of the questions I wanted to ask at Regional Board and it’s not a good practice to buy your cabbage twice. This morning, Roy Streeter had a lot of time spent on dismissals at Park Cakes, was he successful or what happened? It was for health and safety reasons. Oldham, Park Cakes, Oldham.

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: That was on Page 2, Pat. I was only on Page 1.

Brother Pat Rowley – No. 2 Region: Well, I’ve nothing on that.

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: You’re trying to confuse me, aren’t you. In all honesty, Pat, I think the best person for you to ask that question to would be Roy Streeter, who’s somewhere in the room, he’s over there, if you go and see him at break, he’ll be able to answer that question.

Brother Pat Rowley – No. 2 Region: Okay. Page 3, have you gone that far yet?

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: I do the pages.

[LAUGHTER]

Brother Pat Rowley – No. 2 Region: Sorry, I’m sorry.

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Anybody else got anything on Page 2? Page 3 for you, Pat.
Brother Pat Rowley – No. 2 Region: [unclear] on Politics UK, she explained the present strategy and the future. We’re affiliated for 5,000, what do they offer for the money we affiliate to them for? We definitely need a winning strategy after what happened in the recent past.

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Okay, Pat, what politics.co.uk is they’re the people who do our animations, maybe it doesn’t, they don’t have the name that reflects that but politics.co.uk, they also do a blog insight a website [unclear] on why you should join the trade unions, those are all the animations that are actually done by politics.co.uk and the reason why we’ve just renewed is because the aim is they’re going to put two more animations together, one on recruiting of young people, which we were hoping to get some slides to show Conference but unfortunately we haven’t been able to get them in time, so we obviously feel that they’ve done a lot of benefit for us, which is why we’ve decided to renew, so that’s what it is, it’s not actually a political organisation, it’s a company that does animations and other types of promotional material for us, okay?

Brother Pat Rowley – No. 2 Region: [unclear]

Brother Ronnie Draper, General Secretary: Right, I’ll answer that. The evaluation is a round about, I can find out definitely for you, but it’s round about £840,000, the value of [unclear] and that’s something we have to do because we have to do it on an annual basis for the Pension Fund.

Brother Pat Rowley – No. 2 Region: Yes, [unclear]

Brother Ronnie Draper, General Secretary: They’ve been taking £40,000, Pat.

Brother Pat Rowley – No. 2 Region: Yes, what did you say the value was?

Brother Ronnie Draper, General Secretary: £840,000, Pat.

Brother Pat Rowley – No. 2 Region: £40,000?

Brother Ronnie Draper, General Secretary: £840,000, if it’s £40,000, I’ll have it. If you look at the accounts, Pat and see the figure there, it’s about £60,000 something, that’s figures we have to depreciate everything over a period of time, so eventually Head Office as part of a [unclear] will get where that’s going to be nothing, but depreciation for accounting purposes.

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Okay, Pat?

Brother Pat Rowley – No. 2 Region: Yes, fine.

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Anything else on Page 3?

Brother Pat Rowley – No. 2 Region: That’s all on Page 3.


Brother Pat Rowley – No. 2 Region: Page 4?

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Page 4, Page 4.

Brother Pat Rowley – No. 2 Region: Ian McHugh raised the issue of the European Social Fund, money being cut. It has been covered by the Scottish government and we are receiving £10,000. What does that entail?

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: It’s all to do with, do you want it? Okay.

Brother Ronnie Draper, General Secretary: Yes, Pat, I can answer that. I mean obviously I could get Mark, who’s sat right behind me to do it, but what it is, Pat, the European Social Fund, the money was cut, right and we used that money within our Learning Fund in Scotland, the Scottish Union Learning Fund and what the minutes reflect and Mark’s report was that that shortfall that we had from the European Social Fund has now been made up by the Scottish government, the Scottish National Party, so they’ve put that shortfall of £10,000 into our Scottish Learning Fund.

Brother Pat Rowley – No. 2 Region: Okay, thank you.

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Cheers.

Brother Pat Rowley – No. 2 Region: Thank you, Chair.

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Okay, Pat.

[APPLAUSE]

Okay, if you look in your folders now, you’ll find what’s called the Treasurers Report. Everybody got it? Again, I read the pages out, anybody’s got any issue, you come down the rostrum and if you can make sure you talk into the mike, because apparently there’s a, apparently if you don’t talk into the mike, people are having difficulty hearing. We’re going to go and start on Page 1, so it’s the page, the first one with the numbers on it, so again I remind you if you want to come down and ask anything that’s on the page that I’m calling at the time, so Page 1. Is it Page 1, Pat? Okay.

Brother Pat Rowley – No. 2 Region: Mr President, Delegates. CFC members contributions claims, £174,740. How long more will this fund be able to continue?

Brother Ronnie Draper, General Secretary: The CCFA, I think, has got another two years, well two years April just gone.

Brother Pat Rowley – No. 2 Region: Yes, because it used to be reported on the written page, not counted in the and it used to be always stated on it what was in the fund and that’s why I asked it and legal income of £181,000 …

Brother Ronnie Draper, General Secretary: Yes.

Brother Pat Rowley – No. 2 Region: what is that?

Brother Ronnie Draper, General Secretary: It’s legal income, it’s what we, what we’ve done with Thompsons Solicitors is that we’ve gone into a profit sharing scheme, clearly something that we’ll be speaking to other lawyers about, but we’ve done it with Thompsons and that is a business decision we took in the absence of the CCFA money stopping, which the government stopped, it was a different way of helping to fund the Union and so what we did, we went into a profit sharing scheme with Thompsons and what we do, all the claims that are put through on our behalf, are costed, what’s returned and we get a dividend which is shared with Thompsons, so they take part of the money and we take part of the money and that is our share of what we got.

Brother Pat Rowley – No. 2 Region: Yes, okay. Fee sharing with solicitors, £17,000, will that continue after CFC is one of the, the government law comes into force?

Brother Ronnie Draper, General Secretary: That, as you can see, Pat, that’s reducing it, as less cases come in, because what we have to do, when the CCFA’s came in, is that you had to keep that money, if you like, to use a better want of a better term, it was like rainy-day money and so you kept it in the general fund for four years to pay for any cases that were lost, so as you can see, every year that figure’s going down, that figure will be lower next year, because there’ll be no more CCFA fee-sharing going in, but we will be looking to do the thing on the profit share, which is the legal income.

Brother Pat Rowley – No. 2 Region: Yes, it appears via expenditure, it appears that when all of these funds dry up [unclear] £266,712 and on our income £287,507 [unclear], so we’re, on our manufactured income which we take from the members is a couple of hundred thousand short of what we need and if all the other funds dried up, where would the Union be, would we have to make drastic savings along the way?

Brother Ronnie Draper, General Secretary: Pat, I’d like to take a more optimistic view on that. As the Treasurer of the Union, I have to present accounts as they are and you’re right, if you carried on the way you were going, then you would have some serious problems, but I don’t need to tell you or Conference and I’ve no doubt over the course of the next four days we’ll be saying on a regular basis, I know the President will be saying it, is that what we do, we shouldn’t be dependent upon funds coming in from lawyers, what we should be doing is looking at funds coming in from members and the only way we do that is by going out and increasing members, that’s what we do and we set and train a programme that we will hope will bring in extra members into the organisation and we’ve got people who are running in rings trying to make members, the fact is that we’ve all got to be involved in that and that’ll be a theme of the Conference, Pat, but don’t be so pessimistic looking at accounts, because accounts are how I have to report it because of accountancy, it’s not necessarily always as bad, it shows a deficit at the end, but part of that deficit is because we have to include a Pension Fund that is payable over the next 14 years, so we’ve got 14 years to pay back the money that we owe on the Pension Fund, so that’s something that again is in train and we’ve set a programme to do that, but look, what we should never be, we should never be dependent on income that comes from solicitors because prior to the CCFA money, we used to take the money out of claims if you remember, we used to take 7½% on claims over 500 quid, so there’s things that happen. We will sort it, but don’t be dependent, don’t look at the figures there and think well, that’s not too bad, we’ve got £181,000 because that is not money that you’re going to get every year, that’s dependent on claims going in, how many are successful and the share of the profits and of course you also have to take into that figure the costs of running some cases.

Brother Pat Rowley – No. 2 Region: Yes, on the second last line on the income, profit from disposal of investments, £127,405, is that investments that we had to part with, or what?
Brother Ronnie Draper, General Secretary: What it is, Pat, is that we, obviously we put our employers hat on and a business hat on that the Executive Council have to take decisions over the years and if we’ve got surplus money then we will invest it in things that are going to be prudent for the Union in the future. What that money is, is when we bought shares, which we do, we buy shares in different things, all ethical incidentally, we bought shares and we buy them at a price, so if we bought them in 1980 at 50 quid and now they’re worth £100,000, then we realise £95,000, I forgot what figure I used then, but the fact is that’s money that is extra to what we invested, so it’s the interest over, the cumulative interest over years.

Brother Pat Rowley – No. 2 Region: Yes, yes, okay. That’s all on that page.

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Anybody else on Page 1? Page 2. Okay, Pat.

Brother Pat Rowley – No. 2 Region: Benefit obligations. Now, our pension fund which is quite a hefty bill, we’ll come to it in the expenditure account, but …

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Could you speak into the mike, Pat, people …

Brother Pat Rowley – No. 2 Region: oh sorry, yes, okay. The Pension Fund used to be written on the fund what the shortfall was on the funding of the Pension Fund and in 2011/12 it was £3 million six hundred and something and it was rising by a half a million. Have we curtailed that in any way, so that we don’t, because if it keeps going like that, we would never be able to meet our commitments.

Brother Ronnie Draper, General Secretary: Right, the commitments that you have there are always going to be there and I’ll tell you why, that when Gordon Brown was in government what he did, he changed the pension law and what it said is that you have to be able to meet your obligations now, so let’s see, who’s the youngest Full Time Officer, Laura Graham, when she retires, we still have to have that money now, we’ve got to be able to show the means of paying that money now, so rather than planning for 30 years hence, everything, all that money that’s there is the obligations for all the pensions, so people like John Higgins is the next person to go, we have to have his pension money but also Laura Graham who’s got the longest service to go, hers as well, so as you’re replacing, you’re always going to have a rolling programme of what and of course it’s the same with office staff, a running programme of what we need to pay their pensions when they become 65, 66 or 67, whatever it is at that time, so as far as the deficit in the pension scheme that’s a different thing, that’s our obligation, that’s the total cost of the pension to, if everybody retired en mass today, that would be the [unclear] to the Pension Fund. The shortfall in the Pension Fund is a totally different thing and that is what I said before, I actually got the years wrong, it’s actually become 13 years you have to pay, so over the next 13 years the obligations that we have to pensions funds to cut the deficit, we have set a train to do that and the Actuary does that for us and we’re meeting that obligation and that’s reviewed every four years, we’ll be having [unclear] it’s got to be two years.

Brother Pat Rowley – No. 2 Region: Yes, okay, that means it’s not right at the moment [unclear] but it was £3 million six hundred thousand, but it was rising by £500,000 every year, has that slowed down?

Brother Ronnie Draper, General Secretary: Yes, we had to put in to change, where we pay a dividend every year into [unclear] and it’s something that’s got an escalator attached to it, so it goes up every single year by a relatively small amount and that’s our obligation, but it’s an obligation that’s over the next 13 years. Of course your obligation builds up if you take more Officials on, more people join the Pension Fund and we’re going to have probably more involvement as well in 2017, so we’re going to have a fund where we have to auto enrol and people can opt out of the pension scheme, so it’s a question that the Trustees have, are talking about what we do as [unclear] enrol, because the pension scheme that we have is maybe too expensive for some people to join, they may not want to commit that pension scheme, so it’s a question that the Trustees have, are talking about what we do as [unclear] enrol, because the pension scheme that we have is maybe too expensive for some people to join, they may not want to commit that amount of money, but we are obliged to offer that fund and it’s down to them to withdraw from it.

Brother Pat Rowley – No. 2 Region: Okay, thank you, thank you.


Brother Leon Don – Branch No. 334, Region 3: I just wonder if you could explain what it means.

Brother Ronnie Draper, General Secretary: [unclear] Oh sorry, nett book value – it means. What it is, is we wipe the things off on a yearly basis with cars, so any cars that we buy we’ll be able to, whatever you buy them for, so that they don’t sit as an asset within our accounts, we wipe them off, everything we keep, we depreciate buildings, offices, cars, all different office furniture, everything at the end of the day has a nil full value, so as I said before about Head Office being worth £840,000, in reality it’s probably worth more actually, but the fact is that on these figures it’ll be insured at £60,000 so it depreciates, everything over a period of years and that means that’s the only value, so when an Official, because we buy some of our cars in the Republic of Ireland what we do over a three year period it becomes nil value.
It’s a rounding up exercise, it’ll be an accounting thing but I mean, you won’t be able to buy it for a quid but we definitely don’t sell them for a £1, we sell them for more than that, that’s part of depreciation for accounting purposes, that’s the nett value. It still has a value, the cars don’t just become nothing, but we write it off after three years, it’s the same with furniture, building we might write off in 25 years and that’s it.

Brother Leon Don – Branch No. 334, Region 3: Alright.
Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Okay, Page 15. Page 15, Pat?
Brother Pat Rowley – No. 2 Region: Mr President, Delegates, [unclear]
Brother Ronnie Draper, General Secretary: It is, Pat, what you’ll see, what we did, we have to take decisions from time to time, because we used to have money that we kept in Ireland and, if you like, it was rainy-day money because it was always there in case we needed it, in case the government took us on, this is going back to the days of the miners and we had money that was in Ireland and of course when you have the different rate between the punt as it was and the pound and then the euro and the pound, it was never really a good idea to bring money back over here into the UK, but as those rates changed and those of you who have been on holiday will know that the euro has changed significantly, what we did, we brought the money over here, so what it is, the first two are disinvested, they’re either in Ireland or they are ones that weren’t performing well and what we’ve done, we’ve transferred them, we have a company who work for us now called Lighthouse who help us with our investments and you can see from the growth that we’ve had, Pat, that it’s obviously been a good decision that the Executive took.

Brother Pat Rowley – No. 2 Region: [unclear]
Brother Ronnie Draper, General Secretary: We’re getting better returns, Pat, than any of us would get in a bank, given that the banks are giving us nothing, we were actually going to come to you for a loan, but we thought we’d do it this way. I think that the returns that we’re getting as an average is around 6%, which when you think what the bank rate is, it’s a pretty good return on the money that we’re putting in.

Brother Pat Rowley – No. 2 Region: [unclear]
Brother Ronnie Draper, General Secretary: Don’t forget, Pat, you’ve got those other two that have been transferred into those two, so [unclear] obviously it’s been a sound investment strategy that the Executive have followed to get to that position. You don’t need to [unclear] but that’s what it is, it’s just we have to move money around from time to time to get the best value for it, so [unclear] any shortfalls so we’re not losing membership.

Brother Pat Rowley – No. 2 Region: [unclear]
Brother Ronnie Draper, General Secretary: That’s the money in Southern Ireland, Pat and that’s going to be changed over the coming years.

Brother Pat Rowley – No. 2 Region: Okay, thanks very much, thank you.
Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Okay.

[APPLAUSE]
Okay Conference, if I can now put both the Treasury Report that you’ve just gone through and the Annual Report together as a combined report for Conference, do we accept it as a true record, those in favour please show. Anybody against? Thank you very much, Conference.

Brother John Fox – Vice President: Comrades, Brothers and Sisters, can I ask our National President to give his opening address to Conference, please. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

The National President’s Opening Address to Conference

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Conference, firstly welcome to Southport. This year’s Agenda’s a little bit thinner than normal, but it’s given us an opportunity to try and do some different things. We’ve got a number of speakers and I’m sure as we go through the week, we’ll try to make your Agenda as busy and as small, with as much information as we can possibly cram in, to make sure that you have an enjoyable week but one where the resources that we provide enable you to go back to your Branches, giving you vigour to continue.

I’d like to firstly thank our full-time Officials too and our office clerks who continue to service our members across the country. It’s been a tough year in many ways and it looks like it’s about to get a lot tougher and also I’m bound to forget some, but I remembered to write it down this year. I’d also like to thank our Executive Council for the work that they’ve put in over the last 12 months and pay a tribute to our Branch Secretaries, our representatives and our activists for the selfish work that they do year-in/year-out.
Without them, without you, workers on our side nationwide, we wouldn’t have a voice, this Union simply wouldn’t exist and it’s very telling that terms and conditions, health and safety in our workplaces far exceed non-Union recognised sites, that’s some badge of honour and one that we should be proud of.

This year’s Agenda covers a wide range of topics, so I’m looking forward to some fantastic debates and contributions from both regular and new Delegates. However, before we move on to Conference business, there are a number of areas that I want to briefly touch on that affect our industry, our members, our lives and how we, as a Union, need to operate moving forward. Our industry is going through some serious changes, for instance different eating habits affecting white bread sales and a surge in fast food and other convenience foods, as people adjust to ever-changing lifestyles. This is presenting us with new challenges, new organising opportunities. Some people do wonder why we’ve decided that we will concentrate in areas such as fast food or try to. In McDonalds there are 97,000 people working, 93,000 are on zero hours contracts. Those sorts of contracts have helped them into mainstream employment and are seen as the norm, so if we don’t tackle them, who will? And that’s why we thought that concentrating on the areas of fast food was a good area for this Union to show an example of the way.

They have no health and safety training and more than that, they’re intimidated from joining a Trade Union and the knock-on effect, like I say, is now coming into most employers’ businesses who are now using it as a model across their business and how they can implement the same cultures in your workplaces. Fast food workers in the US have decided enough is enough and they’ve been part of an inspirational campaign that’s spread across the world and I am proud to that the BFAWU have led the charge in this country, but we must show workers in fast food that being part of a collective means better pay and more secure contracts. We must show fast food companies and other employers in the food industry that we will not stand by and tolerate the race to the bottom, where people are exploited, workers rights are non-existent and pay is rock bottom. We must do all we can to encourage everyone working in our industry to join the Bakers Union, so that we can use our collective strength to bring about change and fair play that we all deserve. There is power in the Union and it’s time that we proved it.

Moving on to health and safety. Unfortunately, unfortunately the recent election result is going to mean further attempts to erode safety in workplaces. The attitude of the Conservatives towards health and safety has never been any different, the view is pointless, endless red tape holds business back and needs to be scrapped. Their friends in the media [unclear] being found on school playgrounds [unclear]. Trust me, there isn’t one shred of legislation that prevents a boy scout from climbing up a tree at summer camp, but sadly unfortunately people seem to fall for this rhetoric and you shouldn’t confuse fear and litigation and rising insurance premiums with laws to prevent people being killed at work. We all know people who work in bakeries, factories and on construction sites, we know the difference and it’s high time we started to dictate the narrative to politicians with vested interests and employers who would be quite happy to sacrifice our fingers, limbs and lives for their profits, but however the biggest issue facing us is the rise in inequality. The crash by those working in the financial sector. Why weren’t they stood in the dock to be charged with misappropriation, why weren’t their bonuses stopped. The majority of those responsible for this scandal have been largely untouched, with many increasing their wealth.

A good number of those who benefit from the so-called economic crisis and keeping their wealth by funnelling their money into the Cayman Islands and Swiss Banks rather than pay tax. Meanwhile, back in the real world, we are now surrounded by the effects of the race to the bottom to Conservative-led coalition and now a full-blown Tory government using the economic situation to roll out austerity, misery and pain to those who didn’t create the mess and can ill afford to pay it. We see the surging food banks, we don’t have two ha’pennies to rub together while tax cuts are handed out to the wealthy. We see George Osborne rushing to the EU to defend bankers bonuses, allowing the blood-soaked, devil incarnate Ian Duncan Smith to roll out the bedroom tax and modern-day slave labour via Workfare. For those whose lives have already been blighted, divide and rule [unclear] their politics, private sector against public sector, employed against unemployed, able-bodied against the disabled and once again people falling for it. The Prime Minister himself having the scraps from the top table whilst the usual [unclear] welfare faces, what a society we’re living in. Who or what are these people going to turn to when faced with this social injustice, again the answer lies in Collectivism. People feel hopeless and isolated, but keep on taking the rain. If people join together in active common purpose, you’ve got a totally different ball game. That’s the reason why those in power seek to attack Trade Unions and their ability to fight for their members and workers in general. They know when people stand together, our six and a half million are unstoppable. If they concur with our ability to organise, they can protect their interests. The Trade Union movement should never be afraid to step a toe over the line and we’re willing to do that many times over the next five years if we value our rights as working people. The General Election has proved that politics no longer works for the people of this country.
Fair enough, it was a combination of people not bothering to turn out, those [unclear] fringe parties, a surge of nationalism in Scotland and Labour’s uninspiring campaign underpinned by 95% of the country’s media and their Tory supporters that allowed Cameron and his cohorts back into power. However, what anyone may think of UKIP and the millions of people who voted for them and their one MP. Meanwhile, we are governed by a government claiming to have a mandate, to run this country, but with only less than a quarter of the electorate voting for them, there’s something fundamentally flawed with this system and we’re sure going to pay a heavy price for it. For proof, we only have to look at the speeches being delivered on behalf of business at the State opening of Parliament, it could easily have been read by Queen Victoria and here’s a few edited highlights of what’s coming down the track over the next few years. More austerity for the working poor, there’ll be reform of welfare, including of course in-work benefits or tax breaks for the better off, yet more curbs on Unions with the ability to strike being eroded, the sell-off of social housing and our NHS, so-called red tape for businesses will be slashed, making it easier for the private sector employers to sack workers and if this wasn’t enough, the elderly and disabled will be hit with cuts to home care services and police budgets will be slashed along with thousands more council staff facing redundancy, but as bleak as this looks, those of us of a certain age who worked through the 1980’s, we’ve been there before. Sometimes in life we’re set challenges and we are now facing some challenges which seem pretty huge.

Our role as Trade Unionists is simple, we either stand up and fight or live under the thumb. I believe that you can only kick a dog so many times before it snaps and bites your head off. We can either keep accepting the state cuts of those in power will get bored of kicking us or show some mercy or we can use our collective strength to do some kicking of our own and let’s be totally clear, unless the Labour group gets off its backside and gets into gear, Trade Unions will be nothing more than empty shells, unable to change anything. The only way to deal with all of this is to smack them down, so let’s fight the fight with fire and if that means industrial action, occupation and simple disobedience, these are the tools that we and our communities will need to engage in. If the powers that be don’t fight fair when injustice becomes law, resistance should become Duty. We can’t wait five years and hope that a Labour government will ride to our rescue…

[APPLAUSE]

And that has to change, so let’s remember our strength, let’s recognise the power that lies in the sense of community and belonging. This is us, we gave the working man the right to vote, that was us, we gave the women the right to vote, that was us, we’re the people who made the welfare state, that was us, we should never forget where our power and our strength lies, it’s always come from us. Politicians have never changed anything, without us coming together and forcing them …

[APPLAUSE]

[unclear] Conference, Conference, this Trade Union is ready, ready to take that message to our communities, ready to stand by every single worker in this country, ready to stand by all of our communities, ready to stand by every single individual whether unemployed, disabled, sick, we’re ready to stand, we’re ready to fight and let the TUC get off its backside, call a general strike …

[APPLAUSE]

Comrades, we’re going after them, we’re going after them.

[APPLAUSE]

So let’s be organised, let’s be passionate, let’s be inspired, let’s be ready to fight, this Union’s ready, we’re ready and we’re going to take it to them. Solidarity. Enjoy Conference.

[APPLAUSE]

Okay, can you make sure you get your nomination papers in to Standing Orders, Scrutineers, so we’ll call break early, to enable you to do that and if you come back at, okay, 10 past 11, tea and coffee’s outside.

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Okay Conference, just to remind everybody, we don’t allow the lying rag in the Conference Centre, they told lies about the people at Hillsborough, they told lies about Trade Unions, so please make sure (1) you don’t buy The Sun, but if you see one in the street, don’t pick it up and bring it in here. Conference, if you can turn to your final Agendas. Okay Motion 1. Just to remind everybody, when you come down if you can speak into the mike, because apparently people are having trouble hearing at the back, so you need to speak into the mike. Motion 1.
Rule 1.1 Branch 580

Change ‘the fixing of living wage rates for all workers employed in connection with the bakery industry or allied trades’ to ‘the fixing of a living wage rate of £10 per hour for all workers regardless of age employed in connection with the bakery industry or allied trades’.

Brother Keith Hutchinson – Branch 580 (Greggs of Yorkshire, not Pennines): Morning, Conference. Platform, Delegates, can you hear me? Thank God for that. Platform, Delegates, I’ve got to follow him, how can you follow that one up there? I’m here to move motion 1. What you heard, what Ronnie and Ian were saying, especially what Ian was saying about fairness and if you look in our Rule Book, always saying quite clearly let’s have a minimum wage, a minimum wage that people can live, all we want to do is live, whether you work in a bakery, shops or any allied with us, any of our members should be on a minimum of £10 an hour.

[APPLAUSE]

You know, they used to laugh, I remember everybody laughing at this Union when we said we want £10 an hour, we want £10 an hour, what happened? I went on a march last year in London and guess what?, every Union were saying we want £10 an hour, it’s thanks to the Bakers Union and all the people that have supported this, we need to fight for £10 an hour. Please support this resolution, thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

Sister Helen Stacey – Branch 580 (Greggs of Yorkshire): I would like to second this motion. I agree with everything that Keith said and I wouldn’t say we just want £10 an hour, we need £10 an hour. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: I should have said also first-time Delegate when you came down, well done, well done. Speakers? No? General Secretary.

Brother Ronnie Draper, General Secretary: Thank you, Chair. The Executive Council would ask Conference, would ask the mover to remit the motion and I’ll explain it. You may think it’s a bit crazy the Executive asking for such a thing when we were the Union who successfully pushed it through the TUC, two weeks ago we were the Union who pushed it through the General Federation of Trade Unions and both gave us unanimous support on our quest for £10 an hour, but I want to explain why. First, once you carry a rule, it’s in the Rule Book for three years, you can’t change it and that presents us with a problem. If you look at this year’s final Agenda, motions 5 and 8, which were both Executive motions, they were looking or seeking to make change to subscription rates were banned from being used, they were ruled out of order because they were changed last year and under the three year rule we couldn’t do it and so if we were to implement the motion as Keith has written it, we would then be bound by that until 2017 and whilst we recognise that there’s thousands of our members who aren’t paid £10 an hour, our ambition most certainly wherever we are, throughout the Union, is to achieve that £10. We totally agree with Keith and the sentiment of what he said and we would not be devastated as an Executive if you forced it through and we had to do it, but our ambitions as an Executive and I’m sure your ambitions is to drive that figure beyond £10 and that’s when we talk at meetings, that’s where we are. Trying to give our members a realistic rate of pay that will allow them to live, to work and to play with dignity and we want to raise the ambitions of our members just beyond mere existence, we want them to be there earning with the top earners in industry.

We want to ensure that the living standards of our members without the dependence on in-work benefits and we want to continue the fight for £10 and more in the future. Comrades, our £10 an hour wage campaign, which is successfully supported by lots and lots of people around this room and I’ve got to say in the main by people who are not members of our Union, hundreds of people who give their time to this Union, members of other Trade Unions who are outside McDonald’s, outside Costa Coffee, who come to meetings when Ian and I are speaking, who rallied outside the TUC and the GFTU to make sure that other Unions followed that thing. So, we’re going to put the plea to you, did you really want to change and get £10 an hour, the place to do it is not within our Rule Book, because all that does is set a parameter for what the Union believes in. The way that we’re going to get £10, as the President said before, is by fighting for it. We’ll get £10 an hour by putting it on wage applications, because I’ll tell you what, there’s not a company that any of us deal with who are going to say by the way, what we want you to put on the wage application this year is £10 and we’ll give you it. Ian’s right, that everything we ever got, we had to fight for and that’s the same right throughout Trade Unions, so we would ask you when you go back, not just to put your hands up and vote for something, because that’s the easiest thing in the world to do, to get carried away with the emotion of a Conference, put your hand up and then go away and do absolutely nothing.
We want you to go back and when you have your wage applications, that we put on there that we want a £10 an hour wage and just as importantly when your local Officials call a day of action outside a McDonald’s or a Costa Coffee in your region, we had the global day of action a few weeks ago and I went to Swansea and I think there was four of our members there, about 20 or 30 members of Unison and Unite and all that, all out there to support the Bakers Union, to make sure that we got £10 an hour, fighting for people in McDonald’s in the name of the Bakers Union, but sadly there was an absence of Bakers Union members and that’s what we’ve got to do, we’ve got to change it, we’ve got to make sure that we get through to people that it’s important, you might not work in McDonald’s but I’ll tell you what, you’ll know somebody who does, you’ll know somebody in one of the shops that you go into, who’s being exploited on a daily and a weekly basis and unless we as Trade Unions grasp that sometimes it isn’t just about Trade Union members, it’s about how we bring a change to society, that’s how we’re going to go, but Keith, because it would be limiting us to three years and if we were to get £10 this year, we wouldn’t be able to campaign for any more actively as a Union. We’d ask you to remit it, but I’ll tell you now, we remain absolutely strong, we’re absolutely on the button as far as that £10 an hour goes and we will be fighting until the day that all our members are paid £10. We’d ask you to remit the motion, please.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Keith Hutchinson – Branch 580 (Greggs of Yorkshire, not Pennines): Yes, we’ll remit it and I’m sure that the EC will make sure that we fight for £10 plus an hour, but just one little sidestep from that, have you noticed that Ian’s getting thinner, he can’t go in McDonald’s now, so it’s doing some good. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Comrades, everybody should support the fast food workers, that means we’re not asking anybody to boycott any fast food company, one of those workers employed, it’s not McDonald’s, we want them to go in, we want them to go in.

Okay, motion 2. Yes, mate, okay.

2 Rule 3.1 Members’ Rights and Duties

Any person from any industry or walk of life who are committed to upholding the aims and rules of the Union may apply to become a member of the Union.

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Any person from any industry or walk of life who are committed to upholding the aims and the rules of the Union may apply to become a member of the Union. Conference, this is a small but significant change. Currently our rules won’t allow anyone who is not working in our industry to join the Union, so unemployed people for instance are barred from joining and we don’t believe that that can be right. This Union shouldn’t bar people because they can’t find employment. As an FTO and I’m sure you may have heard if not all but most Officials, the only relationship you should have to join the Union, this is what we used to say to people, the only real reason for joining our Trade Union is because we’re the best Trade Union, but if you’re associated with food in any way, shape or form, whether you drink at a pub, whatever you eat for your dinner, then as far as we’re concerned that’s a connection which now should be recognised in the Rule Book. So we ask Conference to support the motion and allow people to join our fantastic Union yes, a specialist Union, but that doesn’t mean that we should exclude groups of workers from becoming members. Let’s remove the barriers, let’s recognise that this Union could offer so much to so many, so let’s get out there and organise people, let’s give people an opportunity to join the mighty Bakers Union and let’s build the future. Please support the motion.

[APPLAUSE]

Formally seconded. Speakers?

Brother Sean Molloy – Branch 558 (Rathbones, Wakefield): Chair, Council, Delegates. I’m here to oppose this because I believe that people that are trying to join the Trade Union, the first thing we need to do is get them in employment, ie if they come from the agencies, we need to get them into full-time employment, if you join a Trade Union it may work against them, then once they’re in the workplace, they look at what’s going on, they see a Trade Union, it’s productive, they think I want to be part of that, it’s happening, I want to be part of that movement, so I’m here to oppose it.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Andy Moorhouse – Branch 417 (Hovis, Wigan): I’m here to support this motion. Conference, Executive, Chairman, Secretary, I think this is a necessary move because we keep being told we’re a small Union, it’s the Bakers, Food & Allied Workers, we can exploit that Allied bit and get more members in and make this Union stronger. I support this motion.
Sister Marilyn McCarthy – Branch 450 (Manchester): First time up at Conference this week, but it certainly won’t be the last.

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Yes.

Sister Marilyn McCarthy – Branch 450 (Manchester): I’m the Branch Secretary of 450 Branch, supposedly the retired members branch, but we pick people up as we’re going along so I’ve got a manager from Zizzi’s Restaurant and I’ve also got somebody who works at Quickprint and his affiliation with the Bakers Union is that he has a sandwich every day for his dinner, we’ll have them. If they want to come to us, we’ll have them. The mighty Bakers Union, not the biggest, just the best.

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Okay, Conference. Obviously, Sean, I hear what you say. The motion isn’t to stop people wanting to become members of the Union, it’s about wanting people not just to be in workplaces to be able to join the Union, but people who are unemployed. Yes, we want them in work, but we shouldn’t say to people just because you’re unemployed, you can’t be a member of the Trade Union. In fact, the sooner we organise the unemployed, the better it will be for all of us, because the unemployed people in this country deserve to be treated with dignity and respect, because most of those unemployed people were once working people who found themselves out of work because an employer decided that they, that they would sack them from the job to improve the company’s profits and what we need to do is make sure, make sure that those people become employed, we as a Trade Union or we as a Trade Union movement don’t say we’re going to treat you the same as those employers or the government which says you don’t have a right to have dignity when you’re out of work. We believe all people, whether you’re working or not working, whether you’re sick or you’re disabled, should have their dignity and be treated with respect, that’s our people, those of us and we must make sure that we stand up for them. Conference, please support the motion.

To the vote, those in favour? Against? That’s carried. Motion 3.

3 Rule 5.1

Branch 582

This conference agrees in a reduced monthly subscription of ten pounds for the first three months of joining the BFAWU. This would help to recruit new members this reduction only to be given once to each individual.

Brother David Lawrence – Branch 582 (Manor, Carlton): Mr President, Platform, Delegates. Motion 3, that this Conference agrees in a reduced monthly subscription of £10 for the first three months of joining. This reduction can only be granted once to an individual. Our Union is at present struggling to recruit new members, which is hard to believe with a Tory attack on the working class, with a huge growth in temporary contracts paying pitiful wages and undermining many of our terms and conditions, with many of our work colleagues struggling to make ends meet, with cuts to public services and stagnant wages, squeezing our take-home pay even tighter, so we are asking Delegates to support this small reduction in joining our Union in an attempt to strengthen our influence when trying to recruit new members and reinforce our strength and influence in the workplace. Delegates, please support.

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Seconder? Formally seconded? Speakers? Okay. General Secretary?

Brother Ronnie Draper, General Secretary: Thank you, Chair, Delegates. The Executive Council would ask Conference to reject the motion, not just because of the lost income over the first three months of membership, but because of the administrative difficulties that would be faced. Over the past couple of years, this Conference has changed rates of pay for under-18 members and reduced the rate for people who are on zero hour contracts and I’ve got to say, we haven’t seen the floodgates open for them to pile into the Union because we’ve reduced it and so it makes you think that maybe finance isn’t the total reason why people aren’t joining this or any other Trade Union, but one thing’s for sure, we cannot keep bringing all different ideas of how we reduce membership, because eventually we’ll reduce it and come on to the scenario that Pat Rowley was speaking about this morning, where we’ll just die, we won’t be able to meet the commitments that we have. In order to maintain the manning levels that we have and thus the levels of service that every employee of the Union has had, I mean you can ask anyone who’s employed by the Union, over the last year they’ve had their pay frozen, not a palatable thing to do but it’s happened because we have to look at the finances of the organisation.
We’ve done an exercise and I’ve had Adrian, he’ll be pulling his hair out at Head Office, I’ve had him doing an exercise in procurement, looking at where we buy papers, at the moment we’re doing a project on IT, looking to see if there’s money to be saved there. Anything where we buy services in, looking to make sure that we get the best value for money and of course investments, making sure we’ve changed our investments to bring it in, but we don’t do that just so that we can reduce contributions somewhere else, we do it so that we can benefit the services that we offer to members. When I wrote the Agenda, probably March, we had four different motions that were all seeking to reduce the contribution rate and none of them explained how we were going to fulfil the obligations that we have, if we had those cutbacks in contributions. Unlike other Unions, the Bakers, Food & Allied Workers Union prides itself on the speed at which a member gets to talk to a full-time Official. Indeed, the speed that any member of the Union can get to speak to a National Official and you talk to members of other Unions and see if they get the same that you get. Unlike other Unions you know, who have research departments, they have vast amounts of money. Unite spend something like £15 million a year on organising, we don’t have those resources, but what we do do is make the most of what we’ve got, but we really couldn’t be in a position where we reduced it any further. We’re able to attend meetings at short notice and we wouldn’t have it any other way and I’m sure if you spoke to the workers at Hovis, they would tell you the commitment of Officials when they had the dispute and that we were allowed to make allowances for their picket line with money that we put in.

I don’t want to sound as though it’s all doom and gloom, because clearly it’s not, but I would question and this is where the administrative part comes in, if we would have payroll departments who would change the contribution rates after 13 weeks and that would have been one of the problems we’d have had if we’d had the 5p reduction or any other change that we made, is companies saying to them one week the contribution rate is this and then in three months the contribution rate is that, so we have the administrative problem with them and I can think of a number of companies that I deal with where that would be a particular problem. We would also have the problem maybe with changing direct debits and we do have members who still pay by standing order, although we are looking to change that and we have to write to them with the changes of subs, but I think one of the biggest problems, it was a debate that we had at the Executive and also a debate we had at the Gregg meeting, the AGM and that’s the problem that when you have any type of probationary rate and somebody comes along and joins at that rate and then after 13 weeks you say your rate’s no longer that, it’s now this and it’s not going up by 5p or 10p, it’s going up by over £2.35 a month, that’s when you get the difficulty, in particular when you’re talking to people on lower money. With such a steep hike, new members would be likely to leave after those three months than to sign a thing to increase.

When members join at present Comrades, they know exactly how much they’re going to pay in contributions and what they can expect from us as a Trade Union and so long as we meet their expectations and we meet our obligations, then I believe we’re on the right road. They will see that that money that they pay in membership is value for money. I think we always used to have a thing it was less than a pint of beer and it was less than a packet of cigarettes, well it’s most certainly less than a packet of cigarettes now and I suppose it’s much cheaper than a beer, depending on where you live. Comrades, our No. 3 Region and you go and talk to our colleagues in No. 3, over the last year they’ve made more than 1,000 members and thank God they’ve done it, because we may have been in problems, 1,000 members that they’ve brought into this organisation, not going out and saying we’ll bring you in on a cheap rate, they brought them in on a contribution that is the contribution of the Union and it doesn’t seem to have been a barrier to people joining in No. 3 Region, so why should there be a barrier to people in other Regions? They joined, as far as I’m concerned and I know the President would think the same, they joined the best Union in the country, when it comes to representation, when it comes to campaigning, when it comes to our attention to their needs and for our ability to punch above our weight and that’s why the campaigns that we’re running now are successful because we have the capability of going out there and fulfilling those objections. Comrades, don’t strangle our ability by setting financial restrictions on the organisation that we will not be able to budget for, all it will do is decrease our effectiveness as a Trade Union and that’s the one thing that we don’t want to do. Please oppose the motion.

[APPLAUSE]

**Brother Ian Hodson, National President:** Right of reply? No? Okay, to the vote. Those in favour? Those against? That’s lost. Motion 7, oh sorry before I do, I just want to bring Mark in from Standing Orders.

**Brother Mark Brooks, Chair of Standing Orders:** Thanks, Mr Draper. There should be on your desks now, three emergency motions, if you have them all. Emergency motion 3 will be taken after motion 10.

**Brother Ian Hodson, National President:** Okay, to the Conference, we agree? Will those in favour, please show? Okay, thank you Conference. Cheers, Mark. Motion 7.
That this conference agrees to abolish union sick pay and replace it with a grant from the EC to those members that have run out of company sick pay or where companies do not pay sick pay.

Brother Keith Hutchinson – Branch 580 (Greggs of Yorkshire, not Pennines): Conference, Delegates. Here to move this motion. We thought long and hard about this motion and we hope, if it goes through, it’s there to help people who have run out of company sick pay and Union sick pay. Now we’re such a great and successful Trade Union, as I believe we are, most companies are on 100% sick pay, so what we’re saying quite clearly is it comes to a time when everybody exhausts the Union and company sick pay, that is the time when people need the money, that is the time when they are most at risk, so this resolution what actually would do, we hope, would then allow the EC to levy grants to people who are in dire straits, whether they’re on 16 hours, 32 hours, 40 hours or whatever, it’s so important that as a Trade Union we look after our weakest people and we believe that this resolution, by changing sick pay rules, will actually do that, so we hope that you will support it. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Are you seconding? Okay.

Brother Neil Shackleton – Branch 580 (Greggs, Yorkshire): I’d like to second Keith’s motion. Obviously we’re all in hard times now and with everybody lives from different walks of life and obviously once your sick pay runs out, then obviously that’s it, so I’d like to second Keith’s motion. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Speakers? Okay, General Secretary to respond.

Brother Ronnie Draper, General Secretary: Keith, I promise I’m not picking on you, but, I’m definitely not picking on you, it really pains me actually that I have to ask Conference to reject the motion and I’ll explain why. I actually agree with a lot that you said before, I know the debate that you’ve just had with Conference, we had the same debate at the Executive Council in May. Clearly, it’s a lot of money that we can save, on 2014 figures that would be nearly £39,000, but as I’ve stated in the past, one of the points is that sickness benefit is called a provident benefit and it can be off-set for Capital Gains Tax, so when like investments and we get money back, we can off-set some of it because we have a provident benefit that’s called sick pay, that’s paid out. I’m not going to make a big play on the provident benefit because it’s not a great amount of money, but the fact is it’s still there. For instance, if we were to disinvest stuff like we did prior to Conference, or we were to sell a building, there’d be money that’d be there, but we would have to show a gain of £200,000 in that to off-set our limit of £40,000 in provident benefit against Capital Gains Tax, but you know the main reason is we don’t like to take benefits off members in such a prescriptive way.

If I’m honest and I’m putting my Treasurer’s hat on, I would hope that the members who are paid full sick pay wouldn’t bother to claim, but human nature being what it is, they do claim, it happens, despite what we say here, people will want it because it’s part of their benefit scheme. They see that they’ve paid into the system, like anything else, even government benefits, you pay in and you expect to get out once you’ve paid there. So why would we believe that should the entitlement be removed totally that they’d be satisfied to wait for a potential grant from the Executive, bear in mind the Executive only meets every three months, we often say people are a week away from poverty, if you really are skint, you’ve got no money, you don’t want to be waiting three months for the next Executive if you happen to miss it. At present it is £7.50 for a maximum of 13 weeks and once it’s gone, it’s gone, but with the proposed system it would be a convoluted system where the Branch Secretaries would have to be on the ball as to where individuals were in regard to company sick pay, whereas at present all they need to know is that the member has been off sick and Regional Office does the rest.

I suppose the other problems are that the Executive Council would pitch a grant for those, where we would actually pitch the grant for those who were claiming, companies where they didn’t pay sick pay or of course where that had been exhausted and if we changed how much time, sorry, we look at how much time that we would spend at Executive Council meetings going through appeal grants, it could be phenomenal and let me explain, there could be potentially hundreds at every meeting, hundreds of claims where sick pay had been exhausted and we just don’t have the time at Executive Councils, we try to cut back on what we do at Executive Councils, not increase, but if I tell you that last year and I’ve done it on 2014’s figures Chair, we had 730 individual claims for sick pay. Now if we remove the benefit, if it’s gone, yes, the potential to save money, but potentially 730 different claims that we would have coming to the Executive Council and if we imagine that every one of those claims, because we’d have to look at it, we’d have to sort of do a basic means test to make sure people were exhausted and I don’t know whose job that’s going to be on the Executive.
I’m sure we can nominate people, but if we look at the potential for every claim being five minutes to deal with, that amounts to an extra 60 hours that we would need at the Executive Council and bear in mind, we’re only there for three days, four days in May, you would be extending it by nearly another three days and you can see then that costs do start escalating if we were to do all this and don’t forget, we’d be opening the floodgates to everybody who had exhausted company sick pay, because at present there’s nowhere for them to go, so not only would they have had the sick pay or the grant, everybody now who’s exhausted would also have the option of applying for sick pay to the Union, so you have to think of how many potential claims that could lead to.

If the motion does get carried, we have to understand that a sickness grant that’s given by the Executive Council could be no more than the original cost that sick pay would have been to the Union, because that’s how we budget, we can’t budget on an unforeseen, we can only budget on what we believe the potential for sick pay to be and I suppose because of the vagueness of it, that is the very reason why sick pay was capped at £7.50. I remember at one time there was a move to try and move it to £10, it was actually capped at £7.50 many years ago to make sure that it didn’t have the effect and because people were getting sick pay in work. In a utopian world comrades, there’s no doubt that this motion has the potential to save the Union quite a lot of money and that’s only if all members agreed. At least that’s how it appears on the face of it, but what about the member who complains about the loss of that benefit, a benefit that they’re likely to use. It is worth the risk of losing that member for the sake of £7.50, for a maximum of 13 weeks? I’ve got to say, I think not and I hope you’re persuaded the same way.

As I said before, if your Branch does not claim sick pay because you get full company sick pay, then I’ll tell you that’s fine and dandy with everyone on this stage and we salute you for doing that, but Conference I would remind you that the financial difficulties that the Union, that this Union, like every other Union have, are not going to be solved by tinkering with benefits at £7.50 and as I said, a maximum saving of £39,000. The only way to increase membership, the only way is to increase membership and making sure that we’re able to pay the benefits that we’re obliged to do, so Comrades we would ask you to oppose that, as I say, although we do agree with a lot of the sentiments that Keith said, so please oppose.

**Brother Ian Hodson, National President:** Right of reply?

**Brother Keith Hutchinson – Branch 580 (Greggs of Yorkshire, not Pennines):** We’ve put it to Conference, you’ve heard what we believe, you’ve heard what the EC believe, all I can say is we didn’t do it, we did it because and I think Ronnie quite rightly said, we want to protect the weakest in our Union, so it’s up to each individual how you vote. Thank you.

**Brother Ian Hodson, National President:** Okay, to the vote. Those in favour? Those against? That’s lost. Motion 8. Is that you, Keith? Where are you going?

**8 Rule 5.2 Greggs 580**

*That this conference agrees that where a member is in receipt of full sick pay, union contributions should still be deducted from their pay.*

**Sister Sarah Woolley, speaking on behalf of Branch 580 (Greggs of Yorkshire) and the Executive Council:** To move motion 8. We ask you to support this Rule amendment. If a member is receiving full sick pay, then we believe that they should continue to pay their Union contributions as they would if they were working. The member would not be out of pocket, as they would be in receipt of full pay, but the Union would benefit from the continuation of the contribution money being received rather than it being stopped from the moment the member goes off sick. Please support.

**Brother Keith Hutchinson – Branch 580 (Greggs of Yorkshire, not Pennines):** I’m here to second this motion, because it’s right what Sarah has just said and how can you follow someone as good-looking as that. When you think about it, all we’re saying is, it does help both the Trade Union, if you are on 100% sick pay and you’re getting, you’re still getting your benefits that you can, then hopefully our members will allow us to still carry on paying their contributions. Thank you.

**Brother Ian Hodson, National President:** Speakers? Okay.

**Sister Rachel Mullen – Branch 529: Platform, Delegates.** I’m here to speak against the motion and there’s a couple of reasons because of this.
First of all, the logistics of it, who’s going to monitor who’s on full sick pay, who’s on statutory sick pay, I mean I can’t see any company’s payroll willing to do it because they’ll just say that they’ve got enough things to do without monitoring that and also if you take into consideration the Union’s sick pay at £7.50, really if you’re charging the subs of £2.80-whatever it is now, you’re just eradicating the benefit that’s already there, so to me the membership wouldn’t want that or wouldn’t like that because really you’ve sort of taken half of the benefit away by making them pay their subs when they’re entitled to the Union sick pay.

APPLAUSE

Brother Sean Molloy – Branch 558 (Rathbones, Wakefield): Chair, Council, Delegates. I’m here to support it, because I must be a bit thick, I didn’t realise that they didn’t pay Union fees when they’re on the Pat & Mick. The point is here is when they are on the sick, the first thing the companies do is discipline them, so the first thing that I had to do when these guys came back from work from being on the sick, is represent them in a disciplinary hearing, so please support the motion.

APPLAUSE

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Any more speakers? You have the right of reply because, no, okay. To the vote, those in favour? Those against? That’s lost. Motion 9.

Rule 15.4 Greggs 580

Remove ‘nominations for the Women’s TUC shall be submitted at the September quarterly meeting and must arrive at HO on the last Friday in September. No nominations to be accepted unless submitted from branches And insert into rule 22.20 after the final paragraph Nominations to TUC conferences for Black workers, Women, Youth, Disability and LGBT Shall be submitted at the September quarterly meeting and must arrive at Head Office by the last Friday in September. No nominations accepted unless submitted through branches.

Sister Sarah Woolley, speaking on behalf of Branch 580 (Greggs of Yorkshire) and the Executive Council: To move motion 9. Conference, this is just a tidying-up exercise. The current Rule only asks for nominations to the Womens TUC, when in fact the cyclo sent out to Branch Officials asks for nominations to each of the five Conferences listed in the Proposal for Change, therefore I feel they should be included in the Rule. The move from 15.4 to 22.20 is so that the rules of attending are made clear and are the same as attending the main TUC Congress, for example Delegates must attend and stay until the close of said Conference unless there are genuine emergency reasons to do otherwise. Please support.

[APPLAUSE]


Rule 22.16 Branch 450

That this conference agrees that when a delegate comes to the podium to bring a motion to conference, they must read the motion. Delegates who are bringing the motion need to realise that sometimes the motion has been wrongly worded and when they bring their speech, they are speaking on a different subject.

Sister Marilyn McCarthy – Branch 450 (Manchester): That this Conference agrees that when a Delegate comes to the podium to bring a motion to Conference, they must read the motion. Delegates who are bringing the motion need to realise that sometimes the motion has been wrongly worded and when they bring their speech, they’re speaking on a different subject, so they might be up here opposing the price of gas, but the motion’s saying that they’re here to oppose the price of electric. It’s not hard, it just makes common sense to me. I ask you to support.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Formally seconded, yes? Any speakers? Okay.

Conference, the Executive would ask you to oppose the motion and just to let you know, Marilyn, when you came down and you spoke on the first one, you didn’t read out the motion and we’ve got to say to you, if every Delegate has to read out every, the motion before they go into the speech, we could be here all week, I mean that’s what the potential has. I don’t think people come down deliberately and not realise they’re speaking on the wrong motion. I think what happens is nerve kicks in, I think people are nervous and they, no, no, no, excuse me mate, if you wanted to say something you should have come to the rostrum, you can’t shout from there, it’s alright, okay, but if they’re nervous, right and they speak on the wrong motion, we shouldn’t castigate, we shouldn’t put something in a Rule Book that says we shouldn’t prohibit you from making a mistake, because to err is human.
We believe that we couldn’t put this into our Rule Book, it would be difficult to put into our Rule Book. We believe that people will come down to the rostrum, as long as they give their name and the Branch that they came from and say what they think is what they need to say, then that’s the right thing to do. We don’t want to prohibit people, because sometimes humans make errors. We ask Conference to reject the motion and obviously, Marilyn, you have the right of reply.

[APPLAUSE]

Sister Marilyn McCarthy – Branch 450 (Manchester): Exercising my right to reply. Ian, you said when I got up earlier, that I didn’t read the motion. Well, I can only think that mine’s printed out different than yours, because this is the first motion from Branch 450. That’s why I never objected to anything before, it wasn’t my place to do it. I’m still asking you to support.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: It’s a shame I can’t respond, Marilyn. To the vote, those in favour? Those against? That’s lost. Okay, Conference, emergency motion No. 3.

Emergency Motion 3 [Rule 22.19] Executive Council

That this Conference agrees that Rule 22.19 reads as follows: ‘Nominations for the EC to be handed to the General Secretary in writing on the first day of the meeting and the election to take place on the second day. Nominees must be members of not less than three years membership apart from the Young Members EC Representative, who must have a minimum of one year membership and be clear of arrears of contributions or the nominations will be void. Only members from the appropriate Region will take part in the election of the EC members from their respective Region. The voting and the counting to take place on the same day, with the results released before close of Conference’.

Those Delegates that were here last year will remember there was an issue about the length of service that we expect a young person to be in membership before they’re able to stand currently for a position within the Trade Union and it was felt by Conference last year that it was wrong and Conference made a decision to change the way that we currently elected our EC and what this is is a tidying-up exercise in line with what the Conference decision was last year and we ask the Conference to support the emergency motion No. 3. Okay. Formally seconded? Okay. Speakers? Okay, to the vote. Those in favour? Those against? That’s carried. Thank you and on that … Motion 12. Motion 12s withdrawn. Motion 13.

13 New Rule No 5 Regional Council

That this conference agrees a minimum of at least 3 months union subscription paid this will deter individuals from joining for representation then leaving once received the representation.

Brother David Lawrence – Branch 582 (Manor, Carlton): Mr President, Platform, Delegates. Motion 13. We had previously had individuals join our ranks at work, rightly receive representation when they require it and then pull out of the Union very soon afterwards. There are a growing number of individual non-members at work, they now quote this reason why they would not re-join the Union and we feel that to help deter these individuals from doing so in the future and to discourage new members from opting not to join after hearing work colleagues spread their gossip, a minimum three month joining-on fee would help discourage this practice, hopefully, from spreading. Please support.

[APPLAUSE]


Brother Sean Molloy – Branch 558 (Rathbones, Wakefield): Yes, I’m here to support this motion. I think it’s quite good. I think you can’t have people having your strides down all the time. People need to be part of a change and not just for representation, but the fact that you need to be strong. I support this motion.

[APPLAUSE]

Sister Janet Phillips – Branch 405: I support this motion. It’s very easy just to sign up when you’re in trouble and then drop. There’s got to be some way we can do it where you can say well look, you need three months and we’ll help you out, contribute three months’ subs and we’ll help you out when you need it. I support the motion.

[APPLAUSE]
Sister Rachel Mullen – Branch 529: I’m here to speak against the motion. I don’t believe it’s right because for instance what happens if a member signs up in April, no sign of trouble and then all of a sudden May they get disciplinary or get sacked without any warning or pre-knowledge of the event happening, what do we do then, do we just ignore them and just let them get on with it by themselves? It’s not certain, that wouldn’t boost membership or help membership at all. I mean, if we are worried about people abusing the system, in our Branch I know that if people come and want to join because they have gotten into trouble we say yes, there’s no problem, you can join, but we can’t help you with this, with your problem at the moment because you’re only wanting to join because you’re in trouble, we’re willing to help you with anything after that, just not this problem, because obviously you just came to us because you’re in trouble, so please oppose the motion.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Andy Moorhouse – Branch 417 (Hovis, Wigan): Hello, Conference. Here to oppose this motion, partly because the practicalities of it, are we going to be signing contracts for three months with new members? There is an issue with your members, people joining, dropping out, joining, dropping out, I’m more in favour of accepting people, helping them and setting a good example, so that other people will join us and then if they come back wanting to re-join, if that person’s done the dirty on us and dropped out, leaving them to their own devices, as an example, so personally I would reject this. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Chris Lay – Branch 253: Speaking to oppose the motion. This is on a basis that I had a friend, he contacted another Union, the GMB, to join this Union, to join the Union, literally to try and get some support, he didn’t, he couldn’t get it for six months, he couldn’t get any help for six months. He joined our Union then, I managed to get him to join our Union, he got the support straight away, three years on he’s still in the Union, still getting the support and help. We’ve got a proud tradition as the Bakers Union to help our members from Day 1 and that’s what we should do. We can use this as a tool to actually get more members into the Bakers Union, so please oppose the motion.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Gary Johnston – Region 2 (full-time Official): I’m going to ask Conference to oppose this and the reason being, we need all tools at our disposal for recruitment. Now, if we’re at a Greenfield site and the only way we can get members is when they get in trouble, to get them to sign up, it gives us an opportunity to get into these Greenfield sites, to represent them and to be seen and if you take that away from us, we’ve had many and I’m glad you passed the rule, because we’ve already got ones in the pharmaceutical company, where we’re going in representing them and they’re joining and some of them yes, I must say, is because they’ve got into trouble, but we need to get every member we can. Please don’t take away any of the tools that helps us do that. Please oppose.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: General Secretary.

Brother Ronnie Draper, General Secretary: Thank you, Chair. The Executive Council would ask the mover to remit the motion back to us and failure to do that we, like Gary and a number of other speakers, would ask Conference to oppose it. Firstly, I’ve got to say that I do have some sympathy with what’s been said down here, because we know that there are people out there who pay to get on the bus, but they don’t pay for the full ride, they only pay for part journey and once everything that they want has been fulfilled, then they drop out and clearly we need to look at how we combat that and I believe that’s one of the main reasons why we want it remitting, we’ll look to see what happens in other places, but indeed we had exactly this argument and debate over this at the Standing Orders Committee, where we were looking not just at whether it was morally right or morally wrong because that’s not what the function of the Standing Orders Committee was, we actually looked at the legality of it and I was asked to go away and speak with our lawyers which I did, I spoke with Iain Birrell from Thompsons and there’s actually nothing illegal about it, but I’ve got to say comrades that if it’s carried, it puts us at a serious disadvantage with other Unions, who ask that members have to be a member for a month before they join, I mean the GMB’s one that I checked out, so we’d be three months, we’re in direct competition with them as Gary just said, they’re looking for every tool that you can get, every competitive edge that our organisers get to go out and grab that transient group of workers to come into our Union, we don’t want to go in with something that totally disadvantages them and so we’ve had those debates, we’ve had the debates with the full-time Officials we know and Gary’s just eloquently confirmed that and that’s, as I say, that’s the reason why we would ask you to do it. We don’t want to get into a contract with members. As far as I’m concerned, when a member joins the Union, that is the contract and that is a life choice, it’s a contract while they’re working until the day they retire and beyond as far as membership goes, that’s where we believe we should be.
You know, you don’t get on the bus and hop off when you want, just depending on where you are in a disciplinary or a grievance or a dismissal.

Before handing back to the mover, I would remind Conference that we already have it in our hands to deal with this and we do you know, because if somebody joins the Union today and we’ve said it, we’ve had this debate lots and lots of times with full-time Officials over, when we used to get our legal cases free, they would say to me well what we do, we’ve got this member who’s got a problem, they want to join and we would say is there a principle there, is it going to make us members, is there something that’s an absolutely sure-fire winner which you can take on board and its going to help you, or is it just some, an individual trying to exploit the Union and its finances and so you have it in your own hands. If a member joins, fine, they can come in, but we don’t deal with retrospective claims, we don’t do it, unless of course it is a stonewall winner, if you can show it’s a stonewall winner and that it will benefit other people within that workplace, then by all means, but that is a decision for you as individual Trade Union reps within a Branch and of course for full-time Officials within our Regions. As I say, in general we don’t represent retrospectively and we leave that open to you, because one of the things it does, it opens us to legal redress.

If a member at a first stage goes down an avenue and we represent them and then they drop out and go to tribunal, we could potentially be picking up their claim and their fees for any future case because we represented them again and that’s why we don’t do it retrospectively. Clearly, it wouldn’t apply to somebody who had under two years membership, but of course we get people who’ve been long-time non-members who join when they’ve got a problem and it does leave us open to claims against them. So comrades, we would ask you to, we’d ask the mover to remit the motion and we will look at it to see if we can see what other Unions do, but what we don’t want to do is put ourselves at a serious disadvantage against other people that we’re competing in an already very, very competitive market for membership, so we would ask the mover to remit. Cheers Dave, thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Okay, okay Delegates, you can put your Agendas away and what I would like to do is, we have an Executive Council member represent some people in our Trade Union and I’d like to invite Apryl down to the rostrum to give an address to Conference.

[APPLAUSE]

Sister Apryl Walcott’s Address to Conference

Sister Apryl Walcott – Branch 450: Which I’ve remembered this year. It’s kind of like half on my ’phone and half written down, so you’ll have to bear with me a second. Comrades, Delegates, friends and Nan, after a long five years of a coalition government, the election has returned a Tory majority albeit small. I remember the exit poll and thinking that you surely had to be wrong. I stayed up for hours in disbelief at what was happening. I finally went to bed accepting it wasn’t getting any better and I woke up with a Tory majority. I have been battling with myself, I haven’t watched the news and I’ve wished bad things on Rupert Murdoch every day since, but Comrades, today has picked me up a bit, Pat, you have picked me up a bit because if you can carry on fighting Tory governments and if you can carry on here year after year, then so can I.

[APPLAUSE]

As Trade Unionists, it was the worse result we could have imagined, but it is now our job to fight like we’ve never fought before for the remaining time we are burdened with this government. We must unite as a movement, we must stand side by side when they diminish our rights as Trade Unionists further. We must unite with everybody when they try and abolish the Human Rights Act and we must unite with our brothers and sisters who are not in Unions but will desperately need our help in the next five years. We must march with students when they try and increase tuition fees again. Nobody should have to pay over £35,000 to try and better themselves and no working class kid should ever have to second guess whether they go to university because of the cost. I hope, as we all do, that this defeat will spur on a real working class grassroots movement, because nobody can say that the Labour Party failed because they were too left-wing. We still have some incredible Comrades in the Labour Party, some of whom you will hear from over Conference and ‘though we will be disappointed with the result as a whole, we must celebrate the wonderful people who are always on our side.

We are all Comrades in this room and we are all working towards the same goal. Political alliances should be left at the door, because I don’t know about you, but I am a Trade Unionist long before I am a Party member. It’s been an enjoyable 12 months being your youth rep and I’ve met many of you along the way, whether it’s been at Regional Councils, Fast Food Rights events or demonstrations.
We had our first full Delegation to the TUC Youth Conference where Delegates spoke on mental health issues and £10 an hour minimum wage. I’ve been attending TUC young workers’ forums and linking up with young Trade Unionists, particularly in Unite and GMB. We now have an incredible opportunity to recruit young members. People are now more politically involved and motivated than they were before the election. We also have some wonderful new Delegates at Conference this year, it’s been wonderful meeting them and getting to know them. Finally, I hope we all have a productive and wonderful Conference, filled with passionate motions and discussion. We are always stronger when we work together and I look forward to working with you more in the next 12 months. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Thank you very much, Apryl. Okay Conference, two o’clock, don’t be late, if you do, you’ll get fined. Have a nice dinner.

[LUNCH]

Afternoon Session

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Can the Scrutineers make sure they go to Standing Orders to count the nominations, please, after the roll call. Roll call.

Brother Ronnie Draper, General Secretary: Region 1, can I have the mike on please, Region 1, Steve, no, 19. Region 2, okay. Region 3, okay. Region 4, thank you Geoff. Region 5. Region 6 and Region 7. There’s 190 Delegates present.

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Okay, yes, is it him, was he late? I’ll tell you, they should pay the fine, shouldn’t they, pay the fine, pay the fine, pay the fine, pay the fine. Okay, Conference, they need to go to Standing Orders and obviously pay your fine, be honest, be honest, be honest Steve. Okay, Comrades, before we turn to our Agendas, I’ll like to invite the Tamil Community to come and speak to us for five minutes. The Tamil Community we’ve been working with and we’ve got a bit of a success story that we want to talk to you about, so if you want to take the rostrum for five minutes that’d be great, absolutely, let’s welcome them please.

[APPLAUSE]

Janahan Sivanathan, Tamil Refugee: Good afternoon everybody, I’m Janahan, Tamil refugee from Sri Lanka. Last Monday when I went for reporting on Home Office in Sheffield, I was arrested and detained at Morton Hall. I’ve been there for five days, because like [unclear] gave me an opportunity to express my case fully and I had lots of support from all of you to fight a campaign to stop my deportation and immediate release of me. I want to really thank you, every one of you for helping me fight this campaign and also I wanted to tell you that many of the Sri Lankans like me and more worse than me as well have been tortured by Sri Lankan authorities and still in UK and many other countries like detention centres and everywhere, trying to fight to save their lives. We are planning to launch a campaign to fight against Sri Lankan deportation at least to save, free the Tamil refugees as much as we can. Please continue to support our campaign if you could, please. Thank you ever so much for all the support you’ve given me and helping me to get released from detention today. I still am not sure what’s going to happen, because I have a reporting condition and I will be probably in Home Office this Friday, I’m not sure whether I’ll be out again or I’ll be detained again, previously I’ve been detained already for five months, so I really wanted this opportunity to thank everyone and please asking for you to support our campaign. Thank you ever so much, thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

Bharathi Subramaniam, Tamil Solidarity: Good afternoon everyone. Thank you very much for letting us have a stall here. Just on behalf of Tamil Solidarity, I just want to thank the working class and the working class for really supporting our campaign, because we wouldn’t have done it here now if it was not for everyone’s signatures, but as Janahan said, this is Janahan’s story, but there are several people, there are several asylum seekers in the United Kingdom who don’t have the right to live for issues, a lot of them are being deported, have already been deported back to Sri Lanka and Sri Lanka is a country who still the government is still under investigation and there has been no independent or international investigation that’s been launched, so it’s not safe to go back, so there shouldn’t be any kind of deportations in the first place, so we want to launch a campaign so that we can stop deportations back to Sri Lanka, or countries where it’s not safe to go back anyway, like the United Kingdom, the government shouldn’t be allowed to send back asylum seekers who are, to countries where it’s not safe. Tamil Solidarity, we have a stall back there, so we’ll be here all week. Everyone would have got a leaflet that looks like this, so please have a read, that gives you information about our campaign, where workers struggle, we campaign to fight for the workers and the working class and the oppressed communities of Sri Lanka. We have, we launched a Join The Union campaign that’s to get the ethnic minority, like to get the Tamil population to join the Union and actively take part in the Union.
We have several active campaigns going on, so do come back and for us to really get the Union to be affiliated with us as well, so if you can push for affiliation through Branch, the Region and for the Union that would be great, so next year hopefully you guys will be affiliated with us. Again, thank you on behalf of Tamil Solidarity and thank you again on behalf of Janahan, thanks.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Thank you very much. Okay Conference, Mark Brooks to give an update from the Standing Orders.

Brother Mark Brooks, Chair of Standing Orders: Afternoon Conference. The following motions are out of order: motion 15, motion 16, motion 17, motion 18, motion 19. They will be replaced by emergency motion 1 and emergency motion 2. Motion 20 stands, motion 21 stands, motion 22 stands, motion 23 stands, motion 24 stands, motion 25 withdrawn, motion 26 stands, motion 27 stands, motion 28 stands, motion 29 stands, motion 30 stands, motion 31 stands, motion 32 stands. That is the end of this report.


Brother Mark Brooks, Chair of Standing Orders: Thank you.

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Emergency motion 1.

Emergency Motion 1 Branch 417, Wigan

Brother Gary Gallagher – Branch 417: Conference, First-time speaker, so you’ll have to bear with me. That this, can you hear me, can you hear me? Right.

That this Conference agrees that given the numbers of who voted UKIP in the recent election, that this Conference and the Union support Stand up to UKIP Campaign and promote the positive effects of immigration.

Comrades, in the election, people were disillusioned with the Labour Party, this is where most of the UKIP votes came from. Nigel Farage is a son of a stockbroker, he went to a private school. UKIP boasts that if it got into power, it would scrap the European Convention on Human Rights and would still attack the Unions as the same as the Tories. They have no interest in the workers of this country. People of this country or Europe have the right to work in any country of their choice. We are living in the 20th Century. Europe is currently witnessing a dramatic rise in fascist and racist popular parties, UKIP must be seen as part of this development. We smashed the BNP, we must smash the UKIP. Please stand up to UKIP.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Seconder? Are you seconding it?

Brother Andy Moorhouse – Branch 417 (Hovis, Wigan): Hello, Conference. Seconding this motion. I think the BNP, UKIP are dangerous because nobody seems to understand what they actually stand for. They’re voting for them because they’re different. They’re different because they’re right-wing Thatcher-right, even verging on fascist if you read what they’re actually saying. No party has had to suspend more people than UKIP than any other party I’ve ever heard of. They’re having to suspend people left, right and centre, mostly for racism, which gives you an idea of where they’re drawing their support from. Please support this motion.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Chris Lay – Branch 253: Totally here to support this motion. I was one of the Labour Party members who went out canvassing and knocking on doors on election day, however in my ward of 9,000 houses there was me and one other person doing this. When I went to the count on the night for my, for Cardiff South and Penarth, I noticed that the areas where UKIP were so prominent was where the Labour members didn’t actually get out and that was the problem, that we didn’t get out there early enough, didn’t get out and talk enough and we in Cardiff South and Penarth have realised this and going forward with our Welsh Assembly Elections now, we’re looking at how we can get out and get the support back for Labour in the areas where UKIP was strong. Please support this motion.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Sean Molloy – Branch 558 (Rathbones, Wakefield): I’m here to support this motion because as I mentioned earlier, Nigel Farage is a merchant banker and if people understand slang, support it.

[APPLAUSE]
Brother Jack Lee – Branch 107: President, Platform, Delegates. To promote the positive effects of immigration seems to me a great idea. It seems to me that the Tories want us to blame immigrants on everything, because if we’re angry at immigrants, we are not focussing our anger on low-paying bosses and bloody multi-millionaire tax dodgers.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Pat Rowley – No. 2 Region: Mr President, Delegates. Delegates, this man called Nigel whatever-he-is, created a fear among the public about immigrants. Look at history. There was an Ice Age in this world at one time and there was nobody here, all of us through our ancestors are immigrants, we come from somewhere, we wasn’t here. Now Comrades, the only way you can protect your liberties is to protect another person’s rights and that’s why I want you to support the resolution. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

Sister Janet Phillips – Branch 405: I think it’s important when you talk about UKIP to accept that there are people who are very frightened as what’s going on. You’ve got the Tory media drumming into them the fact as these immigrants are coming over here, taking our jobs, using our health service, all sorts of lies, so it’s important not to demonise these people who did vote UKIP, to try and get them to explain as you’re being brainwashed by a right-wing media and it’s in their interests to have working class attacking other working class, because they are not attacking them. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: No more speakers? No? No, okay.

Sister Sarah Woolley, speaking on behalf of the Executive Council: Conference, the Executive Council would ask you to support this motion. Throughout the election campaign, UKIP’s racist, fascist policies were hidden behind pictures of Nigel Farage stood in a pub, having a pint, pretending to be one of us. Well I’m sorry, he’s not one of us, his Party isn’t anything like we are. They do not stand for solidarity, they stand for blaming people for things that they can’t possibly be blamed for. Immigration is not something that we should be using as a tool to divide us. We should be embracing people coming into our country and work, joining them into our Union and making our stand stronger to fight this Tory scum, because whilst everyone is thinking about immigrants and what they’re doing or not doing for us, we’re not concentrating on the fact that these Tories that are in power are going to ruin us. We need to stand together and it doesn’t matter where we come from or what country we come from, we need to stand together and fight back, so please support.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Okay Conference, to the vote. Those in favour? Those against? That’s carried.

Emergency motion No. 2.

Brother Andy Moorhouse – Branch 417 (Hovis, Wigan): Conference, Platform. My motion is:

That this Conference agrees, following the Labour Party’s defeat in last month’s election, standing on a semi-Tory right-wing manifesto, that this Union call on and work with the TUC and those in the Labour Party who believe in us, the Union movement, to ensure that the Labour Party stands for what it did and should be, a Party inspired by and carrying out left-leaning Socialist-inspired policies that care for everyone, rather than copying the Tory policies and that we should support Jeremy Corbyn for the leadership of the Labour Party.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Seconder? Are you seconding, you seconding it, yes?

Sister Lorna McKinnon – Branch 500: First-time Delegate and first-time speaker.

[APPLAUSE]

Yes, I just wanted to support the motion. The huge assault by the newly-elected Tory government is an attack on every Trade Unionist and in the face of this, we need fighting Unions, but we also need political representation by those who are prepared to take a stand with us. In the recent General Election, I campaigned for TUSC and I think actually we do need an alternative to Labour and that is really summed up by the recent Scottish election result. Why they thought it would be a good idea to put Jim Murphy, a Blairite war-mongering Zionist, when clearly people are looking for a left alternative in Scotland, that’s what the referendum and recent election result represented in Scotland, a rejection of austerity, not a surge to nationalism and I would, I actually worked at the count in the election as well and this year like elation in people when Jim Murphy lost his seat was totally overwhelming, but that doesn’t mean that I don’t believe there are good people in the Labour Party, when it comes down to it obviously we’re all on the same side when it comes to fighting austerity.
Jeremy Corbyn, like John McDonnell, is a MP who is prepared to stand with us on picket lines and fight for the Unions in parliament, Corbyn has stood with us outside McDonald’s as part of the fight against zero hours and for a decent wage in the Fast Foods Rights Campaign, so although I’m not in the Labour Party, I think that it is a good idea that Corbyn is bringing it to be about the struggle for Socialist ideas and to a leadership contest that seems to be dominated by the Blairites, so I’ll be supporting this motion. Thanks.

[APPLAUSE]

Sister Rachel Mullen – Branch 529: Also Labour Party member. I totally agree with the motion, I would back it 100%. We need a Trade Union movement, not just this Union but the ones across the board, we need the whole Labour Trade Union movement behind the Labour Party only if they will be what they were set up to be, to represent working people in parliament, because in my eyes, being a member over the years from when Tony Blair was in power, it’s just become too much of a red-tainted Tory Party, it’s just really like a shade of blue and I pointed out my CLP when we were having discussions about who we want for the new leader, this was before Jeremy Corbyn put his name forward, well my point was we need to put as much red between us and the Tory Party as possible because we’ve got outsiders looking in, you couldn’t tell the difference half the time, I mean I’ve come about that far to tearing my membership card up because it’s not, they haven’t got policies that represent working class people, but I would say to you all if you’re not happy with the Labour Party, get in there, get in your local meetings, get in your constituency meetings and just change it from the inside, because it’s no good complaining oh, they’re not doing this and not doing that, well what have you done to change it?

At the end of the day you’ve got to go out there, make your mouth go, make your gob go the same you do in your workplaces, otherwise you’ll get nowhere and no answers, so if any of you are thinking about even becoming members or helping out, just go out there, get them to listen to the left-wing alternatives that we want as a Labour Party, not the crap we’ve got now. Thanks.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Adam Brown – Branch 277 (Bristol): First-time Delegate, first-time speaker.

[APPLAUSE]

Thank you. I, 100%, wholeheartedly, agree with this motion. The Labour Party has just moved too far away from the working man. They don’t care about us, all they care about is middle England. All they care about is trying to compete with the Tories on how hard against the poor and the working man they can be. This has to stop. They are not the Labour Party that I grew up with. I grew up with a solid Socialist upbringing and the Labour Party fulfilled my dreams, my ambitions, they don’t do that anymore. It’s time now that we put a bomb underneath them, scared them and told them they’ve got to get back to the old traditional Socialist values. If not, what future is there going to be for our children and our grandchildren, they will just be used as so much chattel in the workplace. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Sam Vickers (full-time Official): I’m getting up here at this moment in time because there’s a number of resolutions that we were going to speak on that’s been ruled out of order, so I’m taking this opportunity to speak on this. One of the things that you can guarantee, that is a guarantee, cast iron guarantee, the Labour Party aren’t going to the Labour Party, back to the Labour Party that we knew and loved, it’s not going to happen. The Labour Party are moving to the right, the Labour Party are looking for those and you’ve heard it all the time, all through the election, they’re centre ground, they’re middle ground, sod everybody underneath that. What’s going to happen to people that’s on benefits, what’s going to happen to people that’s on minimum wages, what’s going to happen to those in poverty? The Labour Party and they keep saying this, are talking about the middle, middle England. They’ll only get elected if middle England vote for us. We need to change the Labour Party, but it’s not going to happen. We need to start a new Party of our own, that represents working people, that’s what we need to do. If Jeremy Corbyn gets elected and we have Richard as his second in command, I might re-join them, but that’s not going to happen either. Richard Corbyn’s not going to get elected, so we might as well move on, look at the alternatives, look at setting up a Party that’s going to represent workers, because the Labour Party isn’t going to do that anymore, it’s quite clear, they’ve said it. All the right-wingers that’s standing for the Labour Party leadership now, that’s what they’re saying, it’s clear as mud.

Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Sean Molloy – Branch 558 (Rathbones, Wakefield): Chair, Council, Delegates. I’m actually going to be the most popular man in this Conference Hall today, because I’m actually opposing this. I believe that the only real opposition to the Tories and the Conservatives are Labour.
Yes, they’ve lost their way, they’ve lost their way, they have, yes, they’ve gone too far to the right, but you cannot get government in this country, in 2015, if you do not gain the centre ground. Under the Blair years we were mugged-over, we thought that they’d get to power and they’d move to the left. They haven’t done that. What they need to do though is be smart, they’re the only real opposition to the Conservatives. The SNP, I believe, will get found out in government. The two programmes I watch on tele, one’s Question Time, the other’s Match of the Day, end of, right, the problem is here, I’m being honest right, I can be honest at Conference right, you need to stick with the Labour Party, because if we start fracturing everything about and start splitting and dividing everything, you’ve no opposition to Tory government or Tory rule and it will get worse. Please oppose that.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Colin Hall – Branch 359 (Region 3): I’ve just got to say this. If we don’t change the Labour Party, then they’ve got to know that we’ve got to go Socialist, because if you let this sorry crowd continue that are in government now, we’re in real trouble. Always remember, it was you lot out there, it was the Unions that brought in the National Health Service, council housing and in the final analysis they’re never going to get rid of zero hours, whether you vote Labour or whether you go Socialist, we need to get rid of these, I’m not going to, you can work it out, we need to get rid of these gentlemen and replace them with something that’s left-wing, that’s going to get rid of zero hours contracts and it’s going to try and re-build this country while we’ve still got a bloody country to re-build, unless of course you want to make sure that if you’re the last man out, you turn out the lights. I’m not going to tell you to oppose or support, you make your own mind up on that, but you think what the alternatives are.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Pat Rowley – No. 2 Region: Mr President, Delegates. Now you’ve heard it all, I haven’t much left to say because all the Delegates that spoke before me have made the point, but if you want to change the Labour Party, you have to begin at the grassroots, you have to go to the ward branches, to the constituency branches, get yourself elected to these, you can change the Labour Party that way. Now I’ve been around the Labour Party for 43 years, since 1968, when I came back to England from New York and the Party now is so thin on the ground. Most wards don’t even quorum, some wards don’t operate at all and the right-wing of the Party which are partly Tory in their own mind, they’re all partly Tory in their own way and they love it that way, because they don’t want, Miliband, Miliband was doomed from Day 1, the right-wing of the Party created doubts about him so that the people would be thinking, then to have Blair to come in to support him at the end, that downed him as well, that downed him. Now Comrades, you cannot do anything if we don’t join the Party at the grassroots level and then we can change this Party, otherwise they will win, because it was a Union vote got Miliband there at the end. The right-wing of the Party detested that, they detested that. You would think that the Party was united inside, it is not, it is not, there is right and left and the right don’t want the left to get anywhere, but support this resolution, but do, for Heaven’s sake, do go to your branches and get joined and attend meetings. If you don’t, you’re handing it over to them and they like it that way. I move, or I support, thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Leon Don – Branch 334: I too would like to second the motion of opposing this movement due to the fact that I also believe that Labour is the best option. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

Sister Janet Phillips – Branch 405: Sorry to be boring you with this. I was on a million people march, well above a million people march, when Tony Blair was in power under Labour and they didn’t listen then, they were in power, they could have stopped all the PFIs, they didn’t, they carried it on, they more or less carried on most of Thatcher’s ideas. They were best friends with the Conservatives in America. Labour, as I see it now, are just business-minded and you’ve got to think what Party do you want, what do you want out of your Party? Do you want somebody who’ll represent society for the majority of the people, even the poorest of the people have got to be valued, or do you want somebody, a Party, that will follow business? This Labour Party as it is at the moment seems to just be pleasing business, it’s frightened of upsetting business, multi-national corporations are running this country and that’s what I believe and unless Labour changes and goes to the left, we’re in real serious trouble. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Chris Lay – Region 2: I’m here to support this motion.

As I said, I went out canvassing on election day and there was just the two of us to do 9,000 houses. I totally, totally agree with what Rachel said earlier and what Pat has just reiterated there. Unless we get involved in the local branches and unless you get involved in your local CLPs, now I’m canvassing my MP, he’s going for the right-wing Liz Kendall, but I’m canvassing him and saying to him actually that’s not good enough, we need to be supporting someone
like Jeremy Corbyn, it would have been great if John McDonnell would have stood, but Jeremy’s just as good. We need to get out there and support Jeremy and try and get him in as our next leader of the Labour Party.

Please support.

[APPLAUSE]

Sister Apryl Walcott – Branch 450: I’m here because I think people, some people may have been a bit confused, because people are saying is it in or out the Party, this kind of motion is to support Jeremy Corbyn, I know some people might not be aware of who he is, but he is an anti-austerity, anti-war man that will stand on the picket lines and that will fight for working class people and I can understand the anger at the Labour Party, I think we all feel the anger at the Labour Party over the past three years, but if we’re not supporting Jeremy Corbyn then we’re leaving it for them, we’re just walking away and we’re giving our best kind of shot at beating the Tories up for some Blairites that don’t care about us, they want us to walk away, but we have to stay there, we have to get people like Jeremy elected, because he will fight for every single one of us as Trade Unionists. Please support.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Okay Conference, okay Conference. The Executive Council would ask Conference to support the call to support Jeremy Corbyn. We believe that there has to be a debate in the Labour Party about where its future lies. Now obviously our General Secretary will be using his closing address to talk about the political situation, so I’m not really going to, I’m not really intending to emphasise too much on that, but I do think it’s important that when you’re voting on this, it’s not about affiliation from the Labour Party, it’s not about where the politics of the Labour Party lie, you’re voting to support the candidature of Jeremy Corbyn and if you believe that the Labour Party needs to change, then he’s the symbol of the change at the top of the Party that could lead to the change within the rest of the Party, which I think we all want to see. So we will be asking you to support the motion, but you have the right to reply because it was, I think it was opposed on the basis we thought there was a disaffiliation and go somewhere else.

Brother Andy Moorhouse – Branch 417 (Hovis, Wigan): Yes. Just clarifying the motion. I do not want us to leave the Labour Party. I want us to fight for the Labour Party that we want, that is what is important. If those at the top of the Labour Party continue to reject us, then we may have to consider our options in looking at other parties, but until such time, we have to fight for the Party that we want, which is the Labour Party. That is the only effective voice that we have at the moment, because that is the one with the majority in parliament, that’s the largest one of the left-wing groups in parliament. If we can get the Party to operate as it used to, as it should, then we have a chance of improving this country rather than letting the Party slide into a second-class Tory Party. Please support this motion.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Okay Conference, to the vote. Those in favour? Those against? That’s carried.

Conference, point of order? Okay.

Brother Steve Nevin – Branch 504: Point of order, please. I think emergency resolution 4, why has this been discarded?

First of all motion 15 was thrown out, motion 16 was thrown out, motion 17 was thrown out and emergency resolution 4, that this Conference agrees following the Labour Party’s defeat in last month’s election standing on a semi-Tory right-leaning manifesto, that this Union reserves the right to support parties and MPs that support our Union’s political policies. We took away ‘affiliation’ and we put ‘support’ in. Now, we’re supposed to be a democratic Union with free speech in a free country, this feels like a dictatorship and the members are being censored and I think personally it stinks.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: I’m going to answer, I’m going to answer you. I mean it should be the Standing Orders that you go and see actually, yes, well that’s fine. If you actually look at Rule 14/15, it actually says that we can only, we can only support or fund those parties or those organisations that are recognised by the TUC or the Labour Party, so you may not realise that it’s a Rule change, but if you want to change Rules, you have to identify the Rule and a couple of the motions that you refer to weren’t ruled as out of order, they were actually withdrawn. I mean, we thought the one on the debate about the future of the Labour Party was one that we wanted to have and we wanted to discuss, because as an Executive Council what we believe the future of the Labour Party should look like is different to what’s currently on offer. We also think the impact of Collins, right, has a significant impact on us that we’re not 100% sure of where we will be in the future, so we’re also, as an Executive, going to consider the impact of Collins on us from a representation point and from a delegation point to the Labour Party Conference and if we as an Executive had been allowed to respond to that one that was withdrawn, you would have found that out, because that’s exactly what
our position was. As an Executive we’re not trying to stop you, we’re not trying to stop people from bringing motions, but you can’t bring a motion that relates to a disaffiliation or a Rule change, there isn’t a Rule change, so that’s the only reason and that’s the only reason why they’ve been ruled out of order, because they’re Rule changes.

Brother Keith Hutchinson – Branch 580 (Greggs of Yorkshire, not Pennines): We’re not asking you to disaffiliate from the Labour Party.

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Keith, I’ve just answered the question, sorry mate.

Brother Keith Hutchinson – Branch 580 (Greggs of Yorkshire, not Pennines): You know, we’re not asking you …

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Keith, I’ve just answered the question. You get one shot at it, right, I’ve answered your question, which obviously was the question I’ve answered, that’s it mate, I’m sorry pal.

Brother Keith Hutchinson – Branch 580 (Greggs of Yorkshire, not Pennines): It’s wrong, it’s gagging people.

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Well it’s not, I’ve just explained, it’s not gagging people, it’s not gagging people. The reality is, the reality is if you want to change Rules, change Rules, don’t try it in a different way, change Rules, that’s what the Rule Book’s there and if you want to change it, then you do it properly, you change the Rule. It is a Rule change, whether you like it or not, it’s a Rule change, it’s a Rule change. I’m sorry you might not like the answer, but it’s the truth, unfortunately.

Okay, okay Conference, do you want to put your Agendas down for some really, really inspiring, an inspiring speech and we’re really, really proud, we’re really, really proud to invite I think probably our first ever elected MP, who’s a Bakers, Food & Allied Workers member and I think …

[APPLAUSE]

I think we’re already seen how, when he was invited to take the oath, he, you’re probably going to speak about it yourself aren’t you, but I think we’ve already seen that he comes from a great Trade Union and he’ll represent our interests and we’re really proud and privileged and honoured to have you here as our first ever elected Labour MP, please address our Conference, welcome Richard Burgon.

[APPLAUSE]

Richard Burgon, Labour MP for Leeds East: Friends, Comrades, fellow members of the Bakers, Food & Allied Workers Union, it’s great to be here today. There isn’t a Union Conference better than the BFAWU Conference …

[APPLAUSE]

It’s the most democratic Conference, it’s the most down-to-earth Conference and certainly it’s one of the most political Conferences as well. Just to introduce myself, as Ian said, my name’s Richard Burgon, I’m the newly-elected Labour MP for my home constituency of Leeds East …

[CHEERS and APPLAUSE]

Thank you, Leeds, Leeds, Leeds. I’m looking out, I’m seeing some people with football tops on, which is good, but I can’t see a Leeds United top out there anywhere, nowhere, nowhere. I’d wear one, it’s a sad state of affairs, but I’m pleased to be here because I’ve had a long working relationship with the Union. For 10 years I was a Trade Union lawyer and I worked very closely with your Union, with our Union and two of the highlights of my working month was always when I went to see Ian Wood, I don’t know if he’s here, at the Pudsey Office of the Union and when I had my rare trips to Fox’s Biscuits at Batley, sometimes at night-time, to see Helena England and the team there, I used to really enjoy that and the reason I’m wearing an all-black outfit today isn’t like Johnny Cash, when Johnny Cash says the reason I wear black is to remind me of all the misery in the world that we need to change, the reason I wear black clothes is to try and look a bit slimmer after all those free biscuits I got from Fox’s Biscuits and elsewhere, but I was really interested to hear the debate that you’ve just had about the Labour Party.

No Party’s perfect and the Labour Party certainly isn’t perfect either, but I think that we’ve got to ask ourselves some questions. I think there are too many people in the Trade Union movement over the years who have blamed others for the rise of New Labour 20 years ago in the mid-90’s, the blunt truth is and we’ve got to be self-critical, is that by and large the Trade Unions assisted in the birth of New Labour and went along with it, with honourable exceptions such as the Bakers Union and the reality is, in the past few years, Unions have got organised, they’ve rejected that model and Unions have taken part more and more effectively, working with other Unions in parliamentary selections to decide who the Labour candidate is, so I don’t think that the way forward is moaning on the sidelines. I know plenty of good comrades who have resigned from the Labour Party over the last 20 years, over various policy decisions, over
various understandable worries about the direction of the Party and sometimes they write long articulate, passionate, principled Socialist letters to the leader of the Labour Party or the General Secretary of the Labour Party saying this is why I resigned and what I say to them when they do that, do you think that makes Blairites sad to receive a letter from a Socialist saying you’ve resigned, no, it makes them happy and they’re also laughing at you for wasting your time writing a long letter that just makes them laugh, that’s the truth.

The Labour Party was obviously set up by the Trade Unions, it’s our Party and so if you don’t like the direction of the Labour Party and I have my concerns just as you do, to leave the Labour Party because of that is the equivalent of leaving your Trade Union because you don’t like the direction of the Trade Union at any given time. It would seem ludicrous to other people to say well, I don’t like what our branch is doing at the moment, so what we should do, because we don’t like what our Trade Union branch is doing at the moment, let’s set up our own branch, let’s set up our own new Union, because we have the power to change the Labour Party, we have the power together if we get stuck-in, not to make it perfect, because no political party is perfect, but to make it what it should be, which is a tool to be used and a weapon to be used in favour of the interests of working people, so why are Trade Unions so important to the Labour Party?

I’d say Trade Unions are important to the Labour Party, not like some of my colleagues might think because they give money to the Labour Party, I think that the real reason the Trade Unions are important to the Labour Party is not even because of nostalgic reasons or historical reasons, the fact, as I mentioned, the Labour Party was set up by the Trade Unions. The real importance of the Trade Unions to the Labour Party and to all of us is that the Trade Unions allow a window into the real world, the real world of millions of people across our country, a real world that is sadly not represented enough in the parliamentary Labour Party today, but there are pieces of good news, there are always pieces of good news in terms of the way the Trade Unions are delivering within the Labour Party. There have been more left-wing Labour MPs selected and elected at this General Election, both in 2010 and in 2015, because the Trade Unions have got our acts together organisationally, we’ve selected the kind of candidates that you want to see, the kind of candidates that will listen to you and the kind of candidates that will work with you, but there’s a long, long way to go and I make no bones about that. So, on election night, the 7th May, I was happy for about four minutes, those four minutes from 10 o’clock for four minutes past 10. On my way down to Leeds Arena to attend the election count, we were thinking that Labour would be the biggest Party in the new parliament and at four minutes past 10 the exit polls came in and they were sobering for those of us that needed sobering up, they were sobering reading, those election exit polls, so why did we lose the General Election though?

I think the fundamental reason that the Labour Party lost the General Election is because after the 2010 General Election we failed to nail the myth that somehow spending money on schools and hospitals and public services somehow caused a global economic crisis. The banking crisis was caused by the bankers, the clue’s in the name, but the Labour Party somehow managed this lie to take hold in the minds of people across our country, assisted by the big business-backed right-wing media, likening the country’s economy to the economy of a house. The economy of a country’s nothing like the economy of a house, the last time I looked, a house and a family couldn’t print money and if they did, they’d be in trouble with the police. A government can print money and that’s totally different, so there’s a lot of myths that we needed to scotch and we failed to do so, so what is the myth that we need to nail now? I know it’s a myth that no-one in this room will believe, but some people out there unfortunately believe it.

The myth that Labour needs to nail now, or we will lose the next General Election as well, is the myth that somehow we lost the last General Election because we were too left-wing, that’s what the newspapers are saying, that’s what certain people in the Labour Party are saying and it’s total absolute nonsense. There’s nothing left-wing particularly about wanting to abolish exploitative zero hours contracts, it’s the right thing to do and it’s common sense. There’s nothing left-wing…  

[APPLAUSE]

…about wanting to save our NHS from privatisation, it’s common sense and it’s the right thing to do. There’s nothing left-wing about introducing a mansion tax, to put £2.5 billion extra into our NHS and there’s nothing left-wing, it’s common sense and it’s the right thing to do to abolish employment tribunal fees and all of those things would have happened if a Labour government, imperfect as it would have been, had been elected the other week. In my constituency of East Leeds where unemployment is higher than most parts in the country, it’s one of the constituencies with the highest rate of unemployment in the country, if Labour had been elected, no-one in East Leeds would have been paying the bedroom tax, so Labour wasn’t perfect, but the fact is…  

[APPLAUSE]
...on a bread and butter basis, life would have been better for people in the workplaces we represent and people in the communities that we represent and seek to represent, but as I say, Labour wasn’t perfect and the job would have been to get a Labour government elected with these policies and then through your Union, through community groups, through anti-cuts groups, put more pressure on a Labour government to deliver more for working people.

[APPLAUSE]

What we can’t do is hand things over for leaders to deliver to us, it’s absolute nonsense, it’s not like going to the supermarket and buying a product. What it’s about is a relationship between the movement and the leader, don’t leave it to leaders to deliver for us because that very rarely ever works. No, we wanted a Labour government and then we wanted to put more pressure, more pressure on that Labour government to do more and more pressure on that Labour government to turn away from an austerity-light agenda. The fact is that the last Labour manifesto had policies that wouldn’t have been dreamt of, but should have been in previous, should have been the kind of policies that would have been in previous manifestos. Without Trade Union involvement, without the involvement of your Union, there wouldn’t have been that policy to abolish exploitative zero hours contracts, there wouldn’t have been the policy to abolish employment tribunal fees, there wouldn’t have been those kind of policies which would have made lives better for a lot of us, but when I’m following the leadership debates in the newspapers and elsewhere, I say this and I know I’m saying this, preaching to the converted here, but we mustn’t heed the call of those in the Labour Party or in the media or anywhere else who want us to travel back in time to the mid 1990’s, to the stale failed Blairite past. It’s a fact that Labour would have won the General Election in 1997 had John Smith lived. It’s a fact that Labour’s ...

[APPLAUSE]

... it’s a fact that Labour’s victories would have been sustainable and we wouldn’t be suffering the damage we’re suffering now if John Smith had been leader and if Tony Blair had never been leader of the Labour Party. I don’t know about you, but I’m much more comfortable with Rupert Murdoch’s newspapers and Rupert Murdoch attacking the Labour leader like they did with Ed Miliband than I am with the Labour leader ending up as godfather to Rupert Murdoch’s child, as was the case with Tony Blair.

[APPLAUSE]

So what’s happened since 2010 and what’s going to happen next? Make no mistake, the government talks about deficit reduction, but deficit reduction isn’t what this government’s economic policy is about. This government’s economic policy is about using the economic crisis, a crisis of the neo-Liberal Capitalist system, as a smoke screen to roll back the gains working class people through our Trade Unions, through our Labour Party, through our own collective efforts, have made since World War II, because it’s a fact that the most class conscious political Party in the mainstream, without a shadow of a doubt, is the Conservative Party, the Party that never sells out the class that it was formed and exists to represent, selling out the class is the job of other mainstream political parties, isn’t it, sometimes, but that’s down to us to stop that happening.

So the Trade Union movement and working class people across our country are now looking down the barrel of a gun, the barrel of a gun of cuts, even more savage than the cuts we’ve seen in the last five years, the barrel of a gun that’s about attacking the Trade Unions’ ability to defend and advance terms and conditions, because what they’re about is finishing the job of privatising our NHS, finishing the job of turning our NHS into an American-style healthcare system, where they feel for your wallet before they feel for your pulse, what they’re about is finishing Thatcher’s attacks on the Trade Unions, so the Trade Unions don’t have the power to stand up legally to the attacks that are coming our way in terms of terms, conditions, jobs and our public services. That’s what they’re about, they’re incredibly class conscious. They’re even about reducing the number of MPs and what that’s about of course is quite simple, they want to reduce the number of Labour MPs and they want to build-in a permanent Conservative majority.

So democracy, as it’s called, democracy and the universal franchise, every person having a vote, was obviously something that we fought hard for. Lots of young people today don’t know that it wasn’t always the case that women have the right to vote. Lots of young people now don’t know that ordinary working class men and women didn’t always have the right to vote. In democracy, everyone having the right to vote, poses a problem for those at the top, the problem being if everyone has a vote then 99% might use that vote in the interests of the 99% and against the interests of the super privileged 1%, so they have to find, the elite have to find a solution to the problem of democracy.

Nye Bevan, a great hero, a lad who left school at the age of 15, a lad who worked in the coal mines, who became a Trade Unionist, became a Trade Union rep, who later became a Labour MP, who later became a Labour cabinet minister and played the most significant role in setting up our NHS said that democracy is a sword pointed at the heart of property power, so the ruling elites have found ways to blunt that sword, where in fact we should be using that
sword to drive it into the heart of the establishment and drive it into the heart of those ideologies that stand in the way of everyone having the life that they deserve and one of the ways they’ve found around the problem of democracy is apathy, that’s true, the newspapers make people apathetic, the newspapers make working class people think oh, it’s not worthwhile voting.

You can bet your bottom dollar that those in whose interests it is to get a Conservative government time after time always vote and never become disillusioned, so one of the solutions they’ve found to the problem, their problem of everyone having a vote, is to make sure that less and less people are convinced that it’s worthwhile voting and it’s only them that gain by that. I’ve heard a lot of talk in the Labour leadership debate about this word aspiration and one Labour leadership candidate said well, we did well in the election, but not, we didn’t reach out to aspirational communities and I found that an offensive insult to my community, because we did do well in my community, we increased our majority and we got a good vote, so the implicit suggestion there … 

[APPLAUSE]

…is that places like East Leeds and places like the places that we all live in somehow aren’t aspirational, well I totally reject politics that is based around …

[APPLAUSE]

…the idea that aspiration is the aspiration of one person from a council estate in East Leeds to become a millionaire when everyone else is left in the situation that they were born in, that’s not the kind of individualist aspiration I want to see at the core of our politics. The kind of aspiration that we should be talking about is collective aspiration. The kind of aspiration we should be talking about is not the aspiration of one in a hundred thousand people to become super rich from an ordinary background, the aspirations we should be talking about are quite simple, the aspiration to be able to send your kid to university without saddling them with loads of debt …. 

[APPLAUSE]

…the aspiration for everyone to have the right to a decent, stable employment with a job that’s a living wage, with a minimum wage of £10 an hour …

[APPLAUSE]

…the aspiration of decent real apprenticeships with good jobs at the end of them and the aspiration for well-funded public services, democratically controlled, in public hands. Now, if these are aspirations that are wild, that are fanciful, that are utopian, then I think we all better give up, but they’re not. These are the aspirations that people out there look to our movement to help them deliver and we shouldn’t hold back in trying to deliver those.

There’s been much talk about left and right. Yes, I’m on the left and proud to be so. Yes, I’m a Socialist, I’m proud to be so, but most people out there and you’ll know this from talking to your reps, don’t think of themselves as left or right, they don’t even know what these phrases mean, but things have changed and in some ways things have changed for the better, because unlike in decades past, if you ask people should the railways be in public ownership, then 73% of people say yes, that’s a left-wing policy whether they realise it or not. If you ask people should bankers be taking home more money than they do without paying their fair share of tax, then most people, even Conservative voters, believe it or not, say no, it’s not right, that shouldn’t be happening, so for left-wing policies such as supporting everyone being paid the living wage, there is support out there, but I think the point of a political party isn’t just to reflect peoples’ opinions as they are now, because if that were the case there wouldn’t be a need for political parties, the point of a political party is also to shape the political consensus, that’s what it’s about, so Labour does need to be bold, Labour does need to take a lead with things, but your role is very important in that. Give your MPs a hard time, give your Labour MPs a hard time.

If they’re not standing up for the policies that you think they should, go and see them in their constituency surgeries, write to them, lobby them and give them a hard time, take part in the political process, because politics is too important just to be left to politicians. So we’re facing down the barrel of a gun over the next five years. Neoliberalism, because that’s what it is, the idea and a great man once said that neoliberalism, neoliberal economics can be defined as the desire to turn the entire world into private property, is coming our way with more force than it has done for many a year. We need to blow out the water the neoliberal economic consensus, the free market economic consensus, it’s existed in this country since 1979, we need to defeat that, because the free market, leaving things to the market won’t lead to better lives for the people we represent or for your members. So we’re in a very difficult situation. The defeat was hard on 7th May and the defeat’s hard for all of those who are going to suffer the consequences of that election defeat. People will still be paying the bedroom tax. People will see the services cut.
I believe that the cuts that are coming the way of local councils demand an approach from Labour councils that the Labour councils should be working together to find an effective way to resist those cuts, because we can’t pretend that services aren’t going to be damaged. For example, the council in my area, Leeds City Council, has suffered cuts of nearly 50% in its funding and there’s more cuts to come. The approach needs to be political, the resistance needs to be political, because if not, there’s no point in being a council and there’s no point in being a councillor, that’s the truth of things. So in some ways we’re on the defensive now, the attacks are coming our way, but I think and I know that Ian and Ronnie think, that we need to attack them as well. I’m looking forward to being on the anti-austerity march, the People’s Assembly Against Austerity March on 20th June and hope to see as many of you there as possible. We need to fight back, we need to resist and we need to attack. When I sit on the House of Commons benches and look across at the Conservatives, I don’t find it a titillating, amusing game like some people do. I’m looking across at people I despise and I make no apology for that and the reason I despise them is this, wouldn’t you despise people and don’t you despise people who are sticking the boot into your friends, family, neighbours and work colleagues …

[APPLAUSE]

…because that’s what they’re doing, but the battles that we have to fight won’t be won in the Chamber of the House of Commons alone.

The battles that we have to fight will be won in the workplace and on the streets and we all know, don’t we, we all know who the second most popular party in working class areas by and large now is, in areas across the country, in many areas across the country, the second most popular political party unfortunately is UKIP and this is an argument that you’re in a really good position to win with your work colleagues and your neighbours. People think that UKIP are an anti-sanction party, it couldn’t be further from the truth. Nigel Farage couldn’t be any more, couldn’t be any more establishment if he tried. A public school educated banker who was a member of the Conservative Party and harboured dreams of becoming a Conservative MP, but when it didn’t work out, he decided to get involved with something else instead. For all their talk of the Peoples’ Army and this and that, what they stand for is the same Thatcherite free market neoliberal economics that the Conservative Party stands for, so we need to make that clear to our friends and neighbours.

What I also think we need to do as a movement and this may be more controversial, is we need a Socialist critique of the European Union, I really do think we do, because what’s happened is in the political mainstream, the only people criticising the European Union are free marketers and nationalists. People have got to remember that in the 1970’s it was a Socialist critique of the European Union that was predominant, so we need to think about lots of things which some people in our movement may find uncomfortable to think about. We need to think about does the European Union in as it stands work in the favour of the interests of working class people. I think we know there are plenty of judgements against collective agreements and against the interests of Trade Unions that prove that it’s not currently working fundamentally in the favour of working class people. It’s an anti-democratic, capitalist institution. We need a Socialist critique of it. I do think we need to talk about does the free movement of labour, in whose interest the free movement of labour in the European Union work.

My argument is this, the free movement of labour doesn’t fundamentally work in the interests of workers who happen to be from Britain. The free movement of labour doesn’t work fundamentally in the interests of workers who happen to be from Eastern Europe. The free movement of labour as it stands works fundamentally in the interests of big business and that’s why they support it, so we should be saying that if the free movement of labour exists, if it’s going to exist, then a law should be passed saying that every worker, regardless of national origin, is entitled to the same pay, terms and conditions as the workers in the country of destination …

[APPLAUSE]

…and then unscrupulous bosses can’t use the free movement of labour to undercut terms and conditions. So there are plenty of things to get our teeth around and I can understand, I can understand why people feel let down by Labour. I feel let down by the voters as well actually, because if the opinion polls had been true, we’d have had a Labour government that we could put pressure on to deliver more for our people, but if in this leadership election Labour takes the decision to travel back in time to Blairism, if Labour takes that decision, then I think electoral oblivion lies in our path. Make no mistake, Labour was smashed in Scotland, but why was it smashed? Well firstly, firstly, the Labour Party handled, the Labour leadership handled the independence referendum in Scotland incredibly badly, it was absolutely ridiculous to share a platform with Nick Clegg and it was absolutely even more disgraceful to share a platform with David Cameron …

[APPLAUSE]
…there were Socialist and progressive arguments for an independence vote, but there were also Socialist and progressive arguments for a no vote as well. I take the view that the real division in our society isn’t based upon geography, the real division in our society is based upon economic class. I believe that a bus driver or a baker in Glasgow has more in common with a bus driver or baker in Newcastle than either of them do with a Scottish multi-millionaire like Brian Souter who owns Stagecoach and who funded the SMP …

[APPLAUSE]

…and that’s a Socialist argument we should have been making. What Labour shouldn’t have been doing is lining up with members of the political establishment and the big business elite to make an establishment case for a no vote, that guaranteed a poorer result for the no vote than should have been the case and it also didn’t help in the General Election that came shortly after, but I’m not a person that believes that Labour’s destruction in Scotland on 7th May was due alone to mishandling the independence referendum. I believe that the conditions for Labour’s catastrophe were sown more than 20 years ago when Tony Blair became leader of the Labour Party in 1994 …

[APPLAUSE]

…because and we all know it from our own areas as well, the view of the Blairites, the views of the New Labourites was this, well, you can take people in East Leeds for granted, they’ve nowhere else to go, you can take people in Scotland for granted, they’ve nowhere else to go, you can take people for granted in the North East or in the middle of London because they’ve got nowhere else to go, when the truth is they have got somewhere else to go, the somewhere else they have to go is either by not voting, by voting UKIP or in Scotland by voting for the SMP and I think it’s a disgrace when you take your most loyal supporters for granted. Some people were criticising me for campaigning so hard in a seat that’s never been held by anybody else other than Labour, but I make no apologies for that …

[APPLAUSE]

… make no apologies for it whatsoever. Firstly, in life and in politics, nothing is guaranteed, but secondly, I want to show respect to the people in East Leeds and across the country who’ve stayed loyal to Labour through thick and thin. I want to show respect to the people who voted with their consciences General Election after General Election and didn’t vote on the off chance of making a quick buck themselves at the expense of their neighbours.

One last thing, I think, before I finish. In this leadership election people are saying, as I mentioned earlier, oh Labour lost because we were too left-wing, obviously that’s total nonsense from our political perspective, but even logically forgetting our politics, it’s nonsense. When I was knocking on doors and I knocked on plenty of them in my own constituency and in marginal constituencies that sadly we lost, the reason people giving for not voting Labour wasn’t oh, you’re too extreme, you’re too left-wing, you’re like Communists almost, you know, foaming at the mouth revolutionaries, they weren’t saying that to us, the thing that I heard time and time again when people were explaining why they didn’t want to vote Labour, was because in their words ‘you’re all the same’, yes? Now, I don’t believe it’s true that we’re all the same, I believe that’s about the media sowing cynicism which stops Labour people voting Labour, but the perception with too many people was that we’re all the same and so those people in the Labour Party who think the solution to an election defeat which occurred because too many people think we’re all the same, to those who think the solution that is to be even more similar to the Tories, I say you’re in cloud cuckoo land and you’re going to take us down a path of electoral disaster.

The Blairites have no monopoly on electoral success. Five million votes were lost under New Labour, four million of those were lost under Tony Blair. I believe that people want a politics and people want politicians who say what they think. I don’t believe that people expect to agree with everything that their MP or party leader says, but I do think people expect us to talk straight and say what we think. One of the many reasons, one of the many reasons that politicians are held in such low regard is because they’re trying to please everybody all the time. As Nye Bevan said, if you try and walk down the middle of the road, you get run down by both sides. So, thank you for your patience in my lengthy address. Next time I come back, I want to see some Leeds United shirts in the audience, but also I’m looking forward …

[APPLAUSE]

…I’m looking forward to not only seeing you fight against this government, I’m looking forward to fighting alongside you against the government, because the truth is this, if we don’t win these battles, if we don’t win the battle to save our NHS, if we don’t win the battle to keep our Trade Unions as organisations that can fight back against the bosses and against the government, then not only will history not forgive us, what’s more we won’t deserve to be forgiven. Onwards to the fight, comrades, onwards to victory.

[APPLAUSE]
Brother Ian Hodson, National President: I told you, a popular MP.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ronnie Draper, General Secretary: Right, Richard, inspiring speech, fantastic and as I say, I would echo everything Ian said about a Trade Union member, of this Trade Union, giving an address like that is fantastic. We’ve got a few gifts, you’ve been busy …


Brother Ronnie Draper, General Secretary: doing all the things in the House of Commons, all the gifts that you get. First of all we’ve got one of our limited edition Bakers Union T-shirts for when you’re out on the marches, the Peoples’ Assembly …


[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ronnie Draper, General Secretary: I would actually like to see you wear it in the House of Commons, but I believe the Speaker would name you for being improperly dressed. We’ve also got you a waterproof jacket, which probably would come in handy with all the crocodile tears you’re going to get across the benches, one of our benches for there. We’ve also got, which is probably one of the biggest, it’s a limited edition pewter Baker. I’m not going to unpack it because it’s got loads of stuff around it, but take it that they’re very good. Lots and lots of packaging around it. It explains the history of our Union, where we came from, cellar baking, we hope it takes pride of place somewhere either in your office or your home and it reminds you of the day that you spent with the Bakers, Food & Allied Workers Union fellow members and the last one, but you did say that you enjoyed the nights when you used to go to Fox’s Biscuits, so rather than you go over there tonight on the way home, Helena incidentally is at the back somewhere and so’s Ian Woods, both here, Fox’s Biscuits made by Trade Union members …


Brother Ronnie Draper, General Secretary: I believe it’s the most valuable gift that you’ll get and you don’t need to tell anyone.


[APPLAUSE]

Thanks so much and thanks for your hospitality. I enjoy biscuits so much that next time I come back, the T-shirt you’ll have to give me won’t be an XL, the T-shirt you’ll have to give me will be an FB, work out for yourself, work out for yourself what that stands for …

Brother Ronnie Draper, General Secretary: Friend of the Bakers.

Richard Burgon, Labour MP for Leeds East: Friend of the Bakers. Last night by the way, on the subject of gifts, last night I was up late finishing the register of MPs interests, it had to be handed in by midnight last night so that MPs who have second jobs can talk about their second jobs, so that MPs who have shares can talk about the shares they’ve got, so MPs who are directors of companies can talk about that, but I was pleased that the paraphrase Oscar Wilde said at the customs didn’t he, I’ve nothing to declare apart from my genius. I can’t quite say that, but I have to say that on my declaration form last night I had nothing to declare apart from the support I’m proud to get from the Trade Unions. Thank you very much.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ronnie Draper, General Secretary: Well done.

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Okay Conference, brew time. 20 to. Back in …

[BREAK]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: I’d like to bring the General Secretary in.

Brother Ronnie Draper, General Secretary: Take my sweet out of my mouth, so it doesn’t shoot out there and hit somebody. We’re going to just do a couple of presentations while Richard’s here, we’re going to use his good offices to make some awards to deserving causes. So first of all, I’ve got a 20 year badge for Kevin Clarke, who’s the Branch Secretary at Warburtons in Wednesbury, so I can’t see because the lights are blinding me but are you out there, Kev, I don’t know how I’m missing you but can you come down and get your 20 year badge off Richard.

[APPLAUSE and CHEERS]

Richard Burgon, Labour MP for Leeds East: Congratulations, well done!
Brother Ronnie Draper, General Secretary: Where’s John? Oh right, that’s great, okay.

[APPLAUSE]

Right and the second one I’ve got is Lisa Greenfield, who I think’s over there doing the laundry, are you taking laundry in or something? Lisa is one of our project workers, Richard, who works for the Union Learning Services and she’s the type of person you’ll always hear before you see her. So Lisa Greenfield, 20 year badge.

[APPLAUSE]

And, well the next one’s not a, that’s it now, we’ve finished, but what I will say is we’ve got John, you’ve had another 20 year badge and I was asked to just mention it and that was Gary Johnston, I think he’s sat at the back there, Gary Johnston received his 20 year badge in between Conference, I’ve obviously known Gary for a long time, another one of those people that you’ll hear before you see them, but he’s been an Officer of the Union for quite a long time, so Gary, congratulations on achieving 20 years.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Okay, before we turn to the Agendas, okay, these are the nominations for the Labour Party. If you want to withdraw, you shout out withdraw. On the Labour Party, if you’re not a member of the Labour Party, you can’t attend Conference, you have to be a member of the Labour Party, so if your name’s put down and you’re not a current member, then you’ll have to withdraw, yes? Okay, so we’ve got the names of Joe Knapper, withdraw, Pauline McCarthy, Sarah Woolley, Rachel Mullen, okay, George Atwall, Pauline Nazir, Jack Lee, Mandy Ambrose, Jackie Barnwell, Andy Moorhouse, Dermy Best, Imran Hussain, Laura Graham, Gary Johnston, Christine Marsh. Okay.

Brother Ronnie Draper, General Secretary: Did we wake you up?

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: TUC. Sarah Woolley, Mark McHugh, Lizzie Dinnin, Pauline McCarthy, George Atwall, Mandy Ambrose, Apryl Walcott, Vince Payne, Jackie Barnwell, Marilyn McCarthy, Pauline Nazir, John James, Christopher Lay, Dave Dash, John Newman.

Okay Conference, motion 20.

20 Fast Food Companies Boycott

Branch 701

That this conference agrees to boycott companies using the exploitative zero hours contracts. We ask that for the duration of Annual Conference, and beyond our conference, we avoid using high street chains, particularly the food industry, such as McDonalds, Burger King, Domino’s Pizza, Pizza Hut and J.D Wetherspoon. As a union leading the way in highlighting these horrid contracts in the food industry, we must stand by our commitments and ban the use of Food Establishments that use zero hour contracts.

Brother Kevin Flood – Branch 701 (No. 7 Region): Afternoon, Conference. I’m bringing this motion to Conference with the view of ending the use of establishments that exploit workers with terrible zero hour contracts. As a Union we’ve been moving away from the fight against zero hour contracts in the fast food industry. As a Region in No. 7, we feel it’s time for us to put our money where our mouth is and stop using the establishments that use these zero hour contracts, so during the period of Conference we’re urging Delegates to avoid and stop using the establishments such as these. Also in the motion we urge the National Executive not to use these food establishments when they’re sitting as a National Executive. Please support.

[APPLAUSE]


Sister Lorna McKinnon – Branch 500: I just wanted to oppose this motion. Boycotting the fast food outlets would obstruct the objective, I think. If workers had a real choice in the matter, I’m sure they wouldn’t actually want to be working in a place that pays minimum wage and is on zero hours contracts. As a Union we’ve been moving away from the fight against zero hour contracts in the fast food industry. As a Region in No. 7, we feel it’s time for us to put our money where our mouth is and stop using the establishments that use these zero hour contracts, so during the period of Conference we’re urging Delegates to avoid and stop using the establishments such as these. Also in the motion we urge the National Executive not to use these food establishments when they’re sitting as a National Executive. Please support.

[APPLAUSE]

I’m paid minimum wage, I’m on a zero hours contract, health and safety’s a massive issue for us, we work in like freezing conditions in the winter and like sweltering heat in the summer-time, we also have to clear the back of our fridges, we have to clear that ice away at the back of the fridge by stabbing at it with a knife, we don’t have any protective wear on or anything like that.

One of my workmates, who joined the Union last week actually, he had to go to hospital after he sliced the top of his finger off on a slicing machine, but he was just instructed by my boss to just make his own way to hospital. My boss was only concerned about like getting his shift covered. My boss is also sexist and he’s racist and when workers are faced with that kind of reality in the workplace every day, it is totally essential that there are people in close contact with them to provide an alternative and politicise them into fighting back. Just to give you an example as well, on the national or rather international day of action on 15th April, we marched to different various fast food outlets and some comrades went inside to speak to the workers, tell them why we were there, give them information, a person to contact and we also occupied KFC …

[APPLAUSE]

but and the workers in KFC were just like smiling from ear to ear when they were faced with this really massive group of people yelling things like £10 an hour now and end to zero hours, so yes, practising a boycott of these outlets by the very people that can help them the most will massively obstruct the vital process of recruitment to the Union and organisation in the workplace, I think, so …

[APPLAUSE]

Sister Marilyn McCarthy – Branch 450 (Manchester): Sorry, Kevin, I’m up here to oppose this. If we stop, try and stop people from using McDonald’s, my husband’s going to be out of work. He’s a Bakers Union member, as most of you know and they make the buns for McDonald’s, so on that I have to oppose it.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Sean Molloy – Branch 558 (Rathbones, Wakefield): [unclear].

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Hold on a sec.

Brother Sean Molloy – Branch 558 (Rathbones, Wakefield): Yes, I looked at this and I’ll be honest, a big part of me does actually like it. I like the mentality behind it and I like what it says, I actually do, a big part of me does like it, however, unfortunately I’m going to have to oppose it because I feel that this flogs the very people we’re meant to protect and I’ll give you an example. Wetherspoons, this week, we’re here, there’s 300 people whatever at Conference, yes? and they’ll be using the facilities at Southport. We’ve had the Lord Mayor here, he’s been like publically saying oh, it’s great for you to come here, so from a business sense of view, I don’t think it makes a great, it isn’t a positive move because you’ve got like Chantel, she probably works in Wetherspoons, she’s been flexed up this week to get her hours in, you’ve got Ronald, he comes from Latvia, he’s working at Pizza Hut, he’s been flexed up to get his hours in because we’re here and you’ve got Daniel who’s from Africa and he’s working at McDonald’s because we’re here and he’s been flexed up as well. So I can sense and see a headline in the local media if we sort of like put this through today. Maybe Chantel who works in Wetherspoons, her gaffer says I’m not paying you for the full week, you’ve got childcare, you’ve had to sort yourself out, but that lot in there have abolished drinking in here, so she’s going to turn around and say well, what about my, I’ve been paying out, I’ve paid out my childcare, I’ve rearranged my lifestyle for the week and they say well, I’m sorry but you’re on one of those contracts, one of these contracts says I can do this, but what I’ll do Chantel, is I’ll pay you an extra day’s pay if you just hang around for the local media and then the headline in the local media is this, the Bakers Union’s put me on the breadline. Please oppose this motion, even though I agree with some of it.

[APPLAUSE]

Sister Toni Bruce – Branch 500: Hello, Conference. First-time Delegate, first-time speaker …

[APPLAUSE]

…so I’m a bit nervous. I would like to oppose this motion. According to recent statistics, the Trade Union membership in the food service industry stands at 4%, which isn’t great and it’s also the lowest across all sectors. The people who work in these, the kind of establishments this motion is proposing to boycott are exactly the people we need to be supporting, encouraging to join the Union, raising awareness in the work we do. A boycott amongst our numbers wouldn’t affect the big businesses profits. As Lorna, who was on before me, mentioned before on the global day of action back in April, we made noise outside four McDonald’s across the city of Glasgow and occupied a KFC, letting the workers know we were there for them and we were greeted at first with surprise, but then with acceptance and joy
that we were doing what we were doing. A boycott is not the way. We are the very people who have the passion and the shared experience to fight their corner. A little word here and there goes a long way and we can’t lift ourselves out from these situations. Trust me, I’m a worker on a zero hours contract and minimum wage and I don’t feel comfortable with this motion. Please oppose. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Andy Moorhouse – Branch 417 (Hovis, Wigan): Hello again, Conference. I’m here to oppose this motion on the practicalities that it’s not going to be effective. McDonald’s etc are nasty, exploitative organisations. If we boycott them, are they really going to notice it, aren’t they? There’s only 20,000 of us, it’s not going to be very effective. Far more effective is the campaign that we’re running, in the exit polls, embarrassing them, as the terrible tragedy of the two kids who died on holiday in Greece and Thomson’s, it is publicity that has the effect on these companies. A boycott will not have an effect. The campaign which publicises what they’re up to, that is far more effective, as like I said, look what’s happened to Thomson’s now after the massive embarrassment of that court case, they are jumping through hoops to try and be, look like goodies. Publicity is a far more effective weapon than boycotting. Please reject this motion.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Mark McHugh – Branch 503 (speaking on behalf of the Executive Council): The EC understand the sentiment behind the motion, however the EC opposes this motion on the grounds that it’s these very companies that we’re trying to organise in. By boycotting these companies, we’d be sending out the wrong message to new and potential members in this difficult sector. If we had to boycott companies such as McDonald’s, Burger King and KFC, then the conditions of the young workers in these places would only deteriorate. The best way to tackle these companies would be to organise the young workers in this industry. This will not only secure a foothold for future employees in McDonald’s, Burger King and KFC and the likes, with improved terms and conditions, but most importantly improve their future and encourage activists for our Trade Union. Please oppose.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Right of reply?

Brother Kevin Flood – Branch 701 (No. 7 Region): Conference, the motion isn’t about not organising, the motion’s about organising. We can’t go and organise these places and then go and sit in a McDonald’s and then go and sit in a Wetherspoons and drink beer. That’s, there are people that are doing it, we can’t do that. The last motion in the Conference this year is about local pubs shutting down, don’t go to Wetherspoons, go to your local pub. There’s a Greggs down the road there, there’s plenty of Greggs members in here, that’s shutting down, don’t go to McDonald’s, go to Greggs. Please support.

[APPLAUSE]


21 Union Independence Greggs 580

That this conference agrees that the national officials and the EC do everything within its powers to keep this union independent.

Brother Keith Hutchinson – Branch 580 (Greggs of Yorkshire, not Pennines): Brothers, Sisters, Platform. I don’t need a paper in front of me for this one, this one should be on all our hearts. The Bakers Union is the finest Union out, it supports its members, it fights for the rights of the people that pay their contributions. We know we’ve gone through and are going through hard times, but I believe we’re turning a corner. Only in Greggs of Yorkshire over the last month and Ian, I can waffle and you can’t do a thing about it, we made 30 members around the Nottingham area and throughout the country you hear positive stories of what they call it, of recruitment, Sean, Rathbones, I can only talk for our area, the tremendous work he’s doing, he’s nearly doubled his membership, well done, Sean.

I’m saying this from the heart, you know, you think back, some of us in this room are not as old as me, but you go back to Joe, you go back further to Terry O’Neill and if anybody ever met Terry O’Neill, he frightened you to death on your first Conference, he was a big guy, but these people fought to make this Trade Union the best Trade Union out. Yes, we’re suffering because of redundancies, because of closures, but the work that Ian’s doing, the work that we’re doing on fast food which we spoke about, when we go out, I went out last year with Ian and with quite a few colleagues and we went around London protesting, £10 an hour, we spoke about £10 an hour.
You know, there’s one guy out there, Pat Rowley, over 80, he walked all the way around, what a privilege to walk with a guy, 80 year old, well done Pat.

[APPLAUSE]

Well done, lad, but that is what this Union’s about and then you hear worrying statements and Ronnie’s right when he gets worried about membership and money, because that’s his job, that’s his role, we’d be kicking him if he didn’t do that, but this resolution is saying one thing, it’s the EC, the Executive, the National President, the General Secretary, you as well, we’re all in power to do one thing, to recruit, to recruit, to recruit. Membership means survival, we all need to go back from this Conference, we need to look into our branches and we’re to think will he join, is he a member, no he isn’t a member, right, see what we can do. We’ve had the discussions on whether they should pay £1.85, £2.50 are we going to go by another 10p, I believe and I believe very strongly and it’ll be backed up by, we recruit members on 16 hours, but half the time the membership and I was talking to a young member in my Branch who said you know, we don’t communicate properly, the young people, but we are trying and end of the day, we need to encourage these people to join the Trade Union, we need to be telling them the benefits, we need to be telling them being a Trade Union member, look at the positives, because I believe and I believe people in this room do, an independent Bakers Union is the only way forward, we don’t want to be part of Unite, we don’t want to be part of any other Trade Union, because if you are, I’ll tell you what, this Conference won’t be here I don’t believe and if you want a full-time Official, you might not have as many or you might get a letter.

I once went round to one of the shops and the guy I was speaking to, one of my Stewards came around and I said go on, you see if you can recruit him, so we started talking and he said I don’t want to talk to a Trade Union and we said why, what’s wrong? I stepped in, me with my big gob as usual and said what’s wrong, he said well, I’ve been in Unison, I think it was and he said I had some trouble and do you know what, I got a letter. I think we spoke about it this morning, you don’t get a letter with the Bakers Union, you pick the ‘phone up, you get a full-time Official. You pick the ‘phone up and if you want, you get the National President or the General Secretary. There’s a lot of young and up and coming people that can take up jobs as full-time Officials. Look at the tremendous work Sarah Woolley’s doing, I know that she’ll make a good full-time Official and I know she’s desperate, when one comes up that she’s going to apply and hopefully she will get that position, but the only way that this is going to happen is by us being independent, by you, by everybody else, getting out there. Let’s get the membership, let’s keep this Union an independent Trade Union and let’s be proud of it. Please support this motion. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: You were right, you can waffle. Seconder? Are you seconding it? Okay.

Brother Neil Shackleton – Branch 580 (Greggs): Chair, Conference. I’m here to support Keith’s motion. I’ve only been in the Union for six years. I’ve received some fantastic training, I did some shops training Steward, health and safety and it’s fantastic. If you go to Unite or to UCM, is anybody that’s up and coming behind me going to receive the same training if we join? So, I totally support Keith in what he said, by keeping us independent. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Sean Molloy – Branch 558 (Rathbones, Wakefield): Can I just ask the Chair, can I give my opinion on this?

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: That’s what you’re there for.

Brother Sean Molloy – Branch 558 (Rathbones, Wakefield): Yes, thank you, yes. I like being independent. I think we’ve got a bit of swagger and a bit of guile about us that makes us independent. My full-time Official’s brilliant, we clash but he normally is, but we’re independent and when we sit down with the top boys, it clearly comes across that we’re an independent Trade Union. However, I want to sacrifice that independence for the sake of a member. Now, there was a guy at Bradford, British Bakeries, Bradford called Pete Barszczak and there was long legal wrangling with the company about his dismissal, which this Trade Union won. Now, I love the idea of being independent as long as we don’t sacrifice the benefits of our membership, because that’s what we’re about. We’re about, we’re a Trade Union and it’s about your members and making sure you do the best for your members, so if independence is a big issue, I’d waive that to make sure that the working man always survives and wins.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Pat Rowley – No. 2 Region: Comrades, Delegates, Mr President. When we were debating the Treasurer’s Report this morning, we discussed all of these things and to keep ourselves independent we would need a Labour government to repeal the laws that are crippling our Union. We need that, we didn’t get it, the people haven’t done it and therefore we’re here where we are, in a dangerous position, quite dangerous, but we will have to live within our means and the only way we can survive is by membership, membership, that’s what it’s like, it’s like sowing seed in your garden,
if it doesn’t grow, you won’t have a crop and if we can’t get young people to join our Union and make sure that we have a Union that’s fit to stay on its own, vote for independence, or vote for, to join another Union, all that we’ll be looking for is the 18,000 or 20,000 members we have, that’s all they want and a lot of people that work in our Union, not all of them will get jobs in this amalgamation or anything like that if it happened, so I have to say to all of you, do everything you can, it’s no good shouting at the EC or the General Secretary or the National President, we have a responsibility as well as them to go out and work and campaign and try to get members in this Union. I support this resolution. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: General Secretary.

Brother Ronnie Draper, General Secretary: Thank you, Chair. We would ask Conference to support the motion and it goes without saying, given that it mentions us, that both Ian and myself and the Executive are absolutely committed to this motion. You know, I was proud in 1973 on my first day in work in Scotts Bakery in Liverpool, to join this Union, over 40 years ago and I’m still a member. I’m even more proud to lead the Union towards its 170th anniversary and that’ll be a proud moment for me too, but of course it’s not just about the actions of National Officers that’ll determine independence of this great Union. It’s going to need all of us believing that our organisation can continue to make a difference, but belief alone, Comrades, will never ensure success. We need collective action from every single person in this room and other activists back at the ranch to guarantee our survival.

We need members dedicated to organised to win, building our membership and making the base figure focussed on a continued growth and not just this week or next week and growth is the absolute goal of this Executive. If you listened, if you sat around a table at our Executive meetings and listened to the things that we do, you would see the dedication that is on these people behind me and what this Union means to them. Recently, we’ve employed Laura Graham at the back in No. 7 Region, a bold step based on the membership we’ve got, but what we’ve done is we’ve gone to growth because we are committed to doing it and I’ve got to say, she’s doing an absolutely excellent job in No. 7 and long may that continue.

[APPLAUSE]

We took the bold step of bringing somebody in and we’re ballots next week on a job in No. 3 Region because John Higgins is going to retire next June and instead of bringing a replacement in in March, we are bringing a replacement in in August and why are we doing that, because it’s an area which is stagnating under a pile of grievances and what we’re trying to do is continue the growth that we’ve been building over the years, we’re bringing somebody in who’s going to go for growth and as I say, once again it’s a bold move. We’ve accepted some help from the Scottish TUC, we haven’t been a member of the Scottish TUC long, Jim McLelland and I were the ones who went along and got us in the Scottish TUC and yet the Scottish TUC have seen the work that this Union’s done and offered help to us to finance the organisation within Scotland and if you look at the masses of outside help that we’ve had to assist with our campaigning and organising within the fast food sector, all to do with growing and sustaining this organisation, it’ll give you an idea what we are doing to keep the Bakers, Food & Allied Workers Union independent and if you talk to any of our full-time Officials and in particular their committee members, they’ll tell you how we, as an Executive, are changing organisational and cultural aspects of their jobs, with the roles more emphasised on organising recruitment and retention. Trying to remove parochialism in favour of an inter-regional campaign structure, ending that age-old culture of the job being swings and roundabouts and replacing it with a, utilising time to the best of their abilities and ensuring there’s time set aside for recruitment. Demanding a culture of responsibility and accountability and there is a role for all of you when this happens.

Like Regional Boards before them, Regional Councils have two main responsibilities. It was always the aspects of finance and of recruitment, they were the two main pillars of Regional Councils, but I go to Regional Councils and I don’t see so much now where people question the campaigns, where are full-time Officials, what are they doing, what campaigns, what help you can give them and we want that situation to be rectified. I sat in a debate for about three-quarters of an hour at No. 2 Regional Council a few quarters ago and it was absolutely invigorating to sit there while they talked to their Officials about how they see the shape of organising within that Region and of course full-time Officials getting involved and that debate, but now, Comrades, is a time for all hands to the pumps and like it’s never been done before. There’ll be no hiding place for any of us, no scope for any of us to be carrying passengers and there’ll be certainly no place in our organisation for anybody who is not absolutely committed to independence of our structure. The Executive Council will be casting a more critical eye over what’s happening nationwide so far as recruitment is concerned and responding accordingly. If there’s lack, we will attack.
We need to make this happen and I want to finish off, Chair, by taking a quote from my predecessor, Joe Marino, but maybe bastardising it a little bit. Joe Marino used to talk about what happened if you made one member, but let me put something to you. If every Region and we have seven Regions, if every Region made a nett increase in membership of three members per week, we’re not talking vast amounts, three members in a Region per week, we’ll see the Union grow by 1100 members per year. That’s achievable. It’s not an ambitious, an over-ambitious target and neither should it be seen as a ceiling to where we want to be, but one that is absolutely wholly achievable. You know, despite horrendous membership loss and I said it earlier on, No. 3 Region can make that figure annually on their own, so why can’t we do it elsewhere?, but I don’t want to again seem to be saying that No. 3, what they do, should be something to match, I’m saying that is something we should be seeking to surpass in every Region, but it’ll need the assistance of all of us, everybody getting involved in our campaigns.

Try to minimise, if you can as activists, try and minimise the amount of times you’ve got to call an Official into a Branch. We spend thousands of pounds a year on training reps, Branch Secretaries, Shop Stewards, Health and Safety reps, Learner reps. We’ve got our main tutor down at the end there, Willie Colquhoun who actually delivers, I know the class of training that he delivers, but he delivers it to make sure that we can stand on our own two feet as Branches instead of being relied upon the crutch of a full-time Official to come in, to lean on. The more time that you can dedicate to doing the things in your own Branch, to building on the stuff that Willie teaches, the less time we will need to have Officials going in and dealing with things that there’s no need really for them to deal with and with that, more time for them to get out organising, more time for them to go out recruiting, more time for them to take part in the campaigns like the Fast Foods Campaign, that’s what we want and that’s another way that you can help, Comrades.

At Regional Council, don’t be afraid and I don’t want anybody to be afraid to question what organising’s gone on and how many members have been made and above all, recruit in your own Branches and offer your assistance to the Officials on outside organising campaigns, because that is the way that we will ensure the survival of this great Union. Conference, there is the challenge that the mover has put to you. The Executive and the National Officers support that and also put it to you. I hope it’s a challenge that everybody in this room’s prepared to pick up. If you want to remain independent, then we’ve got to work at it. Please support.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Okay Conference, to the vote. Those in favour? Anybody daft enough to be against? That’s carried, unanimously. 22.

**22 Female Membership**

*Executive Council*

*That this conference recognises the fall in female membership and agrees to work to turn this around to ensure a more balanced membership of males and females as there once was.*

**Sister Sarah Woolley, speaking on behalf of the Executive Council:** Moving motion 22. Conference, there was a time when our Union had nearly as many female members and activists as males, but that has now changed. Last year, our quality audit was undertaken and it showed that female membership had fallen to 37%, but more worrying were the figures that showed there are 3½ male Branch Secretaries, you decide which half and four male Shop Stewards for every female, one of each that we have, not to mention we only have two full-time Officers that are women and no National Officers have ever been female.

Now, I don’t believe this is because we are in a male-dominated industry anymore, you only have to look at Greggs especially in the shops to see there are plenty of potential female members out there, they just need to be inspired to join and become active within our Union and there are plenty of women here at Conference that are already doing that, but how are Branches communicating with these potential female members and engaging the ones that we have? Is your Branch seen as the boys club or one that’s inclusive of anyone and nurtures everyone, offering support and guidance to those who want to go further without feeling threatened of what it may mean for you? I’d like everyone to think about their Branch and its set-up. What can you as a member, shop or Health and Safety Steward or Branch Secretary do differently?

I challenge you all to go away to speak to that woman that you see every day but don’t really know, ask her if she is in the Union and if she’s active or not and if she’s not in the Union, find out why and make changes within your Branches needed to get them involved and help them progress and for any woman sat out there thinking I can’t be a Branch Secretary or a full-time Officer, why not? If Frances O’Grady can be the first female General Secretary of the TUC, why can’t any of us? Please don’t only support this motion if it’s carried Conference, but action it too. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]
Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Formally seconded. Speakers?

Brother Leon Don – Branch 334: I look at this motion and I really, really like the principles and ideas behind it, however sadly at my Branch we are far more male dominated than female and my goal personally is to recruit everyone in the Union and that means that sadly I have to oppose this motion. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Colin Hall – Branch 359 (Charnwood Foods, Leicester): I’ll tell you something and I’ll tell you something straight. Some of the best ideals I ever learnt, I learnt from my mother and I’ll tell you this, there’s a lot of strong women out there, there’s a lot of strong women in the Union and there’s a lot of strong women that need to be in the Union. The last motion talked about increasing membership and making us strong, well if you’re not going to go out and get the women in the Union, you’re not going to be half as strong as you think you are. You want to know Region 3’s secret for getting more members? We talk to, we’ll talk to everybody and because of that, we’ll have every woman in the Union that wants to join and support them as strongly as we can. I ask you to support this motion.

[APPLAUSE]

Sister Toni Bruce – Branch 500: I strongly support this motion, I think it’s very important. I believe that the ingrained attitudes and expectations of women, this is a thing that needs to be changed. Lorna and I are new members and we attended our first Regional meeting a month or so back. Overall the meeting was a great experience, but there was one thing that I feel that I do need to address.

We were introduced to a Brother and he welcomed us by commenting on our physical appearances. I’m not here to attack him, I’m sure he was well-meaning and may have thought he was being complimentary, but this is exactly the kind of mentality that we need to challenge and change if the Union and I’m sure it does, it wants to be more, a welcoming place for women. I can speak with absolutely certainty that every woman in this room must have faced some kind of harassment based on the simple fact that she’s a woman.

This is a problem that stretches far further than this organisation and permeates every aspect of social life, however this, we must fight to change this and we can start here. So to help think of ways in which we can encourage more women to join the Union, the first thing is to remember that the work starts from within. Respect and equality are crucial and more women need to be at the front, strong female leaders in power and encourage younger and more inexperienced women. Women also need to be encouraged to speak up and participate, but we also need to understand the underlying reasons why women may feel intimidated or uneasy or unsure about speaking and getting involved.

Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

Sister Lorna McKinnon: Me and Toni are like a tag-team right now. Yes, I just wanted to also absolutely support this motion. Obviously everyone knows in society, women are disproportionately paid and treated and I think as well that for a lot of women there is this expectation that that’s just the way things are because that’s how it has been for so long, but obviously we have a responsibility to change that and empower women. One strategy and it’s just expanding on what Toni was saying, is really simple, it’s just making sure that women are properly represented at meetings, rallies, protests and ensuring that women are speaking on platforms, that’s inspiring and encouraging to other women and more than that, if it’s a new woman that’s been recruited to the Union, I think it’s important to make sure and take the time to speak to them about exactly what they might want to say and also that like as Comrades did with me, actually yesterday, but that process as well of helping is a political process that helps sharpen ideas and it inspires confidence.

My own personal experience until really recently, our boss, he openly admitted to only hiring female staff because he believed that the waiting staff position at my work, it was much more suitable for women, it was like women in their place, serving food, working behind in the kitchen and it was just more appropriate and me and Toni were subjected to back-handed sexist comments about our personal lives, about the clothes you wear and isolated un-unionised women who are faced with the same kind of sexism in our workplace, it has to be made totally clear that that kind of behaviour is just totally unacceptable and that these issues of fighting sexism is at the heart of our politics, so again if we want more women to be in the Union we have to relate to those issues and put them at the front and just to finish again with the example of the 15th April demo that we had in Glasgow, that was like by young workers, new Bakers Union members, mostly women, but also I think there’s a more general point to be made here with this motion, which is that it’s not just sexism that holds us back and divides us in the workplace, it’s also homophobia, racism, transphobia and the lesson here is that when we fight back together, when we fight back collectively, a space opens up to challenge these ideas that are pushed on us from the top of society, so I’ll be supporting this motion.

[APPLAUSE]
Brother George Lonsdale – Branch 459 (Greggs): I’ve worked for Greggs 21 years. I started as a Saturday girl, that’s what my wage slip said and I’ve moved on from then to shop manager. We’ve been discussing about selling the Union to members and I just wanted to bring that up a little bit. When I go around the shops, I sell the Union by asking people do you have car insurance, do you have life insurance, do you have house insurance and I turn around and, they all turn around and say no, I say but at the end of the day what benefit do you see of them and they say well nothing, until something bad happens. So I say to them well, why don’t you have job insurance. I say, so across the board, because we go around the shops, obviously it is a female-orientated job, we do sign up a lot of female members. We’re all on the same level, so I say male or female, at the end of the day I try and sign up as many members as I can. We’re always there night or day, but to achieve what we must do is unite, work together from the top to the grassroots.

The people on the back top table need to come back down to earth sometimes and be there when we need questions answered, applying always open door policy. It is what our members want from us. Please help us achieve the goals that the women’s world cup squad I’m hoping will achieve. At the end of the day let’s get more members, let’s get more female members and by doing that we can obviously have a bigger Union and be represented across the board. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Chris Lay – Branch 253: I’m here to support the motion. Without digging myself into a hole with my new wife, I’d love it if we see more women, if more women were here, I’d also love it if more youth were here too, because they are also the future of this Union and also from whatever industries they may be from, as the motion was passed earlier today. We need new members, whether that is young, old, male, female and I’d love to see a higher membership because that’ll mean even more Delegates here to Conference, so please support this motion.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Pat Rowley – No. 2 Region: Mr President, Delegates. It’s strange to see a resolution like this here at Conference. Although the resolution is good, but nobody has put forward some reason why this is happening, why we’re not having female or we have lost female members or female members are not joining and I hope there’s nothing in the Union, either gender, or sexist or anything else like that in the Union that’s stopping women from joining the Union, because the Union is opened definitely, the Union has put nothing forward that would stop women from joining the Union, but we have to find the reason and somebody has to come up with that either in work or wherever it is, then you can deal with that problem, but without getting the problem you can’t deal with it. I support the resolution, make no mistake about that, if there’s anything like that, if there’s any problem within the Union that interferes with a person either gender, sex or anything else, we have got to deal with that problem and sort it out and quickly. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

Sister Rachel Mullen – Branch 529: I’m here to support the motion. I know if you’ve been here on previous Conferences, you will have heard us bang on about young workers rights and how we need to recognise that, but I think womens’ issues don’t necessarily go hand-in-hand but it’s a similar issue where there’s a minority there that needs a voice or possibly needs to be encouraged to maybe join the Union or become active in it and take up a rep’s role, because sometimes if people don’t know what things are, if people don’t know how they treat Union workers or whatever and they’re scared to approach people about it, I think for like for recruitment is a tool that we should be getting out and using, because if a female is perhaps a bit dubious about joining the Union for whatever reason or becoming more active, I think the more experienced women in the room and women that are involved want to be talking to them, because if they say this is why you should be in the Union, like specific reasons for being a woman, they might think I’m talking to somebody who is the same as a woman, she is a member, she’s telling me why I should become a member, perhaps it might be useful for me to join sort of thing and I think about getting representation, about female activists, I think the more experienced activists, whether it be men or women, need to encourage women to come forward, because it can be pretty intimidating when you come to places like this and it’s predominantly male or dominated.

Yes, I’m looking about and it does look to be more females here than there was last year but it can be pretty daunting, so I think if you just give people encouragement. I mean I know from my Branch I got lots of encouragement to obviously just go out and put my opinions out and don’t be afraid of what people think of you, because if you’ve got an opinion and you want to say it, well, why shouldn’t you have your say because you’re a woman or why shouldn’t you go for roles or want to do anything because you’re a woman sort of thing, it just makes sense to bring it on the table and I think Sarah, being the woman’s Delegate now, I think we really need to sell that.
I think when we go out recruiting in the shops or we need to be telling potential members and current members that might know, that we’ve got a specific woman’s role on the Executive Council there to address any issues that they may have and that might make them think oh well, if the top people in the Union who are making decisions have got a female rep on there, it might be a good idea to go and talk to them or pass my concerns on to them and it will feel like they’re being listened to and being taken in consideration and would make them feel quite good, I think, if they knew they had somebody that they could go and raise an issue with, so I think we should obviously fully support this motion.

[APPLAUSE]

Sister Marilyn McCarthy – Branch 450 (Manchester): Yes, I’m up to support this. When I started in this industry, almost 20 years ago, I worked at Park Cake Bakeries in Oldham. It was the biggest bakery in Europe. We supplied £96 million-worth of cake every year just to Marks & Spencers. There were 2,000 people who worked there coming up to Christmas and during the year there were 1,200 of us and Park Cake was somewhere where women worked and there were some men, it’s not like that now. It’s somewhere where a lot of men work and some women, so obviously you’re not going to get as many women members because there’s not as many women employed in the thing, but I do ask you to support it.

[APPLAUSE]

Sister Janine Cokayne – Branch 201 (Hovis, Avonmouth): I’m here to support this motion, but I think we need to look closer to home as to why we’re not getting women members, because the simple fact is that there’s closet misogynists out there. I don’t care what you say, there’s men that make advances to women, there’s men that put women down, men feel threatened by strong women. I’ve been to meetings in the Union where there’s strong women there as myself, big gob, plenty to say, not afraid to say it and I’ve heard another woman say she’s a dragon and I said well that’s alright, because when I grow up in this Union I want to be a dragon exactly like her, hear us roar.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Dermy Best – No. 7 Region: Chair, Committee, Comrades. I would just like to say that the wording of this motion concerns me a bit as if we have to some way artificially balance our membership for women. As a Branch Secretary, we have women in our membership but they won’t come forward to take responsibility, they won’t step up and take Union positions. I find that very, very frustrating simply because there are women’s issues that I know that our members are not coming to me about and I find that very, very disturbing. As Pat says, I don’t think the Union has anything to say that would hold back women joining the Union and I fully support women coming to the fore. We have a full-time Official, Laura, who’s excelled herself, so I will support the motion, but I think women need to step up.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Okay Conference, to the vote. Those in favour? Those against? Okay. Do you want to put your Agendas away now. Okay. Obviously on the opening day of Conference, we do the Agendas, we do the Rule changes, you have to listen to me a little bit, but we also get the opportunity to have an inspirational, inspiring discussion and talk from our General Secretary too and it’s that time of the day where it’s my opportunity to introduce Ronnie to do his opening address to Conference. Ronnie Draper, General Secretary.

[APPLAUSE]

General Secretary’s Opening Address to Conference

Brother Ronnie Draper, General Secretary: Thank you. Chair, Delegates, Comrades and Friends. Six weeks ago, when I was preparing for Conference, I envisaged that I was going to be standing before you today lauding the election that saw the demise of this rotten coalition government and the infancy of a Labour-like coalition, governing the country with all the implications that that could have. Instead, we have a floating cesspool of Tory MPs, only too eager to continue with the programme of austerity against those already severely disadvantaged by five years of financial attacks, benefit sanctions and incomprehensible levels of low pay, low skill, low aspiration jobs. A government that is willing to turn a blind eye to the exploitation of migrant labour across the globe and prepared to cosset those who corruptly evade tax with off-shore havens or accounting loopholes the size of the rings of Saturn. A government that will change policy on the hoof in its quest to remain in power and to protect the demands of those who profit financially. A referendum on Europe to appease UKIP, a serious internal discussion on TTIP to protect their friends who have and continue to seek to privatisate such things as our NHS. Just after the election, it was the day after, the President phoned me and he said hey Ronnie, he said you’ll never guess, he said, David Cameron said the Tories are going to be the party of working people and I said yes and Santa Claus really does come down your chimney on the 25th December, there really is a man in the moon and if you fall asleep with your head under the pillow, the tooth fairy’s going to take all of your teeth out.
Comrades, clearly Cameron’s definition of a party of the people is something totally different to what I see as a party of the people. Does he count the poorest people, or just some sort of sub-species at the beck and the call of the rich. A group who will carry the financial burden for the mistakes of the banks. A ready-made army of cheap labour to exploit at will. I ask the question, does a party of the people remove fairness from the workplace at a rate that beggars any logical understanding, unless it’s a deliberate ploy to hamstring the very people that they say that they’re going to protect. They’ve removed protective health and safety legislation from the workplace, legislation which is supposed to ensure that workers are not injured, maimed or even worse. Legislation that has fallen by the wayside in the name of removing red tape for the employer. Fallen on the bonfire, that has the HSE as kindling, fanned by the pages of the Health & Safety At Work Act. Comrades, it doesn’t matter to a Tory if you, your family, your friends or colleagues suffer because of the negligence of your employer, so long as that employer has got a few less forms to fill in.

They strive to make it more difficult for Trade Union members to take strike action against their employers, irrespective of how they’re treated at work, as they see it as a restriction on business and unfair to the poor employer. What happened to fairness for the employee?

Who in the Tory Party worries about exploitation of those in the workplace, but of course we don’t have it in our hands to defeat this corrupt anti-worker legislation written by millionaires, sorry we do have it in our hands to defeat this corrupt anti-worker legislation written by millionaires, delivered by an unelected billionaire to benefit the rich and the privileged of this country.

We defeat them by sticking together, Comrades. I want you to look at the examples of Gunstones recently and of Burtons, Llantarnam, who voted in such numbers that it wouldn’t have mattered what legislation the Government had before us, because people in those Branches stick together, stuck together and are prepared to take action together.

And of course what government of the people allows for the absolute control of huge swathes of working population by exploitative employers in the way of zero hour contracts, agency and casualised labour. It’s a sham, self-employed schemes that are there and a plethora of part-time, low paid, low skill positions. The Tories call it flexibility and they have done since the days of Thatcher, flexibility. I call it slavery and when I look at the government’s proposing to get rid of the Human Rights Act, one of the cornerstones of that is the abolition of slavery and yet this government seems to legislate to have people on slave terms, slave conditions and slave wages. Comrades, they have used various guises in their slavery thing, Workfare for one, bedroom tax for another, mansion tax, all these things follow on from when Thatcher also had the poll tax, all things to denigrate working people and to keep them suppressed. Keeping a long dole queue, so that they could drive down the wages under Thatcher, now they’re more subtle, they just go ahead with it and cut terms and conditions and legislate for it and to top it all, they virtually eradicated our access to justice. You have to self-refer if you have an accident at work, you can’t do it through your Union any more. If you get dismissed, you have to pay to go to a tribunal and should you lose even on the smallest technicality, you can face financial destruction for you and for your family.

It has to be a bad system, Chair, that sees barristers who are not of our class but barristers taking to the cobbles on strike against this government, there has to be something bad in that justice system. I don’t necessarily agree with either statement, whether you get the government that you deserve or you get the government that you vote for. I do believe that those at the bottom of the earnings ladder have contributed to the election of the most right-wing government in living memory, if not by their actual support, but by their voting actions or inactions.

Millions of working people voted UKIP as an alternative to the Tories without thinking about the consequences of voting for them. A party that’s been said on numerous occasions today that is more Tory than the Tories, committed to change in the Euro-enforced legislation, that they say that the UK’s had to suffer. The legislation that we’ve had to suffer, Comrades, is the working time regulations and stuff like that that has protected us on holidays, that gives us a response back to our bosses, they’re the sort of legislation that this government and UKIP would seek to try and get rid of, while they’re doing that and they want to get rid of the six-pack, this is coming from a leader who is anti-Europe, who earns his lavish salary and his lavish expenses in Europe, although he rarely attends, he’s also married to somebody from Europe but never ever mentions that and that’s left to people of press and times. A man of the people he’s seen as, the ordinary beer-swilling, fag-smoking guy that you meet down at the pub, except as Richard said before, this guy is a multi-millionaire, privately educated, merchant banker, an ex-card carrying member of the Tory Party, who incidentally and you’ll all remember it during the election thing, said that he would vote with the Tories. He was supposed to be against the things that they stood for, but made it very, very clear that that was the party that he was going to get, should he get into parliament.
Comrades, clearly people didn’t trust the Labour Party to lead the country, despite the promises, the abolition of the bedroom tax, zero hour contracts and the development of that mansion tax and a fairer tax system that would have benefited us all. Whether it was the absence of film star good looks on behalf of Ed Miliband, or our abject failure to refute the scurrilous accusations that the economic crash on austerity with all manifestations of the previous Labour government. People failed to embrace them as a credible alternative. Unfortunately there is no credible home for the disenchanted. I don’t want to be too controversial, but without counting the SNP who stood on this anti-austerity platform and Plaid Cymru, we had 10 or 11 other parties in that election who professsed to be left-wing in some guise or another, all standing different candidates in different parts of the country and all with laudable manifestos. The problem is that they were not only taking potential votes from Labour, they were also splitting the left vote. I’m not certain, but I don’t think that any one of those parties actually saved their deposit anywhere. If we are to have a credible party on the left, then we need to unite behind a banner, with common objectives and realistic ambitions and believe me, if the Labour Party don’t do it in the future, I’ll be one of the ones that’ll be touting for us to look elsewhere, but the fact is that we’ve got to get the left together, we have to come, otherwise we’re going to just be dividing our own class.

Above all, we have to take the working class with us, confident that we can effect change, not just talk about it. Chair, I want to move on if I can to the debacle and I know we’ve had the debate this afternoon in emergency motion 2, but I want to talk just for a short while about the Labour Party leadership campaign and I think after nearly 40 years as a member of the Labour Party, I believe that I’ve earned a right to call it a debacle because that is exactly what it is. When Henry Ford used to sell his cars, he used to give people a choice, he said you can have any colour you want, as long as it’s black and it appears that Labour’s executive, its leadership are doing exactly the same thing. It appears to me that the Labour leadership is saying you can choose any Labour leader as long as they’re from the right. Mary Creagh, Andy Burnham, Liz Kendall and Yvette Cooper, all lovely people, all dedicated Labour people, but not people of the people and now I’m pleased to say that we have Jeremy Corbyn, at least who’s entered the race, who gives us an opportunity of change. It was almost like the white knight on the charger coming to the rescue of working people. The best recommendation the others gave me was that they made Ed Miliband look something like a lefty.

My question would have been, had Jeremy not stood, where is that left candidate and more importantly why do we need 35 Labour MPs to support a potential leader. What say do we have, as Trade Unionists, what say do I have as an individual member as to who leads our Party, other than the individual vote. We used to have the electoral college, it got scrapped and it got scrapped because they believed the Trade Unions had too much influence. It isn’t about Trade Union people having influence, it’s about working people having influence who leads our Party. I’ve got to say that as an individual member of that Labour Party, if I’m given the opportunity, I will be voting for Jeremy Corbyn and I will be going out and campaigning for him as our leader.

[APPLAUSE]

And I will also be pushing Labour MPs, I was in the Scotch parliament on Thursday and I talked to Labour MSPs and tried to canvas their support for Jeremy Corbyn for that leadership. He’s a decent guy, we’ve said before, I think that Apryl said it, anti-austerity, anti-war, workers-supporting and most certainly a Fast Food Rights advocate. He is honest, he is committed and he is a dedicated individual. We need to unite the left behind somebody like Jeremy Corbyn and if he doesn’t get those 35 votes Comrades, he will not be able to stand under this present constitution, but I’d ask the question, what special qualifications do Labour MPs have that they can have the exclusive power to nominate leadership candidates on behalf of hundreds of thousands of Labour Party members without redress or without direction. You wouldn’t, none of you would allow our full-time Officials, the paid Officials of this Union to elect the two National Officers without you having a say, it wouldn’t be thought about in this, but that’s exactly what is happening within the Labour Party. When you voted for your elected Labour MP, presuming you did vote Labour, how many said to you if you vote for me, it’ll be a vote for X as a leader. They talked of manifesto pledges and what they would do to effect change in their constituency, but nobody added the caveat and I spoke to probably more MPs than anybody else in this room, nobody ever said to me if Ed Miliband stands down, you vote for me and you’ll be getting Andy Burnham or Liz Kendall’s camp, why would they.

When I’ve been asked and I’ve been asked on many occasions by the press, who the Bakers Union’s going to be supporting and I have a stock answer to it, until now of course, because now we know who we’re supporting. It doesn’t matter what we think about it, because of the electoral change going on, I always answer the press that if it was the Grand National, first of all I’d want to see who was running in it, I’d want to see what form they had before I placed a bet and I’m most certainly not prepared to tell anyone in the press where I see either my individual allegiance lying within the Labour Party and more importantly where I see our organisation’s allegiance, until today and just like the Grand National, if I don’t like the runners, I most certainly don’t want to have a bet.
Even if we are to have one member, one vote, what is wrong with Trade Unions making their own nomination? Why can’t we nominate people like John McDonnell or Ian Lavery, MPs who have a proven track record of tireless work on behalf of a fair deal for their class and what about the new intake, we listened to Richard Burgon this afternoon, but they’re not alone, Louise Haigh or Clive Lewis, why can’t they be leaders, why can’t we nominate those people as leaders of our organisation. I might not say Justin Madders because if he dances we’ll lose forever, we’ll be forever out of power, but as I say now we have Jeremy Corbyn that we can unite behind and it’s important that every one of us goes from here and puts pressure on our local MPs, where there is a Labour MP in your area, to get behind him. I’m not saying that my way or the highway, but I am saying that giving us Hobson’s Choice is no choice at all for working people.

Comrades, we already have an electoral system that determines that every five years we have to elect an MP from a list of people we don’t know, presented by a committee that we don’t know, hoping that they stand for the same aspirations as us. Comrades, it’s naff and it’s time to change. Chair, we have a relatively small Agenda this year, but every motion means something to somebody in this room, it means something to those people that you represent back at the Branch. Every member has an opportunity to have a say, every Branch can shape the way their Delegates vote and every Delegate has the right to come to this rostrum to express their opinions. All we ask is that we get the same within the political theatre. Politicians would do well to take a leaf out of the Trade Union Manual. Comrades, you portray democracy at its very best, you are a credit to the movement and those you represent. Don’t ever change that. Thank you for listening. Solidarity.

[APPLAUSE]

**Brother Ian Hodson, National President:** Okay, Conference, can I just make you aware that across the road at the Victoria pub, if you’ve ever wanted to be inspired by a politician, Dave Nellist will be across the road taking part in a TUSC Against Cuts meeting, which is going to be chaired by Sam Vickers and also Michael Lavalette, who is a Socialist Preston councillor. Have a good evening. Make sure you come tonight to the evening event and see you in the morning at 10 o’clock. Thank you, Conference. Prince of Wales tonight, the do’s on at the Prince of Wales.
Monday 8th June 2015

Morning Session

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Okay. General Secretary to call the roll.

Brother Ronnie Draper, General Secretary: Region 1. Region 2. Region 3, sorry George, how many? 39, right, thank you. Region 4, okay. Region 5. Region 6, cheers. Region 7, thank you. 192 Delegates present.

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Okay, can everybody take their seats please. Okay and can I remind like visitors and people on the stalls, apparently yesterday we received a few complaints that whilst the speakers were on, they couldn’t hear because people at the back were talking, so could you make sure that if you need to talk and you’re on a stall, could you go somewhere else rather than be inside, so people who are taking part in the Conference can hear what’s going on at the front. Okay, are we ready to go? Motion 23. Motion 23, yes. Right, whilst you’re on your way down, I’m just going to bring Mark in to do a Standing Orders report. Marilyn, I’m just going to bring Mark in for a Standing Orders report, I just wanted to make sure you were on the ball, do you know what I mean? Mark Brooks from Standing Orders.

Brother Mark Brooks, Chair of Standing Orders: Thank you, Chair. Emergency motion 6 and emergency motion 7 will be taken after motion 24. Motion 33 stands, motion 34 stands, motion 35 stands, motion 36 stands, motion 37 stands, motion 38 stands, motion 39 is out of order, motion 40 stands, motion 41 stands, motion 42 stands, motion 43 stands, motion 44 stands, motion 45 stands, motion 46 stands, motion 47 stands, motion 48 stands, motion 49 stands, next will be emergency motion 5, motion 50 stands, motion 51 stands, motion 52 has been withdrawn, motion 53 stands, motion 54 stands, motion 55 stands, motion 56 stands, motion 57 stands, motion 58 stands, motion 59 stands. That is the end of this report, thank you.

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Okay, to Conference, we all agree? Okay, thank you Conference. Okay, Marilyn. Motion 23.

23 Rules

Branch 450

That this conference agrees that rules are to be carried out as they are written and not someone’s interpretation of the rule.

Sister Marilyn McCarthy – Branch 450 (Manchester): Morning Delegates, are we all nice and sober, very good. Right, motion 23, that this Conference agrees that Rules are to be carried out as they are written and not by somebody else’s interpretation of the Rule. So if you looked at Rule 10 for instance, that is the Rule, you don’t then say even if you look at Rule 43, it says something different, we’re not discussing Rule 43, we’re discussing the one that I’m talking about, so I ask you to support this because all we’re doing is trying to get people confused.

[APPLAUSE]


Brother Pat Rowley – No. 2 Region: Mr President, Delegates. Conference, when you come up here to move a resolution, if you write the resolution and put everything you have to say in the resolution, why bother coming up here, they could read it themselves. When you come up here, you come up here to defend what you’re putting forward. Always make sure that in your presentation of your resolution, put every item that you want in that first speech, because if you don’t, if you try it in the second one, you will be pulled for moving a second resolution. So Conference, use your judgement on this, all of you come here for many years, but a person that comes up here to move a resolution they do not and should not and nobody does put everything they have to say in the resolution when they come up here to move the resolution. Conference, use your judgement on this. I think that the resolution is wrong in ways and that’s why I’m here. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Conference, the Executive Council would ask you to support the motion and you know Marilyn, I couldn’t agree more with you, in fact I often like to refer people to Rule 6 and let me just tell you what that says. It says that often, or should I say I often refer people to 6, because what it says in Rule 6 is the Chairman on any question understanding Orders or a point of order or explanation, my word should be final, so I always like to refer people to that Rule and so we shouldn’t interpret them, we should take them as read, what the Chairman says goes, so please support the motion.
Those in favour? Apart from when I’m at home, I didn’t include being at home Ronnie, I didn’t include being at home.

Sorry, those in favour? Those against? The Chairman’s always right, that’s carried. 24.

24 Quitting the Union

Branch 582

This Conference agrees that any member wishing to leave the BFAWU can only do so by written consent to their Branch secretary (if no Branch secretary to regional office).

Brother David Lawrence – Branch 582 (Manor, Carlton): Mr President, Platform, Delegates. Members decide to leave our Union for many reasons and traditionally they have done so in writing to the Branch Secretary, giving an opportunity to discover what issue they had which had brought them to their decision to leave and offering a chance to help resolve their problem, or at the very least learn from it to improve our own future performance and our commitment to our members. Management at work have been dishonest by creating an opt-out form to bypass our procedure, using it as their right to manage, so they claim and pursuing what clearly is an attack on our strength of membership. We ask your support Delegates in condemning the undermining of 40 years of good industrial relations at work, so we can report back to members and galvanise them to show solidarity and challenge this and every attack on our terms and conditions at work. Please support.

[APPLAUSE]

Sister Sheila Hyman – Branch 582: Mr President, Chair, Delegates. I’m here to second this motion. At my workplace the clerical office have a form as Dave said, with multiple items on it including if you wish to terminate Union membership, but this information is rarely passed on to the Branch Secretary, which means we don’t have a true reflection of membership numbers. If it went through the Branch Secretary, then he or she would be able to ask the person what their issue is and maybe sort it out straight away, thus retaining that membership. I ask for your support. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

Sister Pauline McCarthy – Branch 582 (Manor Bakeries, Carlton): I’m up here on behalf of the Executive to support this motion. It is Premier Foods at Carlton we’re talking about, us particularly. The piece of paper that you get, all you have to do is put your name on it and circle for the Union. They don’t pass the paperwork on to me, they don’t move it, they don’t tell me about it until like three or four months later. I’m supposed to get a monthly report, I don’t get it, so I don’t know who’s in and who’s out of the Union until I get the report from Regional Office, which is every three months, so I’m really up here to support. As for the Executive, we need to be able to talk to people and encourage them, find out what the problems are, debate whether, is there anything I can help with. All the services we have, we have to talk about everything in order for members to understand what we do, so I’m up here to support. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]


Sister Janine Cokayne – Branch 201 (Hovis, Avonmouth): Sorry, I’m not here to speak on the motion. Can I have a point of clarification, please. On the ballot papers, we’ve been told that there’s three votes, but it says if you put more than one vote, it’s invalid.

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: It was a mistake, it’s just an error, that’s why it was corrected.

Sister Janine Cokayne – Branch 201 (Hovis, Avonmouth): On the paper.

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Yes, it’s a mistake.

Sister Janine Cokayne – Branch 201 (Hovis, Avonmouth): So we can vote for three.

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: For three.

Sister Janine Cokayne – Branch 201 (Hovis, Avonmouth): Excellent, thank you.

Brother Ronnie Draper, General Secretary: Janine, you can vote for up to three people. That’s why I made the announcement before, otherwise it just would have delayed it all, so it’s up to three on both of them.

Emergency Motion 6

Branch 504


Due to the defeat of the Labour Party, we ask that the EC investigate the reasons for this and to look at alternatives that support our Union policies.
Well, well, well, 2015, what a disaster for the Labour Party, fighting the most ruthless Tory leader since Thatcher and they couldn’t even get close to a victory. Wiped out in Scotland, nowhere to be seen in vast areas down south, hundreds of thousands of former hardcore northern Labour votes lost, lost to UKIP, a right-wing establishment party. A very real nightmare for Miliband and company. Labour lost not because of what the Murdoch media claimed, that they were too left-wing, they lost because they failed to show a true anti-austerity, anti-Tory agenda.

The workers movement of Britain needs a political voice, a new party, a party for the 99%, not the 1%, a party that builds an opposition to austerity, a party that will fight for decent living standards, secure jobs and decent pay, a party that will commit to building a mass council house programme for years to come to end the housing crisis, a party that will repeal the anti-Trade Union laws, not make them worse and a party that will scrap all tuition fees and have free education for all as a right and a party that will bring the NHS, railways, Royal Mail, utilities and public services back into public ownership. None of these will happen under Labour. The Trade Union movement as a whole need to urgently discuss how to create such a party. Please support this motion. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Seconder? Formally seconded. Speakers?

Brother Adam Brown – Branch 277 (Bristol): I totally support this motion. I put in a motion myself which wasn’t allowed to be debated yesterday, which was very, very similar along these lines. I believe the Labour Party has turned its back on us and has done for many, many years. They don’t care because they know we’ve nowhere else to go. We’re not going to vote for any other party, we’ve nowhere else to go. We need a new party, a party that is based on the old traditional Socialist values. We face prejudice in the workplace day in and day out. We’re spoken to like you’re just something on the bottom of managers shoes and they get away with it. This isn’t good enough. We need to be strong and we need a strong party that we can oppose all this and fight them, once and for all. These are all what the Tories want, they want us to have absolutely nothing and we’re not far off that now.

I really fear for our children and our grandchildren. We’re treated badly in the workplace, what are they going to be treated like, unless us as a whole do something ourselves, get off our arses and do something and fight, once and for all and I believe that that will not happen through the Labour Party, it can only happen through a new party formed out of the Trade Union movement, that is why I support this motion. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

Sister Lorna McKinnon – Branch 500: Sorry, yes I also want to support the motion but I thought it would help to talk about it from the Scottish perspective as well. The recent election for me was a bittersweet experience, everybody knows what it means, five more years of the Tories attack on Trident, anti-Trade Union laws, human rights, disability, whether it’s the right to strike, it will just be a total attack on the working class. The Tories have already said that there’ll be £12 billion-worth of more cuts and it’ll be the most vulnerable people in society that are paying for this crisis, but on the other hand the Scottish election result reflected like a total meltdown of the main British establishment parties and I was actually pleased that the Labour Party was punished in Scotland, because they were offering more austerity and they were imitating the Tory government and it didn’t appeal to the class anger and because of that they paid the price and in the Labour Party we saw like almost a total wipe out of the Labour Party, there’s only one left and that was because of their position in the referendum, but also because of their commitment to more austerity.

Yes, the Scottish election result was absolutely an anti-austerity vote, it was a vote for the only main party that was organising against the onslaught of the cuts against Trident, against war, against racist immigration policies, a really left-wing perspective and those are actually, that’s the kind of perspective that this Union has, those are some of the reasons that I joined. Just to give an example as well, in January this year, the Labour Party voted with the Tories and the LibDems for £30 billion more austerity cuts and they want to spend £100 billion on renewing Trident, but I do totally accept that there’ll be lots of you and this Union about the best route to get working class representation and that we all work together on things like fighting the cuts and the threats to the Trade Unions, but surely after this election with the level of political crisis in our Unions, we should be providing a forum for us to debate these different views on the way for getting better representation. I’ll stop there, thanks.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Pat Rowley – No. 2 Region: Mr President, Delegates. Conference, even if you change and even if we start a new party and all of this, if we don’t attend the local branch meetings, I’ve been well over 40 years in Bristol and the ward branches, which is the basic route of the Labour Party, there is no members at that branch. Most branches, a lot of branches in our constituency can’t function because they don’t have any members.
Now, whilst that’s happening, you’re not, your Labour Party can do what it likes, because there is nobody there, so there’s no delegates for the constituency party, there’s no delegates for the local party which takes in all of Bristol, five constituencies, probably about 20 people turn up when there should be around about between 200 and 300 people at that meeting, there isn’t. Now that is why and if you start a new party and the same thing happens, you will not get what you are looking for. Until you people take it all and go to your meetings and the same in the Trade Union movement, if we don’t attend our meetings, many things can happen behind our backs, so you must attend your meetings.

I agree with what the mover is putting forward, but the Tories will love this, if we had about four parties bashing the guts out of each other, splitting our votes in several ways, then they know they have got us where they want us. Conference, you have to make your minds up now when you vote, I’m not telling you how to vote, you all know what the reason is, you know the reasons why the mover of the resolution put it forward and you know, but if you don’t attend meetings, no matter what party you start, it will not be democratic. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Jim Carlin – Branch 503: Good morning, Conference. First-time speaker, first-time Delegate.

[APPLAUSE]

I’d just like to support this motion this morning. It sort of pains me from a family perspective that I’m up here supporting an alternative to the Labour Party, due to my family’s background in the Labour Party and in the junior movement, but somewhere along the way the lines have been blurred in the Labour Party. You can’t be the party of the employee and the employer and you can’t be the party of the tenant and the landlord. Somewhere along the lines the waters have been muddied in the Labour Party. We need a strong alternative, we need a strong working class voice and a strong Trade Union voice, sadly that’s lacking within the Labour Party at present and I would urge Conference to support the motion. Thanks very much.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Sam Vickers – Region 5 (full-time Officer): Chair, Delegates. It pains me to be here to do this today, but I don’t believe there’s any choice. I was a Labour Party member, I withdrew out of the Labour Party in 1982 because of the attacks on people that were not agreeing with what the Labour Party was saying. I agreed at the time that you can’t have a party within a party, but they didn’t just evict people who were in militant, which I still believe was wrong, they evicted people who disagreed and challenged what they were saying at the time, that’s when I withdrew out of the Labour Party. I joined TUSC, the Socialist Party in December and that was for many reasons. If you look at our policies of our Union, every policy that we’ve passed in this Union is a policy of TUSC. It’s not the policy of the Labour Party. If you look at the Labour Party and Pat, I love you to bits, but I’ve done what you’ve asked.

When you get to the top of the Labour Party and you can ask those that go to the Labour Party with resolutions that we’ve sent from here, those that have been passed, they take no notice of them. So democracy in the Labour Party doesn’t work. If you look at, I was at a demonstration at Barnsley, outside the town hall, demonstrating about the cuts to the children’s centres and to other services in Barnsley. I spoke to one of the cabinet members and what he said to me, he said, what do you expect us to do? I said, I expect you to fight for the people who elected you, not just accept Tory cuts and then he just said to me, Rotherham and if anybody knows anything about Rotherham and I’m sure you have, because you’ve seen it on national news, about the child exploitation etc, I don’t know what that had to do with that issue, but what he meant is that they’ve got Tories running Rotherham Council. I said to him, we’ve got Tories running Barnsley Council now, because you’re doing what they asked you to do.

What I’m saying, we need to fight. Labour are not fighting, they’re not fighting for anybody, but the middle, the middle ground, that’s all they’re interested in. If you listen to the phrases that they come out with, hardworking people, what about those that are hardworking people that are put in poverty, they don’t mention them, they never mention them, they’re after the middle ground and the middle ground only. I don’t want a party that only go after those who’ve got, I want them to look after those that haven’t got and I don’t hear anything anymore in the Labour Party, it pains me to say, that are defending hardworking poor people, employed or unemployed. I ask you to support the resolution. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Colin Morgan – Branch 238 (Burtons, Llantarnam): I ask you to oppose this motion. Labour has lost its way, but it’s the only party to vote for, it is a party of the, a true Socialist party. If we don’t support or oppose this motion, where are we going to go. We’ve seen what has happened in Scotland, Scotland have elected the SNP and have destroyed the Labour Party in Scotland. It’s the only way forward. You’ve got to be careful what you do and what you wish for. The only way to change the Labour Party is from within, not from without. I ask you to oppose this motion. Thank you.
Brother Sean Molloy – Branch 558 (Rathbones, Wakefield): I’m in agreement with the gentleman before me. I think, I’m here to oppose it. I believe that Labour at the moment’s like a wounded animal. I believe it’ll come back. I think it’ll move to the left eventually. I think they’ll see some sense. I’m here to oppose it.

Sister Monica Currie – Branch 508 (Scotland): I would just like to say that the SNP didn’t cause Labour to lose in Scotland, Labour caused that.

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Okay, Conference. The Executive Council completely understands peoples’ feelings about the Labour Party, we keep expressing them day after day. We understand the frustration, but there again we’re a Labour movement and being in struggle is what we’re used to and what we’ve always had to fight for. Struggling is part of what we do on a daily basis, what you do in the workplace, it’s what we do, it’s what we do because we’re a movement, but let’s be clear, let’s be clear, we should never be defeatist, we should never accept we can’t change things, but we should never rely on politicians to change them for us. If we expect politicians to just automatically change things for us, then we are living in cloud cuckoo land, we are living in a dream world, because politicians will never just change things for us. The only way we do that is when we come together and we go out there and we force them to change it and that’s how we make sure the politicians listen to our needs and to our demands, because for too long we’ve all thought somebody else will do it, we’ve not gone out there and done it ourselves.

So let’s be clear, the Executive understands the need for investigation into what happened within the Labour Party, but it needs people to fight inside the Labour Party too, because currently our position is we’re affiliated to the Labour Party, so you need to be on the inside of the Labour Party, fighting to change it from within and when we leave the Labour Party, that’s when this Conference makes that decision, but until that day, until that day happens, you get inside the Labour Party and you fight from within to change it to make sure it reflects our needs and our demands and then if we can’t do that, then you will make that decision whether we leave. This isn’t asking us to leave the party, this isn’t requesting that we leave the party at all. This is saying we investigate the reasons why it lost.

Well, I think we all know the reasons why it lost, we know why it lost, it’s no longer connected to us, it introduced the Collins Review which impacts on us as a Trade Union, we recognise that, that’s why we opposed it, that’s why this Union, this Union along with the NUM opposed Clause 4, now every Trade Union in the country wishes they’d have taken the same stance as us as well, because we were right to oppose Clause 4 …

…we were right to say we should keep it and we’re determined, determined that we will change the Labour Party to reflect what our needs are and what our demands are, so we ask you to actually support the motion, but there was opposition to it, so we have the right of reply. Please support the motion. We’ll investigate it, we’ll take it to our parliamentary group, we demand change, but we demand that while we’re affiliated, you all get in it and you all start fighting from within to make sure it reflects us and the policies that we believe in and the policies that our members believe in and what we stand for as a Trade Union. Please support.

Right of reply. To the vote, those in favour? Against? Thank you very much. That’s carried. Emergency motion 7. While the mover for the motion’s coming down, can I remind everybody that today the credit union AGM will be in here at lunchtime. Obviously it’s one of the best benefits that this Union has created over the years and if you’re in it, then make sure you please attend that meeting, because your input for that is so so important and critical. Okay.

Emergency Motion 7


Due to the heavy defeat by the Labour Party at the General Election, this Conference agrees to a debate on the future of the direction of the Labour Party.

Fair play, Ian, you just stole my thunder with that speech, but anyway, yes, so I was really deeply concerned by the heavy defeat obviously, but also deeply concerned that there wasn’t any sufficient left-wing candidate until Jeremy Corbyn threw his hat into the race. We need more MPs within and we need more people like yourselves to go out there and start being councillors, such as Gary Johnston, our full-time Official in Caerphilly.
So we need more MPs, like John McDonnell, Richard Burgon yesterday, Lisa and Andy and of course Jeremy Corbyn. We’ve got to get in there, we’ve got to get on the doorsteps, we’ve really got to just get on the doorsteps and get our policies out there, but we can only do it if we all stand united and together. Please support the motion.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Steve Nevin – Branch 504: Morning again, Conference. We have motions stopped time and time again as to why we can’t disaffiliate, so we don’t give up, so we’ll try a different route and we’ll try the debates, because we’re Union people and we’re fighters and we don’t give up. Where are the Labour Party going? Well, further right is the answer, they’re as much a pro-cuts, pro-big business party than the Tories. We can support Jeremy Corbyn all we like, Jeremy Corbyn is not going to be the party leader, it’s just a dream, it’s not going to happen, unfortunately it’s not. He’s a 100:1 with the bookmakers, they very rarely get it wrong. That leaves the four other right-wing candidates, all Uxbridge educated, none of them opposed the Iran war, none of them opposes the benefit cap and none want the re-nationalisation of our public services and industries. The leading candidate, Andy Burnham, health minister in the last Labour government, brought in foundation hospitals and helped introduce PFI into the health service.

We face huge struggles ahead, huge, with created austerity and attacks on democratic rights by Cameron to come, who will face this Tory juggernaut? Well, not Labour, that’s for sure. They jumped into bed with the Tories at the Scottish referendum and they’re still snuggled up to them now. They helped drive through that juggernaut, pushing through the cuts today. Only five Labour MPs voted against the £12 billion cuts to come, five. The stream of the Labour Party of old has gone, it’s gone forever. Wake up and smell the coffee, Executive Council. Listen to your members, the rank and file who are crying out for a change of direction. Stop being afraid to stand up to the right-wing Labour MPs. We can’t wait a further 12 months for change, we need to urgently discuss this and discuss it right now. Please support this motion.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Gary Johnston – No. 2 Region (FTO): Conference, this motion is about the future, so where does the Labour Party go next? Of course, we need to learn the lessons of what happened and the young lady that got up and said it wasn’t the SNP that lost Labour the thing, it was Cameron going around telling middle England if the Labour Party and the SNP are in together, it will cause chaos and this scared middle England and middle England voted Tory. Not only did they not vote Labour, they absolutely dismantled the LibDems and the LibDems want to let you think that it was the Tories fault, but their MPs time after time after time went and voted for the bedroom tax, so they deserved everything they got. Now, we’ve had Richard up here yesterday, we’ve had our General Secretary’s speech and Ian now and the one thing that keeps coming up is democracy. Well, the Labour Party’s not democratic and it hasn’t been since Tony Blair. Never mind Clause 4, even within councils and can I take this opportunity to congratulate our guest to Conference, Willie Colquhoun is another Bakers Union councillor and that’s what we need to get, is more councillors, congratulations Willie.

[APPLAUSE]

Now as a councillor, on behalf of the Bakers Union, going into council meetings, sometimes it is a total waste of time. Tony Blair entered just the cabinet system and it’s where all the decisions are made. Cabinet, there’s 10 of them there, they make and it’s very, very, very difficult for the back benchers to get too much, because they’ve too many people in the pocket, they try to say who gets on the scrutiny committees, who you have on there, on there and ones like myself kind of get pushed out. That doesn’t bother me, I don’t have the time anyway and I will never sell away my right to say what I want just to get on anything, but we are looking to the future. What do we need as a leader? Yes, Jeremy would be the right one, let’s hope he can get it, it’s up to the members now, but if we’re going to take back the Labour Party, there’s only one way of doing it and that is all members here and not just in our Union, all Unions, getting involved, going to the constituencies, getting their names down as councillors. When we start taking control of the Labour Party, then we will have more of a say.

Of course if you look at democracy, right, we have elections every five years, we don’t want to do it, Maggie Thatcher’s anti-Trade Union laws, that we have to elect the General Secretary and National President, but we as Union members agree and we do not stand against them, but our Rule Book is quite clear. Our Rule Book says that any member, after three years membership, is entitled to put their name forward to stand for those posts, now that is democracy. Now the Labour Party, a few weeks ago, they sent us out emails, any party members probably would have got them, on about the selection process, so feeling a bit pissed off after the result, I sent them back an email. I said, why is it only an MP who can get 35 MP votes or supporters can put their name down for leadership? Why can’t I, as a party member, not get 35 party members to support me, so I can run for the leadership?
Guess what the reply was. We will answer your email in two weeks’ time. Well, I still haven’t had that and it’s gone three weeks. The Labour Party is not democratic.

Ian spoke of, one of the Delegates spoke about motions going to Conference. It’s the same thing as we do, Branches put the motions to Conferences to [unclear]. Within the party, you can put your motion in at ward, goes to your constituency, can be put forward into the thing. At the last Welsh Conference 90% of them were thrown out anyway, never even made the platform and the others were bundled into one thing oh, we’ll have a debate on the environment. It is so undemocratic, it’s unbelievable, but as I said, that is no reason for us to try and start again. We have got a speaker today who, along with our ex-General Secretary, Joe Marino (? spelling), were quite pushing forward the Socialist Labour Party and with big names like Arthur, it didn’t get anywhere, so do not codge yourself that we can all of a sudden form another party and make big strides, it takes a long, long time. I think there is only one way, one way to get a better Labour Party and that is by us, not just talking about it, going in, getting involved, becoming councillors and getting our say and getting more MPs like Richard, that is the only way we can do it. Please support, Conference. [APPLAUSE]

Sister Lorna McKinnon– Branch 500: On the future of the Labour Party, yes, I just wanted to say that it is abundantly clear that, in the wake of their election defeat, Labour are going to move further to the right and at this, for some people they may have the opinion that yes, the Labour Party has shifted to the right, but the traditional Socialist values it’s based on only need to be revitalised and replaced at the centre of their politics and of their policies, that we can change it from within, but I mean to those people I would say and it was one of my heroes, the revolutionary Tony Cliff, who said it first, you can’t move a wheelbarrow by jumping inside it and if Cliff was alive today I think he would say that the wheelbarrow no longer has any handles to push it forward or a wheel to balance it on to stop it tipping so far to the right.

The Labour Party is in serious trouble, like this is the reality of the situation and I understand that it is a really difficult decision to make, but it is true that they’ve left us, they’re not the champion of the working class anymore and until it has a radical change, we have Jeremy Corbyn in our base, I would support Jeremy Corbyn, but is that going to bring about a radical change for the whole of the Labour Party, I don’t think so, but they need a radical change in direction, they need to be promoting policies for social justice, be rejecting Trident, illegitimate illegal wars and until they do that, I don’t think we should be supporting them. I was out campaigning in the election for TUSC, but one of the things that you repeatedly came across was people saying I’ve not left the Labour Party, the Labour Party’s left me, so I think actually we do need to be looking elsewhere at this point, but whatever decision is made, it is clear that the debate and discussion has to be had within the wider Trade Union Labour movement, to discuss better political representation for working class people. Yes, and that’s something that, this is a motion I’ll be supporting. [APPLAUSE]

Sister Janet Phillips – Branch 405: The Labour Party, people who are staying in the Labour Party, who are left-wing, I admire you. I wish you all the hope in the world, I wish you all the good luck in the world, but things are not going to go that way. Leave it to those who are doing it, I can’t do that. The only thing I can do, as a Union activist, is be out on the streets. We’ve got to change our attitude in the Unions as well, there’s no more oh, I’m in this Union, we’ve got to co-operate with each other. It’s a long battle and we’ve all got to show a different way, working together. As for this working class and the middle class, it’s going to hit them as well, they’ve got old people who are going to have no old peoples’ homes. They’ll have people in the family with mental illness and nowhere to turn and it’s activism, it’s being a nation working together to get rid of these Tories and good luck for the future and activism. [APPLAUSE]

Brother Pat Rowley – No. 2 Region: Mr President, Delegates. I think Gary Johnston put the points very well for our Union. Many years ago, not that many, this Union did not allow their full-time Officials to take up councillors jobs. It wasn’t a second income then, you got no money at all as a councillor, just your expenses for getting there that day, that’s all you got. Now that’s where there was a lot gone wrong, the disbanding of the Young Socialists was deadly for the Labour Party. They had thousands of members, thousands of members, they were able to run Conferences, they were able to organise themselves, but the top got rid of them. You have a National Executive in the Labour Party, but then you, I think it was on their layer, this Policy Conference movement came in and they’d got more powers than the EC, they could overrule the EC on anything. The Delegates that go to Conference, can any of you ever tell us that a Labour Party Conference was democratic. No, it was not, it was all run in back rooms and back deals. That’s why the Conference of the Labour Party needs looking at.
Why doesn’t the Labour Party Conference have two days or at least one day of their Conference for motions from their constituencies. No, there is none, they’re not. It’s a showpiece for ministers and it’s over in three days and gone home. The policies were all done behind backs.

Conference and it will not happen until we go to the wards and I say it again and again and again, if we don’t. I have to say one thing, that the contributions to the Labour Party are too high, they should be half what they are. It’s not money you want, it’s members, members are worth millions, pounds are trying to buy their way in, that’s not the way. Conference, support this resolution, but make sure that we look to reform the Party. Remember this, that people 100 years ago put up an awful sacrifice and gave us a Party and got us out of the workhouses and all the degradation that was. Are we not men enough and women enough today to go out and go to the meetings and take on these people and then get your resolution and have a Party Conference, a Labour Party Conference that is democratic, by the people for the people. Conference, support this resolution.

[APPLAUSE]

**Brother Adam Brown – Branch 277 (Bristol):** I’d like to say there’s been some very good arguments put both for and against by the previous speakers who have got up. I personally believe that the Labour Party is dead in the water and has been for many, many years. Yes, I can understand where they’re saying of going in and changing it from within. I just can’t see that happening, because those at the top are not going to allow it. They’re going to feather their own nest and look after their own self interests, as they always have done and again we will be left out in the cold. I believe the only way forward now is for us to debate with other Unions and the TUC with a view to forming a true Socialist Party. This will not happen overnight, this will take many, many years. There’s going to be no magic wand waved and it is not going to be something that a lot of us will probably see come to fruition, most of us, certainly of my age and above, will probably be dead, but it’s not about that, it’s about future generations, it’s about how we want our children to be raised, how we want them to live their lives, we do not want them to live like we are living now, under a terrible yoke and for that reason, I say we need to move away and start all over again. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

**Sister Marilyn McCarthy – Branch 450 (Manchester):** I’m here to support this resolution. But I personally believe that the Labour Party is dead in the water and has been for many, many years. Yes, I can understand where they’re saying of going in and changing it from within. I just can’t see that happening, because those at the top are not going to allow it. They’re going to feather their own nest and look after their own self interests, as they always have done and again we will be left out in the cold. I believe the only way forward now is for us to debate with other Unions and the TUC with a view to forming a true Socialist Party. This will not happen overnight, this will take many, many years. There’s going to be no magic wand waved and it is not going to be something that a lot of us will probably see come to fruition, most of us, certainly of my age and above, will probably be dead, but it’s not about that, it’s about future generations, it’s about how we want our children to be raised, how we want them to live their lives, we do not want them to live like we are living now, under a terrible yoke and for that reason, I say we need to move away and start all over again. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

**Sister Apryl Walcott – Branch 450:** I support the motion, but I think we need to move more discussion. If we desert the Labour Party, then what does happen in five years time, because we’re not anywhere near close to getting any form of party other than the Labour Party elected in five years’ time and I’m not entirely comfortable with leaving the vulnerable with a Tory government for another decade or another 15 years or another 20 years, because that’s how long it will take to get another party going and we have to think about the vulnerable, the bedroom tax, the people who are being decimated and having to go to food banks. Let’s not think about us, can they survive another decade of a Tory government? I think that’s what we need to think about. I wholeheartedly support a debate, I think we should debate all day long about the Labour Party, because there needs to be discussion and there needs to be change in the Labour Party, but moving away, what is that going to do for the most vulnerable in the next five years, in the next 10 years, because we are nowhere near close to any alternative that would be elected within the next decade. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

**Brother Ian Hodson, National President:** Okay, Conference. The Executive Council would ask you to support the motion, but I just want to make a couple of points. I think, Marilyn, I think you’ll be around for at least another century, so you never know, you could see it in your lifetime. On the issue of, the question was brought up about people not being able to debate over the disaffiliation of the Labour Party. If you don’t bring the motions that include a Rule change, you won’t get it through as a Rule change. The debate around disaffiliation means you alter Rules, so we don’t put people’s noses out of joint because we don’t want to debate the issue of being affiliated to the Labour Party, we rule them out of order if you don’t bring the Rule changes that’s required to go to the floor of the Conference to enable Conference to take a decision one way or the other.
We absolutely are a democratic organisation and as Gary rightly points out, more democratic than any political party, like any Trade Union, absolutely committed to meeting the demands and the requirements of our members, that you are here to represent, but you can’t debate something that doesn’t allow us to make a decision in the end of whether we affiliate or disaffiliate because you don’t change Rules. The Rule Book’s there, the Rule Book’s there and if you look through it, you will find the Rules that relate to our relationship politically and this is a Trade Union by the way that doesn’t give hundreds of thousands of pounds to the Labour Party, this is a Trade Union, right, that affiliates the minimum amount and only gives to people who stand up and support our policies. We don’t give to an MP or a perspective MP that doesn’t agree with our Trade Union values. We don’t give to any Labour person at all unless they’re committed to fighting for the repeal of the anti-Trade Union legislation, against fracking and support us through our parliamentary group, amongst other areas such as the re-nationalisation of rail, the re-nationalisation of energy.

We are a committed Trade Union that values our political link with certain politicians and Richard, who came here yesterday, the first, first BFAWU MP, we’ve got so many now standing to be councillors across this country, we are fighting from within, we do agree that the Labour Party needs to change, we do accept there should be a debate and we have no fear whatsoever, but we can’t debate something if the people who want to debate it don’t make sure they apply the Rules and make sure we comply with democracy of our Union, which is the Rule Book. You want to change it, you link it to the Rules. Make sure you get it right and then you’ll debate on the floor of this Conference. Please support the motion.

[APPLAUSE]

I don’t think nobody opposed it, did they, or did they oppose it? Did anybody oppose it, I can’t remember now. Did you want a right of reply, just in case you did? No, okay. To the vote, those in favour? Against? Thank you very much, that’s carried. Motion 26. Withdrawn. Motion 27.

27 Rights at Work Branch 215

That this Conference agrees the future lies in creating better jobs. Our children’s prosperity requires an employment revolution not zero-hour contracts.

Brother Pat Rowley – No. 2 Region: Mr President, Delegates. Conference, we need to create better jobs, we need a revolution in new jobs and better jobs for young people, because today young people are coming out of school and they can’t get a job, but how are we going to get these jobs? The country today is just working and ticking over on service jobs. British manufacturing and export is at nil for a long, long time and it’s at nil for what reason? Because the countries that we sell our goods to and deal with are the same as we are, they are down and this is what happens, you have boom and bust, that’s what happens with boom and bust and until these countries that we deal with, when things were good, 60% of what we made went to Europe and also the other way and UKIP came out, No, we want our independence, that we sell our goods to and deal with are the same as we are, they are down and this is what happens, you have boom and bust, that’s what happens with boom and bust and until these countries that we deal with, when things were good, 60% of what we made went to Europe and also the other way and UKIP came out, No, we want our independence, we will deal with the rest of the world, well why isn’t, why aren’t they dealing with the rest of the world? In the good times, Britain did more business with the Republic of Ireland than China, Japan, Korea and South America. The only country that did more than Ireland was America. Now if they can do that much business with the small islands like that, three and a half or four million people and they are talking about dealing with the rest of the world.

Of course the amount of money that is picked up from China and these countries, these are big countries trying to export themselves and they’re working on cheap labour and they are hitting the economy of this country, but until Europe picks up again and business takes off, people will not get jobs, you cannot have jobs without business. Service industries, these zero hours, cafés and all of these places, they want the people for a couple of hours and the mid-day when things are busy and people are out for lunch and then they want them to go home and be back in the evening when they’re coming out again. Conference, I move this resolution because that is the only way to get our young people back to work and we will not get them back, these apprentice jobs and a lot of these things that are being offered today are just subsidising cheap labour for the businesses.

Now when that’s going on, why can’t a young person have a proper wage for working. Surely when you go to work you must take home a wage and that wage should keep you and should be able to sustain your life without being subsidised, the employer subsidised to do it and this business about don’t pay National Insurance and don’t do this. We must pay a National Insurance, we must stay in the National Health Service because we have a stake in it that way, but Conference, I move this resolution on behalf of young people and if we don’t look after young people and if they don’t have work and if they don’t pay National Insurance and if they don’t pay taxes, how do you expect I’m going to live the rest of my life, I can’t, there’s no money there to do so. Conference, I move.
Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Are you seconding it?

Brother Chris Lay – Branch 253: Here to second the motion. It is absolutely imperative that we do get better jobs out there and none of these bloody zero hour contracts or Workfare or anything like that.

If it starts happening in your workplace, let’s say no now, let’s say no, don’t think so and we’re not having it. This Union won’t have it. Please support this motion.

Sister Carole Golightly – Branch 506 (Region 5): Hello. Delegates, Conference. I’m here to support this motion for those on zero hour contracts. We owe it to our children to ensure that we create a better future for them. Let’s fight for a decent wage, a living wage and decent jobs. Please support this motion. Thank you very much.

Brother Keith Hutchinson – Branch 580 (Greggs of Yorkshire, not Pennines): Platform, Delegates. I’m here to support this motion. We owe it to people and there’s a young man with his partner back there, Ian Dolan?, we work with these people on Youth Fight For Jobs, but if you pass this motion, which I know you will with no issue whatsoever, go to some of their demos, stand there, go outside McDonald’s, to outside these places that have got zero hours, don’t sit on your arses, do something. Don’t just sit here and say yes, it’s a great idea, follow Ian, he just stands outside McDonald’s door, nobody can get past him, but you know, let’s not only just have the words, let’s have some action. Follow us, get out on those demos, all the demos are publicised, show that the Bakers Union is a Union, which it is, against zero hour contracts. They are the bane of this country. Please support.

Brother George Lonsdale– Branch 459 (Greggs): Hi again. I think it’s not just about zero hour contracts. Many jobs in Greggs offer 16 hour contracts, which are deemed as full-time. That’s £112 per week, before any deductions. You cannot live off that. We need to push for more hours for the members we already have. By doing this it will only swell our members. Remember, it’s strength in numbers. Thank you.
So, Scrutineers, make sure you do the balloting. Everybody else, if you haven’t filled in the ballot papers, make sure you do, make sure they’re collected, make sure they’re in Standing Orders and then you can go for a brew, how’s that? Back for half past.

[BREAK]

Okay, can you make sure everybody’s out of the lobby and in the room and sitting down, everybody’s paying attention again. I just want to bring everybody’s attention, this is particularly to do with the English project, you’ll see that on the screen over there, there’s this presentation that’s consistently rolling. Obviously we want you to stay in at dinnertime and read it, not during Conference, but obviously it’s there and it’s explaining what the BFA Learning Service new operating system kiosk does, just in case you wondered what it was. If you want any more information, I believe John Vickers is full of information all about it and can fully explain exactly the ins and outs of it and he’s more than happy to go to the bar with anybody who’s buying him a beer and explain it over a drink with them, I’ve been told, is that right, John, is that right?

We are going to do some more motions, but obviously people have noticed that we’ve been joined by the person who really should be the leader of the Labour Party, John McDonnell, who’ll be coming to speak to us shortly, so I’d like to welcome John to the platform, but we’re going to move back to the motions, which we’re on, we’re on, we’re just going to bring Standing Orders in for a minute.

Brother Mark Brooks, Chair of Standing Orders: If you turn to your Agendas, motions 37 and 38 will now be called Composite 1, which should be, is on your tables. That is all I have to put to Conference.


28 Rights at Work

That this Conference agrees equality for all. Women still waiting for real equality, in work, in board rooms, in the churches and in Salaries. Young people of eighteen years and over on a minimum wage £10 an hour rising yearly with the cost of living.

Brother Pat Rowley – No. 2 Region: Mr President, Delegates. Conference, this resolution, as you see, is about equality. I didn’t pick this up from being a director in some company or something like that, I have to read various reports from various people and many organisations. Women are getting promoted in companies, but they are not getting the salaries men are getting. Still there are some little twists there yet that man seems to be worth more, well he’s not. Conference, support this resolution, because women must take up their place both in the job and in the salary, because what you take home you live on and Conference, if we don’t do that, we’re discriminating against women, it is a form of discrimination. Conference, I move this resolution. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]


Sister Apryl Walcott – Branch 450: Responding on behalf of the Executive Council. Whether you identify as a man or a woman, you are 16, 18 or 58 and you are doing the same job, then you should be paid the same wage and that shouldn’t be the minimum wage, because what you have to think about, the word minimum, they are telling you that if it was legal, they would pay you less. We also must acknowledge that it is women who are bearing the biggest brunt of these nasty policies and cuts from the diabolical wages in the care sector to the slashing of funding for the most vulnerable women and children. I come from a family of incredibly strong women, one of whom is a Trade Union officer and one who had a child at 15 and is now an amazing businesswoman. I’m also lucky enough to have been raised by a fantastic mum.

I worked in Honduras last year and I’ll tell you what, the progression of the village that I lived in was down to a group of women that got together and decided to change things. Sexism is not always so obvious in politics, we must also look at the tampon tax and the reshuffling of jobs when women go on maternity. Finally, one of the most powerful things I’ll ever be as a woman, I’m a proud woman, a proud Trade Unionist, a proud politics graduate and a proud intern for a Human Rights charity and if anyone tells me I can’t do anything, they’ll be getting told two words and the second one will be ‘off’. I’m going to leave this by talking about equality for women in the Trade Union movement. We are not where we should be. Women are still under-represented, young women, young women of colour especially are under-represented and we must, we must think about how we treat women from the top to the bottom of Trade Unions.
If women have an opinion, it is not for men to tell them to shut up or tell them that they don’t know anything and tell them that they should be quiet, that is not the way as a Trade Union that we work. If we liberate women, we liberate this whole Goddam world. Please support.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Okay Conference, okay Conference, to the vote. Those in favour? Against?

That’s carried. Motion 29.

29 Rights at Work  Branch 390

This conference agrees to lobby the government to change the tiered system it has in place for national minimum wage. It is our belief that this system is an unfair practice and all workers regardless of age, should be treated equally.

Brother Sean Winfield – Branch 390: Mr President, Platform, Delegates. This Conference agrees to lobby the government to change the tiered system it has in place for the national minimum wage. It is our belief that this system is an unfair practice and all workers, regardless of age, should be treated equally. Apprentices receive £2.73 per hour, people under 18 get £3.79 per hour, people from 18 to 21 get £5.13 per hour and those over 21 get £6.50. We’re all doing the same job, we’ve all got financial responsibilities. I know that we’re lobbying for a living wage, but we should all get the same wage, not be discriminated against because of age. I ask that this Conference vote in favour of this motion. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Seconder?

Brother Warren Broomhall – Branch 390: I’m here just to support and second this motion. The national minimum wage should be what it says on the tin. Young people should not be disadvantaged just because of their age. Even apprentice workers should be on a minimum wage. These workers still have financial commitments and should be treated fairly. How can anyone expect to get a good start in their working lives when they are clearly being exploited? Please support.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Pat Rowley – No. 2 Region: Mr President, Delegates. Conference, a minimum wage should be a living wage. There’s no use them saying we’re having a minimum wage that isn’t fit to keep you living. A minimum wage means a living wage, nobody should be below that, no person should be below that, no person should have to go to a food bank after working to look for food, that is wrong, that’s going back to the Victorian days when they had the workhouses, that’s what that is. Conference, young people are as well fit to take their place in any job as anybody of 20, 30 or 40 years of age. Young people, when it comes to the army, at 17 they’re asked to take the front line, why then have they to take the back line when they come home and go back in a job? Conference, support this resolution and make sure …

[APPLAUSE]

…and make sure, and make sure at your places at work that young people get their rights. Young people are our future, they’re the people that will come after us …

[APPLAUSE]

…people before us did this for us, do it now for them and we will never regret it. I move, I support, sorry. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Andy Moorhouse – Branch 417 (Hovis, Wigan): Here to support this motion. The minimum wage is one of the problems that we have simply because you have the obscenity on the other side where they’re saying oh, benefits are too much, so we’re going to cut benefits, that’s because the difference what you get on benefits and minimum wage is non-existent. So you’ve got a choice, you can either sit at home and get the same money or go and work and spend half your life working, for the same money. Duh, they wonder why they have a problem. Increase wages, that is how you increase the difference between benefits and wages, it’ll encourage people then to work. It’s ridiculous that benefits are being cut to try and encourage people to work. The benefits are set at a minimum level, that’s what people need as a minimum. So again, using their own logic, if there’s no difference between being on benefits and being on a minimum wage, that’s the minimum level that you need to live, you need more money. Support this motion, please.

[APPLAUSE]
Brother Adam Brown – Branch 277 (Bristol): I wholeheartedly agree with this. The minimum wage should apply to everybody, but I personally believe when we speak of a living wage etc., what we should actually be speaking about is people earning the national average wage, not a minimum, not a living wage, the national average, which in 2013 was £517 a week. We all believe in equality, we should all be paid the same, which is the national average.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Any more speakers?

Brother Joe Knapper – Branch 566 (Warburtons): Here on behalf of the Executive. Delegates and Platform. The Executive would obviously ask Conference to support this motion, as the system disadvantages the young people working within our industry and as a Trade Union we cannot allow this kind of discrimination to go unchallenged. How one employee can work alongside another, getting less pay, is not acceptable, so here it is again, minimum £10 an hour. Please support, thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Okay Conference, to the vote. Those in favour? Against? That’s carried. Motion 30. Motion 30?

30 Rights at Work

That this conference agrees that workers must retain the right to strike with the same rights for all voting systems.

Sister Carole Golightly – Branch 506 (Region 5): Hello. Conference, Delegates. I’m here to support this motion. I agree that workers must retain the right to strike, the same right as our voting systems. Please support this motion. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Sister, I take it you were moving the motion, yes? You were moving the motion?

Okay. I’ll tell you what, we’ll take it that you came down in advance and obviously when we put it on the video, we’ll reverse it and then you’ll follow Pat. That’s why you confused us, Pat. She thought you’d spoken.

Brother Pat Rowley – No. 2 Region: Conference, it is my mistake.

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: It’s okay, it’s okay.

Brother Pat Rowley – No. 2 Region: I left my Agenda here and when I went back there I didn’t know that I was back again on the rostrum. Conference, Mr President, Delegates. Conference, this resolution agrees that workers must retain the right to strike. That must never be taken away. Back in 1923, workers got the right to withdraw their labour. We must never let that go, but we must never strike out of fear and we must never fear to strike when the need is ready. We must do it then, but at all times, at all times, there was a Delegate, he’s not here this year, John Halliday from No. 7 Region, said it here very well at Conference, dialogue is still the best method, but the right to strike must be there. Conference, I move.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Formally seconded. I’m glad we had the first speaker up to support it next. I don’t need a clipper board though, do I, so you can get that in the right order, no.

Brother Andy Moorhouse – Branch 417 (Hovis, Wigan): Obviously here to support this motion. We don’t strike for fun, we don’t strike at the drop of a hat, there’s a whole process that you’ve got to go through and there’s a reason we end up going on strike. That’s because usually it’s bad managers provoking the situation. We desperately need this, any changes to the law that are coming, resisting and stopping, we must have the right to strike. Support this motion.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Adam Brown – Branch 277 (Bristol): I too support this motion. On and off over the years I’ve been on strike many, many times. It is our fundamental right and should not be taken away from us. It is our biggest weapon and really it’s probably our only true weapon, because it hits the employers where it hurts them the most, which is in their pocket and that is all they think about, is pounds, shillings and pence, so I say support this motion and be able to strike as and when and use it as a tool. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Any more speakers?
**Brother John Fox – Branch 405 (speaking on behalf of the Executive Council):** The Executive Council asks you to support this motion. If it wasn’t for this action that we can take and most of all it is the only action that we can take, if you go back to the time at Wigan, that was a long time ago now, 20 months, if we didn’t have the right to strike then, then that would have had serious consequences on our terms and conditions and the 28 people who got the full-time positions. We need this, we’ve got to keep going and this strike action, on the motion itself it says the right, the actual, I’ve not got my glasses on so I can’t see you, couldn’t read the motion properly, but it comes on the motion about having the right way of going about this and we did it at Wigan the right way, but if Boris Johnson went the right way, he wouldn’t have been Mayor of London, if David Cameron went the right way, he wouldn’t be in power now in the Conservative Party, so we ask you to support this motion. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

**Brother Ian Hodson, National President:** Okay Conference, to the vote. Those in favour? Against? That’s carried. Okay Conference, you can put your Agendas away now. Execution, no, absolutely no execution here John, not for you anyway. Conference, when people look at politics and you look at the leadership candidates and currently going for the leadership of the Labour Party and listen to some of their reasons why they believe that the Labour Party lost the Election, all they’ve got to do is look at what happened in Scotland, which people keep referring to, but also look at what happens when you’re a politician that has principles and stands up for working people. When you have principles and you stand up for working people, what you do is you get elected, not just for the majority you had last time, but with an increased majority and let’s welcome, give an absolutely rapturous welcome to the re-elected MP for Hayes, oh forget that, John McDonnell.

[APPLAUSE]

**John McDonnell MP’s Address to Conference**

**John McDonnell, MP for Hayes:** Thanks a lot, thanks a lot, thanks Brothers and Sisters. Thank you. I’m here as the Chair of the parliamentary group in parliament on behalf of the Union. We’ve circulated a written report to all of you about the activities of the group over the last year and I believe there’s time for questions after I’ve spoken, on any of the issues you want to raise, including those in the parliamentary report. Whilst I’m, let me just say this though, I chair the parliamentary group so I’m the voice of the Union along with others in parliament and I just want to say this to you. I’m immensely, immensely proud of being the voice of this Union in parliament. I’m immensely proud not just being a voice in parliament, but also on every picket line and every demonstration that you’ve called, because what you’ve done is not just represent our members effectively, but also those people up until now have had no representation, particularly in the fast food sector and you launched the campaign 18 months ago, which I think has sent shock waves right the way through the Trade Union movement about how a Union can effectively organise, how you can represent some of the most vulnerable workers within our society and some of the youngest as well, so I just want to thank you.

First of all, thank you for the honour of being able to represent you in parliament, but also thank you for just the determination, the courage that you’ve shown in your representations of our own members but also, as I say, in the fast food industry over the last year. Last year when I was at Conference, we were preparing the Agenda for the negotiations with an incoming Labour government. We had a whole list of things that we’d been talking directly to Ed Miliband about and to be frank, we were achieving some successes in those discussions around Trade Union rights, around health and safety, the heat? campaign that we’d been waging and we thought things were moving on and most of us thought, if you cast your minds back, that we would most probably have a Labour government, not necessarily with a majority, but at least the largest Party and we were hoping maybe a Labour government with a small majority. Well, as you know, on 8th May it was probably one of the darkest hours for the Labour movement in this country since the Second World War, with the Tories getting back in and we now face, I think, one of the most serious political situations that we’ve faced at least since the 1980s.

You’ll hear from Arthur later on about, he may well take you through what happened to the working class during that period, when we were struggling then under a Thatcherite government. Well I warn you, this government is worse than anything we’ve ever seen under Thatcher and more determined as well. Why did Labour lose the Election? Let’s just take it through. You’ve had some debate about that already, but basically the most common theme on the doorstep from people who used to vote Labour, didn’t vote Labour this time, wasn’t actually the phrase that people expected. It was more, I didn’t leave Labour, Labour left me and we heard that time and time again, right the way across the country. People disillusioned with Labour and looking for an alternative or disillusioned with Labour and staying at home. In Scotland, you know we got wiped out, we’ve got one Labour MP left.
He got re-elected because he supported the campaign of his local football team. It wasn’t about being a Labour MP as such and what happened in Scotland, people don’t underestimate this and don’t misinterpret it, the SNP won not because they’re a Nationalist Party, they are in some elements of it, but they won because it was a complete rejection of what New Labour over the period in office had imposed upon them, Iraq, privatisation, cutbacks and not offering them an alternative. The SNP won because they were seen as the anti-austerity party, they’re mildly social democratic and the irony of it is, they’re implementing austerity policies in Scotland, we’re having a battle through the RMT at the moment about them privatising the ferries and cutting workers pensions, but they portrayed themselves as anti-austerity when it comes to Westminster and yet the Labour Party was seen as almost a party in occupation, a foreign country’s party occupying Scotland, that’s why they rejected, anything from Westminster they rejected and they mobilised like a social movement, the way the Labour Party used to mobilise, bringing people in, mobilising, recruiting, campaigning against unfairness and injustice and do you know what was frightening as well, in parts of the North of England in particular but elsewhere as well, UKIP came second to Labour in 42 constituencies, got four million votes, a racist party, don’t tell me they’re not racist, they’re racist and they got four million votes. Why?, because of the same level of disillusionment. We never provided people with their jobs, their homes and the security that they wanted and right the way across the rest of the country, to be frank, when you’re coming out of a recession people want to feel confident that the incoming government is on their side and for Labour to go into a campaign promising austerity-like policies, disillusioned whole sections of people who would normally support us and they allowed the Tories to blame Labour for the last recession.

The Tory allegation was that we crashed the economy. The problem with that is it’s true, but they got the allegation true but for the wrong reasons. Labour didn’t crash the economy because we spent too much money on teachers or hospitals or police officers or investing in our environment, we crashed the economy not because of overspending, but because of under-regulating. Under Brown and Blair we went along, with all the ideas of neoliberalism that you de-regulate the banks and the finance houses, you allow credit to go through the roof, you do nothing about Trade Union rights, so wages remain suppressed and then you get a debt bubble and eventually someone, a family in the United States on low pay, say we can’t pay the mortgage anymore and that went right the way across America, right the way across Europe, but we had a special responsibility in government, because we had the City of London, two miles, well a mile and a half from Westminster, that we allowed to completely become out of control and rip off not just the people who’d borrowed the money, but the whole of society.

This argument that we overspent is easily disproved. In terms of the amount we spent, in proportion of the GDP, the gross domestic product, we spent less than we inherited from the Tories. What happened was as soon as the crash occurred, we had to pump money into the economy to save the banks, but we saved them for whom? Not for us. We put £850 billion-worth into the economy and we saved them for the bankers. The bankers are back now, with their bonuses, with their profits, with their huge pension schemes and even when they fail, they’re still getting paid out. What I find despicable at the moment though is actually all these ministers, Labour ministers who are in the Shadow Cabinet now blaming and turning on Ed Miliband. They were in the Shadow Cabinet, why didn’t they stand up and say something? Why didn’t they pose the alternative to austerity? Why didn’t they campaign within their communities? It’s too easy just to blame one man. What do we face now? This is a serious speech, there aren’t many jokes, I’m sorry about this. What we face now is an absolute hurricane of cuts, privatisations and attacks on Trade Union rights and civil liberties. We’ve had the Queen’s speech, you’ve been talking about some elements of it today.

The Trade Union Bill will be introduced, as you know, a balloting procedure, as someone has just said in the debate, a balloting procedure which would mean that only 55 MPs would be elected on that basis, 50% plus 40% of the overall electorate you have to have, which means if you get a turnout of about 50% you have to have 80% of those people voting in favour. This government was elected on 25% of the vote of the electorate. This is what anywhere else in the world would be described as an elected dictatorship. They have no mandate for this legislation, no mandate for this attack on our civil liberties, that we fought for and struggled for and gained as a result of two centuries of struggle and sacrifices, but it goes further on than that. I tell you in this next five years, if they can get away with it, the NHS will have gone. In the last six months of the coalition government, two-thirds of all contracts in the NHS went to the private sector and it’s interesting isn’t it, it went to companies from which many Tories have got financial interests and unfortunately some ex-Labour ministers are working for them. A scandal, a rip-off of, I think, on a scale we’ve not seen before.

In addition to that, as you know, what they’re doing is on housing associations, like council house sales, they’re going to sell them off. I tell you, I represent a working class multi-cultural community in West London. Tonight, 200 of my families will be sleeping in bed and breakfasts, 4,000 on the housing waiting list, only six months ago there were 10,000 but the Tories wiped off with a calculation, a manoeuvre to take 6,000 families off it.
Many of my families in my community are living in over-crowded communities, over-crowded housing, but worse still, in West London, in the seventh richest country in the world, I have people living in sheds and families living in shanties, I have a shanty town developed in London at the moment, in my constituency, where whole families are living in appalling third world-like conditions and yet what do the Tories want to do?, they want to sell off the housing associations in the same way they want to sell off council properties and deny those people any prospects of a roof over their heads. It’s like going back 70 years, 60 years, 50 years. I was born in Liverpool, I haven’t got the Scouse accent any more, we moved south for work. I was born off the Scotty Road, in a slum and we celebrated the day we moved out to get a council house, [unclear] as standard, with a garden. The families I now represent have no chance. The waiting list in my area, right the way across the country, means that people will have to wait a minimum of 10 years at the moment, when the housing association properties are sold, there is no hope of having a decent roof over their heads.

This is a scandal, an absolute scandal, the suffering that they’re imposing on our community. The budget is in a few weeks’ time as well, 8th July, £30 billion-worth of cuts, they’re looking for £12 billion-worth of cuts on welfare benefits alone. Most of that will come from working families tax credits, most of our members are on working families tax credits of some sort and they’re coming for child benefit as well. They’ve promised that they won’t attack people with disabilities, nobody believes that. So there’s a debate in the Tory Party now about whilst we’re cutting the benefit, but taxing it in some form and increasing the stringency of the test for people with disabilities. Well on the last figure, of the number of people who got assessed ready for work under the work capability assessment, 4,000 died before they got to work, assessed willing, able to work, they died before they could take up the job. In parliament, some of you raised it with me last time and I raised the question on your behalf, about the number of people who committed suicide as a result of the cuts in benefits. The government, there was an MP, a Tory MP called Esther McVey, I won’t say any more on that, I wound up in the Daily Mail the last time I mentioned anything about her.

[LAUGHTER]

We asked her to publish the government’s report monitoring the suicides of people who’d been on benefits, where the coroner had indicated the benefit cut had been at least part of the reason why they’d done it. They refused to publish them. We got a leak, well a leak, a Freedom of Information Act request, a leak and then an FOI and they monitored just 49 and of those 49 cases of suicide, they discovered that at least 10% were related, of the suicides were related to a cut in benefits. That means if you extrapolate that over all the figures that we’ve got, we’re talking about literally every year, literally every year, tens, dozens, maybe up to 100 people committed suicide as a result of the cuts in benefit. Is this a civilised society? Is this the sort of society that we should be living in, where the most vulnerable are forced to take their own lives as a result of these cuts and yet they’re going to pour more on them. Well let me say this though, the threat isn’t just what’s coming from the government. One of the biggest threats I think we face is that we’re about to possibly go into another recession. All the factors that were there to create the 2007/2008 recession are back again, low pay, pay stagnating at the moment, low productivity, a deficit on our current account, so we’re actually buying more than we’re selling in terms of abroad, house price assets going through the roof again, debt increasing not just on houses but also people going into debt again for the basics, evictions on a record scale this year, all of those factors now that created the 2007/2008 crisis are back again, so we’re faced with a government inflicting cuts of 30 million, reducing demand in the economy, the economy, all the figures we heard before the Election now contradicted because we’re going backwards and possibly into deflation rather than growth itself and an economic crisis potentially within two years. I didn’t come here to give you good news obviously, did I? But I’ll tell you what the good news is. In meeting in Conferences like this right the way across the country, people are actually making a determined decision and the determined decisions are these. What do we do about this? We resist, we resist …

[APPLAUSE]

…in the same way that you’ve resisted over these recent years. I go around, I go around the country, I don’t know maybe it’s me, but everywhere I go now there are people resisting. Candy Udwin, I was in Trafalgar Square last week on the National Gallery dispute, a group of workers, I don’t think they’ve ever been on strike before, they’re out on strike on a regular basis now. Why?, against privatisation to protect their wages, but I’ll tell you one other thing as well. At a basic solidarity to the Trade Union rep that represented them has now been victimised and sacked. I pay tribute to PCS for the solidarity that they’ve given their own members, but on that demonstration in Trafalgar Square, we had the Barnet UNISON workers as well. Home carers, again threatened with privatisation, another group of other carers with them who’d been privatised already, 17% pay cut, what do they do, some of the lowest paid workers in local government, what are they doing?, they’re on strike, on a regular basis and they’re fighting back every time.

[APPLAUSE]
We had the lecturers from the London Met, the London Met Colleges, these are lecturers, these are professional
qualified people, whose jobs are being casualised. Why are they being casualised?, because their contracts are being
withdrawn, their wages are cut, their conditions undermined. What are they doing?, they’re not just striking themselves,
but their students are coming out with them and we had at the UCL, when the students were then threatened because
of the solidarity that they were doing, what did they do?, they went on rent strike against the University. Right the way
across the piece. Come to London some time, I’m describing it as a rebel city at the moment, people fighting back.
Housing occupations taking place, squatting started again because there’s nowhere else to go, that’s why the Tories
made squatting more a criminal offence in the last legislation and do you know what happened?, the youngster down in
Brighton, turfed out of the accommodation, threatened with criminal action, froze to death this winter on the doorstep.
Read it, where do we read it, right the way across the media? No, not at all. In the Daily Mirror and The Morning Star
Again, what’s been happening in the squatters movement now, families saying we’re not going to be evicted by
landlords anymore, we’re staying put and whole communities then surrounding them to support them. So I say what
we’ve got to do now is be part of that resistance movement, part of that resistance movement and we have a special
responsibility as a Union now to make sure first of all all our own members are fully educated about what’s happening.
We expose to them the crisis that this country is in, the attack that’s coming at us from the Tories, but also what we
need to be doing, exactly as we have done the last year or two, withdrew our political education mechanism, the way
we run our courses etc., not just talk about how bad it is, but what alternatives there are. We’ve got to give people the
vision of a future society, an alternative, that the Labour Party failed to do at the last Election, because in that way we
can give people confidence.

As I say also, when we work together, we’re stronger. That means and we as a Union have always done this, we’ve
always worked in solidarity with others. When other Unions are in dispute, if we can assist them, we do, but you know
in this coming period, if they get the Trade Union Rights Bill through you know what they’re going to do, they’re
going to target PCS, the civil servants, RMT they detest, the RMT have become the miners now like the miners were
in the 1980’s, the FBU, because of their continuing campaign over pensions and if they can break them, they’ll come
to break us, so I think one of the things we should be saying to the TUC now is that when we campaign together, we’re
stronger, when we strike together, we’re undefeatable, so therefore the TUC needs to play its role now …

[APPLAUSE]

…in co-ordinating activity. And let me say this as well, we need to link up with all those other struggles. It doesn’t
matter now whether people are in the Union or not, we want to recruit them, but if they’re not with us at the moment,
let’s get alongside them, so if there’s a housing campaign, if there’s students, whoever it is in resisting, we should be
with them, so on 20th June, on the People’s Assembly March, we’ve got to make it the biggest protest that we’ve seen
in decades, to get people out there against austerity. And let me just say this in terms of politics as well. Tony Benn
used to say there’s not enough Socialists, but there’s too many Socialist parties. I think it’s time we started getting
together. Instead of fighting one another, let’s have one common front against austerity. Let’s start working together
and maybe from that we’ll get an electoral formation that could prove to be effective. I actually say now as well,
I’m convinced, up until recently I’ve always been a first past the post person, now I’m convinced about the need for
proportional representation. We can’t have a situation where large numbers of people are voting and not represented.
That’s why I think we should be considering now and talking through the alternatives to this voting system, so we
all have a democratic voice, but in the meantime that might well then assist us in an emerging, I think, a political
formation that’ll be more direct in its Socialist commitment and at the same time be able to represent us better, but in
the meantime we have to fight with the resources that we’ve got. We’re currently in the middle of a Labour leadership
election. Up until last week, to be frank, there were three candidates, four candidates, you couldn’t put a cigarette
paper between them, so on the left of the Labour Party there was a decision taken that we should run a Labour
leadership candidate this time. I’ve done it twice, I don’t fancy another bed of nails quite honestly and I had a heart
attack two years ago and I think that’s the association with this Union that most probably did it, but there you are …

[LAUGHTER]

I don’t blame you, I don’t blame you, but the, so we decided Jeremy Corbyn decided he fancied a chance, so we’re
backing Jeremy Corbyn.

[APPLAUSE]

Jeremy Corbyn is a principle Socialist.

[APPLAUSE]
We are, we have until next Monday to get 35 nominations. We need to be frank, as much pressure on Labour MPs to nominate as we can mobilise this week. I’m grateful for this Union’s support for Jeremy, but all of us individually we need to be contacting our local Labour MPs or Labour MPs close to us or anyone we know, to tell them to nominate. We’re not even asking them to vote for Jeremy at this stage, just to nominate so we can have at least a voice against austerity on that ballot paper, that’s all we’re asking for. To be frank, the rules of the Labour Party leadership campaigns and I’ve been through two of them, make FIFA look democratic.

[LAUGHTER]

I’ve just, we’re just asking, we’re just asking for the Labour Party to give us a choice and Jeremy Corbyn on the ballot paper would open up the debate and give rank and file Labour Party members the opportunity of hearing an alternative in the campaign and possibly voting for it and I say this, if Jeremy does get on that ballot paper, we’re not there just as a token, we’re not there just to debate, we’re there to win, we’re there to win …

[APPLAUSE]

…because we want a Socialist government. We want a Labour government committed to austerity. We want a Labour government that actually represents the working class again. They’re saying in some ways that will alienate middle England, well actually I represent a London constituency, I’ve campaigned right the way across London and the South East. What people want is a Labour, Labour, as a Labour Party back again. They want Labour to build the homes for themselves and their children. They want secure jobs, they don’t want to be dependent on the City of London, they want their manufacturing jobs back again, decent jobs, skilled jobs. They want education for their children without having to go into debt if they want to go to university and they want to live in a decent environment. It’s not much to ask, but it’s something the Labour Party was founded to deliver and that’s what Jeremy will be standing for when he stands for leader. So let me say this in conclusion. Yes, in many ways politically this is for us one of the darkest of times, but there is light at the end of that tunnel. It’s one of the worst of times, but actually one of the best of times, because it means now we can’t just sit on our hands anymore, we’ve got to fight back, we’ve got to resist. If we don’t, there’ll be nothing left of what our forefathers and mothers before us created for us.

There’ll be nothing left of the welfare state, we’ll be living in a society so unequal that will reflect the 18th century and not the 21st century and I have to say as well, we’ll be leaving for our children no future whatsoever. So what do we need? I come back to it again and you know it better than me. Three things, courage, because it’s tough, the courage of people like Candy Udwin, all of us have to display, when they come for you, you stand up. Determination, absolute determination, we’re going to win, doesn’t matter what they throw at us, we’re going to win. They’re the few, we’re the many, we control, if we don’t work, they don’t earn and at the end of the day, we control this economy, not them and we can control the electoral system as well with our votes, because we’re the many, they’re the few, but above all else what do we need? Why were we founded? We were founded on the principle of solidarity. We need solidarity with every resisting struggle in this country.

[APPLAUSE]

Solidarity, Brothers and Sisters.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Okay Conference, we’re going to take a couple of questions, so does anybody, it’s got to be literally about two questions because obviously we’re getting near half past 12, so is there anybody who wants to ask John any question, we’ve got one, one more, we’ll take one more, two. Pat?

John McDonnell, MP for Hayes: Pat always asks me a question.

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: I didn’t see you there, Marilyn, come down, we’ll have three, Marilyn, come down. I’m a coward, I know where my bread’s buttered, I know where my bread’s buttered. So Pat, John, Marilyn.

Brother Pat Rowley – No. 2 Region: Mr President, Delegates. John, welcome and it’s great to see you at our Conference. My question is, does politics need cleaning up? Is it too immoral? I read here by a minister, McShane, who got jailed for fiddling his expenses, but when he came out he said he was glad that pre-2010 all expenses belonging to MPs were shredded. Haven’t we a right to know that these people are doing wrong and haven’t we a right to have them taken out of office? It’s your, to tell us what you think on that, John.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: We’ll ask the questions and then John will answer them.
Brother John Vickers (full-time Official): One of the issues I’ve got, John, is we’ve got to bear in mind, is before we get all excited and giddy and making all these demands, we’ve got to bear in mind in this room today there are probably Delegates who actually voted Conservative, Delegates that actually voted UKIP and it’s okay getting on this wave of euphoria, what we’ve got is we’ve got issues within ourselves to sort of get across and finally, one of the things that really does concern me is one of the things that’s actually going around on Facebook is a photo of the Houses of Parliament and about it being televised, you can actually see and when it came to the debate on the national minimum wage, there were maybe 10, 15, at most 20 MPs from either side in the Houses of Parliament talking about the national minimum wage. When it came to MPs salary debates, they were crammed in like sardines, because it was like …

[APPLAUSE]

…it was a case of, it was a case that they were talking about how deep they could get their snouts into the trough. What are we going to do to get the message across to people that we’re actually trying to target, that Labour Party MPs, I’ve got morals, I’ve got principles and are not in there to get their noses as deep as they can into the trough, that’s an issue we’ve got to tackle. [APPLAUSE]

Sister Marilyn McCarthy – Branch 450 (Manchester): Until two years ago, John, I lived in Oldham, an industrial town. Our MP was Michael Meacher, I think he still is, son of a merchant banker, so he definitely had a lot in common with the Oldham people and he never, ever came and knocked on my door in the 30 years that I lived in the same house, nobody from the Labour Party ever came and knocked on my door. What are these people doing? He’s not in that brochure, he doesn’t support the Bakers Union. Park Cake Bakeries is in Oldham, in his constituency, what sort of MPs have we got?, that’s one. Secondly, my MP now, because I’ve now moved to Salford, the City of Salford on the outskirts of Manchester and our MP is Graham Stringer, another one who doesn’t know how to knock on doors and his name’s twice in that book. These are not what I would call Labour MPs, they’re out of touch with us. [APPLAUSE]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: I was going to say, Marilyn, I wouldn’t have knocked on your door either, I’d have been scared. John.

John McDonnell, MP for Hayes: Okay. Let me just, Pat raised the important question of cleaning up politics. Let’s be clear, it’s a scandal that they seem to have eradicated the evidence from the expensive scandal that was exposed, that’s what’s been reported and what I can’t find, what I find absolutely amazing is only a few went to prison, only a few and they weren’t the worst examples of the expenses that were claimed. Remember, even David Cameron had to pay back money for the gardening that he claimed that was illegally claimed and it’s extraordinary how they closed that whole scandal down so quickly, but that isn’t just the scandal is it, it’s all the other jobs that they do as well and then when they stand down as ministers, how companies that they’ve awarded contracts to as ministers within 18 months or two years they become directors of the boards of those companies and that isn’t just Tories, that’s ex-Labour ministers as well. I think we should follow Dennis Skinner’s example, if you’re an MP, that’s your one job, one job, that’s all you should have, you shouldn’t have any outside jobs …

[APPLAUSE]

…and if, if you’re a minister and if you’re a minister and you stand down, you’re no longer a minister, you shouldn’t be allowed, not just for a period of 18 months or whatever, not to have a directorship in a company that’s been associated with your department, it should be permanent …

[APPLAUSE]

…you shouldn’t be allowed to take up those jobs and consultancies and in addition to that, you know as well, in my constituency, if someone’s caught fiddling, a couple of quid on welfare benefits, they’re interrogated under the Act and all the rest of it and then often they’re prosecuted, they’re dragged through the courts, named and shamed in the papers and some of them then go to prison. I’m not defending people who fiddle the welfare benefits or anything like that, but in comparison with what MPs, happens to MPs and the bankers as well, we’ve never seen a banker go to prison for what they’ve done in crashing the economy, it’s a scandal isn’t it? The law that applies to one should apply to everybody and that includes MPs as well. [APPLAUSE]

John’s made a good point, John Vickers made a really good point. We’ve got to really think carefully about not just other people who voted UKIP and Tory, but our members as well. That’s why I raised in my speech the important role we’ve got as a Union to educate our members, expose how our system works, so they’re educated about that, how
they’re being ripped off, how they’re being exploited, who’s doing that, who their parliamentary representatives are, but in addition to that, get our members involved in discussing the alternative that we want to see. Our Union’s been very effective at political education, but we’ve got to really recognise right the way across the Trade Union movement now, that’s one of our roles, because we can’t have people, we used to call it false consciousness, where they go and vote against their own class interests and that’s what they’re doing and it’s easy, isn’t it?

In every recession someone comes along, some demogog, demogoric politician and blames a scapegoat. In the 30s the Fascists blamed the Jews, in the 50s and 60s actually it was my lot, the Irish, got it for a bit in this country, then it was the Blacks, then it was the Asians and in this recession it’s immigrants or anyone on welfare benefits. UKIP targets the immigrants, the Tories target the welfare benefits. We’ve got to explain to people that these are scapegoats, it’s not the individuals that are causing the problems that we’re suffering, it’s the system itself and those who control the system and their representatives in parliament are the Tories and their representatives are UKIP. I think that’s the role of political education that we do and in terms of parliamentary debates, let me just say this. In terms of our group, I’ve been proud at the way we’ve represented this Union in parliament, turning up at debates, engaging and all the rest. Obviously we have to prioritise, we’re a small group, we prioritise who can get where, but it is interesting isn’t it, when we were campaigning on the minimum wage and the living wage at £10 an hour, we got some support but not enough. Every MP that’s associated with any Trade Union in this country now, we should have committed to £10 an hour as a minimum wage, full stop.

[APPLAUSE]

And I just, don’t get me going on the MPs salary increase, because I just, my heart won’t take it quite honestly, but isn’t it a scandal that the one time that the government’s going to impose, by the looks of it, are the pay freezes right the way across the board, those same MPs are going to vote themselves through, well not vote themselves through, because it’s done independently now, but virtually do nothing about having a 10% increase up to what, 74 grand or whatever it is. My view is all of them should now say we’re not having it, full stop. Keep it in there and spend it on what’s needed, the NHS …

[APPLAUSE]

…or something else. Now let me just tell you this, I’ll speak to Michael Meacher and Graham Stringer, I’ll try and get them both to knock on your door, you might not enjoy it, but it will be worthwhile …

[LAUGHTER]

…but I’ll tell you, in my constituency, in the General Election, we knocked on every door, it was knackering, it was absolutely knackering, we knocked on every door, it was a hard, gruelling campaign, but we don’t just do it at election campaigns, we do it all the time and I correspond, I had one woman at a public meeting the other day who said you’ve written to my husband six times, are you having an affair with him or something, it was like that …

[LAUGHTER]

…and that’s what we’re about, representing people, we’ve got to be the Labour Party and all of us now, we’ve got to be a social movement once again, where we work together as a community. No-one, even if they’re elected into different positions, they’re no different from anyone else, they should be just working class people, which comes to my final point. As a Union, we’ve been trying to encourage our members in the political education and all the rest, that they’re good Trade Union reps. We’ve also been saying to our members, think about standing for position, standing as a local councillor, standing for parliament, because we want working class representation back in parliament, because in that way we can get true representation with people who know what it’s like to struggle to pay the rent, not able to actually afford things that their kids want.

We want people in there who’ve life experience, not people who have been parachuted into constituencies and all they’ve done is to go university and then become policy advisers. We want working class representation again and this Union can spearhead that campaign. Solidarity.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ronnie Draper, General Secretary: Comrades. John, brilliant as normal, I’m starting to think it’s just a rehearsed script this, so normally we would give guests a pewter baker, but he’s got more bakers than Hovis so we decided, first of all, I asked John before what charity he would like to donate £100 to, so I’ve given him a cheque for £100 for Hayes FM and I’m sure John will just say a few words before he goes, just on what it is.

[APPLAUSE]
Well, we’ve been noticing you’ve been a bit scruffy lately, so what we’ve done, we’ve got you some proper clobber, so when you’re out on the fast foods campaign, John, as he always is or on the picket line, you’ve got one of our zero hour T-shirts and you’ve got one of our designer jackets, how’s that, aye?

[APPLAUSE]

And of course the only reason he ever comes back to our Conference is the biscuits, he loves the biscuits made by Fox’s, Trade Union members, John, so take them away. We’ve got one more surprise just to say though, I’ve just spoken to all the Executive and we want to bestow on John honorary membership …

[APPLAUSE]

…which is the highest honour you can give in the Trade Union movement, so John will be a life honorary member of the Bakers Union.

**John McDonnell, MP for Hayes:** Can I say thanks a lot, thank you. I won’t delay your dinner, but can I say thanks a lot. I’m shit at bakery …

[LAUGHTER]

I am really, when Ronnie says that, it is the highest honour and I’m humbled by it, I’m really very, very grateful. It’ll be one of the things I’ll always remember for the rest of my life, I’m really grateful. Can I say in terms of Hayes FM, this is a local community radio station that we set up, I chair it and it’s for training young people into media broadcasts. A lot of them are kids who are, some of them are at school still, coming to the end and looking at what career they do, but there are others who are kids off the street, who’ve not necessarily got all the formal qualifications but we can get them broadcasting etc and then get them into jobs as well, so this will go towards that, to help them, the training. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

**Brother Ian Hodson, National President:** Okay Conference, before you go, the credit union is actually going to be in the Gardens Bar, I believe Pauline’s put some money behind the bar to buy the first round and Joe’s purchased the sandwiches, is that right, Joe? Anyway, so that’s in the Gardens Bar and it’s through the door, on your left, I was just making sure it was on the left. Is that my left? On somebody’s left.

So it’s in the Gardens Bar. If you’re in the credit union, make sure you go to the AGM, that’s yours, you want to take part in it, you’ve got to take part in the decision-making process. We’ll be back …

**Brother Ronnie Draper, General Secretary:** Just one point I want to make. In front of all of you you’ve got a Candy, a Reinstate Candy, everyone’s got them, right, so when Mark Serwotka stands this afternoon to speak, we’ve got a poster which is advertising it, we want everyone, if the visitors haven’t got one, we’ll get one for you, when Mark starts to speak we would like you all to just hold it up, across your chest or something and we’ll get John Vickers to take a photo and that’ll go out in the press release from our Union and also from PCS …

[APPLAUSE]

…so if you could do that when Mark stands to speak.

**Brother Ian Hodson, National President:** 2 o’clock.

[LUNCH]

**Afternoon Session**

Okay, everybody take their seats. General Secretary to call the roll.

**Brother Ronnie Draper, General Secretary:** Region 1. Region 2. Region 3. Region 4, okay. Region 5. Region 5? Yes, how many? How many, all of them. Listen, if you’ve got past taking your shoes and socks off, somebody else will do it for you, if you don’t know how to count. How many Delegates have you got? Thank you, well done. Good answer, Sam. Region 6 and Region 7. There’s 193 Delegates in the room.

**Brother Ian Hodson, National President:** Okay Conference, straight on. Motion 31.

**31 Rights at Work **

*Conference agrees that employers should not hound, harass and victimise employees that are off on long term sick. We are seeing a rise in members complaining that even when they are off for a short period of time, of around 1 or 2 weeks, they are referred to Occupational Health appointments and company doctor appointments as a means to forcing them back to work early. An agreed period of time should be enforced before an employer can start making contact with long term sick employees.*
Brother Dermy Best: Chair, Committee, Comrades. People who are at work sick or being bullied by employers, who return to work on most occasions before they are fit to return. Workers are being contacted at home constantly sometimes, even though they have their own doctor’s name. This is completely ignored and they are being referred to the company’s occupational doctor, who legally can override their own doctor’s diagnosis simply based on the fact that the company’s occupational doctor has visited the worker’s place of work and is familiar with the working practices and systems. This may come as a surprise to most Union reps and workers who have never seen a doctor in the workplace and work practices and systems have been changed over the years. This bullying and intrusion on workers’ privacy is not acceptable, especially when they are at their most vulnerable. Workers need privacy at times of recovery, especially when people are suffering from long-term illnesses, for example mental health issues and reasonable time should be agreed before employer’s representatives make contact with employees who are ill. Please support this motion.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Seconder? Formally seconded.

Brother Leon Don – Branch 334: At the site where I work, our HSE is a Tory councillor, so he is very anti-Union, so I really like this motion. Where I work, we have a lack of first aid training and I believe that this motion might be able to help that, so I would like to support this motion. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Chris Lay – Branch 253: My company is one of the worst for doing this, especially people like area managers who think stress is not important and it’s just a way that we can just get some time off work. It isn’t that at all, stress is one of the biggest things which are affecting us, especially in the shops, in Greggs at the moment and they’re pushing people onto the occupational health and then even area managers aren’t actually listening to the occupational health, so please support this motion.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Andy Moorhouse – Branch 417 (Hovis, Wigan): Here to support this motion. We have tried to get this implemented at work, for some strange reason the bosses don’t want to talk about it. I’d love to know if the bosses get ‘phone calls when they go off, it only seems to be a one-way street where they’re chasing us, nobody seems to chase them, it’s taken as read if they’re off, it doesn’t matter. We have another issue as well, a sidelight on this. We actually have, in the past have had issues where the occupational health nurse hasn’t been taking any notice of what a consultant has recommended for treatment for one of the workers who was off and she wanted him back, the possibility that he had industrial asthma in a bakery, so he can’t work in an area where there’s any dust and she wasn’t listening to her, she wasn’t listening to the consultant surgeon and tried to get him back on his job on production where the dust is, it was ridiculous. Please support this motion.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Sean Molloy – Branch 558 (Rathbones, Wakefield): Chair, Council, Delegates. I’m here to support this. There’s too much of this going on in the workplace at the moment. People getting harassed and hounded, it’s wrong. My advice to any of my members that are off on the sick or getting treated like this, I say harass them back. Ring them, an example the occupational health will want to make a telephone call to you. I said well, don’t take the telephone call, tell them you want to go to the site to see them, start harassing them, because as soon as you start harassing them back, this sort of behaviour stops. So my experience is, if there’s a cost involved to them, they’ll stop doing it, so I’m here to support it, but just harass them back.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother John Owens – Branch 432 (EC Member): Supporting this motion and speaking on behalf of the EC The EC would ask you to support this motion. We totally agree that there should be a period of time before occupational health start making contact with members off sick. It is becoming very apparent there are members that are being bullied, harassed and victimised whilst off sick by our employers, by occupational health. We accept that our companies need to manage sickness, but there’s a difference in managing it with dignity, compassion and understanding members’ sickness for whatever reason it may be. Unfortunately companies are using a change that was incorporated into new guidance on fit notes, published by the government last March, that could allow an employer to give precedence to the views of an occupational health practitioner over those of a GP. The guidance states that assessment about whether your employee is not fit for work or may be fit for work or any other advice if the fit note is classed as advice and for the employers to determine whether or not to accept it and the companies are using this guidance to attack members whilst off sick and it’s not always long-term sick.
Myself and my colleague, Jay, at our bakeries spend more time representing and giving advice to our members who are off sick, short-term or long-term and who are being bullied and harassed more than anything else. My colleague, Jay, has suffered this harassment and lack of compassion from occupational health and bosses whilst off sick. We have a member who is off sick with stomach cancer, part-way through her chemotherapy she is getting ‘phone calls off occupational health asking her if she wants to come in to work for six hours a day. This is disgraceful and unacceptable. I myself was a victim of this when my mum passed away last September and I was off sick with bereavement stress, not for months but for three weeks and I was treated by occupational health and management like a piece of shit. No care, no dignity, no compassion …

[APPLAUSE]

…and no understanding. They wanted me back into work at any cost and the cost to me was they refused to pay me my sick pay. This was allegedly based on a report from occupational health when she told me there was nothing wrong with me and I should be back in work. Unfortunately bereavement stress or any stress doesn’t come with a plaster or a sling or crutches.

They kicked me when I was down and I’ll never ever forgive or forget them and I’m still bloody angry over it.

[APPLAUSE]

In the end, to me, it wasn’t just about the money, it was about how they treated me and many of our members are going through the same thing, so we have to fight it, we have to challenge every decision that goes against our members.

[APPLAUSE]

At the end of the day, the occupational health are just puppets and the companies are the puppeteers pulling the strings, getting occupational health to recommend that you go back to work before you’re ready. So what do we do in the meantime? In our Region, No. 4, we had a presentation by Thompsons Solicitors called ‘Conflicting Medical Evidence’. If your Region hasn’t had one, then you need to get one and use the advice and the information that the presentation gives you. If an occupational health report conflicts your GP, members should take a copy of that report back to their GP and ask their GP to comment on it, why they do not agree with it and why their medical opinion should be preferred. As the late Bob Crowe once said, if you don’t fight, you’ll lose, but if you fight, you might lose. Please support this motion.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Okay Conference, to the vote. Those in favour? Against? That’s carried. Motion 32.

### Rights at Work

**32 Rights at Work**

*That this conference agrees that we need to put pressure on the powers to be that Christmas time is a family time and not to be spent working silly, unnecessary hours. It has become more apparent that shops/supermarkets are opening more and more, longer and longer over this period which then puts pressure on us the suppliers.*

Brother John Owens – Branch 432 (A.B., Liverpool): Moving this motion and responding on behalf of the EC, who ask you to support this motion. That this Conference agrees that we need to put pressure on the powers that be, that Christmas time is a family time and not to be spent working silly, unnecessary hours. It is becoming more and more apparent that shops and supermarkets are opening more and more, longer and longer over this period, which then puts pressure on us, the suppliers. Whilst I accept that some people have to work over Christmas, like our emergency services and I thank them for that, but come on, do supermarkets have to stay open until late on Christmas Eve and open again early on Boxing Day? After weeks of Christmas shopping, do we really want to be going back to the shops at silly o’clock on Boxing Day?

Take Next for example, not a supermarket, but a High Street shop. On Boxing Day their sale starts at 5 o’clock, so staff who work there would have to be up very early to get into work. How can they enjoy Christmas Day? My local ASDA used to close about 5 o’clock, only a couple of years ago, on Christmas Eve, but it has got later and later and now it’s open until after 9 o’clock on Christmas Eve. If we’re not careful, these supermarkets will be opening on Christmas Day. Whilst I accept that we live in a 24/7 world, we all know when Christmas is and most of us live within walking distance of a supermarket or own a fridge/freezer to stock up on food. I think even some McDonald’s now are open on Christmas Day. I was speaking to a lad in an outdoor shop in Liverpool just after Christmas last year and he was telling me that he was a student in Liverpool and working in this shop, probably on a zero hour contract.

[APPLAUSE]
He had to work until 6 o’clock on Christmas Eve and then get the shop ready for the sales on Boxing Day and he had to be back in work on Boxing Day at 10 o’clock, so he couldn’t go home because he didn’t drive and he had to rely on public transport as he lived over 200 miles away.

It’s not the food industry, but we have a new gym by me called Pure Gym, they’re all over the country, it’s great, it’s only a tenner a month, open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. It’s great if you work shifts like most of us, but guess what, it’s open on Christmas Day, for God’s sake. What is it, a quick session of legs, bums and tumbs boot camp, or a fast kettle bells before Christmas dinner? But at the end of the day, who is to blame, the supermarkets and the shops greed or our willingness, as a customer, for 24 hour shopping, 7 days a week, even though we are most of the time suppliers in the first place? It certainly is food for thought. Please support.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Seconder? Formally seconded.

Brother Colin Hall: It’s a fact, it’s not just Christmas, it’s every time they have a bloody Bank Holiday or whatever and the fact is, you go in supermarkets or any of the stores these days, they very rarely run out of anything because they plan, so if they can plan, why the blazes can’t they plan, stock up a little ahead.

Right, you know Christmas comes on 25th December, it’s the same every year, why aren’t they ordering more stuff in November, building up gradually? I know that we work in the food industry, but let’s face it, a lot of the stuff that we produce doesn’t go out of date within a couple of days so yes, they can certainly plan, organise the stock better and then perhaps some of us can have a better Christmas than we’re getting, because let’s face it, every time we’re working extra, you’ve never got any managers in and that’s curious, because we need all these managers to run the place, yet when we’re doing these extra shifts and weekend working etc., you’d think the managers were extinct. Why is this? Please support this motion.

[APPLAUSE]

Sister Helen Stacey – Branch 580 (Greggs, Yorkshire): I work at Greggs in my local town, Long Eaton and on Boxing Day I’ve got to get up at 5.15 a.m. to make sandwiches at 6.00 a.m. I’ve got a little girl at home, I really wanted to spend time with her, but I can’t. In my local town, my whole High Street is full of charity shops. Those charity shops aren’t going to be open on Boxing Day, so who’s going to come and buy a sausage roll from Greggs? What’s the point? I’ve got to work a whole day. How much money are we going to take? Not enough. We should be closed on Boxing Day, it’s a family time. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Keith Hutchinson – Branch 580 (Greggs of Yorkshire, Branch Secretary): Helen, a first-time speaker, we’re so proud of her. Well done, Helen.

[APPLAUSE]

Greggs are making millions and millions and millions of pounds. They’re great, they’re making money left, right and centre and do you know what, the government decided oh well, Boxing Day is now on Saturday, we’ll have Boxing Day on Monday, so Sunday becomes a normal working day. So what does that mean? It means we cannot bulk stuff up, it is fresh, so we’re expecting drivers not to have a drink on Christmas Day, it spoils their Christmas Day. If Next, as somebody said, opens early, what happens? There’s pressure, peer pressure put onto people, well you know, it’s a normal day, come in that little bit earlier, forget health and safety rules on how dark it is or how cold it is or if it snowed, it’s what goes through the tills. Let’s fight to keep Christmas Day and Boxing Day special. Greggs and companies like them boast that they’re family companies, hah, where are family values? Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother George Lonsdale – Branch 459 (Greggs): They use the excuse the recession hit us hard, we still came in at core growth by a yard. Extend opening times they say, what to? we ask, they say all day. Staff struggling to get in so early in the morning, they say do it or we’ll get someone else, whilst yawning. To the guys at the top we’re just a number, so sleep with one eye open when you slumber. We need to stand up as one to fight, we don’t want to be working all day and all night. With the Union beside us, backing our cause, we can stay up with our children, waiting for Santa Claus.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Chris Lay – Branch 253: Fair play, it seems like a Greggs convention, this motion, but that’s because we’re pee’d off in Greggs, fair play and we are, because it’s coming to the stage where Christmas Eve now, you’re having a fight with your area managers because you’ve got to stay open until 6 o’clock. Well, there’s no bleeding buses on until 6 o’clock where I live, so how on earth can I get home after 6 o’clock on Christmas Eve?
And then as they rightly said, more and more people now are opening on Boxing Day, so nobody can have drinks on Christmas Day, but also now they’re looking at Easter Sunday. When’s it going to stop? We’re going to be open soon 365 days a year. It’s not right, let’s back this motion. Please support.

[SISTER MARYLYN MCCARTHY – BRANCH 450 (MANCHESTER):] Up here to support this motion, but please be aware that Christmas is not a happy family time for everyone, so I’m going to get one in now while I can. In Manchester city centre at the moment, we’ve got a tent city. These men and women are driving Manchester City Council mad, good on them. They’ve been camped in Piccadilly Gardens and moved on by a court injunction, so they’ve set up camp outside Manchester Town Hall one week before the General Election, so they got moved again. They went and camped outside Manchester library. For those of you who don’t know Manchester, Manchester library is back-to-back with Manchester Town Hall. Needless to say, they’ve moved them on again. They’re now residing in St Ann’s Square, surrounded by all the really expensive posh shops. There’s two million empty properties in Greater Manchester and 20,000 homeless people. We, the mighty Bakers Union, are helping to feed these people. If any of you can help out in any way, please come and see me. Support the motion.

[APPLAUSE]

[BROTHER SEAN MOLLOY – BRANCH 558 (RATHBONES, WAKEFIELD):] Yes, I’m here to support it as well. It’s quite topical. Myself and the FTO have been in a recent meeting where they’re trying to stop holidays three weeks in front of Easter and three weeks in front of Christmas. My argument with this is office staff at the site get holidays at Easter and Christmas. Managers get holidays at Easter and Christmas, why can’t our members?

[APPLAUSE]

[BROTHER IAN HODSON, NATIONAL PRESIDENT:] Okay Conference, to the vote. Those in favour? Against? That’s carried.

Okay. Obviously we’ve been joined by a great, great General Secretary, somebody who’s been, obviously besides you, Ronnie, I would have said great, great, great General Secretary for you Ronnie, obviously, but obviously we’ve been joined by a great, great General Secretary, just one less, is that alright?, but we’re really pleased, we’re really pleased that Mark Serwotka’s agreed to come and speak to us because when you look at what’s happening to the Trade Union movement and you look at what’s happening to working people in general, the PCS has been a Trade Union that has been at the forefront of standing up for workers in the public sector. It’s been at the forefront of ensuring that people in their Union were actually given proper representation and were supported fully and although they’ve had to take many, many days of strike action, one thing the PCS has never been found is wanting, it’s never sold their members out, it’s stood by them, they’ve got so many campaigns.

We, as a Trade Union, we, as a Trade Union believe in solidarity and you know, the PCS are being targeted by this government, they’re making them do check-offs so they can lose members, but you know they’ve done such a good job in recruiting, it’s going to backfire on this government and we’re really, really proud, really pleased and really honoured to invite Mark Serwotka, but we want you to give a message as well. We want to send a message to you and your Shop Stewards. We want to send a message to the people at the Gallery, because we want to stand by you and your members in solidarity and we want to send this message to you as well, Mark and to Candy Udwin.

[APPLAUSE and CHANTING, ‘We’re workers, United, we’ll never be Defeated’ and ‘Reinstate Candy’]

[BROther MARK SERWOTKA'S ADDRESS TO CONFERENCE]

Brother Mark Serwotka, PCS: Thanks ever so much, Ian and can I start by thanking everybody for that fantastic show of solidarity. Wherever we go around the country, we’re getting Labour movement events to do the poster about reinstating Candy and I can tell you from visiting the strikers and the picket line very regularly, it really does help boost their morale and lift their spirits, so I do want to thank everybody for that marvellous gesture. I also wanted to start by saying that it’s a fantastic honour and a privilege for me to come and address this Conference. You see, I think your Union shows us all that is best about Trade Unionism in Britain and actually shows it doesn’t matter about being one of those massive Unions, what matters if you’re a Union that believes in fighting back, defending your members, standing up to a bullying employer, you’re prepared to get stuck-in, that is what Trade Unionism is all about and in your Union …

[APPLAUSE]
…in your Union, the lead you’re taking around Fast Food Rights, around getting the TUC to adopt the £10 an hour policy which, by the way, they need to start getting on and doing something about, the fact that you’re campaigning over issues like maximum temperatures in the workplace and probably more significantly, for me anyway, was the marvellous victory that your members won against Hovis and a strike against zero hours contracts.

[APPLAUSE and CHEERS]

I’ll tell you what happens when you see an inspiring story like that, it doesn’t matter how awful it is at work, it doesn’t matter how shit you feel, it doesn’t matter how much you think the employer or the government is getting on your back, you see other working men and women standing up for justice and winning and it absolutely lifts your morale and makes you realise what is possible. So what I think is this, is if you can win in Hovis, if we can win in some of our disputes, just imagine what we could win if the Trade Union movement came together and all of us started to take action jointly with one another …

[APPLAUSE]

…because I have no doubt that if we did that, we could see off what’s actually happening. You know, I started work in a civil service, in a DHSS office, a benefit office, when I was 16 in 1980. I had 5 ‘O’ levels and you had to have 5 ‘O’ levels to get in the civil office, so I just scraped in.

On my first day at work, my mother and of course you always listen to your mother, well you do in South Wales anyway, I know it’s different in Crosby …

[APPLAUSE]

…but in South Wales, you listen to your mother and she said to me as I was leaving the door, after she put my tie up and brushed down my velvet jacket and she said to me son, she said, you’re going to work for the civil service, fantastic pay, fantastic pension, job for life and people in the community will look up to you with admiration for what you do. Now finding out that my mother lied four times in one sentence, right …

[LAUGHTER]

…is a cross that I’ve had to bear ever since, because it’s never been good pay, it’s never been a job for life, but it did used to be a job which you could do, knowing that you were there to help people, help people back into work, help people when they fell upon hard times, help the disabled, the lone parents, the pensioners, because when I worked there, your job was to ensure that you did whatever you could to help people. You fast forward that 30 years and what’s happening in the DWP is a bit of a microcosm of what is happening with the Tory government across the board. Six years of pay freezes, we’ve seen in the civil service 196,000 jobs cut in the last 7 years, the government say they’re about to cut another 100,000 in this parliament. In the DWP we had members who used to be there to help people, who are now bullied and threatened with the sack if they don’t apply benefit sanctions to people who are desperate to try and get money, who live in poverty, on the most spurious grounds whatsoever.

They have turned one of our public services into one where most people who come in now are suspicious of the workers across the desk, because the government is trying to use it to force people into abject poverty and our message has to be this, what we have to do in the DWP as a Union is stand up for those workers that we organise, but carry on with the work we’re doing, with groups like disabled people against the cuts, the unemployed workers centres, to stand outside making it clear we abhor the policy of benefit sanctions, in order to say that if we can unite claimants and the workers inside, then we have a powerful force that can stop the government. However, if we let them divide us, if we let one have a go at the other, it’s what they want, that they try to divide public sector against private sector, those people who are in work against out of work, those people who are migrants and those people who are not, all of their strategy is based on dividing people as much as you can, in order to drive through their terrible attacks and that’s why I stand at this Conference and I’ll put my cards on the table, I’m not a member of the Labour Party, but I stand here at your Conference, knowing that you’ll be having the debates that we had at ours two weeks ago.

We were the first Union in Britain to meet after the General Election. Now I don’t know what you did on 7th May, but I sat at home with a curry, it wasn’t from Greggs, I’m sorry, but it was a curry and we sat there, my wife, my kids, listening to the telly, hoping that at 10 o’clock what we would have seen is that this government was going to be removed from office and when the exit poll came through to say the Tories had a majority, I think I, like most people, if not everyone here, was absolutely gutted. There’s something interesting about why I personally felt gutted, I wasn’t gutted about who had lost, because I have to say this, that the fact that Labour lost because they were so timid, they were such an awful opposition, they didn’t really give anyone inspiration or hope, they actually tried to play it safe, wasn’t the tragedy of the election, the tragedy of the election was that the Tories won and the Tories won and they are
now going to attack people in this country in a way that we will have not seen for generations and that means that us
in the Trade Union movement, I think, have to seize the moment to say this, that if we wait for Labour, either to win
in 2020 or deliver us from what we are about to face, we will be well and truly stuffed.

If, on the other hand, we recognise this, that the Trade Union movement, six and a half million strong still, coming
together, can fight for justice at work, decent pay rises, decent welfare state, decent NHS, then we have the ability to
stop this government in its tracks. Incidentally if we do that, it might mean that some of the political parties, including
Labour, will start turning to the left rather than turning to the right and my Union and I hope like yours therefore, is
absolutely committed …

[APPLAUSE]
…to work together at every level, to ensure we can defend ourselves now, but also that we can have a better form of
politics than we currently have in this country and what I really wanted to do in my short speech is to talk therefore
about the things we need to fight now, but also what my Union believes we need to do politically to ensure that we do
not go in to another election faced with parties that represent austerity or austerity-light, in other words a party that’s
going to knock you over the head or a party that’s going to come up to you silently and still inflict pain but maybe not
in such an upfront way.

That’s no choice for us and for our kids, we should aspire to have a real choice of a Socialist society that is based on
people getting what they need, based on what they need rather than profits and rather than big business and therefore
for me, we stand here …

[APPLAUSE]
…facing a Queen’s Speech that we’ve just had, that was going to unleash the biggest wave of cuts that we will have
seen in this country. It’s going to be very clear, very quickly, that what we had in the last government was just a warm-
up for what we’re about to get. Let’s give you some of the low lights. In education, this government is just about to
introduce testing in schools of four year old children. Now can you imagine anything more obscene, than four year old
children being tested in school. Not only is that obscene for the kids, it’s also obscene for the teachers, who from the
earliest age are drilled to ensure that people pass tests rather than learn about life and if they don’t pass the test, they’re
now told that their schools will be forced to become academies and privatised into corporations across the education
system. On social security, we have, contrary to what you might read if you ever pick up a copy of the Daily Mail, I’m
sure you don’t, but if you did, do you know we have one of the least generous benefit systems in the whole of Europe.

Compare our benefit levels to France, to Germany and to Sweden, they are absolutely miles less generous and yet
we’re told that the trouble with this country is there’s too many people who can while away their time on benefits, but
do you know what, the government hasn’t just driven down benefit levels, it actually is about to carry out £12 billion-
worth of cuts on social security. These will be cuts to people of working age and it won’t just be to people who are
unemployed and disabled, but they will also be, may be is, to many thousands of your members who will be receiving
working tax credits because of low wages, so many of the employers, they are going to introduce benefit freezes for
working tax credits under the new Universal Credit. In other words, what we’re going to see is in-work poverty get
even worse, but do you know what else they’re going to introduce? They’re going to introduce a sanctions regime
against those people who are in work. We will have the spectacle in my Union where 40% of our members are entitled
to working tax credits because their pay is so low, the people in Job Centres will have to threaten their colleagues with
sanctions. If you are part-time, if you work in the industry and you’re part-time or you turn down overtime, you may
well be sanctioned on your benefits if you are not being deemed to do enough to get extra work.

In other words, what the government’s about to do is not just pick on the unemployed, they’re going to absolutely
turn on all working class people and families who are dependent on benefits in-work or out of work, in order to make
ends meet and we’ve got to do something about it, because there’s already a million people on food banks, think what
it’s going to be like if tax credits are sanctioned or if benefits are cut by £12 billion. I’m sure your Conference has
discussed that we know there’s going to be changes in the Union laws. It will now be illegal to have a strike unless
50% of the members vote and 40% of those vote in favour. The government know that across the public sector over
the last 119 industrial action ballots, 101 would not have passed those thresholds. In other words, they’re going to
make it virtually or as difficult as they can to strike at a time when we will need to strike more than ever before, so
the change to the anti-Union laws will affect you, it will affect us and we need to campaign against it. Do you know,
we also need a massive campaign against privatisation, because again I don’t think we’ve seen anything yet in terms
of the privatisation that is coming our way. In the civil service we’re expecting privatisation of tax offices, of benefit
offices and of debt collection services working for the Ministry of Justice.
There will be no end to where the privateers will pop up to make profits on the back of our members. They will do nothing about the housing crisis, nothing about the health crisis and nothing about the environment crisis. In fact, they will make all these things worse.

So that, it seems to me, in a nutshell tells us how much we have got to face and I think that means, Comrades, that we’ve got to ask ourselves over the last five years, did we do well enough with the last government. Now with exceptions like your fantastic Hovis strikers, my Union believes that the Union movement failed. We failed to put up enough opposition to what the government did and if we repeat that failure in this parliament, then we will regret it for generations to come. Things are literally at that stage where it is, as somebody said, stand up and fight or we’re going to be run over. Now somebody in UNITE once said at a meeting, to win a fight, you’ve got to be in one, so it seems to me that our call, at your Conference and mine, should be to the TUC leaders across the board, why don’t we all get in this fight together and stand up against this government and what they’re going to do.

[APPLAUSE]

Now, you’ve had some marvellous disputes, I know you’ve talked about the National Gallery strike, but I just want to say this about the strike at the National Gallery, because the National Gallery workers are PCS members, they’re low paid and the National Gallery want to privatise 400 out of the 600 jobs. Our members have had 34 days of strike action, there’s another day of strike action this Thursday and then we are considering escalating that action even further, not because we want to, but because the management are ploughing ahead with their plans to privatise the second most popular tourist attraction in the UK. In addition to that, they sacked our leading Steward, the person who was leading our ACAST/ACAS Delegation, sacked on the eve of the first strike, to send terror through the workforce. They calculated that if we can sack your Senior Steward, you haven’t got a chance. I have to say that nothing made me prouder in my Union, than the response of our members to the sacking of Candy Udwin, was to have the longest series of strikes we have had so far in this campaign.

[APPLAUSE]

So I want to thank Ronnie and Ian and others from your Union who’ve been on a picket line, who have had their sessions on the loudhailer, who have been sending solidarity from you and from your Colleagues across the UK and our commitment as a Union is to say we’re going to do whatever it takes to win that strike. No matter how long it takes, we will be there supporting the members and seeking to build that campaign, because we believe if we can stop privatisation at the National Gallery, it will do what your Hovis strike did, it will inspire people, in small workplaces and large, to actually believe that you can win if you’re brave enough to stand up and be counted and that’s why when I do meetings in my Union, I tell this little story, because I think it’s a story that really gives most people some heart, because it shows you can win. PCS represents people working in Windsor Castle and for those who don’t know Windsor Castle, it’s where the Queen lives when she’s not sat on her throne. Our members were not paid the London living wage and they have been expected for the last four years to work on a voluntary basis and do extra work without any pay whatsoever. Now these are not members who are the most militant in the Trade Union movement, there’s never been a strike before at Windsor Castle, but this year they said to us we’ve had enough, we’ve had enough of being exploited, we’ve had enough of low pay and we’ve had enough of being expected to work for nothing, so they asked us to ballot them. We balloted them for industrial action, 91% of people voted in favour of a strike …

[APPLAUSE]

…and do you know what, they didn’t take one minute of strike action, they got the London living wage backdated six months and pay rises between 4½ and 7½%.

[APPLAUSE]

Now, I’ll tell you what, if you can win in the Queen’s house, you can win at the National Gallery, you can win at Greggs and you can win everywhere. The bosses try to exploit us, whoever they are, by basic Trade Union principles and that’s what the story at Windsor Castle tells me and that is why we’re determined to ensure we can repeat that success in the National Gallery and therefore I hope that everyone here will not only continue to support us, but will consider coming on the massive demonstration on 20th June called by the People’s Assembly in London, where over 100,000 people are expected to march against austerity. We want Union banners at it, we want people across the public and private sectors making a common cause to say to the Tories we’re not going to sit back and let it happen and it is my opinion that if we see an uprising of resistance on small local disputes and larger national ones, then we can continue to see the tide turn as we saw at Windsor Castle, but it’s equally true to say, if we put our heads down, if we decide not now, if we decide we’re not strong enough to win, then it will be every man and every woman for themselves and God help us is all I can say, because if we put our head down we will suffer and our children will suffer and we cannot and we will not allow that to happen.
So Comrades, our Union believes and we’ve met with John McDonnell earlier this week, that wherever you stood in Britain, there is a better politics than what we’ve got at the moment. The people actually deserve a far better choice than basically the Tories and Labour who, whilst they are different, agree on so many things, agree on privatisation, agree on public sector pay cuts for example, agree on benefit caps, agree that the problem we have with welfare is that there are too many people claiming benefits, they shouldn’t be agreeing on those things. Labour should be saying the Tories are wrong, wrong, wrong and wrong again. 

[APPLAUSE]

You know if they did that, then maybe some of the 27% who didn’t bother to vote, or 30%, might have thought there was something worth voting for and if Labour hadn’t been sitting back thinking well at the end of the day, working class people, they have to vote for us because there isn’t any other alternative, that taking our people for granted, that they saw come back and bite them in a most vicious way, because people either stayed at home or far too often, 3.9 million of them, decided often to vote UKIP. Now if we have working class people voting UKIP because they think they offer something better than Labour, the Trade Union movement needs to stand up and start arguing for real left politics, so that working class people have got somewhere to turn.

[APPLAUSE]

So Comrades, our Union believes and we’ve met with John McDonnell earlier this week, that wherever you stood in the past, in the Labour Party or out of the Labour Party, our job has to be to unite all those people on the left of politics, to make common cause, to fight the government now and to argue for the type of changes that can see us have a better political choice in the future. Now we believe, John believes, my Union believes therefore that now is the time for the Labour movement to say we will campaign absolutely flat out for proportional representation and I’ll tell you why John and I and others and I know you’ve got Arthur Scargill speaking later, who wrote the most fantastic article as long back ago as 1987, arguing that Socialists should agree to electoral reform, because that is the best way that we can mobilise the left. Now why do I say that here today and why do I think it’s important?

I think it’s important for these reasons. If we don’t reform the electoral system, the elections will continue to be about 100 marginal seats, meaning all the political parties will move to the centre in order to win over the so-called middle England vote. There’ll be nothing being said for working class people and communities like ours who need something better. It means we will carry on having a situation where we’re going to have the most right wing government in this country for decades, elected by 24% of the electorate. How can it be right that less than 1 in 4 voted for this government, yet they’re going to carry out the biggest attack on us that we will have seen since the Thatcher period. So it’s not fair, it’s not right, it’s not democratic, but the main reason that people like John and I think now is the time to move is this. It is probably through the advent of PR that we really could see the left in this country, in the Labour Party and outside, make common cause to offer people Socialism at elections, not just this same-ish centre-ish politics that forgets the working class people of this country who need so much more.

My finishing point really is this, for those who are not convinced, have a look across every single country in Europe, where you see real left parties, the ones who will support the policies that this Conference will agree this week, whether it’s in Greece, whether it’s in France, whether it’s in Spain or whether it’s in Germany, they get votes by the million and they get votes by the million not for some wishy-washy in the centre, we’re all fighting over some tiny voters in the marginals, they get votes in the millions, for nationalisation, for no to austerity, for Trade Union rights, for strong welfare states and for a society that believes the wealth is created by working people, so why can’t working people share that wealth rather than it all be exploited by those people at the top. So I believe that if it’s good enough for those countries, it should be good enough for here and if we can mount a Labour movement campaign that fights austerity now, but also seeks to change the electoral system, maybe the next time there’s an election, we can all enthusiastically vote for left wing policies, knowing it will make a difference.
Comrades, if we don’t do that, the danger is we’ll have the fight now, but in 2020 we will have a Labour Party going in to the election led by either Andy Burnham, Liz Kendall, Mary Creagh or Yvette Cooper, that believe the Trade Unions are an embarrassment, they don’t want to take their money, they don’t want to stand up for Trade Union rights and that is an absolutely dead end for the people that I and you represent. Do you know, I want better than that, that I believe my kids deserve better than that and I believe all you and your members deserve better than that. So let’s fight in the here and now against this vicious government, but let’s fight to transform politics to have a real left wing voice in Britain, made up of Labour Party members and others, to say we want a better society and we will fight for it like never before. Thanks very much for your time.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: … and obviously the Executive will do the door tomorrow morning, yes? Okay. Also unfortunately I’ve got another depressing message, I’m sure most people will think, there’s been a huge incident on the M62 which happened earlier on today, we believe there’s some fatalities but it’s also, obviously we send our condolences if there has been any fatalities to the families, but unfortunately it’s also had an impact on Arthur Scargill, who’s actually now stuck on the M62, can’t come forwards, can’t go backwards, so he’s not going to be able to make our Conference today, but we are trying to see if we can re-arrange for him to come on Wednesday morning, because he is desperate to come and talk to you, he was really looking forward to addressing our Conference and so if we can do anything to bring him here on Wednesday, obviously we’re going to try Heaven and Earth to make that happen. So I can only apologise on his behalf that he’s not been able to get here today, but hopefully will be here on Wednesday morning, so for those people that have come over to listen to him today, hopefully if you can come back on Wednesday he’ll be here, but hopefully we’ll be able to find out before the end of Conference today whether he can confirm that he can come on Wednesday morning. Okay Conference, what number are we on? 33, motion 33.

Oh sorry, sorry, wrong, not 33, we’re going to do the health and safety ones tomorrow. We’re going to put …

Sister Janine Cokayne – Branch 201 (Hovis, Avonmouth): Can I make a Point of Order?

We’re supposed to promote equality and be democratic, I don’t believe by having any newspaper open on Page 3, that it’s an objectification of women displaying their breasts, it’s acceptable on the Conference floor and I don’t think it’s right.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Okay, yes, Janine, you’re quite right. We shouldn’t be bringing newspapers in with pictures of naked women in it. We ban The Sun, okay there are other papers unfortunately that do do that sort of thing, so we would ask you if you buy a newspaper that contains any images like that, that you avoid using it on the Conference floor. I mean what you do outside of Conference is up to you, but obviously we don’t want to cause offence to anybody else, so please don’t bring in a newspaper that displays women in such a way.

[APPLAUSE]

Conference, can we, motion 37. Just to explain, which is composite 1 now. Just to explain because tomorrow morning we’re going to be doing the first session on health and safety, we thought that what we’d do in the run-up to that is take the motions on health and safety at that point, because it makes all of the morning to like a whole health and safety session. Okay, so it’s Composite 1.

Standing Orders, where is he? Composite 1. Glad you could join us. Take yourself to Standing Orders and give yourself a fine for not being ready. Is that right, we all agree? Fine the Standing Orders.

[APPLAUSE]

Delaying Conference.

**Composite Motion 1**

Brother Mark Brooks, Chair of Standing Orders: Thank you, Mr President. Moving composite No. 1.

*This Conference agrees that the NHS be ring-fenced from any more cuts by this government.*

The NHS is the jewel in the crown of the welfare state. A great achievement from previous generations’ struggles. It was the greatest act of parliament in the last century by the Labour government. The NHS was founded in 1948 but this Tory government seems determined to sell off all our national services, the NHS, the Royal Mail’s going, just a couple. It’s also determined to press ahead with austerity. Cuts in the last five years, nothing, the next five years, more cuts, more cuts.
So how long do we wait to see a doctor? I’ve got to ‘phone up at 8 o’clock in the morning, I could be at work, so I don’t get that day. So then when do you get a dentist? My dentist has got a waiting list. So then what do you do? I have to go for an emergency dentist, so you take time off. Everything seems to be sold off by this government. So, I was watching Question Time and they said oh, we’re going to give you 5,000 new GPs, well 5,000 GPs are going to retire by 2020, so you haven’t got any new ones. So if you need an operation, how long’s the waiting list?

Unfortunately I had to have an operation a few years ago now and got told the operation’s going to be nine months to wait. I went, nine months? I said okay, how much to go private? £4,000, so I thought I’ve got to wait the nine months. That’s despicable. If you’re waiting and you’ve got some serious illness, you want to be seen, not waiting on a waiting list that’s ever increasing and growing. Please support.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Seconder? Formally seconded.

Brother Pat Rowley – No. 2 Region: Mr President, Delegates. Conference, I ask you to support the resolution. The speaker of the composite has said everything that’s to be said about the resolution and about the struggles that future, our present, past generations had to bring about this Health Service. Previous to that people died in workhouses and everything else, awful situations, but I read in the papers that the Chancellor has already knocked £200 million off the health budget, there’s a list of them in the paper, that the Chancellor has ruled out. They said they wouldn’t cut the Health Service, they have cut it and cut it, they want rid of it, because they can afford to pay. Conference, support this resolution.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Colin Hall – Branch 359 (Charnwoods, Leicester): The NHS is a wonderful thing, but unfortunately there’s a horrible disease going around at the moment for which there seems to be no cure and it seems to be prevalent among the middle classes more than it does in this room and I’ll tell you what that disease is, it’s bloody ignorance. Now a while back, I had x-rays for my chest, they were looking for, it doesn’t matter what they were looking for, but they were looking for it and oh, I see you’ve got a lump here on your shoulder, right, well we’ll send you off to see this man, don’t like the look of that, we need you to go in, okay, fine, go in, came round from the operation, sorry we had to take a lump out the size of your fist. Listen, don’t be sorry, I’d sooner it’s on that plate at the side than inside of me. Fortunately it turned out to be benign.

If I’d have had to have paid for that, I would be stuffed and what a lot of the middle classes forget is, if we don’t fight for the NHS, in five years time there won’t be any NHS and your alternative is an insurance-based health system. Oh yes, that sounds great, yes, yes, you just pay, you just pay a bit and, I’ll tell you something about insurance companies, there’s such a thing as pre-existing conditions. If you’ve got something already, they won’t touch it with a 16 ft. barge pole, which basically means you would be screwed. Come up with the money or you die. In this country, you go into a hospital, a doctor asks can I help? In some countries you go into a hospital, the doctor asks can you pay? Please support this motion.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother George Tittensor – Branch 392 (Birmingham & West Midlands): Mr Chairman, members of the Platform and Conference. I don’t believe this goes far enough, because if you look at some of the print and some of the things that are going on, agency labour is robbing this NHS blind. I’ve give you facts, this won’t be contradicted. A nurse earns £12.50 per hour, the average nurse. Agencies outside of the registered lot charge the NHS £52 an hour for an employer and some charge £180 an hour, that is ridiculous, it’s bleeding it to death.

Now a pretty decent NHS worker is coming in at £12.50 an hour and agencies are coming in and charging for the same job £180 an hour. That’s despicable.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Andy Moorhouse – Branch 417 (Hovis, Wigan): Hello Conference, again. Here to support the motion, but to follow on from what my previous Comrade has said, this motion doesn’t go far enough. Ring-fencing the NHS from cuts is only partial, the problem is a major privatisation programme. How does that affect the NHS? In so many ways, but simply put, if you run a department for £200 million and you privatise it, before you spent £200 million on that department, now you’re only spending £185 million on that department because £15 million is being creamed off as profit, that’s what’s going on locally in Wigan. So please support this motion.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Sean Molloy – Branch 558 (Rathbones, Wakefield): I’m here to support it obviously. I’ve had a fair amount of work done on the NHS, mostly my fault. I’ve had brain surgery, stuff like that. I mean, personally I look at that, that was 20-odd years ago. I feel I’d be paying it off the rest of my life, so really it’s for the future, your children’s future to
protect the NHS. Also I just think about it’s going to become a money-making exercise. Are we going to start paying for women who are having babies in maternity wards, are they going to get stung for bills as well? It’s ridiculous. Fight for it.

[APPLAUSE]

**Brother Ian Hodson, National President:** No more speakers?

**Sister Carmina Kaszoni – Branch 7:** Hello, everybody. I just decide to have a few words for you about this NHS. I consider that NHS in this country is great, even if it has downs and ups, it’s great. I come in from a country, I’m coming from Romania, where if you don’t have money to pay the doctor, if you don’t have money to give the nurse, if you don’t have money to pay for your anaesthetic injection, you don’t get an operation, you don’t get nothing. In my country, I don’t want to speak bad about my country, but in my country if you don’t have money, you can die, you’re dying in your home, so I believe the NHS needs to be supported. I believe that we have to fight for a right to have equal rights in health and most of that to have proper, I’m sorry, I’m nervous, to have a proper health system here in UK. Thank you very much.

[APPLAUSE]

**Sister Jackie Barnwell – Branch 331 (responding on behalf of the Executive Council):** Just let’s play our own little survey. Hands up who’s complained about the NHS? Guilty, moaned about my doctor, can’t get in to see him, but it’s all down to cuts. I just want to put the slant on, there are a lot of dedicated people working within the NHS and I went down to the local hospital before I came here, just to get some idea of how these men and women felt and one of the main things that they said was the amount of bureaucracy that they have to go through now, the amount of paperwork that they have to do, it’s actually, they feel stopping them doing the service that they want to do, to the public and waiting times could be reduced if they didn’t have to meet all this bureaucracy. As George mentioned, there’s £1.3 billion spent on agency staff in nursing and the reason that a lot of these women go in to the agency is because the NHS is not flexible enough on their working times and rostas, they’re 12 hour shifts, a lot of them are working 12 hour shifts, so they go to the agencies because it means they can fit in with their own families.

They would all love to be within the NHS on the decent ray of pay and that £1.3 million can do that, but the NHS has to be more flexible to enable these people to do a job. One of the things that we saw last week in Warwick, we thought there was another fete going on, because there was a big white tent which turned up, a marquee outside the hospital. It was a temporary operating theatre, in the car park, for any minor operations that needed to take place, but as I say, you shouldn’t be in a situation where you’ve got a marquee up to give somebody an operation. When the NHS was brought by the Labour Party all those years ago, one of the things that was, I’m trying to think of the word now, one of the reasons for putting it together was so that every man, woman and child received healthcare and the moral to that was, you would be taken care of by the welfare state, from the cradle to the grave. Let’s make sure that that continues.

[APPLAUSE]

**Brother Ian Hodson, National President:** Okay Conference, to the vote. Those in favour? Against? That’s unanimous.

**Motion 40.** Motion 40? Slow from Wigan, aren’t they. Were you asleep, mate? You have another job to go to, or what?

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**40 Banking, Finance & Taxation**

*That this conference agrees to request that the government make it easier to remove the licence required by senior banking personnel when wrongdoing is found.*

**Brother Andy Moorhouse – Branch 417 (Hovis, Wigan):** The motion is that this Conference agrees to request the government to make it easier to remove the licence required by senior banking personnel when wrongdoing is found. The only reason I know that they need a licence to practice as a senior banker is because one guy has had his licence removed, only one. Do you know why? Because he embarrassed the banking industry by clocking up record fines for not paying on the tube, for 12 years. Ever since the Oyster Card was brought in, he has refused to use it and he is so rich he just keeps knocking it back and walking through, like some sense of privilege that it doesn’t need to be done and just pays the fine and finally, because in London it became a big scandal, his face was all over the papers, they suspended him and removed his licence to be a banker, so he’s lost his job, cracking, belting, for being a horrible person, but he can’t get another job in the banking industry.

Now, let’s just go back to 2008, the banking crisis, why the government has no money, because they had to bail out the banks, because they cheated, they manipulated, they lied, they frauded and caused the entire system to collapse, that wrecked the economy and we had to bail them out. We still haven’t sent anybody to jail for that, never mind the
fact that it was bad practice, bad management and they’ve still got their licences to move around and do the job. The people responsible should have had, should be in jail at the very least, but if not, they can’t do their jobs as evidenced by what’s happened, they should have had those licences removed from them. Please support this motion.

[SUPPORT]

Sister Janet Phillips – Branch 405: As far as I’m concerned, if one of us goes and robs a bank, we get jailed for a long, long time. They’re robbing us, they should be bloody jailed as well.

[SUPPORT]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Any more speakers?

Brother John Newman – Branch 247 (A.B., Cardiff): Speaking in support of the motion on behalf of the EC Conference, we all know the aftermath of the banking industry and the tax payer is still picking up the tab today, yet the bankers still want higher salaries, greater bonuses and some even have guaranteed bonus schemes written into their contract of employment irrespective of profit or loss. Well, we believe that it’s time for change. As far back as 1979, the Banking Act gave grounds for revocation of recognition or licence under Section 6, Part 1H and it says: The institution has failed to comply with any obligation imposed by this Act or (i) the institution has in any other way so conducted its affairs as to threaten the interests of the depositors, that is just two ways to revoke a banking licence. Successive Banking Acts and successive Banking Reform Acts, including the Financial Services Banking Reform Act of 2013 also have such powers under the law. So it’s not really a question of making it easier to revoke a banking licence, as those powers are already there. It’s about making the Financial Services and the Financial Conduct Authority act. Please support.

[SUPPORT]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Okay Conference, to the vote. Those in favour? Against? It’s unanimous. Motion 41. Got your voice back?

41 Transport

Greggs 580

That this conference agrees to lobby the government to reduce travel fares for students living away from home for studying.

Sister Angela Shortreed – Branch 580: This Conference agrees to lobby the government to reduce travel fares for students living away from home, for studying. A lot of young people study away from home, obviously to better themselves, have a better job in life, so why should the rail companies make £250 million in profit and young people can’t even afford to come home to see their families. Please support.

[SUPPORT]


Brother Pat Rowley – No . 2 Region: Mr President, Delegates. Conference, we must support the resolution. In my view, young students are what we have to bring about the world that we would live in, engineers, doctors, nurses and all of these people. Why should they have to pay for their education, when they’re the benefit that we need. We should be paying, as far as I’m concerned, education should be free for all students, all students, not having to pay or coming out of our universities with a £40,000 mortgage around their neck. What chance have they of getting on in life? Conference [unclear]. Yes, support this resolution, education should be paid for by the state. We can bring, we can bring armies in from other countries here and train them and send them back to their countries to fight.

[SUPPORT]

We can train the Taliban in Afghanistan to fight the Russians, we can supply all of those things, we can afford to education our children. When you arrive at 16 years of age, that is the standard of your education at that time, but you have to go on to improve your education and we need innovators and people to bring about the things we want, to bring about innovation, so that we can export the great work that they produce. Conference, support this resolution.

[SUPPORT]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Any more speakers?

Brother David Byrne – Region 6 (speaking on behalf of the Executive Council): To support this motion. I wasn’t really aware of the high cost of travel in the UK until I went on-line to check out the rail travel ticket prices. I’m surprised how expensive it was, the travel. Oyster Cards, Travel Cards, all different prices, depending on which part of the UK you’re in. Back home in Southern Ireland, it is nowhere near as expensive to travel.

[SUPPORT]
Money is tight for students, who will be trying to budget using their wages from part-time jobs. This Tory government needs to be realistic on travel prices for students, trying to make ends meet. Please support.

[APPLAUSE]

**Brother Ian Hodson, National President:** Okay Conference, to the vote. Those in favour? Against? Unanimous. Motion 42.

**42 Transport**

Greggs 580

*That this Conference agrees to call on a newly elected Government to bring back into public ownership all local services including railways that are sold off to profit making companies.*

**Brother Pat Rowley – No. 2 Region:** Mr President, Delegates. Conference, I am asking you to support a resolution that you have no hope in getting in the next five years if this government is in power. You will get more of the same, that’s what you will get. To bring back, they have already sold off the East Coast line in the railways that was the most profitable of all the franchises that was in it, they’ve sold it off. Now they have the Post Office up for sale. So Conference, I move the resolution, but when you will get that, we might get it if we get a Labour government, but you’re not going to get it under the Tories and we put them there. Conference, support the resolution.

[APPLAUSE]

**Brother Ian Hodson, National President:** Seconder? Formally seconded? Okay, obviously the Executive Council would ask, don’t want to expect miracles, we’d ask you to support the motion. To the vote. Those in favour? Against? That’s carried. Motion 43.

**43 Transport**

Branch 390

*This conference agrees to lobby the government to review the policy on reverse warning systems on all commercial vehicles where vehicles have blind spots e.g. Transit vans with blacked out rear windows.*

**Brother Warren Broomhall – Branch 390:** Mr President, Platform, Delegates. Speaking on motion 43. This motion came about from an accident that happened on my site. All vehicles on site are required to have reverse warning systems in place. The accident on our site luckily only resulted in some minor bumps and scrapes, as well as a slightly bruised ego, but this accident highlighted a major concern for me. The vehicle in question was your typical transit van, which was an external delivery van. This accident could have been avoided had this vehicle been fitted with a reverse warning system. Statistics have shown that nearly a quarter of all deaths involving vehicles in the workplace are due to reversing, all others result in serious injury. I’ve looked into see what the cost of fitting these devices to current commercial vehicles is and the price ranges from £20 to £30, a very small price to pay for the cost of a life. Please support. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

**Brother Ian Hodson, National President:** Seconder? Formally seconded? Any speakers? Okay.

**Brother Lukasz Bemka – Branch 359 (Charwood Foods, Leicester) - speaking on behalf of the Executive Council:**

Delegates, Platform. As Warren mentioned, nearly a quarter of deaths is caused by vehicles reversing. I’ve got some other statistics as well. 33% of all vehicle accidents are caused by parking and reversing. It only takes a split second for driver attention to wander or slight misjudgement and a tragedy may happen. This number increases in the case of vehicle accidents in working environments to over 50%. A very simple solution like reverse warning systems could really save lives. At present the regulation includes all commercial vehicles over three tonnes. Changing it to all vehicles with a blind spot would be definitely beneficial, regardless of noise pollution. The EC would ask you to support the motion.

[APPLAUSE]

**Brother Ian Hodson, National President:** To the vote. All those in favour? Against? That’s carried. Motion 44.

**44 Transport**

No 5 Regional Council

*That conference agrees the HS2 high speed train plan be scrapped and re-thought out cut the billions by half, 50% to drastically improve the present rail system and 50% to other desperately needed services.*
Brother Duncan Dale – Region 5 (West Yorkshire): Chair, Platform, fellow Comrades. That Conference agrees the HS2, the high-speed train plan, be scrapped and re-thought out. Cut the billions by 50%, to drastically improve the present rail system and 50% to other desperately needed services. I put this, like everybody else, I put this in in January at the Regional Council. I wasn’t sure at the time, like all of you, I wasn’t sure who was going to be in No. 10 come May, so had Labour got the keys to No. 10, I think myself personally and what I’ve heard through the media, I think they would have probably thought along the same lines as me. I would have had a different style to operate this, but then I found out on 8th May, we all woke up to find that the lunatics were still running the asylum, so I said be damned, it goes through, I’m putting this through, what we’ll get out of it.

Let’s cut this in two parts, first of all it’s the train itself and then there’s the other part of why it shouldn’t be there. Let’s see what, we’re talking £50 – 80 billion, this is what they’ve quoted. Where they’ve got this quote from, if I get a builder to do an extension to my house and I said how much and they gave me a quote and then I said how much will it cost me in three years’ time? and when he finished rolling about laughing, he’d stand up and tell me I’ve no idea, but they have this figure. We’ve never known a quote yet about The Shard or The Euro Express, we’ve never had a quote that’s been within budget, so how they can say £50 – 80 billion, I would hazard at a guess it’s probably over £100 billion and what are they going to do with it?

First of all, it was on the local media where I live in Yorkshire, West Yorkshire, it was from South Yorkshire that in Sheffield, just across from the Meadowhall, the other side of the dual carriageway, there was a street of houses, they’ve already, they’ve already sent them notice for compulsory purchase, these are people that lived in this street, this community, they’re going to compulsory purchase it, it might ring a bell that, from the 1960s for some of us, they’re going to pull it down. It won’t start with that street obviously, it’ll go from street to street, then they’ll go into the green and pleasant land, the farmland, they’ve got to do, you’ve got two tracks, you’ve got your embankments, you can imagine and if the farmer’s cottage, his family have lived there for 10 generations, if that’s in the way, there’s no way they’re going to do a round circle, that will come down as well, there’ll be no mercy and the whole idea of it is, according to the media, is to get Mr Smith, who lives in his semi-surburban house in Leeds and Mr Brown, who lives in his semi-surburban house in Manchester, is to shave 30 minutes, approximately 30 minutes off his travelling time.

They haven’t been shouting from the rooftops asking for this, they prefer to live where they live because of the family and their friends, they prefer to live in Leeds or Manchester, up north, but not only that, because the property and the cost of living is well down, but when they’ve been promoted or deployed or wanting, or put in for that job down in London or down the south, they want to keep that job because of their high salary. Now nobody’s blaming them for that, there’s nobody arguing about that, it’s their, that’s how they want it, but that’s the reason. It’s also that they’ve made the explanation to take motorists out of their cars onto the train. Now we all know, we all know there’s a preference, you either prefer to drive or you prefer to use public transport, they’re not going to change that, but this is their explanation. Right, so we’re now going to go from the train, we’re going to go to the reason why I disapprove of this.

The very same week, during the commercial break on the media, a guy called Paul O’Grady came on, we all know who Paul O’Grady is, a very well-known personality. He was putting an appeal out and it was for a charity Save the Children. Now Save the Children is one of the most fantastic organisations in the world, a charitable organisation and it was for children who were going hungry, starving and cold, but we weren’t talking about Central Africa, we weren’t talking about war-torn Afghanistan or wherever or the Middle East, we were talking about children in Barnsley, Bradford, Birmingham, Aberdeen, Wales, you name it, our own and what he said was that there were children, they were appealing for us to all pay £2 a month. I will gladly throw £2 a month in that hat, I’d put more in, I’ll give to any charity which is a genuine cause, £2 a month for these kids and the way he put it over, as we’re speaking now in this Hall, it’s afternoon, there are children sat behind their desks, between five and eight years old, with empty bellies. They’re hungry, these are our kids, but don’t forget, I don’t apologise for keep repeating this, £50 – 80 billion to Mr Jones … At the next desk, there’s little Sarah, she’s falling asleep in the warm classroom, the teacher nudges, you should go to bed at night, you and sleep. I did miss, I did miss, but the house is so cold, I kept waking up, so I lost sleep. We call that fuel poverty. Now little Joe, who’s got the empty belly, is looking forward to Thursday, because on Wednesday his mum’s going to get a food voucher to go to a food bank, she’s going to get some food, so he’ll have an egg, cornflakes, with soldiers, he’ll get a warm breakfast, he’s looking forward to that.

This is actually going on now, while they’re coming along and saying we’re going to invest £50 – 80 billion to get this train down to London. This is absolutely disgusting and the other thing that’s even worse is that all the promises they made leading up to the election, about the National Health, about jobs, the list goes on.
The first thing they came out with on 28th May, right, the 28th May, the first thing, they approved not the NHS doctors and nurses, not teachers, not jobs, they approved from London to Birmingham, the HS2, they approved it, within three weeks, no mention of all the manifesto promises that they’d given us, they approved it. This is where I get so, so annoyed and how the country can stand by and let this go on. We’ve got silver spoon-fed, public-schooled, millionaires, people sitting on that front bench in the Houses of Parliament, what I’ve said today, I’m not trying, I wouldn’t dare to tell you what’s going on because you’ll know what I’ve said about what’s going on, about these hungry kids and the cold kids and this, that and the other. They know, that’s the annoying part, they know it’s going on, but they still insist, they’re still insisting on these policies. It’s not for, this train is not for the zero contracts, our minimum wage people, this is for people on good fat salaries, it’s not for the people, the working people who are struggling and I could go on forever, we could be here until Friday. I beg you, I implore you to support. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Seconder? Seconder?

Sister Sheila Hyman – Branch 582 (Manor Bakeries, Carlton): Mr President, Chair, Delegates. Up to-date, this train has cost us £1 billion and it hasn’t even been officially approved yet. HS2 Limited has overshot its allocated £101 million budget by £87 million. This money has been spent on four lots of professional services contracts. They have also overspent on its civil engineering by £11 million. This cannot be right. We have a rail system in place that is crying out to be updated and upgraded. We also have a National Health Service that is nearly on its knees, trying to deliver a service that’s been slowly destroyed by cutbacks.

We have parents of young children being told that their kids can’t have medication they desperately need to keep them alive, due to costs, yet we are being told it will be feasible and beneficial to other countries to spend £billions on a train. This truly breaks my heart. Please support this motion.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Steve Nevin – Branch 504: Afternoon, Conference. I’m here to support this motion. I want to have a go at the Executive Council on this one. As a Socialist, I’m in favour of efficient, comfortable and affordable public transport systems, but in the case of the HS2, the service is proposed for business use and therefore leads to ticket prices that are premium, meaning working people will continue to use the cheaper existing service. The Netherlands HS scheme is being bailed out by the government, precisely because of this. Environmental and social consequences will hit working people living close to the line the hardest, as they won’t be able to afford to move owing to the high cost of living in the South-East. Yes, we do need real services that are fit for purpose, so surely it is better to invest the £50 billion+ costs on expanding and improving the current rail infrastructure. We are all for jobs, services and investing in the infrastructure, but not so that multi-national corporations can profit at our expense. Please support this motion. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Sean Molloy – Branch 558 (Rathbones, Wakefield): I’m here to support it. This is nonsense, they’re spending loads of money to get a fat cat businessman to London earlier. Just get an earlier train, mate. Secondly, this money, secondly, when you look at it, the money they’re spending, by the time they get the thing up and running, it’s going to be obsolete anyway, so it’s a complete waste of time.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Andy Moorhouse – Branch 417 (Hovis, Wigan): Here to support the motion. Conference, I was lucky enough to spend five weeks in Japan earlier this year, tearing up and down the country on the bullet train, the Shinkansen, it’s a phenomenal piece of kit, 200 miles an hour, every 30 minutes, going from one end of the country to the other. You only have to wait 30 minutes. It’s fantastic and that’s what they want to, the HS2 is inspired by the Shinkansen, the bullet train. You would think it’d be fantastic. The difference is, Japan has got a full comprehensive invested-in, working, infrastructure transport system, from buses, underground, local trains, national trains and then you’ve got the Shinkansen on the top of it, the cherry on the cake. What are they going to try and do here?, distract everything from the mess that is the normal rail system and create this black hole that’s going to suck all the money out of it onto this distraction that’s on top, that just goes from one end of the country and how are you going to get into it in the middle?, nobody knows. It’s a complete waste of time. Please support this motion.

[APPLAUSE]

Sister Marilyn McCarthy – Branch 450 (Manchester): I’m a bit bemused by this, I just don’t know why are we looking at our money to support this train, when I thought they’d sold the rail network off, so am I right or am I wrong here? If it’s not ours, why are we paying for it? So support it.
Brother Ian Hodson, National President: I think you might have to ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, I haven’t got a clue, Marilyn. I’d like to help.

Brother Adam Brown – Branch 277 (Bristol): I support this motion, because all that’s going to happen here is a few people are going to get extremely rich out of this, it’s going to end up like a white elephant, people will have to bail it out time and time again with money and it’ll be us that ends up footing the expense of it all again whilst, as I say, a few people will get extremely rich on it, so I ask you to support it, please.

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Any more speakers? Okay.

Brother John Fox – Branch 405 (speaking on behalf of the Executive Council): I was speaking to my local councillor the other week, ex-ASLEF driver and he was telling me that it takes 20 minutes for this new train to actually get up to speed and it also takes over 20 minutes to slow down, so from London Euston to Birmingham, it’s an hour, how much time would they save? Five minutes, if that, it’s not worth it. 50% of this money could go on improving the rolling stock that we have now, people, the rolling stock is packed to capacity, especially at rush hour, Katrina at the back, she’s often sitting on the floor, well she puts it on Facebook often enough, sits on the floor, might have the kids with her, can’t get a seat, all this needs bringing up-to-date, better trains, more carriages. Let’s get that infrastructure right. The other money, the motion actually says, can go on our education, on our NHS, which is required, child care, caring for our elderly and also, what’s the other one?, well, we’ve got an ageing population, so we say please support this. Thank you.


Brother Mark Brooks, Chair of Standing Orders: For a while now we’ve had a ban on mobile ‘phones on the Delegates’ floor. Now we’re going to laptops and mobile devices. Please show respect to this Conference. You’re here to do the duty of your Branch, your District or Region. Anyone caught using a mobile or any other mobile devices will be fined. Thank you.


Brother John Fox – Branch 405 (speaking on behalf of the Executive Council): I was speaking to my local councillor the other week, ex-ASLEF driver and he was telling me that it takes 20 minutes for this new train to actually get up to speed and it also takes over 20 minutes to slow down, so from London Euston to Birmingham, it’s an hour, how much time would they save? Five minutes, if that, it’s not worth it. 50% of this money could go on improving the rolling stock that we have now, people, the rolling stock is packed to capacity, especially at rush hour, Katrina at the back, she’s often sitting on the floor, well she puts it on Facebook often enough, sits on the floor, might have the kids with her, can’t get a seat, all this needs bringing up-to-date, better trains, more carriages. Let’s get that infrastructure right. The other money, the motion actually says, can go on our education, on our NHS, which is required, child care, caring for our elderly and also, what’s the other one?, well, we’ve got an ageing population, so we say please support this. Thank you.


Brother Mark Brooks, Chair of Standing Orders: For a while now we’ve had a ban on mobile ‘phones on the Delegates’ floor. Now we’re going to laptops and mobile devices. Please show respect to this Conference. You’re here to do the duty of your Branch, your District or Region. Anyone caught using a mobile or any other mobile devices will be fined. Thank you.

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Motion 45.

**45 Government and Political Branch 107**

*That this conference urges the Labour Party to adopt socialist policies in order to show clear differences between Labour and other main parties. This may sound simplistic, however, given the disconnect between politics and the people of this country, clear choices would surely stimulate more interest in the important issues facing everybody such as NHS, zero hours, low pay etc.*

Brother Jack Lee – Branch 107: Mr President, Platform, Delegates, Conference. That this Conference urges the Labour Party to adopt Socialist policies in order to show a clear difference between Labour and other main parties. This may sound simplistic, however given the disconnect between politics and the people of this country, clear choices should be given to stimulate more interest in debates and important issues facing everybody such as the NHS, zero hours and lower pay.

Conference, a lot of what I’m going to say now has been said already, but it’s well worth repeating. This motion was formulated before the General Election, but it is now even more important because of the catastrophic events of 7th May. Before the election, you couldn’t get a fag paper between the Tories and nearly New Labour and now the poverty stricken, the low paid, the working poor, the old, the disabled and the dispossessed, plus the 75% of the people of this country who didn’t vote for the Tories are going to pay for the next five years. There has to be a choice for people, an alternative. There are millions of people, millions, who are not interested in politics because of the ‘they’re all the same’ syndrome. We must change that. The Labour Party should give people choices such as, on the one hand, a publically-owned railway system, or on the other hand, a profit-making, expensive, transport system which takes £4 billion of taxpayers’ money a year anyway, a living wage as opposed to a zero hour minimum wage policy, which is slavery in all but name, affordable housing, as opposed to private landlords who are ripping off tenants, vulnerable tenants, with a tattered go-ahead from this now unleashed Tory majority.
Conference, Labour failed in this election to nail the myth that Labour was responsible for crashing the economy, thereby causing the horrors of the last five years and now we see Labour want-to-be leaders clamouring to be the first to claim the Labour Party is now a party of the centre and we’re treated to the disgusting sound of party leaders saying we got it wrong. What are they apologising for? The truth is that when Labour came into power in 1997, after 18 years of Tory rule, it was clear that there was little or no investment in the infrastructure, hospitals, schools, etc., so Labour started a massive investment in hospitals and schools, mostly modernising older Victorian and Edwardian buildings, school buildings and hospital structures which were older than the NHS itself. So while they were investing in NHS and education etc., Lehman Brothers collapsed, causing a catastrophic banking crisis across the world and injuring everybody, so Labour were fixing the roof, but while they were doing that, they were victims of dodgy banking systems and dodgy bankers.

Labour must now tell people that they were not responsible for crashing the economy, that unleashed Capitalism crashed the economy, that banking greed crashed the economy and George Osborne choked recovery. Comrades, the Labour Party wants to capture the notice of disaffected people along with the next generation of voters, unsullied by the policies of the past, must make clearly different policies from the Tories and LibDems. They must promote the ideas of great people like Nye Bevan, Tony Benn, Keir Hardie. Offer the electorate a choice and as for that next generation of voters, the Labour Party, along with our help, must reach out and try to capture their imagination before the Tories do.

Conference, James Larkin once said the great only seem greater because we are on our knees, let’s get up off our knees and he was right. Let’s now challenge everything that the Tories peddle, refuse the lies told by the odious Sun newspaper and the rest of the Murdoch press. Show those who think they’re all the same, that is not the case. I move.

[APPLAUSE]

**Brother Ian Hodson, National President:** Seconder? Formally seconded? Speakers? General Secretary.

**Brother Ronnie Draper, General Secretary:** Thank you, Chair. The Executive Council would ask Conference to support the motion and I’m going to try and steer clear of the things that Jack was talking about, although I do wholeheartedly agree with him. In my opening address, one of the things I sited as being reasons why Labour’s not in power today, was the question of voter apathy. There were millions of people who sat at home, who didn’t vote, who didn’t vote, who couldn’t be arsed to get up and go and put their X in a box and that’s despite having lived through seven years of austerity and five years under a coalition government.

Do you know, in a system where it’s not compulsory to vote, there’s a real need to capture the imagination of the public and the only way to do that is by advertising policies that set you aside from the opposition and I think that’s the essence of what Jack was talking about. Boasting that the austerity measures that you’re going to offer are going to be lighter than what the Tories are offering isn’t an alternative to anybody, that was what I called Hobson’s Choice. When the President and I, a few months ago, prior to the election, we had an audience with Ed Miliband at his offices in London, we talked about there had to be clear blue water between what the Labour Party was offering and what the Tories were offering, otherwise we were going to hit problems. We talked about, when Ed Miliband said about we’re going to have an £8 minimum wage by 2020 and we were saying we want a £10 an hour in 2015, that’s what we’re looking for and to build towards it is not good enough and I’ve got to say, I will say that Ed Miliband did change his tune slightly after that, because after he’d been in with us two and had an hour, or whatever, of toing and froing, the Labour Party policy changed to where it was going to be at least £8 by 2018, so we got a couple of years off and we got the ceiling wiped out, so let’s hope that would have gone further.

Yes, the Labour Party was going to abolish the bedroom tax, it was a clear promise that was well advertised and yes, there would have been some changes and I don’t know, I’m a bit sceptical about what changes there were going to be to zero hour contracts, because I heard Ed talking a year ago at the TUC Congress and making points, Chair, about the abolition of the zero hour contracts, only to hear an interview on television that seemed to be saying something totally different, but let’s accept that what he was saying, that there was going to be a massive reform to zero hour contracts and of course there was some things around health, NHS, education, but there were no definitive promises that absolutely set Labour apart from the Conservative Party and now, four weeks after the election, we see already that the Labour leadership candidates are aligning themselves with the Tories on immigration, on the deficit and on EU reform, shame on them for doing that, shame on them.

If Labour is to be a credible opposition, then we really do have to reinvent ourselves. Call me naive, but I always believed that the opposition’s job was to oppose, to oppose everything that is wrong in government, yet we saw time after time Labour benches abstaining instead of putting their hands up in opposition to that coalition. One of the
examples that I would give and it’s one that’s quite memorable, it will most certainly remain with me for the rest of my life, was when the Cat Reilly thing had gone through, the Workfare problems, where the government had been taken to court and they’d lost the case and then they said they were going to make reforms to try and ensure that Workfare still went through, there was a major debate in the House of Commons and the President and I went and sat in the visitors gallery to see what was going to happen with Labour politicians on the road to Downing Street a year later, what they were going to do about zero hour contracts, so we sat in there, Chair and we listened to the debate and there were some great speeches from people like John this morning, but Liam Byrne led for the Labour opposition and despite saying the things they did say, at the end of it he asked Labour politicians to abstain and I will never to this day know why you would abstain.

Bob Crowe has been quoted many times about saying the only battle you can’t win is the one you don’t take part in, but you know if you’re going to give people, working people, confidence in your Party, you’ve got to show them that you’re going to stand up for the values that they have. Surely it is better that the Labour government lets the voting public see that if we’re against the Tory government or the LibDem coalition, that we put our hands up again. It doesn’t matter whether we lose, because we’d only lose because there’s more of them than there is of us, more exploitors than there are saviours. If Labour’s prepared to continue to take the soft option of hanging onto the Tory coat-tails, then as John and as Mark and a number of Delegates here have said, we’re going to be in opposition for an awful long time and so there has to be a seat change within the Labour Party if we’re to be a credible opposition.

Last week, Comrades, I put my name and Mark did as well, we put our names to a letter in The Guardian that criticised austerity, it was a damning letter that went from Resist Unite. We were prepared to stand up because we represent people who are in struggle and yet I don’t see any of those four, Jeremy Corbyn’s was on, but I don’t see any of the other four Labour candidates for leadership putting their name to something, they were absolutely definitive about representing working people and the disadvantaged, nothing and that tells me everything about where we’re going to go if they get in, unless we change things radically. Conference, we need a Labour Party that remembers its roots, but also is progressive in its future. A Labour Party with clear, radical policies that bring real benefit to the poorest in our country, instead of making vague promises and diluting manifesto pledges as soon as they can. A Labour Party that has working class people at the helm, driving us forward instead of political luvvies whose indifference has left us treading water. Conference, please support the motion and let’s take our Party back.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Okay Conference, to the vote. Those in favour? Against? That’s carried. Motion 46.

46 Government and Politics Greggs 580

That this conference agrees that the closing of children’s centres around the country is abhorrent, these places offer a vital service to some of the most vulnerable families in society and we should be lobbying the government to provide sufficient funding to keep them open.

Sister Sarah Woolley, speaking on behalf of Branch 580 (Greggs of Yorkshire) and the Executive Council: To move motion 46. Conference, Sure Start Centres were introduced by the last Labour government. They were seen as a tool to help reduce child poverty and initially were placed in deprived areas, but soon were rolled out nationally with the aim to give children the best possible start in life, for improvement of childcare, early education, health and family support, with an emphasis on outreach and community development. To give the children the best possible start in life, also involves helping their parents and Sure Start Centres do this by offering help of all kinds, both formally and informally, to their parents and carers and by ensuring they have a support system in place that many who attend do not have at home.

For most people who attend Sure Start Centres, that is the only place they will have had adult conversation, friendships and advice and their children somewhere safe to play with new friends and without them, they run the real chance of becoming isolated, start to struggle and fall into all kinds of problems. You can probably now understand my anger at the ConDem government cutting funding to the Sure Start Centres and having 400 close in the first two years of their term, by the end of last year near enough another 400 had closed and of those still open, over half have had to slash their services, rending them useless in the community and if Cameron has his way, the rest will go too, either that or be privatised, so that they aren’t interested in the children and families, but what money they can make out of them. I say this often at Conference, but our children are our future and unfortunately we aren’t all elite like Cameron and his mates who can afford private nurseries, nannies and advisors, some of us rely on local children’s centres to
get the information and help we need. Sufficient funding to keep these vital services open and functioning efficiently is essential to our children’s and their children’s future, as without them the future of a large number of them is potentially very bleak. Please support.

[APPLAUSE]

**Brother Ian Hodson, National President:** Seconder? Formally seconded. Any more speakers? To the vote, those in favour? Against? That’s carried.

Okay, okay, close your Agendas. What we’re going to do, we’re going to read the results of the TU ballot and the Labour ballot. Okay, these are the people that stood and the people, the votes that they got. Okay, this is for the Trade Union Congress. It’s Sarah Woolley 107, George Atwall 83, Marilyn McCarthy 73, Pauline McCarthy 64, Mark Hague, Mark Hague? Mark McHugh, sorry Mark, Mark McHugh 50, Christopher Lay 46, Lizzie Dinning 37, Mandy Ambrose 21, John James Billy-no-mates, a big 0. I’m only telling you what it says on here, mate. I can only read what’s on the paper. I’ve got to get some new glasses. So being elected is Sarah Woolley, George Atwall and Marilyn McCarthy.

[APPLAUSE]

Okay, for the Labour Party Conference, Rachel Mullen 123, Pauline McCarthy 123, George Atwall 73, Andy Moorhouse 62, Gary Johnston 34, so that’s Rachel Mullen, Pauline McCarthy and George Atwall for the Labour Conference.

[APPLAUSE]

Okay, yes, as a matter of clarification, Rachel will be the Delegate and Pauline will be the visitor, okay.

Across the road at half past five, in the Victoria Pub, is a ‘What should Socialists say in the EU Referendum’, so those that haven’t been speeched-out, I know it’s going to be a fantastic event because some of the people that are going to be speaking at it, fantastic speakers and so I’d encourage you to go along. Tomorrow morning, we’ve got Hilda Palmer who’ll be doing a spot for us on health and safety, ably supported by Willie Calhoun (? spelling) and obviously the National Health & Safety Committee will be leading that part of the session, so what I’m going to do is to give them time to prepare, is allow you to finish five minutes than what I was anticipating and enjoy your evening in the Prince of Wales. I believe we’ve got a band called Pulse, oh Tonal Recall, I don’t know where Pulse has come from, Tonal Recall, is that what it said?, so see you in the morning, half past 9. It was five minutes early today and I let you go for an early brew, come on.
Tuesday 9 June 2015

Morning Session

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: General Secretary to call the roll.

Brother Ronnie Draper, General Secretary: Region 1, thank you. Region 2. Region 3. Region 4. Region 5, say that again, thanks Mark. Region 6 and Region 7, thank you. There’s 189 Delegates present.

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Morning, Conference. We’ve had a quick message sent to us that says, thank you to all our members for the fantastic solidarity from PCS Union members at the National Gallery and from Candy Udwin. We’ve also had a message from, let me just get to it, just get to it, 'Just a note to say thanks again for the invite to the Conference yesterday, it was a very useful insight into the issues discussed and debated and the challenges faced by the Union. Hope the rest of your Conference goes well', Mark Eccles on behalf of the management from Warburtons, that attended yesterday. 'All the best for your Conference at Southport, fraternal greetings from the Prison Officers Association', Steve Gillan and we got a ‘phone call, which we can’t take, if you do it’s a fiver.

[LAUGHTER]

Excuse me? Excuse me, no and is that a tenner then? Can we have a vote on that, is that a tenner for taking a call in Conference? Okay, make sure he goes to Standing Orders. Okay, Conference. It’s great to see you all looking so well and refreshed. Obviously you’re nearly as well and refreshed as I am, which is a pleasure. We’re going to go back to the health and safety part on your Agendas, which is on motion 33. This one is going to be slightly different to the normal format, because what we’re going to do is take the health and safety motions, then we’re going to stick the EC on the floor and we’re going to bring the Health & Safety Committee, we’re going to introduce you to the Health & Safety Committee and then we’re going to have a couple of inspiring speakers, well we’ve definitely got one, I don’t know where Willie is …

[LAUGHTER]

anybody seen Willie? It’s a bit like dude, where did I park my car, isn’t it. So that’s what we’re going to do this morning. Okay and this afternoon, this afternoon we’ve got another amazing speaker coming, which we hid from you, I don’t know how well we hid it from you, but I think you’ll be really impressed with the speaker we’ve got this afternoon and hopefully, with a bit of luck tomorrow morning, Arthur Scargill should be here about 10 o’clock-ish, which will be great. So Conference, back to the motions, motion 33.

33 Health, Safety and Welfare at Work No 5 Regional Council

**That this conference agrees to put in some kind of working committee to work with senior management to identify areas in the workforce which are recognised 'light' duties only. Thus removing members from more physically demanding roles and not putting the health and safety of our hard working core at risk giving the union upmanship amongst other unions displaying the fact that it can deal with this delicate issue fairly and precisely.**

Brother Sean Molloy – Branch 558 (Rathbones, Wakefield): Chair, can I ask, if I read the motion, can I actually give the reasons behind this motion as well, is that okay?

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Okay.

Brother Sean Molloy – Branch 558 (Rathbones, Wakefield): Thank you. That this Conference agrees to put in some kind of working committee of senior managers in areas in the workplace which are recognised as light duties only(?), thus moving members from more physically demanding roles and not putting the health and safety of our hardworking core at risk, given the Union [unclear] displaying the fact that it can do this [unclear] fairly and precisely. This has come about because the Branch I’m at unfortunately votes with its feet. I’ve spent the last 2½ years of my life going back and getting members that have pulled out of this Trade Union and putting them back in it. We’ve got a lot of things going on at work, we’ve seen a lot here about harassment and getting people off the sick, when they’re coming back in, the company I work for tend to think it’s acceptable to put them back into the manning whether they’re fit or not to do the job. Some of the stuff we do is physically demanding and it’s quite prehistoric.

So what we’ve done, we get people that moan, we get people that, members unfortunately and we’re trying to police this, so we can sort of like do it properly. I believe that people who come back on light duties should be put elsewhere, on lighter jobs, not put back in the manning because it’s a health and safety concern. First, it’s a health and safety concern because they’re putting more work on other people, because they’re physically not able to do it and secondly,
they shouldn’t be put back on the shop floor if they’re on light duties anyway. There should be identified areas, like offices and places like that where they can come back and rehabilitate themselves back into the workplace. So I’m asking you to support this, basically on the point, the fact that what they’re doing is wrong. Okay.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Seconder? Formally seconded? Speakers?

Brother Terry Povey – Branch 277 (Warburtons, Bristol): Yes, I fully support this motion, basically down to the fact that recently in Bristol we’re having a serious amount of people who are suffering from flour inhalation etc. We need these light duties to help our members to (a) get better or at least take them out of the atmosphere. I support this motion.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Okay, no more speakers? Pauline?

Sister Pauline McCarthy – Branch 582 (Manor, Carlton) – responding on behalf of the Executive Council: I’ve had a few drinks, you have to be sociable, don’t you, you’re forced to be …

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: What, this morning?

[LAUGHTER]

Hold on a minute, they say I’ve got a problem.

Sister Pauline McCarthy – Branch 582 (Manor, Carlton) – responding on behalf of the Executive Council: You see, they all pick on you, there’s no need is there, there’s no need. I only fell down once, what’s up with you? Sorry, right, it’s back to the motion. The Executive Council would ask you to support this motion. You all work within industry and you know that people come back to work on restricted duties, well in Manor, Carlton, it’s normal practice nearly. We talked about a motion on light duties, 31, yesterday and we talked about people coming back to work, being bullied to get back to work, well at Carlton they come back to work, after they’ve seen occupational health, they come back with the Branch Secretary to have a chat, to see what they can and can’t do and they assess their duties and they put them on restricted duties and restricted duties is basically going to somewhere where nobody else can rotate around you, so you’re restricting other peoples’ movements, because you’re on the light duty and they’re doing all the hard work, so we up here support this motion, but you’ve got to bear in mind that every Branch has got its own Health & Safety Committee and that should be part of the Committee that we’re talking about forming here, because health and safety is, in every workplace it’s important that we all get together and represent everyone, not just those that are well and fine and dandy. I ask you to support.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Okay Conference, to the vote. Those in favour? Against? Unanimous. Motion 34 Health, Safety and Welfare at Work

Conference agrees that the BFAWU request the HSE must make contact with our Health & Safety Representatives when visiting a recognised BFAWU site.

Brother Diarmuid Best – No. 7 Region: Chair, Committee, Comrades. The Health & Safety is the body responsible for encouragement, regulation and enforcement of workplace health and safety and welfare. The health and safety function is to [unclear] employers, employees and [unclear] advice and information. The health and safety information should include if the employers are complying with the Health & Safety Law and also any improvement or prohibition notices have been issued. The Health & Safety Executive is the enforcing body of the Trade Union, train the health and safety reps to police health and safety daily in the workplace. Recognition of the work the health and safety reps and their important role of improving health and safety in the workplace, is accepted by all.

The health and safety of even employers and provision that is made law for health and safety reps to carry out their functions and receive information from Health & Safety. So why on earth are health and safety inspectors visiting the workplace without contacting Union representatives? How can they determine if the employers are complying with health and safety legislation unless they talk to Union safety reps, who police health and safety daily in the workplace. For the health and safety just to meet with employers is not acceptable and undermines the legal rights of Union safety reps and the members they represent. Please support this motion.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Seconder? Formally seconded?
Brother Keith Hutchinson – Branch 580 (Greggs, Yorkshire) – member of the National Health & Safety Committee:
Yes, we’re here to support this, but if you go to somewhere like Hazards and you listen to people like Hilda and the people that go to these meetings, you will be surprised, the government, how much they’ve cut away from the HSE and don’t think it stops there. You’ll be lucky and Hilda, I’m sure, will give you the exact details, if you ever see a HSE representative, we have to fight, we have to protect the HSE, we have to work with them, because they and we are here to protect our members. Please support.
[APPLAUSE]

Brother Sean Molloy – Branch 558 (Rathbones, Wakefield):
I think this motion’s actually superb. I think what it does is actually gives recognition for the Trade Union with the HSE. Also it’ll get a fairer, fairer reflection of what’s actually going on in your workplace, because companies don’t like the HSE coming on top of them, so if they speak to the Trade Union it gives a fairer and true reflection, so please support this motion.

Brother John Owens – Branch 432 (A.B., Liverpool) – EC member, speaking on behalf of the EC:
The EC asks you to support this motion, but with the cuts by the last Tory/LibDem government and I’m sure by this anti-health and safety Tory government at the HSE, it is not very likely you’re going to get a visit unless there’s a fatality or a serious accident and even then you might get one, but if we do get a visit from the HSE, we would expect them to ask to speak to a Trade Union health and safety rep and also expect the company to point them in the right direction, but we demand that they ask and demand that they are pointed in the right direction, to the health and safety rep on site. It is imperative that the health and safety rep should have time to spend with the HSE to discuss any health and safety issues. Unfortunately, the last government and I’m sure this government think that health and safety is a burden in our workplaces and believe there is too much red tape, but to pinch a line from Hazards, I would rather be covered in red tape than red bandages. Please support.

Brother Ian Hodson, National President:

35 Health, Safety And Welfare At Work  No 4 Regional Council

That this conference agrees to work with the relevant authorities to ensure senior decision makers within industry and banking etc. are regularly tested for drink or drug use especially prior to important decision making.

Brother Stuart Bolton – Branch 405:
That this Conference agrees to work with the relevant authorities to ensure senior decision-makers within industry and banking are regularly tested for drink and drug use, particularly prior to important decisions. Conference, judging by the decisions that they regularly make, you’d think that this would be already in place. The mechanisms for doing it are in place, they do it in sport, it’s quite easy to do and the same rules that apply to us, we get tested, should apply to them. Conference, please support this motion.

Brother Ian Hodson, National President:
Seconder? Formally seconded? Are you coming down, Pat? Are you coming down, are you coming to speak? Oh right, okay. It was just before Mandy got on, that was all.

Brother Pat Rowley – No. 2 Region:
Mr President, Delegates. Yes, there’s a great reason to support this resolution because people, when they have any form of liquor, that stuff or drink in them, their mind is not what it should be. We cannot drive now after you drink a pint of beer, you’re not allowed to drive because you’re not safe on the road and it’s the same in the office, you’re not qualified to make a decision. I remember years ago, when Nikita Khrushchev? was offered booze at a meeting and he refused it, he said no, he said wine’s in, wits out. Conference, support the resolution.

Brother Ian Hodson, National President:
Any more speakers?

Sister Mandy Ambrose – Branch 105 (Warburtons, Enfield) – speaking on behalf of the EC:
I think we all need to accept the working world as it is today, from the point of view of self-responsibility and that of other workers. There is justification and acceptance of a need to test employees for alcohol and drug use. This is to protect all, even though some aspects may be deemed to be intrusive. By the same token, does it not seem plausible this testing for alcohol and drug use should be extended to senior members of staff, given that as leaders they make and take greater decisions that will affect all within an organisation.
The same adverse influence is open to higher ranking, sorry about that, to staff and employers alike, but let it be said that when any staff member falls onto troubled times, they are handled with compassion and understanding. Support should be available in order to bring an individual back to normality. It is right and proper to have a level playing field of testing that demonstrates equality throughout all levels of staff, in all organisations. I ask Conference to support this motion.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Okay Conference, to the vote. Those in favour? Against? That’s carried. Motion 36.

### 36 Health, Safety and Welfare at Work

**Branch 390**

This conference believes the current system for reporting agency workers’ accidents and injuries through the offices of the agency, not through the workplace placement, promotes under reporting and gives bad employers an ‘off the books’ Health and Safety advantage. This leads to a more dangerous workplace for our members. To try and reduce the effects of this cynical tactic, we will instruct our delegates at the TUC and Labour party conferences to lobby for the following change in H&S regulation. ‘All agency workers’ accidents and near misses must be recorded, and reported if necessary to the Health and safety Executive, through their workplace placement’s existing H&S management systems.’

Brother Michael Blundred – Branch 390 (Manor): Mr President, Delegates, Brothers and Sisters. I’ve got to apologise for this motion, it’s quite a wordy one. This Conference believes that the current system for reporting agency workers’ accidents and injuries through the offices of the agency, not through the workplace placement, promotes under-reporting and gives bad employers an off-the-books health and safety advantage, this leads to a more dangerous workplace for our members. To try and reduce the effects of this cynical tactic, will instruct Delegates to the TUC and Labour Party Conferences to lobby for the following change in H & S regulation. All agency workers’ accidents and near misses must be recorded and reported if necessary to the HSE through their workplace placements existing health and safety management systems.

The really basic aim of this motion is just to get all workers’ accidents investigated and dealt with equally, whether that worker is an agency worker or an employee of the factory, because the next person using that machine, if the accident is to an agency worker, could well be one of our members. The same thing, if they trip on a bad set of stairs, the next person down could be one of us, so I ask you to support this motion, to have some equality for agency workers when they are the injured party. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Seconder? Formally seconded?

Brother Colin Hall – Branch 359 (Charnwoods, Leicester): The system that we’ve got, where stuff’s reported through the agency, is ludicrous, because I’ve a very strong feeling that while the HSE might check employers, I bet you he doesn’t go around the agencies and even if they did go around the agencies, you’d be surprised how easily files get lost and then they’re only found when they’re made to be found. The fact is, a lot of agencies send workers to a factory, they give them little or no training at all, little or no safety induction at all and I’ve spoken to enough agency workers, I know what I’m talking about and the fact is, these employers can say oh yes, we’ve got a model health and safety record yes, look at our books, we’re great, but I’ll tell you what, if you’ve got accidents happening to agency workers and they’ve got to go on the company’s books and mess up their nice shiny record, they’ll clamp down on the agencies and they’ll stop a lot of practices that are going on. An agency worker is a worker, the same as you and me, they’re not in the Union but they’re still a worker. I want all workers to go home safe. Please support this motion.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Sean Molloy – Branch 558 (Rathbones, Wakefield): Yes, I’m here to support this. I think there’s like two rules and I think we all need to be singing from the same hymn sheet. A young agency lass, back in February/March time, got a very, very nasty burn off one of the tins on the plant and the only reason it was highlighted is that we took on the case and filed in a claim for her, otherwise they wouldn’t even have talked about it so yes, please support this motion.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Any more speakers?

Brother Vince Payne – EC Committee: The EC asks you to support this motion. At present there are loopholes in the system of ensuring agencies report accidents and injuries.
This change in regulation will hopefully ensure compliance with their duty. Also agencies should ensure that reporting responsibilities are clearly understood by the host business and the workers. Please support this motion.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Okay Conference, to the vote. Those in favour? Against? That’s unanimous.

Okay Conference, we’re going to move the EC down to there, we’re going to move the EC down to there and we’re going to bring the Health & Safety Committee up to here and we’re going to invite Hilda to come up and if anybody knows where Willie is, I’d really appreciate it. We’ll let him do that one for free, won’t we. Yes, you can ‘phone him, Ronnie, that one’s for free.

Okay Conference, normally we would probably put a health and safety fringe on, in fact this year we intended to put a fringe meeting on on the Saturday and turn the Saturday into what we, we thought would be the start of having a regular session at Conference on health and safety, but beginning on the Saturday rather than a fringe meeting during the week, but obviously because of the final Agenda, we saw an opportunity to actually put it where probably health and safety should be, which is right at the centre of our Conference and to make sure that we underpin how serious (1) we take health and safety, but how important it is that health and safety is in utmost in everybody’s mind in the workplace, because it doesn’t matter how much you earn, it doesn’t matter what your wages are at the end of the week, because if you haven’t got your health, then it doesn’t matter, because you can’t go out and spend it.

If you think that money’s more important than somebody’s wellbeing, that would be a huge mistake, so what we want to try and emphasise is that the cuts and the media campaign around health and safety that undermines health and safety, which is a deliberate act to put your lives at risk, to enable people to exploit you for their profit, needs to be highlighted and it needs to be rebutted and what we’re really, really pleased about this morning is that we’ve got somebody that’s been at the forefront of our Conference and to make sure that we underpin how serious (1) we take health and safety, but how important it is that health and safety is in utmost in everybody’s mind in the workplace, because it doesn’t matter how much you earn, it doesn’t matter what your wages are at the end of the week, because if you haven’t got your health, then it doesn’t matter, because you can’t go out and spend it.

I can stop backfilling now, but obviously, so I’m really, really pleased and you’re going to be absolutely inspired when Hilda Palmer talks to you shortly and obviously now Willie’s got out of bed, dude we’ve found where we parked our car, we’re really pleased that we’ve got Willie, because Willie, more than anybody else in our Trade Union, has been responsible for making sure that people in your workplaces are trained to a level, in my case above the level of my intelligence, but people in your workplaces are trained to a level that enables people to go to work and go home safe from work, so we’re really pleased that Willie’s agreed to do a spot, even though he didn’t know what it was he was going to do, because I didn’t ask him until the last minute in case he said no, I just wanted to put him in the deep end and tell him we’d cut off his money support if he didn’t come and do it, no, but he said it was brilliant and he said he would, so I’m going to introduce our National Health & Safety Committee, because in your Regions you all have a representative that sits on your Regional Council, so I’m going to start from down that end. Hasn’t mentioned football this year, didn’t talk about being in the Champions League, never mentioned anything about going outside of the top four or anything, so I won’t mention it either, so we’ve got John Owens, he represents Region 4, so I think we should give people, because they put themselves out, they put themselves out …

[APPLAUSE]

…very, very committed to your health and safety and then obviously everybody will have heard Mark Brooks all week, so he comes from No. 3.

[APPLAUSE]

And then next to him, obviously he’s down every day isn’t he, so you’ll all get to know if you didn’t know him already, but we’ve got Keith Hutchinson, he’s from No. 5.

[APPLAUSE]

Over here we’ve got Dermy, he’s from Northern Ireland and he …

[APPLAUSE]

…and he really makes sure we all stay on a level playing field and we don’t get ahead of ourselves and next to me we’ve got Dave King, who comes from the Republic. Who’s missing, who’s missing? One, two, three, four, five, it’s Region 2, we need somebody from Region 2, we need somebody from Region 2, can we make sure we sort that out when you go back to your Regional Council, because it’s important that your voice is heard on our National Safety Committee as well and the person I’m going to introduce next is actually the Chair of our National Health & Safety and they’ll
actually be running this bit, so I’d like to introduce to you Vince, who is on the Executive and is the Chair of our National Health & Safety …

[APPLAUSE]

…and he’s been pretty inspirational about making sure that we prioritise this at Conference, Vince, he’s from Region 1 by the way, so if you want to take over and I can sit back now.

Brother Vince Payne – EC Committee: Thank you, Ian. I’d just like to say I’ve got a tremendous team at the moment and if we could get someone to fill Region 2, we’d be very happy and then we can really push forward, but the team is very settled, they’ve been in their positions for a fair old while and let’s go forward. Obviously Ian’s spoken about our guest speaker today, which is Hilda Palmer of Hazards. They do some incredible information and analysis on www.hazards.org, so please look at that. Willie’s going to say something, I would imagine, on courses etc., etc. I just want to say what the Committee actually does, the mechanics of how we work.

We meet at our Regional meetings and from there we obviously pick up problems and sometimes we can resolve them there and then or we take them further to the National Health & Safety meeting, which occurs every three months, or quarterly if you like, at Stanborough House. Our next meeting will be on 20th July and all the issues that we’ve brought from our Regions are relayed to the Committee and we bounce about ideas on how we can resolve the issue etc and then we talk about the activities that we might personally have achieved and done in our Regions and for our site bakery or wherever you work. There will be updates on previous meetings, what has happened since then, how we will hopefully have sorted the problem out, but it’s not always the case. We invite professional people in, such as Willie, to do a presentation or solicitors with updates on new legislation and sometimes we’ll even get a supplier in of PPE to show us some new PPE equipment, but we do whatever we can to sort of improve the situation and look at possibilities of change. Ian will stand up and give us, well hopefully, a health and safety activities report, but it’s not always the case because he might go off on a tangent and I have to pull him back in line …

[LAUGHTER]

…as you well know. We are looking at surveys at the moment, bullying and harassment and also heat in the workplace, which should be found on the Union website, hopefully. We look at also health and safety courses, we’re looking at perhaps the development of a Stage 4 health and safety course. We’ve just been given the Hazards Conference invite, if you like and we’re hoping to send a couple of the National Committee there, because it is a brilliant Conference. We always leave space on our Agenda at this quarterly meeting for any other business and this will be anything that really isn’t down to your Regions and it could be something you’ve read in the paper, in the last one I brought up some pensions information, but whatever you like you can bring to the table and we will discuss and at the end of all this, we will have detailed minutes of the meeting circulated to all the reps at the table and they will go back to their Region the next time around and explain what we’ve done.

It’s not easy being a health and safety rep on site, there’s the frustrations of members that are thrown back at you all the time and then you’ve got to try and do something about it and you get quite frustrated, but in my case I remain positive and I set myself achievable goals and I normally do get them, but it might take a long time. I must emphasise the importance of site inspections, they really are important and once you get into the habit of it, even the managers get into a habit of knowing that you’re going to do a good report, a good job and just let you carry on and do it. That’s only on my site, but give it a go, if you’re not doing one right now. It applies pressure, because it’s a written report and you must give them at least some timescale to achieve repairs or whatever the problem is. It’s important to keep records, as I’m sure you all know, but any new health and safety rep, keep records of your meetings, find out the emails of your managers so email them with your issues, it’s a brilliant weapon to use, have a health and safety strategy, there’s no point going in there and if it isn’t working that time, try something different, try things and when it works maybe that’s it, you’ve got the recipe for success. Praise the management when necessary, now and again they’ll do a good thing, it’s not all just knock, knock, knock, say well done and sometimes it’ll open another door.

We need to promote our own success, sometimes we just carry on doing what we’re doing and don’t realise no, maybe nobody knows what I’ve done, so we need to do that a bit more. Produce easy-to-read onsite newsletters, not too much information because people get bored very easily, like you probably are now with me, I’ve nearly finished, lead by example, there’s no point in saying don’t do it that way, if you carry on then you’re breaking the rules yourself, lead by example and service your members with health and safety complaints, just because it’s an awkward one, don’t bury it. Thank you. From there I will pass on to Hilda, who’s going to do a splendido speech for you.

[APPLAUSE]
Sister Hilda Palmer: Thanks. Thank you very much indeed, I’m glad you moved over there, I thought I might end up sitting on your knee, which wouldn’t have been nice for you. Thank you very much indeed, Sisters, Brothers, Comrades, members of the Executive Council and members of the Safety Committee. It’s an enormous honour and privilege to be here and it’s absolutely fantastic that health and safety is, as Ian said, at the centre of the Conference. This is where Trade Unions came in, health and safety should be at the heart of our Trade Union organising and actions. Trade Unions formed around the issues like the 8 hour day, 8 hours of work, 8 hours of rest, 8 hours for what you want, quite good to go back to that, wouldn’t it really and we’re back there really, safety of machinery, for an independent inspectorate, for compensation, for action against hazardous chemicals, that’s where Trade Unions came in and that’s really what we’re all about.

Health and safety matters, it’s fantastic to see your publication Health and Safety Matters, because it absolutely does and as Ian says, if you haven’t got your, if you’re dead there’s nothing you can do about it, if you’re killed at work there’s nothing you can do about it, if you haven’t got your health there’s nothing you can do about it. Health and safety is absolutely vital, health and safety is about life or death, health or sickness or injury; that’s what it’s about and our job as Trade Unionists and particularly as safety reps is to represent our members and try and get the best possible health and safety conditions we can. I was very interested in some of your motions, particularly the one about drug and alcohol testing, I think it would be quite good to have the Cabinet tested, I’d particularly like George Osborne … [LAUGHTER and APPLAUSE]

…I’d quite like to have George Osborne tested for coke, for cocaine, before he actually makes any bloody decisions. Trade Unions are the reason we’ve got the health and safety that we actually have at the moment or we had in 2010 and the reason we don’t have little boys running up chimneys and little girls running under looms, but the logic of neoliberalism and the market is if slavery and serfdom makes economic sense and makes more profit for workers, that is the way we’re going and there already are more slaves than there ever were, there are slaves working the cotton farms in Pakistan, there are slaves in the shipping fleets providing prawns and shrimps to our supermarkets, so we’re really back to where we were and we need to re-organise and re-group. It’s a month after the election and Joe Hill says don’t mourn, organise. Yes, that’s fine, but we actually do need to mourn. We’ve just had International Workers Memorial Day with the slogan, remember the dead and fight for the living, because we do need to remember the dead, we do need to mourn, we need to understand why we are now in the situation of having another five years of this dreadful, vile, obnoxious neoliberal bunch of bastards.

[APPLAUSE]

I’m 63, I’ve got to the stage where I’m absolutely sick of the whole thing of it and I’m not going to restrain myself, not that I ever did terribly much, but I’m not going to restrain myself any more. We have to understand why we failed and I have to say, almost more depressing than the result of the General Election is the Labour leadership election debate. [APPLAUSE]

With the vacuousness and the false analysis and the rush to take the Tories clothes apart from, of course, Jeremy Corbyn who I sincerely hope gets enough nominations to get on the, get into the election. Okay, so we’ve had five years of attacks on health and safety, we’ve got another five years and if we don’t fight like hell for our lives, we may well end up with no health, no safety and no justice at work. We’re going to have to fight back, we’re going to have to fight for our lives and the lives of our children and our grandchildren. We’ve got few supporters in parliament in any party really apart from some of our usual friends, John McDonnell, Jeremy Corbyn and a few others, but they’re actually fairly small and I don’t suppose any of you have heard health and safety being mentioned during this leadership campaign, apart from probably from Jeremy Corbyn. We’ve got to go back to basics, we’ve got to go back to educating, organising and adjusting in work and out of work, to make work safe and healthy. So I want to look in my bit about what we’ve lost, where we are now and what we’re going to do and it is important to understand what we’ve lost, we actually lost a huge amount in the last five years.

So they’ve had one term, that should give you an idea, we’ve lost so much. In another five years they could set all of this in stone and we could have lost it for good. They’ve reviewed health and safety and the HSE absolutely to death, but never from the point of view of how can we stop people being made ill or injured or killed at work. How can we make that better?, it’s never been from that perspective, it’s always been from the false, bogus and unevideced position that health and safety is a burden on business and how can it be reduced, that’s a complete lie and I’ll come onto that in a minute, but that’s incredibly pervasive, the corporate media and press reinforce that at every turn, health and safety’s gone mad, it’s over the top, it’s strangling jobs, we don’t need it, all that sort of rubbish.
So they’ve reviewed health and safety, the Young review, the Lofstedt review, the red tape challenge, the Martin Temple review of the HSE and even with those bogus terms of a burden on business, almost all of the reviews have come back and actually said well, health and safety really isn’t that much of a burden on business, but that hasn’t stopped the government going ahead and doing what it always intended to do, which was to attack our health and safety and to slash its regulation and enforcement. They tried to abolish, Chris Grayling tried to abolish the HSE, that was what he wanted to do until he was told by his civil service that he actually couldn’t do that under International Law, so he did the next best thing and he immediately slashed its budget by 35%. It’s now 44% less than it was and it was never enough. The HSE has the budget of a small police force and yet it’s supposed to police health and safety for the whole country and develop policy for 30 million workers, that’s absolutely absurd. Local authorities and the cuts to councils, their health and safety has been cut even more. Some councils do no health and safety enforcement anymore, so all of those workers who are in the sectors enforced by the local authorities, which will be some of you, they are not being protected any more. It killed off, they killed off the HSE medical division, occupational health is now completely off the agenda and occupational health is what kills and injures and makes most of our members ill.

They abandoned proactive preventative inspections, where an inspector comes into a workplace and spots something that may injure or kill somebody and puts it right before it does and keeps employers on their toes. Grayling arbitrarily cancelled 33% of those inspections in low risk workplaces, which includes your workplaces. The only high risk workplaces where they do proactive inspections any more are the nuclear industry, the big chemical plants, construction, waste and recycling and foundries, everything else, agriculture, quarries, docks, manufacturing, electrical engineering, air and road transport, the public sector, your work, is all supposedly low risk and you will never see an inspector and your employer knows that unless there is an incident, there’s a RIDDOR report or somebody raises a concern. Well, we know they’ve already messed about with RIDDOR, they’ve changed it from over three day reporting to over seven day reporting and they’ve scrapped a lot of the things that had to be reported. So inspectors get less information about what’s going on in workplaces, they get less concerns as well because if you go on their website, you can’t even find a ‘phone number, trying to get hold of them is incredibly difficult, although that actually is possible now.

They’ve stacked the HSE Board with industry stooges, there are only two worker representatives on what should be a tri-partite Board now, instead of three, because they refuse to have Matt Wrack, the General Secretary of the FBU and instead appointed someone who used to be the General Secretary of the First Division Association, the Sir Humphreys of the civil service and he doesn’t represent us, he doesn’t represent anybody, but he sits on the HSE Board and takes home £16,000 a year for the privilege. They pulled the teeth of the gang masters licensing authority, the director of the GLA used to say employers should be afraid of us, so clearly that was not a good idea and they’ve made the GLA toothless. They’ve priced sick and injured workers out of their entitled compensation for injuries and illness caused by work, by changes to legal aid, by removing civil and strict liability, making it far harder to get compensation. The idea of compensation culture for work-related illness and injury is a myth anyway almost, well well less than 10% of workers who are injured or made ill get any compensation at all and that was before the changes, so it’s going to get far worse. They’ve made employment tribunals pay-per-go and consequently the number of tribunals has gone down by 80%.

They’ve removed key legal protections, some regulations, they’ve scrapped some ACOPs, including the ACOP to the management of health and safety regulations which safety reps use enormously, so that’s a huge loss and they’ve dumbed down guidance, so they’re basically encouraging employers to do as little as possible and they’ve told business, one of the most pernicious things they’ve done of course, is they’ve told business that health and safety is a burden that they don’t have to bother with and business didn’t need telling.

This is bad, it’s very, very bad, but it’s going to get a hell of a lot worse and this has all happened, last year we had lots of celebrations of the 40th anniversary of the Health & Safety at Work Act and wasn’t it wonderful and didn’t it do a good job and nobody mentioning the elephant in the room, which is it’s being utterly dismantled. It used to be universal, all workers, all workplaces were included, now we have, well a two-tier workforce with the high risk and low risk and then we had the self-employed people who, the government is trying to exclude self-employed people from health and safety legislation and we’ve also got, as we’ve heard already, agency and zero hours workers who are further down and probably have almost no health and safety at all and then we’ve got unionised and low paid young workers and people on Workfare, who are not really covered at all, so they’ve split it all up and it’s absolutely dreadful. Everything we’ve fought for, for the last couple of hundred years, is absolutely being rode back. So, where are we now? I think over, after five years, well how many of you, let’s have a show of hands, how many of you think the health and safety in your workplace has actually got worse?
Okay, it’s not everybody, okay, that’s great and I think in some workplaces people have managed to hang on to what health and safety they’ve got and that’s due to the good work of Trade Unions and safety reps and actually working with managers and keeping them on their toes, so that’s really good, but for a lot of workers, workers are working longer and harder, more hours, more amount of work, heavier workloads for much less pay, benefits have gone down, in-work benefits and we have to work years and years longer to get a pension and everybody is more insecure and this has led to even more work-related stress, work-related musculoskeletal disorders and a whole range of everything. So in-work poverty has massively increased and the safety net has been removed, so if you do get ill or injured, there’s very little there to catch you. So the need to stay well and stay healthy in work paradoxically has become even more important.

More workers have been pushed down into the precariat, on low pay, insecure contracts, zero hours and those, that sort of work carries the double whammy of being the work where people are more likely to get injured, more likely to get ill, more likely to get cancer, suffer from heart disease, from diabetes and all the rest of it, all those things that they like to blame us and say it’s all our fault for and that’s all related to the actual quality of the work. The HSE has left the field of enforcement, they’ve abandoned the field really and into that sort of arena have swept the commercial occupational health and safety organisations and they’re being very good at pushing all sorts of programmes on your employers, wellbeing programmes, behavioural safety, or bullshit as we call it.

[LAUGHTER] Worker engagement, mindfulness and they emphasise individual things like diet, alcohol, smoking, because it’s not about, these things are all about circumventing the Trade Union structures in the workplace, the safety reps and the Safety Committees and going directly to workers, they’re about health promotion and they’re really about saying the reason you’re ill is because you’re a fat, lazy bastard who eats all the wrong things, smokes too much, drinks too much and doesn’t take enough exercise.

[LAUGHTER and APPLAUSE] And of course there might be an element of truth in that, certainly for someone like me, I’m too fat, I’m too lazy, I don’t, I do drink a fair bit, all the rest of it, but the idea is instead of looking at what makes you ill at work, so you have these wellbeing programmes come in and there will be wellbeing champions and so you will be fighting with stress-related problems, with musculoskeletal disorders, with asthmagens, maybe with chemicals that are causing cancer, maybe really, really serious issues that you’re trying to get dealt with properly and prevented and controlled and they’re not interested in that, they will come in with these programmes, leave all that in place and they want to focus on all these programmes about getting you to eat more greens and maybe have a jazz dance class at lunchtime and things like this and the difficulty with this is employers are very keen on it, they puts lots of effort into it, they’re very supportive, whereas as a safety rep you’re in an adversarial role often and you’re fighting to get things done, so quite a lot of reps like this work, a lot of members like some aspects of it, but it’s something that we have to actually use and subvert and we have to reject the sort of basic premise of it, because it’s part of the whole programme of taking away our rights and protections and the enforcement that keeps us safe and actually making us responsible for our own health and safety, so we actually have to fight quite hard about that. It’s very much really about blaming the worker and we must fight against that.

The HSE doesn’t do any enforcement on stress anymore and actually says so, they won’t enforce on stress and they don’t even promote their own health, their own management stress standards. So what does this mean, what does this mean in terms of figures? Well, the HSE will say last year 130 people were killed at work. Now a lot of people will see that, 133 people, 30 million people in work, that’s very tragic, but we don’t really need all this health and safety, do we?, but of course it’s a completely false fallacious figure and I’m beginning to think that we should actually impose penalties on anybody on our side of the fence who uses that figure, ever. It’s an official figure, it’s only the figure of people who are killed at work, who have to be reported under RIDDOR to the HSE and the local authorities, it’s not everybody, it’s not drivers, driving as part of their work, it’s not fishermen, it’s not people working in the air or at sea, it’s not all those people who have committed suicide because of the pressure of work.

If you add all those people in and the members of the public who are killed, it’s about 1400, those are people killed in incidents, but the bigger iceberg of harm caused by work or the number of people who die because of illnesses caused by poor working conditions, that’s about 50,000 people a year, 18,000 from work-related cancer, 20,000 from heart disease from stress and overwork and bullying and all the rest of it, long hours and about 12,000 from lung diseases, from dust and chemicals and neurological diseases, that’s a lot of people, so when the HSE says 133 people were killed last year and that’s what gets reported, although their website says something different because we’ve campaigned quite hard on that, I would come back and say well, it’s nearer 140 people a day and think about the publicity given
to health and safety at work compared with say the number of people murdered. The number of people murdered last year was 515 and I’m telling you that more than 50,000 died because of work, which gets the more publicity? About 630 service personnel have been killed in Iraq and Afghanistan over about 13 years, okay, more people have died on construction sites in that time.

So we must be very careful about the figures and we must use our figures because if we don’t, then our workers, our members, our comrades don’t count and if you don’t count, then you’re not there when policy is being made. Two million people are made ill by work every year, about 28, more than 28 million working days are lost because of work-related illnesses and injuries, okay? Deaths don’t seem to have gone up, but over the last couple of weeks I am aware personally and I won’t have them all, of 10 work-related deaths, some of which I’m dealing with through families against corporate killers and almost every death, every injury, every illness at work is due to the mismanagement of health and safety, it’s not due to careless workers or all the rest of it.

So we also have Fit for Work, I believe you had a motion about Fit for Work, this is something that’s coming to you very soon and this is something that grew out of some work that Dame Carol Black did about work and health, where instead of saying that work makes us ill, she said that the problem really was that we were suffering from common illnesses and we are afraid to go to work because we thought it might make it worse and we should all be beaten back to work and that’s where the fit note came from. Now Fit for Work is a new scheme which, you’ve all heard of the work capability assessment, which applies to people who are claiming Employment Support Allowance and you know the horrors of that, you know by the miracle of Atos that paraplegic people and terminally ill people were declared fit for work and then many, many of them died, their benefits were denied and many of them actually died, now that same sort of system is now coming to people in work, it’s being rolled out this system, it’s being trialled in Sheffield, it’ll be coming everywhere soon and what it is is a private commercial company, it’s actually a subsidiary of Maximus, Maximus is a huge American health and safety company that has been charged with fraud, multi-million pound fraud, so it’s just the sort of company that our government would like to get into bed with and that runs the work capability assessment, sorry a subsidiary of that runs the Fit for Work scheme, but Maximus itself has now taken over the Atos contract for the work capability assessment, so they’re going to work quite closely on this and what it is, what it means is that if you’re off work sick for four weeks, it doesn’t matter what your occupational sickness schemes are, it doesn’t matter if you get three months full pay, three months half pay, none of that matters, after four weeks you will be deemed to be long-term sick and you can be referred to this commercial organisation by your doctor or by your employer, you can’t refer yourself. Now if this was about getting you physiotherapy or counselling or support to help you get better, we would be going along with it, but it’s not, the only purpose of this scheme is to find out if you’re fit for work and to help you devise a return to work plan and to get you back to work, so this is going to be very much about bullying people to get them back to work and it’s very, very worrying and it’s going to cause us a huge amount of problems, but the thing is you have to agree, the person who’s being referred has to consent, so I think we have to think about how we use that and how we support workers to do that, because I think there’s going to be huge pressure on them and we know it’ll have lots of knock-on effects in terms of sickness absence policies and probably also contractual sick pay, so we have to watch that, but it’s an absolutely huge problem.

We need to talk about how we know that regulation, the cutting of regulation and particularly the cutting of enforcement has an effect on people, we can’t just talk in generalities and I just want to talk to you very quickly about a particular example. I’m working with a family of a lad called Cameron Minshull, who was 16. In 2013, in January, David Cameron, dodgy-dogma Dave Cameron was up in Preston talking to business people about how we must get rid of stupid health and safety rules, because they were stopping young people getting work experience, what he didn’t say is they’d already made huge changes and the precautions and safety checks that had to be done for young people doing apprenticeships and work experience training had already been cut massively, okay. A few days later, in January 2013, Cameron Minshull’s mum takes her 16 year old lad to work in a small engineering company in Bury. He missed getting into college and she didn’t want him lying in bed, she didn’t want him being a scrounger, she wanted him to be a striver, so they’d got him a government-approved apprenticeship through a training agency called Line People Training, they assumed everything was safe and fit for him to work in. She took him to work, because there were three buses, it would have taken a long time. When she comes to pick him up, the place is surrounded by police tape. She never sees her son alive again. He was 16, he was working in an engineering company, he was injured so badly he was taken by air ambulance to Wythenshawe, his head was so injured, but he didn’t recover. When the HSE came in, they said they thought it was something from the 19th century and they found that all the lathes in the workplace either had no guards or had had their guards deliberately disabled and this is a place, a workplace where a training organisation had come in, inspected supposedly and deemed this fit for work.
Well, they probably hadn’t done that because the government have reduced the things they have to do. So that family, Karen Minshull was the mother of four children in the morning, three in the afternoon and she’s so devastated she can’t work and she’s living in an absolutely dreadful situation, trying to hold everybody together. We’ve been working with them and the police and the HSE and the CPS have done a really good job and in a few weeks’ time, we will be in court. I was able to get Joanne Hill, Cameron’s mother, into court some weeks ago where she could sit in court and sob her heart out as she heard the men who killed her son plead guilty to corporate manslaughter and to other charges.

[APPLAUSE]

But how bloody dreadful, she thought he was safe at work, she was absolutely beside herself, she was ringing everybody up and saying how can this happen?, I thought he was safe at work, because people out there do not know what’s going on and they believe the hype that there is this vigorous health and safety regime, we’re the best in the world, employers are terrified of the HSE and inspectors and will do the right thing, it just isn’t so.

Just another example on Legionnaires’ disease. When they banned proactive inspections in 2011, whenever it was, employers stopped inspecting their cooling towers, so in 2012 we started to get outbreaks of Legionnaires’ disease, this is where health and safety at work also affects public safety. There were five or six outbreaks and about five people died and a lot of those people who were made ill, they don’t recover from that very easily. Legionnaires’ disease is a very serious lung condition. That was in 2012. What else happened in 2012 in the summer?, the London Olympics. Suddenly they got very scared, on my God, supposing we have a Legionnaires’ outbreak during the Olympics and they pulled all their inspectors together, they ran out of inspectors and they inspected all the cooling towers around the Olympic venues and they found that 75% of them were unsafe, had bacterial levels in them which could have caused people to be ill and they got them treated and averted that, but that was a direct result of banning proactive inspections and the impact that had on, well employers who don’t really care.

Okay. Something else that we’re facing at the moment is we’ve had deregulation in the UK, that’s spread to Europe. Whereas we used to, at one time, get some good regulations from Europe, we had the six-pack, the management of health and safety at work regulations, we’ve had COSHH, we’ve had other regulations, we’ve had some good stuff from there. In 2013, the European Commission announced something called the re-fit programme, which is a deregulation programme following the stuff we’ve had here, it’s a review of all health and safety and other legislation to see how the burden on business can be reduced. So this has gone into Europe and they stopped legislation that was almost on the point of being delivered which would have been good for us, things like legally enforceable limits on carcinogens, mutagens and reproductive toxins, laws on nanotechnology, which are also very harmful and endocrine-disrupting chemicals. Endocrine-disrupting chemicals you may not have heard of, they’re things in plastics, in cleaning materials, they’re in cans, they’re the lining that stops the can being eroded, they’re in thermal till receipts, they’re in pesticides, so those regulations were stopped and it’s now clear that that was due to the lobbying of American chemical and pesticide companies, so the EU stopped those sort of things because of that and it all leads into something called TTIP which, how many people have heard of TTIP?

A few, the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership is a secret trade treaty being negotiated between the EU and the US, it’s being negotiated by the unelected, undemocratic European Commission, which is made up of commissioners who are all business friendly, it’s not being negotiated by our MEPs and it really is about completing the neoliberal project, the last gasp of Capitalists if you like and it’s really fast-track deregulation, it’s about opening up all our public services to privatisation, it includes something called investor state dispute settlement procedures, which would allow foreign companies to sue our government if it does something that might impact on their profits. So for example, had the Labour Party won and they’d repealed the social, the Health & Social Care Act and tried to take all those contracts back into the public service, all the American companies that held those contracts would have been able to sue the government for appropriation of future profits. Veolia is suing Egypt over raising the minimum wage.

There are lots and lots of examples of this, but I don’t really want to go into this. Something else on health and safety that’s very dangerous is in this treaty, there’s something called regulatory co-operation and that means that our regulations in the EU and in America have to be brought together somehow. Now on health and safety at work, on chemicals, on food, the environment, everything, our regulations are up here and I haven’t got long enough arms to show where the American ones are. Now if they’re going to harmonise them, oh great, those will come up to ours, do you think that’s going to happen? Where are ours going? Down. This is a really dreadful thing, it is an absolute race to the bottom and we absolutely have to stop this. If this gets in, it will set so much in stone that we will then not be able to overturn. Okay, so what are we going to do, what are we going to do?
Work doesn’t have to be like this, work doesn’t have to be like this, it’s only like that so that they can screw as much profit out of us as they want and that’s what Trade Unions have always been about standing between that and workers, but we’re not going to sit back, we’re not going to take this, we’re not going to lie down, we have to say, as the families against corporate killers would say, we’re not fucking having it.

[APPLAUSE]

We have to think bigger and better, we have to actually demand a better world, we have to reject all this lie that, the con of austerity and the lie of globalisation, that everything has to be like that. Our Comrades in Asia and all over the world where they’ve had terrible disasters of Bhopal, of Ranoplas (? spelling), of the Soma Mine, of everything, they are actually depending on us to keep our regulations high so that they can come up, they don’t want us to be pushed down to compete with them when they will be pushed even lower. We have to develop a much better idea about this and we have to absolutely challenge what they’re saying. This is really like the Emperor’s New Clothes, the burden on business lie, it is an absolute lie, it is like the Emperor’s New Clothes and we, as Trade Unionists, have to be brave enough to be like the little boy who said oh look, he’s not wearing something very pretty, he’s absolutely naked.

We have to be prepared to stand up there and say this argument of burden, our health and safety is a burden on your business, it’s a lie, it’s stark bullock naked and we’re not having it. The evidence for this is very, very clear. Poor health and safety costs the NHS, it costs the benefit system, it costs the economy, it costs huge heartbreak for those families. It costs between £30 – 60 billion a year, but of that cost the individuals and their families pay 57%, we as taxpayers pay 22% and remember our tax is taken before we even see it, we can ferret it away to a tax haven somewhere, can we? Business, which can ferret its profits away and is always demanding deregulation out of this government, often isn’t paying its taxes, the businesses that cause the risks and the hazards that make us ill, they only pay about 21%. Some recent research in America shows that it may be, sorry in Australia, shows that amount that they pay may be even less, so we have the evidence for that and we need to use it.

We’ve got to be much braver and we’re going to have to build our Labour movement again from the ground up and we can’t depend, we can’t look to parliament, we can’t look to law, we’re going to have to do this ourselves. We have to use things like all the tools that we have and we have a lot of tools, we have the Brown Book, which I’ve momentarily lost, I don’t know what I did with that, did I drop it? Thank you very much, thank you, we have to use the Brown Book, this is probably one of the best bits of regulation and law that we’ve ever had and it’s been widely used by Trade Unions in training, it’s widely used by Trade Unions every day in work, it’s used by the TUC, but I don’t think we’ve actually got behind it enough. It’s nearly 37 years old, we are still meeting Branch Chairs, we are still meeting safety reps who don’t know about this and I think that’s a real indictment, that’s not necessarily true of people like you, but it is there, it gives you, as a safety rep, phenomenal powers to be consulted, to receive information, to inspect the workplace, to represent your members and to actually act. It has fantastic powers and it’s never been properly enforced, but it is actually there and there’s an enormous amount we can actually do.

We have to use health and safety as a recruiting tool, we have to get more people into the Union and we have to recruit more safety reps, but health and safety is a very powerful recruiting tool and an organising tool and we have to try and put health and safety back on the collective bargaining agenda and at the centre of Trade Union education and we have to do that in our workplaces and we have to talk to people, we have to talk to our fellow workers, to our members and get them behind all of this. We have to talk to people outside, in the community, we haven’t won the argument, the good regulation of health and safety is actually necessary, because the corporate press and the lie has got out there, government is pushing that, business is pushing that, we have to actually try and win that and we have to do that on the ground and our Unions and the TUC have to support us and safety reps with resources and organising tools, with training and we’re going to need to look at new methods and new ways of doing things, but there are lots and lots of things that we can do and we need to reclaim the health and safety agenda and make it clear, to say that work doesn’t have to be like that, work shouldn’t be hell, it shouldn’t hurt and it sure as hell shouldn’t kill anybody and it should be fulfilling and worthwhile and it can be and that’s what we need to be making the argument about and we need to be telling our stories like the fact stories and we need to be explaining to people what to do.

When your employer’s coming to you with the wellbeing stuff, you need to subvert that and say great, yes, we’re all on board for that, we want people to be better so look, let’s look at all this stress stuff, let’s risk assess the stress, let’s use the HSE as stress management standards, let’s have a look at COSHH, let’s have a look at all the chemicals that we can get rid of and actually use that. Even things like low pay and insecure contracts, those create stress. In America when they pay young workers, they double their pay, they cut their hypertension, their high blood pressure, by 30%. We know those things, everything is about health and safety and we need to absolutely get a grip on it and outside of work, we’ve got to defend the need for health and safety and try and win over our communities.
We’ve got to work with them and there’s masses of work, the work that the Bakers Union has done with the fast food workers, the drive for £10 an hour minimum living wage, all that sort of work, there’s masses of work, the Bakers Union is at the forefront of working with the community. I think we have to say your struggle is our struggle, our struggle is your struggle. We have to go back to that community organising and we have to work, fracking, the bedroom tax, the tax on out of work benefits and in-work benefits, they’re all part of the same plan. They’re trying to divide us and we have to regain our solidarity and take our issues out into the community and bring the community back with us. The Hazards campaign, we are there, we are there to help you, we’ve got the Hazards Conference coming up, Hazards magazine, I’ve given you all a copy, please subscribe. If some people here say they’re going to subscribe, I have some copies of the new one I can give you here and it only costs 15 quid for three or four issues, this has the arguments, we produce the arguments and have been doing for the last five years, it’s up to people to use them. We are producing the bullets, it’s up to you to fire them and I think you know how to do that. FACK is there to help, we have a DVD giving some of the FACK stories and we also have this on YouTube and I can give people links, where people tell their stories. FACK sits with families in their darkest hour and tries to speak truth to power, that’s what we do and we can all use that sort of information.

There was something, the last thing I wanted to say to you was in the next Hazards magazine, there’s a fantastic bit on organising from Dave Smith, who you might know as the blacklisted activist, who’s written a book and has done so much to put blacklisting on the agenda and he’s also a Trade Union tutor and he says that he was on a course and a rep told him a story about one of their members who’d reached the final stage of the compulsory sickness monitoring procedure, the woman had a poor sickness record, you couldn’t deny it, but her absences were due to ongoing hospital treatment because of the work-related injury, so the rep was doing all the right things, quoting all the law, the employer was absolutely not moving, the worker had gone over the trigger levels and it looked certain that she was going to be sacked via the capability procedures and the final stage was due to take place on this Friday, so the rep spent the Wednesday and Thursday going around the workplace, talking to all the members, explaining this person’s situation, asking if they’d put £1 in to buy a card, they bought a huge card, a bunch of flowers and an oversized get well soon card and then on the Friday before the hearing they sort of lined up in the corridor where this woman was going into this meeting and they applauded her and they gave her these flowers and everything and when they got into the meeting, the employer said okay, we get the point and she was reinstated. Now, that’s about organising.

[APPLAUSE]

**Brother Vince Payne – EC Committee:** If anybody’s got any questions for Hilda, please come up to the microphone and ask the question and I’m sure she’ll respond. Thank you.

**Brother Leon Don – Branch 334:** At my Branch we have a serious lack of first aid trainers, I don’t know if any of you guys experience the same problems where you work or not and I’d like to know why that is and what we can do about it, please.

**Sister Hilda Palmer:** Okay, but you know better than me what’s going on in your Branch, but what I, the trouble is getting people to come forward for anything is difficult and I think we need to ask ourselves why that is and it’s actually usually a step or two backwards, so we can ask people to volunteer, we can encourage them, but I think we need to go back a few steps from that and it’s something about doing a lot more work in the workplace with members and about trying to get across the need for health and safety. Look at the things that go on in your workplace, look at the ways in which you can actually make a story out of why you need health and safety reps, look at the ageing of the workforce, are there issues about, are people more likely to have heart attacks, is that an issue, what are the sort of injuries that you have where first aiders could be really important, so go back to that or use one of your quarterly inspections to actually focus on that, that’s a big issue, focus on it, ask people why aren’t they coming forward, are they not coming forward because they don’t think they’re going to get enough support, how could you do that? Are they not coming forward because they don’t think people will support them?

You actually need to build the case as the same for safety reps and you actually have to go back a few steps, yes? Or it could be that maybe people don’t think there’s a need for safety reps, look at your reports of accidents and injuries, are people reporting them, is there an issue? You need to look at all those sort of things, yes? I’m sorry I haven’t got an easy answer and I can’t come and recruit them.

**Brother Ian Hodson, National President:** Any other questions?

**Brother Colin Hall:** Hi, this chemical that the Yanks have been bringing in that’s in thermal till rolls and all sorts of other nasties, can we have in English what it is, so I can Google it and look up, is it skin soluble?

**Sister Hilda Palmer:** Which chemical’s that?
Brother George Lonsdale: The one that’s in thermal till rolls and various other things.

Sister Hilda Palmer: Oh sorry, endocrine-disrupting chemicals, EDCs. If you Google EDCs or if anybody wants to get more information from me, there is masses out there, on social media there’s a massive, there’s a big group called EDC-Free Europe, but I can give you lots of information about that. It’s a whole range of chemicals, a lot of chemicals disrupt the endocrine system, that’s the glands like pancreas and the thyroid, the things that control your body, there are lots of chemicals, but the ones I was meaning was things like Bisphenol A, they’re plasticisers, they are things in plastic and that thermal till paper has a sort of plasticiser on it, okay and it’s possible that someone handling a lot of them, in a shop, doing a lot of that, could be actually getting quite a high level of that, because it is absorbed through the skin. They’re not all absorbed through the skin.

Brother George Lonsdale: How about in a plastics factory or say you’re using film to wrap food.

Sister Hilda Palmer: Yes, there are all those sort of issues. If you want more information about that, I can provide that and the thing about EDCs is they work at a very low level and they’re being implicated in things like breast cancer, prostate cancer, also things like diabetes and obesity and birth defects, they’re a really, really big issue. A report recently showed that they cost the European Union, I can’t remember, about 200 billion Euros a year, something like that, the health effects caused by them causes that amount of harm.

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Next? What I want to do is I’ll take three questions and then Hilda will respond to all three of your questions, yes?

Brother George Lonsdale: Hilda, I’m just inquiring, maybe a bit of help and advice. Does health and safety start at work or is it when you’re travelling to and from work? A lot of our shops are opening a lot earlier in the morning now and obviously travelling home late at night, a lot of our members have worrying concerns about travelling to and from work. Now I know we have duty of care to all employees, but could a health and safety aspect come into that as well and if you can give us any tips where I can tell them where to screw it, if that’s okay.

[LAUGHTER and APPLAUSE]

Brother Pat Rowley – No. 2 Region: Mr President and Delegates. My question is there’s fats in food and there’s chemicals in fats, now there’s a fat called Trans fat that they use when they take out the other fat and that Trans fat I have no idea what Trans fat is, how it comes about or what else, but they say it’s far more dangerous than the fat they took out to make this low fat food. If that is the case, how do we stop them from using and I don’t know if they’re using your bakeries now today, I’m retired, if they use Trans fats. Trans fat is a type of a fat that can give food many more days’ life on the shelf, so that they can sell it long past the time and that’s all I know about it, but can we stop them from using Trans fat? Trans fats are very dangerous, more dangerous than the fat that is in the normal food, far more dangerous for cancer and everything else. I only know these things by reading the papers, I didn’t invent them. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Jack Lee – Branch 107: I wonder, Hilda, if you could explain to the Conference the range of punishment given to employers who are found guilty of bad health and safety laws.

[APPLAUSE]

Sister Hilda Palmer: Great questions. Thank you very much. Travel to and from work yes, you can include that, it’s not, it’s a bit of a grey area but it is, where’s the person who asked that? Yes, it is something, you’re absolutely right and particularly when we’re talking about unsocial hours, talking about very early in the morning or late at night when there are issues about public transport, there are issues of violence at work, sorry, well yes, violence or potential threats to people. Yes, you can include that. I can send you some more information on that, but it’s about, with a lot of these things, about actually constructing the argument. There have been a few cases where employers have been held to be responsible for certain things that have gone on, so for example I mean if somebody’s worked very, very long hours and then driven home and had an accident, there have been issues where that has actually come back to bite the employer. So there is a little bit of, there is some precedent there you can use, but yes, that is exactly something you should be using and I can give you some more information on that, okay?

Trans fats, a very, very good issue, Trans fats horrible bloody things. We were all told butter wasn’t very good for us and apparently that was really because the American soya beans farmers campaigned long and hard to get their oil into the market and Trans fats are really where you’ve got oil and in order to make it solid and spreadable, you bubble hydrogen through it to create a more solid form like the fat you’ve just got rid of, but they are actually much more dangerous, but there is quite a big campaign to get rid of Trans fats, quite a lot of food companies boast about having got rid of Trans fats, it is possible to do, so there’s lots of evidence out there that it can be done, places like Marks &
Spencer’s laud the fact that there’s absolutely no Trans fat in any of their food, lots of other organisations do that, it’s quite possible to get rid of it from food, it just takes a bit of work, so there’s lots of precedent there, can I point you in the right direction, yes?

Range of punishment, that’s very good. Well, the range of punishments stretches from a slap on the wrist to possibly a fine, I think the biggest fine ever was £1.3 million against Corus in South Wales after they let a faulty furnace explode, it was being held together with gaffa tape and baler twine I think, it exploded and four workers were killed. They were fined £1.3 million and £1.7 million in costs and everybody thought that was incredible, wouldn’t that teach them, well no, because they’ve gone on to kill at least another 15 or 16 people in various other plants since then and they’ve also got a new blast furnace worth 35 million quid, so they didn’t do badly out of that. The penalties for most health and safety offences are fines, okay, a fine on the company or a fine on individuals. There are more offences now under some law that was brought in under the last Labour government whereby people can go to prison for certain things, there are certain individual offences where people can go to prison. Usually the maximum is about two years, but if you killed somebody at work and you were charged with gross negligence manslaughter, that could carry a life sentence.

In practice, more employers are now being given prison sentences, but a lot of them are suspended, so they might be given a nine month prison sentence but it’s actually suspended. A few people have actually gone to prison recently.

In the case I was telling you about, in Cameron Minshull’s case, the father and son were charged with gross negligence manslaughter and they pleaded it down to a Section 37 and a Section 7 offence, where the maximum prison sentence is two years. So in general, if you commit, if you’re charged with corporate manslaughter, the company can be fined an unlimited amount and the fines have just gone up, could be an unlimited amount, but in general judges are advised to start looking at about £500,000 and go up or down, depending on the size of the company and the horrific-ness of the offence. If you’ve killed someone and you’re only charged with the health and safety offence, then judges tend to start at £100,000 and go up or down and remember, no matter how badly you’ve behaved, if you plead guilty reasonably early, you can claim your 30% discount, it’s good that, isn’t it?

[LAUGHTER]

Isn’t that incredible? So in general the fines, they’re not enough and that’s why the Hazards campaign has always argued for individual duties on directors to make them responsible for health and safety, so they can be held accountable if something goes wrong and when they come to court it should be don’t forget your toothbrush, because you’re off to jail, that’s the only thing that will make them change their mind.

[APPLAUSE]

**Brother Vince Payne – EC Committee:** Thank you very much, Hilda, for answering those questions. Right, we’re going to move on now to Willie Colquhoun and then after that a short presentation followed by what you’ve been waiting for, your tea break. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

**Willie Colquhoun’s Address to Conference**

**Brother Willie Colquhoun:** Good morning, Conference. Firstly, Conference, my sincere apologies for lateness. I did think it was a 10 o’clock kick-off this morning. I will say, as soon as I finish here, I will take myself to Standing Orders Committee and pay the fine, as soon as …

[APPLAUSE]

…just as soon as I’ve tapped Ronnie for five quid.

[LAUGHTER]

But to pick up from Hilda, my goodness there’s some doom and gloom around health and safety really, isn’t there? and we should be full of doom and gloom because it keeps us on our toes I think, but when Ian asked me to do a bit of a presentation this morning, I thought, I wondered what I should do and Ian suggested a bit on the Brown Book, which Hilda showed up. I thought that’s a good idea, it’s a very good idea because as Hilda rightly says, it’s a very, very important piece of legislation for reps, it’s a piece of legislation that allows Trade Union recognised health and safety representatives to be, to exist if you like. So we get that, 1974 of course as people and I do apologise because most of the people I’m talking to I’ve told this story to before, I’m looking around the room, I think there are three people who haven’t been on a course with me …

[LAUGHTER]
Yes, I can’t name them, my goodness I’ve lost myself, yes, we got the ’74 Act and then in 1977, bear in mind we had a reasonably government Trade Union friendly in the 70’s, prior to ’79 and we got the ’74 Act, forward in 1977 by the safety representatives and Safety Committee regulations, which gave Trade Unions’ health and safety reps in recognised workplaces the right to exist.

Now prior to 1977 we had Trade Union health and safety reps, but the employer didn’t have to recognise us, the employer could say I know you’re the Trade Union health and safety rep but I don’t want to talk to you, get back to work and that was the situation, so the Brown Book, if we could borrow yours please, Hilda, the Brown Book gave us the right to exist and it also gave us quite a lot of authority within the workplace and we call it the Brown Book because initially it came in a little brown book format which was ideal, it was absolutely perfect, because one could put it in the pocket or a small bag. Some amazing people at HSE decided to put it into A4 format, the bigger one with the rose in it, the ’96 rights, but the Brown Book itself is becoming a bit difficult to find, I think. I was in my garage last week and I found about six of them and I thought oh, that’s great, I’ll get those on eBay …

[LAUGHTER] …they’re becoming very scarce and a very, very handy little book, I would love to see them go back to that format for it, but this is what we have anyway, this is a Union Learning reproduced one and this, Colleagues, is the law of the land, this is not a suggestion by Trade Unions or by TUCs, this is the law as enacted by parliament, by way of regulations and the safety reps and Safety Committee’s regulations. As I say, it gives us very particular areas of authority in the workplace and I think it’s often surprising to new reps to find out just what authority they have due to the safety reps and Safety Committee’s regulations. Regulation 3 for example, gives the Trade Union the legal right to elect or appoint its representatives. The employer has no input into this and the employer shouldn’t have any input into it. We decide who our reps are going to be and we present those reps to the employer. Regulation 4 quite clearly states, sets out the role and functions of the health and safety rep, very clear, very straightforward, it tells us what we may and what we should be doing in furtherance of good health and safety practice in the workplace.

It also gives us, we also find in Regulation 4 and 4A the right to take time off to attend training courses, to carry out one’s role and functions as a health and safety rep, very, very important aspects and people shouldn’t be out of pocket for so doing and the law’s quite clear on that. The law is also perfectly clear, as I say, on training and it clearly states in Regulation 4 that as soon as possible after election or appointment, a health and safety rep should be granted sufficient time, sufficient leave of absence to attend a training course provided by the TUC or an independent Trade Union, of which we are one and I urge Conference very sincerely to get people onto these training courses, because if you don’t, I’m going to have to go and get a real job.

[LAUGHTER and APPLAUSE]

Regulation 5 in the SRSC regulations gives the Trade Union reps the right to inspect the workplace, provided the rep puts the request in writing within reasonable time, what is reasonable is how long is a piece of string basically, but I would suggest a week is perfectly reasonable notice to the employer of the rep’s intention to conduct a workplace inspection, at least on a quarterly basis and this is something that reps should be doing in attempts to be proactive in the workplace, which we should always be seeking to do as health and safety reps. Proactive is hugely important, there’s no point being reactive. Being proactive is acting before the incident happens, being reactive is responding to it, we want to be proactive and the use of Regulation 5 is very handy in that respect. Regulation 6 gives the health and safety rep legal entitlement to investigate accidents and near misses, another very important aspect and one I hear quite often is there was an accident in my workplace, I wanted to go and investigate but the employer, my manager, told me we are investigating it, go back to work, not acceptable. It is vitally important, it is very important that we conduct investigations following accidents and near misses, because of course employers tell lies, things get moved, things disappear, so on and so forth. So one must exercise one’s legal entitlement to get to the scene of an accident or a near accident as soon as is possible.

Regulation 7, I find very important also, Regulation 7 gives us a legal entitlement to access information and documentation relating to health and safety. So if one sees a dangerous practice or a practice that one isn’t pleased with, then the rep has a legal entitlement to request of the employer, for example, to see the risk assessments, COSHH data sheets, whatever the case may be and that is a legal entitlement that we have and again, from my experience, what I find is that people do that, they make that request, the employer says it’s none of your business, that’s our documentation, no, it is our business and I always say to reps one of the areas where Trade Union activists need to be very assertive is in health and safety and one can be assertive without being angry or being rude. My wife doesn’t believe that, but you can really and this is one of the areas where we should be asserting our legal entitlement and our authority, we want to see the documentation. Regulation 8 concerns reps who aren’t employed in the workplace.
Regulation 9, the one I always sort of ram home, if you like, on Stage 1 health and safety courses is that regulation regarding Health & Safety Committees and it says where two or more reps request of the employer that a Health & Safety Committee be established, the employer must do so within a period of three months and it goes on to explain how a Health & Safety Committee should be formulated and it should be formulated in consultation. The employer should be getting together with us, should be asking us what we think about this, what we think about that, how should the makeup of it be, so on and so forth, but of course what they do is they say right, I’m going to get one of these what do you call them Health & Safety Committee things yes, blooming nuisance, but we’ll get one anyway and of course I’m the senior manager, so I’ll be the chair person, I will decide what’s on the agenda, I will decide when we meet and if it’s not convenient to me, I’ll postpone the meeting.

The guidance notes in Regulation 9 quite specifically state, I think it’s guidance note 94 now, it used to be 100. I just got the hang of the guidance note numbers and then they changed the format to the A4 and they changed the guidance note numbers, that was about 10 years of very sadness for me gone out of the window. I only know these things because I’m a very sad person. Just to digress, people who know me will know that I tend not to digress.

[LAUGHTER]

I went to bed one night, this is nothing to do with the Brown Book unfortunately, went to bed one night and my wife is an incredibly prolific reader, my wife reads constantly, she’s always got a novel on the go, I don’t read in bed because I just can’t get comfortable enough to read in bed, but one night I thought I think I’ll read in bed and I went up to bed and my wife said, a bit of wifeism here, my wife said what are you doing? I’m sitting there with a book …

[LAUGHTER]

I said I’m reading, love. Alright, what are you reading? I said I’m reading the 1984 Trade Union Act.

[LAUGHTER]

She said you’re a sad bastard.

[LAUGHTER and APPLAUSE]

Back to Regulation 9. Regulation 9, I always do a session on that. I was saying to Ronnie just before I came on, this is very unusual for me to be doing a session without a flip chart. I’m feeling a wee bit lost here, I always have a flip chart and people who know me know I do the diagram on the Health & Safety Committee on a flip chart. I’m very unoriginal, I’ve been doing this in diagrams for 20 years, but anyway the guidance notes, a great thing about the SRSC regulations is it comes in three parts basically. We have the regulation itself, we have the ACOP, the code of practice, telling the employer how to reach the standard of legal requirement and then we have guidance notes for them and the guidance notes are simply guiding the employer along the route to complying with the legislation and still they don’t get it right, still they muck up, so they’ve got the regulation and another great thing about the SRSC regulations is it’s written in layperson’s language, it’s written, it’s for us and it’s written for us, so it’s very, very readable.

Also you can pick that document up anywhere and open it anywhere and it’s in very short paragraphs and you can read a paragraph here and there, now and again, just opening it at any regulation, so it’s a very user-friendly document and still they don’t get it right, it’s absolutely amazing. I marvel that they can’t do that and it’s often, it’s because they don’t want to get it right or because they simply don’t know. I’ve talked to managers about the Brown Book and it’s oh yes, the Brown Book, oh yes, great. I don’t push it, but I could say to them you don’t know what the Brown Book is, do you? and they probably don’t, but they’ll say they do. They either don’t know or they don’t care and of course some of them aren’t very smart when it comes to particularly health and safety and I always say any employer, any senior manager, any director, I’ve ever spoken to about health and safety tells me health and safety is the most important aspect of my work, my life. I think about it coming to work, I think about health and safety while having my dinner, I go to bed thinking about health and safety, with two provisos, (1) it shouldn’t interfere with production and (2) it mustn’t cost more than £3.42.

[LAUGHTER and APPLAUSE]

Beyond that, their interest in health and safety really does a nosedive, I’ve seen that many, many times over the years and also we’re dealing, while we’re dealing with these people, we’re also dealing with people who don’t have any particular interest in health and safety at all. Hilda’s done a marvellous job of explaining how lax and how uninterested and how dangerous these people are, very, very dangerous, they’re killers and this piece of legislation is aimed at trying to help us, the Trade Union reps, to stop them doing that basically, but I go back to Regulation 9, very simple and straightforward, written in lay terms, but they never get it right. The guidance note, the relevant guidance note, I can’t remember its number now, says Health & Safety Committee meetings should only be postponed or cancelled in very exceptional circumstances, not just exceptional circumstances but very exceptional circumstances and I bet
almost everyone in this room has experienced a Health & Safety Committee meeting being postponed or cancelled at the drop of a hat, because one manager can’t manage or can’t get along, too busy with something else. What we should be doing there is saying to them this is not good enough, why are you so arrogant that you think a Health & Safety Committee meeting can’t function without you, it’s sheer unadulterated arrogance. They don’t postpone meetings because any of our reps can’t attend, indeed they deny our reps time off to attend, but they’ll drop, they’ll postpone a meeting just at the drop of a hat because one manager isn’t available. If one manager isn’t available, then we’ll have the meeting without that one manager being available or send a delegate on that person’s behalf, very simple, very straightforward and what we should be doing, where they continually postpone meetings, my suggestion to reps is have the meeting anyway.

There is no reason why we should have to forego a Health & Safety Committee meeting just to convenience them and to inconvenience ourselves, just have the blooming thing. Why can’t they have a meeting without us, watch us, yes, you can. I’m really missing the flip chart. Keeping on Regulation 9, again most people have heard me say this before, the Health & Safety Committee should be equally balanced between employer representatives and Trade Union representatives. We do not go in there as shop floor workers meeting with management, we go in there as Trade Union representatives and Trade Union Officials, that is our function when we go into Health & Safety Committees.

It’s a matter of changing hats, I’m a line operative, forklift driver, whatever the case may be, but when I go into that meeting I’m in there as an Officer of the Bakers, Food & Allied Workers Union and I’m meeting with representatives of the employer. It’s what we call relative equality, we must all be equal in a committee and a committee by definition is a joint managing structure, but anyone that’s on committees and there’s local clubs or whatever the case may be, one knows that no-one on a committee has absolute right, no-one on a committee controls it singularly and they shouldn’t be allowed to, so why should we be allowing a Health & Safety Committee to be controlled by one person and that’s what tends to happen and the guidance notes to Regulation 9 recognise this and try to address that by stating quite clearly that it should be equally balanced by not stating who should be chairing the meeting.

Now it’s a hard and fast fact, again people have heard me say this before, I don’t gamble, I don’t approve of gambling, but I would be prepared to bet on this. If I do a course in a factory or a workplace, quite often we’ll go into a boardroom-type place, where they hold meetings at other times and usually, if you get the big table, usually it’s fixed seating and at the top you’ve got a leather swivel chair, most places you go into are like that …

[LAUGHTER]

…and I always say to the troops, there is nothing in that legislation or any other legislation I’ve ever come across that says the senior manager must have the leather swivel chair.

[LAUGHTER AND APPLAUSE]

There is no reason why the reps, one of the reps shouldn’t chair the meeting or why an interested manager, if we can find one, chairs the meeting or we could have an alternating chairpersonship as some workplaces do, where a health and safety rep will chair one meeting, an employer rep the next, but we need to have that established in a Health & Safety Committee and the notion of relative equality, we’re all in there together, we are all part of a committee which is a joint managing structure, no-one’s in charge of it and no-one should be allowed to be in charge of it, that makes mockery of the whole thing. It breaks it down before it even gets a chance to start, effectively and the reason I sort of labour Regulation 9 is my own personal belief that this can be used as the basis of a working arrangement with the employer.

A good Health & Safety Committee can do marvellous things, a not good Health & Safety Committee is pretty worthless. We can make it good, Colleagues, we can make it good by knowing what Regulation 9 says and by holding them to account, to behave themselves and to agree and operate to the letter of the law and to the spirit of that law, very, very easily done, it doesn’t cost them any money and it can be done. I’ve worked in this business for over 20 years and I’ve only come across three companies where I’ve worked with reps on. It can be done, it isn’t difficult to do and we should try and hold them to account. For me, after Regulation 3, we appoint or elect our reps, the employer has no input into that, once we’ve done that, Regulation 9, we get the Health & Safety Committee going, we establish the fact that we are equal partners in that Committee, that no one person or persons should be controlling it, it should be done as a committee, all decisions should be as a committee.

Also in the guidance notes, it suggests that voting be kept to a minimum and the reason for that is perfectly simple, we shouldn’t be voting to decide whether we should implement legislation or legislative requirement in the workplace, we shouldn’t be voting to decide whether to put guards on machines or take them off, the only time we should be voting is
whether there’s disagreement over how we best implement the law, the legal requirements. We shouldn’t be voting to
decide whether to obey the law or not and again, as I hear all the time, is people say to me our reps explain legislation
to the employer and the employer says oh yes, we know that, but we don’t do it that way. There is only one way to
obey the law, there aren’t other ways and I use a very poor analogy there of a person going to the pub and drinking 10
pints, getting in his car and the police stop him. Have you been drinking, sir? Yes, for 10 pints, officer. You’re done.
No, no, I know what the law says, officer, but I don’t do it that way.

[LAUGHTER and APPLAUSE]

No, you’re nicked. So I would seriously and genuinely urge all Delegates in this Hall to get back, get familiar or re-
familiarise with the SRSC regulations, get the Health & Safety Committee running as it should be running and don’t
be allowing them to put you off. I remember years ago being in Park Cakes in Bolton, I don’t know if we’ve any reps
from Park Cake here, we have, oh Ranella, I forgot about you, withering violet there, but years ago Ranella, before you
were involved, I did a course in there and very, very typically Park Cakes, Bolton management was mucking about if
you like with regards to the Health & Safety Committee, it was Yvonne Franks? at the time, as I recall and Yvonne and
a couple of other reps and I decided what we’ll do is, we’ll write to the employer and we drafted this letter which was
to the effect, Dear Manager, we the two undersigned health and safety reps request that a Health & Safety Committee
be established in accordance with Regulation 9 of the SRSC regulations etc., etc. Next paragraph, we understand that
a ‘Health & Safety Committee’ is in existence, but it in no way complies with the legislation, therefore please meet
with us to discuss this matter, that type of thing and the idea was let’s start again, let’s get it right.

I don’t know if it ever worked, I never got round to finding out, but I thought it was quite a good idea, so if people are
in a workplace where the Health & Safety Committee is not functioning or it’s dormant, then get back there and get it
going, get it set up, read the SRSC regulations, very light reading, read the very explicit guidance notes to Regulation
9, which quite clearly set out what the employer and us should be doing and get a good Health & Safety Committee
going, because to come back to what I was saying, I think it’s the basis for good health and safety relationships within
the workplace, it’s a starting point and it’s also the forum of course to be raising complaints and issues of concern,
rather than having to go into the grievance procedure, as we so often have to do and rightly so and we should be
using the grievance procedure where it’s required and we shouldn’t be put off, it’s the one area where we should be
hammering home.

Just before I finish off, Mr Chairman, I’d like to pick up on something that Hilda touched on earlier in her excellent
presentation, the issue of bullying, very, very much a problem in the workplace, so much so that some years ago
Ronnie and my Colleague Roger Sutton decided to re-brand, if you like, our Health & Safety Stage 4 course and
Ronnie and Roger decided to turn it into a course on stress, bullying and harassment, which obviously I’ve been
running for some years now and it’s been very successful, in that there’s a good take-up, which is quite surprising
because it’s very difficult to get people released for a Stage 4 course. Also the GFTU runs weekend courses on stress,
bullying and harassment, always over-subscribed and it shouldn’t be subscribed at all, because there shouldn’t be such
a blooming thing, but stress, bullying and harassment all link together and bullying is a great stress, as well you can
imagine.

Stress, I will point out, is not an illness, it’s a causal factor, causing a huge amount of injury, illnesses, sorry, up to
and including suicide, it’s a very, very serious issue and bullying is a very, very serious issue. I would seriously urge
anyone who is seeing anyone being bullied in the workplace to do their level best to put a stop to it, it creates heartache
and misery, it’s the most awful thing one can experience, but anyway on a lighter note, we got the 1974 Act, we got the
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SRSC regulations in 1979 and, sorry 1977, what did we get in 1979?, Thatcher and we go into what, Sean Molloy,
General risk assessment, we had risk assessment requirements under separate legislation for particular aspects of the workplace, but it’s only with the management rights in 1992, revised in ’99, that we get the requirement on the employer to risk assess in general and I remember doing a course, 1996 it was, quite a good memory for dates, I’m very sad again, 1996, I was doing a course for USDAW in Croydon and it was a shop stewards course, a woman on the course worked for Woolworths, in the distribution place down there at the time and she said oh, it was a shop stewards course but we were talking about health and safety and this woman said we’ve got a great manager, he’s mad keen on health and safety and he goes way above and beyond the call of duty. Now I knew Woolworths as a company and I thought this woman’s deluded. I said how does that come about, she said he’s introduced this thing, he’s made up this thing, he’s devised this thing, she called it. I said what is it, she says it’s a method whereby he goes around and checks the workplace and if he sees something that he calls a hazard, he tries to work out whether it needs to be done away with and this was the terminology she was using. I said oh right, he made this up himself? Yes, yes, he’s really keen on it. I said what do they call it? She says I don’t know. I said was it risk assessment? Yes, that’s it, yes, risk assessment. She thought this employer was being very proactive of his own initiative and I explained to her that legislation came into effect three years ago, it’s a legal requirement. She said that sod, wait until I get back to work, he told me it was him that did it.

[LAUGHTER]

I said no, it was us that did it. The Trade Union movement got that introduced, because everything that we ever have we fought, struggled and suffered to get, men and women before us fought, struggled and suffered to get any pro-worker legislation introduced in this country. Employers have never sat down and said why don’t we legislate against ourselves and introduce legislation to protect people from our negligence. They’ve never sat down and said I think we should legislate against ourselves so that we can’t steal pension funds and so on and so forth. We have had to fight to get these things and in any fight we have casualties. Our people have suffered for this and we should be bringing employers to account and saying to them no, the people that went before us have gone before us, fought and struggled and suffered to get us this, so we are going to implement it.

So without further ado, Mr Chairman, I’m going to finish at that, by urging people to recognise the importance of this one piece of legislation, the safety reps and Safety Committee’s regulations. If you don’t have a copy, get a copy, if you desperately need a copy, I think I’ve got a few in the car for anyone that really, really wants one and for anyone who really desperately, urgently needs one, I’ve got a wee original Brown Book and they can have it. Thanks for listening to me.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Vince Payne – EC Committee: Thank you, Willie. Thank you, Hilda, for everything. Thank you to the Health & Safety Committee and I hand over to Ian.

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Okay, I think, Vince, thank you very, very much for organising that, I think that was an absolutely exceptional presentation …

[APPLAUSE]

…rom both Hilda and Willie. Willie had no notes, not a single note. I don’t know how you do that, Willie, but obviously that’s why we have got so many excellent reps that’s been turned out by you and your training courses. Obviously we have a presentation at Conference every year in recognition for significant contributions to health and safety, so I’d like to invite Neil from Walkers Union, it is Walkers Union today isn’t it, it’s the Walkers Union, it’s not Slaters & Gordon is it, it’s Walkers Union. Okay, so I’d like to invite Neil down from Walkers Union and obviously to invite the winner of the award down to, I’ll let you take over from there, Neil, you can explain what it is.

Brother Neil Turnbull (Solicitor) – Walkers Union: Thanks very much, Ian. Obviously we’re delighted to sponsor this award this year, as we’ve done always. The Bakers and National Health & Representatives Safety Award goes to Michael Blundred.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Michael Blundred – Branch 390 (Manor): Mr President, Brothers and Sisters, thank you very much for this, I’m a bit flabbergasted. If I can say one thing about health and safety at work, if you see an issue, just report it there and then, don’t wait to take it to your Health & Safety Committee, try and get it sorted immediately and if management turn around and say no, we can’t do it, get it to your Health & Safety Committee, get it on the books and it’ll stay damn well there until they sort it for you. If it’s on the agenda every month, they’ll get pissed off with it and do it. That’s a key thing, just get the thing sorted if you can and then badger them and badger them until they’re sick of you. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Okay, thank you very much and congratulations. General Secretary.
Brother Ronnie Draper, General Secretary: Yes, just very briefly, I won’t keep you from your tea, I’ll be two minutes. Just to make a presentation to Hilda or to the organisation, Hazards organisation, you’ll just have to make sure I’ve made a cheque out, so from the Union thank you for what you’ve done this morning, we appreciate it, obviously a lifelong supporter of the Union and of course we’ve had a long association with Hazards as well. So I’d like to, on behalf of the Union, present you with a cheque for £100.

Sister Hilda Palmer: Thank you very much indeed, thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ronnie Draper, General Secretary: Okay and also, how’s that, a tin of biscuits.

Sister Hilda Palmer: That’s brilliant, thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ronnie Draper, General Secretary: Just as an aside, at one time Hilda and I were speaking at the Labour Party Conference, at a fringe and at the time she had some trouble with her leg and she had a walking stick and she was sat at the front and put her walking stick against the stage and I walked past and fell over it, so a great bit of health and safety. I said that’s not very good health and safety is it, Hilda? She went, it’s not very good Hazard sponsoring is it?

[LAUGHTER]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Okay Conference, we’re going to have 15 minutes, back in here for ¼ to, 12 o’clock, go on then, 12 o’clock.

[BREAK]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: [unclear] … a note about an announcement that was made this morning and it’s part of the consequences of the automation of the banking industry which is going to result, because people mainly use the hole in the wall now, it’s going to result in the loss of 8,000 banking jobs from HSBC. I think we should send solidarity to those workers and the Trade Union that’ll be trying to negotiate with the employer to avoid the loss of jobs. It’s about time in this country, as we’ve demonstrated all week, that we recognise that jobs and work and providing work for people is more important than profit. If we actually used our logic and we wanted to reduce the need for people to be dependent on state benefits, then providing work should be at the centre of anybody’s objective and if a government doesn’t understand the need to make sure work’s provided instead of continuously looking for ways to throw people out of work, I think we would all be better off.

So please consider, when you do use the automated machines, that every time you go and use one of those, there is a risk of putting somebody out of work, that goes in a supermarket or a bank or anywhere, so please bear that in mind because we need people in work, provided with real employment, not people being kicked out of work because they’ve found a way to automate us and build profit for themselves at our expense. Is this where the price is right? The winner of The Price is Right, it wasn’t Roy Streeter, it was, no, no, it was Terry Renshaw, Terry Renshaw won that. Watkins & Gunn, which is at the back, you know what you’re winning, fantastic.

Conference, we’ve also got a function on that’s sponsored by Watkins & Gunn in aid of the Alzheimer’s Society, an evening of music and karaoke and I heard the singers last year and some of them were much, much better than I, much, much better than I, but I can’t sing anyway so, yes in fact, yes you’re right, everybody was much better than me, yes, yes, so that’s over the road, that’s from 7.30 and yes, it will be late, it’s the Welsh that have organised it, but what a fantastic night that is. Year in, year out, they’ve always been the mainstay for a social event and a social evening. Are you ready? Absolutely. Obviously we have, you know, elect a female Executive rep every two years and they normally make a contribution at Conference and this year is no exception. We’ve got Sarah who’s going to give a contribution, probably before we go to dinner and we have a special announcement and you can do it now yes, I’m just waffling, yes. Just get on with it, yes, yes. That’s me told.

Sarah Woolley Addresses Conference

Sister Sarah Woolley - Branch 580 (Greggs of Yorkshire): Am I on, can you hear me? Yes. Conference, we are in 2015, yet the gaps in equality between men and women are still nearly as great as they were back in the 1900’s. In the UK, women working full-time earn on average 9.5% less than men, even though women make up 51% of the workforce, hence my motion on Sunday about lack in women membership and to answer Pat’s question as to why there has been a drop in female membership and activists, I think the root starts there with those statistics.
As a Union movement, we strive to fight for equality, fairness and solidarity, yet women are still paid and treated in a lot of workplaces, even Unionised ones, as second rate citizens and this is wrong and we have to look at ourselves as a movement of how we view women. We had examples on Sunday of opinionated women referred to as dragons and young women having comments made about their appearance when attending a Union meeting for the first time. Is this something that would happen to a young man? I think not, so it shouldn’t happen to a woman and what kind of picture does it point when it does. Now don’t get me wrong, I’m not impartial to banter and can give as I can get, as can most in the room, but Conference, there is a time and a place for it and judgements need to be made before offence is caused.

After all, if we’re fighting for equality, should we not be the beacons of it? Long gone are the days where a Trade Union movement was filled with middle-aged men, we’ve seen a rise in young people, black and ethnic minorities, females and LGBT activists and that’s how it should be. Barriers are slowly being broken down and support put in place for these people to take part and become more active within the movement and although we’ve still some way to go, I feel our Union is on the right path to removing the barriers completely, ensuring all members are treated equally and given the same opportunities should they want them. We just need to ensure all members have the support and encouragement too, as this is vital and it works. You only have to look at the two young women from Scotland, first-time Delegates and speaking like they’ve been coming for years, actively going out and trying to recruit members and I do believe they headed up the Fast Foods Rights protest in Glasgow. This wouldn’t have happened without the encouragement and support of Mark and others from Scotland and this needs to be mirrored throughout the Regions.

Embrace those who want to be active, regardless of age, sex or race and give them the tools, encouragement and support they need to get where they want to be, as this will ensure our Union will grow, be strong and stay independent for years to come, but most of all strive for equality, not only in your workplaces, but your Branches and Regions too. We are all equals, we are all members of the mighty Bakers and whether you are black, white, old, young, male or female, we are all important and in times of struggles, stand next to each other in solidarity, but this is something that we need to happen at all times, not just hard times. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Thank you very much, Sarah. Okay Conference, I also want to make you aware, because obviously I know a lot of people were disappointed yesterday that Arthur didn’t come and speak, but we’ve got some great news for you, because he’s absolutely definitely going to be here tomorrow morning and we’re really looking forward to welcoming him to our Conference.

[APPLAUSE]

And Arthur’s Arthur, we all love Arthur don’t we, so I think it’ll be a fantastic day. I just want to remind Delegates as well that this afternoon we’ve got another fantastic speaker and I think you’re going to love him as well, in fact I’m certain of it. We’re now going to use this opportunity to, okay mate …

Brother Adam Brown – Branch 277 (Bristol): Please explain to me why members have, sorry, could you please explain to me why there were managers from a company here yesterday when we were discussing motions?

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Yes, we’ll do that. We’ve had managers come into our Conference for years, we’ve had them from different companies, from Premier Foods, from Allied, from Warburtons, a number, we’ve never excluded anybody from coming to Conference, we’ve never been asked to exclude people from coming to Conference. If there is an issue of it, then we’re more than happy to consider if people don’t think managers should be in the room. We’ve never seen any consequences of management attending our Conference. If there ever was, then they would feel the full force of the Trade Union that you’re a member of and they would find that (1) we would exclude them but they’d also find that we would take action against any employer who abused our courtesy and our trust, because when they come in here we expect them to be very courteous towards us and we trust them to be honest, not use any of the information that they find, but having said that, they can use any information on us anyway.

It’s on Twitter, it’s on social media, it gets reported in the press, they can go and, they follow us on social media, they probably follow you on your Facebook page in many ways, we’ve found that when we were organising the strike at Burtons, people were getting befriend by people who were actually in the management team but calling themselves something else, so I mean we’ve never had anything from them. They either like what they hear or they don’t like what they hear. One thing’s for certain, they’ll hear what we’ve got to say and I think that’s important. They must know who we are, what we stand for, what we fight for and you know what …

[APPLAUSE]
…they need to understand us, they need to accept that we have a right to be treated with dignity, so I’m not afraid of managers, I’ve never been afraid of managers, you shouldn’t be afraid of them either, nobody should ever be afraid of a manager, because I’ll tell you what, when we come together there’s nobody better than us and that’s so important. You and all of these people in this room, never be afraid of any manager. No consequence can come to you for standing up for what you believe in. Everybody should feel confident to be able to say to a manager this is what I believe in, this is what I stand for, this is what I fight for and that’s why I’m here doing the job that you do on a daily basis, which is fantastic and we look forward, we look forward to any challenge from any manager that says we now understand the consequences of some of the actions that we do, that make peoples’ lives a misery, because they need to understand, most of the time that’s what they’re doing, so hopefully, hopefully …

[APPLAUSE]

…they will gain experience and knowledge about us to treat us with dignity and respect. I hope that answers your question. A bit of a rant, I know, but I was just waiting for him to get some information.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Adam Brown – Branch 277 (Bristol): Thank you very much, Mr President.

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Not a problem, not a problem. Thanks for the question. Oh we’re going to do a motion, because he’s not quite ready, he’s not quite ready, so we’re going to do, is it motion 47? Oh, are you ready, you said you’re not ready. Oh, okay. Motion 47.

47 Government and Politics

Greggs 580

That this conference agrees free school dinners for reception and year one children is great but there are five more years of primary school children living in poverty and going without food. Our parliamentary group needs to look at ways to introduce free school dinners to ALL primary school children.

Sister Sarah Woolley, speaking on behalf of Branch 580 (Greggs of Yorkshire) and the Executive Council: To move motion 47. The last five years have seen a dramatic increase in poverty. We’ve seen food banks multiply faster than anyone deemed possible, with almost a million food parcels given out last year by Trussell Trusts, who run 430 of the food banks, which is about half of the network. Lots of children are surviving on next to nothing whilst their parents are skipping meals in order for their child to actually eat something. This isn’t set to get any better over the next five years, in fact with zero hour contracts, the increase in benefit sanctions, bedroom tax being re-looked at and changes to benefits, with caps being put in place and the criteria to be able to claim changing, things are set to get a whole lot worse.

Free school meals were introduced for our children in Year 1 and Reception amazingly by the ConDem government, but what about the other children in primary school who are turning up hungry, as there was no bread left and mum doesn’t get paid for another four days, or going home to the prospect of plain pasta for tea again because there’s nothing else left until dad gets paid on the 25th. Do they not deserve at least one hot decent filling meal a day too? Who has the right to determine one child can have a free dinner and their sibling two years older than them has to go hungry again, as their lunchbox is lacking nutrition and their dinners now cost £9.50 a week, which their parents just don’t have. It’s not the politicians who have to explain to the children why our wages don’t cover everything and why one child gets treated differently to another.

By getting our Parliamentary Group to look at ways to introduce free dinners to all primary school children, we will hopefully ensure the issue is brought up in parliament and discussed, showing Cameron and his out of touch party that children are suffering because of their policies and that we won’t stand for it. Please support.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Are you seconding it?

Brother Carl Thorne – Branch 543: Delegates, Chairman. I went to school in the 1950’s, I was a twin and I’d got a sister and I’d got no father, he left us when we were little, so when I went to school, my main meals a day was two, free milk, school dinner and a lot of people in my generation that was unfortunate not to have a father would understand why it’s so important for a child to get that meal. Free milk should be for everybody, free school dinners should be for everybody at that age. I thought in the 1950s, when I was at school, they were hard times and there’s many people in this room that come from that era that understand hard times.
My three meals a day were school milk, as I said, school dinner and on a teatime in those days, if I was lucky, used to be a slice of bread with a bit of butter on, dipped in sugar and that’s what I went to bed on and if it was really a good day, there’d be a tin of Nestlé’s milk there, so you’d spread a bit of Nestlé’s milk on. I don’t want those days to come back and I certainly don’t want any kids to go to school and rely on food …

[APPLAUSE]

…to rely on food being there so they can have a square meal a day, it should be there for every child. I ask you to support this motion. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother William McKnight – Branch 4 (Beech’s Chocolates): First-time Delegate, first-time speaking.

[APPLAUSE]

I’m here to support this motion, because like they all say, I’ve got five kids and I’ve been paying school dinners for the last seven years, just so my kids can eat, but I’ve got another seven years to pay as well, so I’d rather, well, I really want to support this motion. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Colin Hall – Branch 359: It’s simple. We talk about a level playing field. The fact is under cuts, when people are up against it, often the only thing they can cut back on is food, because if you cut back on your rent or your bills, they either cut you off or throw you out. Now, scientific studies have proven that if a child gets, is decently fed, they’re X percentage better off when they’re trying to learn. Now, it’s pretty obvious that the children of the rich don’t go hungry. Why should the children, why should the children of the less well off and the children of the poor be …

[APPLAUSE]

…why should the children of the less well off and the poor be disadvantaged at school, because they’re so ruddy hungry they can’t concentrate on their work. If I opened a shop and I said right, there’s two price tickets on that washing machine, there’s one price ticket for the rich and one price ticket for the poor, someone will come along and tell me it’s illegal. There should not be this discrimination in schools. The fact is, free school meals should be right for all, no child should have to go hungry, it’s a crime. Please support.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Pat Rowley – No. 2 Region: Mr President, Delegates. I’ve been a school governor for the past two years at a school in Bristol, a primary school, Barton Hill. The area is 75% poverty, people are suffering badly. School meals are a necessity and some of these people, they’re from other countries, they do not like to take meal tickets because they feel that it’s a stigma, I found that at the meetings, but the kids around them can’t know because whichever kids have got the school meal tickets, they hadn’t had a dinner or they had a special ticket to get their meal, no they didn’t, they all got them, but I believe, as the speaker before me said, free school meals should be for all children in primary school. That is a fact, because a child is hungry and it’s suffering because it cannot learn well and when it’s hungry and when it’s not.

The most popular meal in the school is fish and chips on a Friday, that goes, they never have enough of it, but there is some of the meals the children don’t take to very well and you see, when food is cooked like that, it’s cooked in a way that it’s good for them, sometimes it doesn’t, there’s a lot of waste in schools because children don’t eat it, but there should be a better look at the food, the way it’s produced for the children and everything else. I don’t mean adding flavours to it and all of that stuff and giving them junk food, I don’t believe in that at all, but nutritious food is an important thing to any young child, because it’s growing, it needs it more than anybody else in society. Conference, support this resolution.

[APPLAUSE]

Sister Helen Stacey – Branch 580 (Greggs, Yorkshire): I’d like to support this motion. I have a child myself and am a working parent. Lots of working parents have to pay for their children’s school dinners or give them a packed lunch. If all children got those dinners, they’d have more time to spend with them once they got home from work, because they don’t see their child all day, they’re at school or they’re at work and when they come home they’ve got to spend time in the kitchen cooking dinner, when they could just have had it at school, they can make them a nice sandwich and then have a little play with them after. I support this motion.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother George Lonsdale – Branch 459 (Greggs): I’ve already had one say in this. First-time Delegate, probably spoke about five times.

[APPLAUSE]
My father was a cotton mill worker, my mother was a stay-at-home mum, I was one of five children. We were very poor, there was no doubt about that. We usually had a packed lunch made up by my mother, bread and butter, sometimes jam, a bit of a luxury. At the beginning of the week, on a Sunday, after church, we used to go and get a bottle of pop, now that bottle of pop had to last us all week. I used to love Cherryade, Panda Pops, no other brand, it was the best. Got the Cherryade and it used to last me about two/three days, then it had to be refilled with Corporation pop. Unbeknown to me this was water, very upset about this. I began to realise that, I used to get lemonade at the beginning of the week instead because then at least when the other kids looked at me, they thought I had lemonade in my bottle instead of Cherryade obviously. I was bullied at school for being poor and malnourished, there’s no doubt about that. We massively need to support the fact that kids need free school dinners.

[APPLAUSE]

We all need to be treated the same. I’m glad to see that Greggs actually have Breakfast Clubs, it’s a big thing that Greggs are actually promoting at the moment. I’m not bigging them up, but at the end of the day we do a massive help and a justice for people having breakfast at least. I don’t know what else to say, apart from obviously I massively support it. I would have written a poem about it if I had more time, in all fairness, but like I said we should definitely uphold this and obviously vote for whatever to get it, cheers.

[APPLAUSE]

Sister Janet Phillips – Branch 405: Just this last week before we came to Conference, somebody in the village posted on Facebook that they’
didn’t got the toast money in to school in time, so that means their kid couldn’t have toast. What is it, the PTA, they used to be given toast from the bakery and mothers would go and make toast and you just paid like 50p a week. Now, I was upset about it, about other postings and I said well, what about the kids who unfortunately go to school without any breakfast, do they have to actually watch other children eat in front of them and they’re hungry? and I ‘phoned the school up and the woman wouldn’t give me a right answer, she wouldn’t answer properly, so what I’m asking you to do is, if you’ve got children at school and they run similar clubs, can you go and check that the children who are less well off don’t have to sit and watch other children eat and they’re hungry. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Okay Conference, to the vote. Those in favour? Those against. That’s carried unanimously. See you at 2 o’clock, except for those Greggs people and the meeting is, the meeting’s over there apparently.

[LUNCH]

Afternoon Session

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: General Secretary, roll call.

Brother Ronnie Draper, General Secretary: Region 1, thank you. Region 2, 20? Well, it’s been 23 all week, 20, okay. Region 3. Region 4. Region 5. Region 6 and Region 7, thank you. There’s 188 Delegates present.

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Just a couple of announcements, from the EC?

Brother John Owens – Branch 432: After the verbal abuse I received about my team, about myself this morning while introducing the National Health & Safety Committee, I feel as though I should respond to it and the fact that I haven’t spoken about footy because it’s all about winning trophies, it’s not about finishing in the top four and qualifying for the Champions League …

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: It was last year through, wasn’t it, it was last year, we’re in the top four.

Brother John Owens – Branch 432: and considering we didn’t do either, because we were shite …

[APPLAUSE]

…that’s why I didn’t want to talk about it.

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Well done, absolutely, absolutely. Solidarity, Brother. I agree with that last point entirely. Don’t forget tonight and one of the charities that anybody who follows him on Facebook will have seen him doing all those big walks up big mountains and stuff, the Alzheimer’s Society, it was only about four steps you’re right, yes, I mean he really is a man who can stride over mountains literally and so obviously the Watkins & Gunn event is about raising money for the Alzheimer’s Society, so just to give them another plug, it’s in the Victoria over the road, so do get along.
Also, you can’t have a Conference without a party night with the Irish can you and obviously Ronnie will be dancing there I believe, so, I mean that’s a sight to behold. Obviously last night we had Mr Fox doing rock ‘n’ roll in the …

[LAUGHTER]

…Prince of Wales, fortunately he didn’t do too much damage to my wife and obviously to get my own back, I threw Pauline around the dance floor literally and threw her under a table at some point, it just goes to show, it was a learning experience, he said this is what I had to do and I failed miserably at it and also today, at half past five, right next door, there’s lunch provided, sorry food provided, won’t be lunch will it, because that’s what we’ve just had, you see one day seems very much like another, but obviously we’ve been saying how we stand in solidarity and how we support Candy Udwin and the National Gallery, I mean go along and meet her and give her some moral support, show her what the Bakers Union believes in, show her how we’re going to stand side by side with striking workers and go along to that tonight, which is at the Ramada Plaza at half past five, which is going to be chaired by Sarah, she’s over there, just looking for you. They’ve also got, they’ve got Lorna speaking, who’s over there and they’ve got Zac, I thought it said Eddie Cochran then, but Zac Cochran, Michael Bradley, who came here last year and spoke to us and they’ve got some of the Glasgow homeless care worker strikers there as well, so it’s going to be a great evening. Anybody who went last year thoroughly enjoyed the, thoroughly enjoyed the event so make sure you get along to that tonight.

Okay, back to the Agenda, because our special guest hasn’t yet come into the room, I’m sure you’ll know who he is when he arrives. Motion 48. Oh, that was very remiss of me as well.

Also we want to send a special message to our Stewards and representatives and the workers, Hovis in Wigan, who are currently in discussions over potential redundancies there, so I’m sure everybody wants to send a message of solidarity to those people.

[APPLAUSE]

48 Government and Politics Branch 450

That this conference agrees this union lobby’s the government with regards to the cut backs that have occurred within the Police force. Greater Manchester Police has been cut by 2,000 so far and another 300 to go in fiscal year 2014 – 2015.

Sister Marilyn McCarthy – Branch 450 (Manchester): I’m also the captain of the Bakers, Food & Allied Workers Union formation swimming team, come and join us.

[LAUGHTER]

This Conference agrees that the Union lobbies the government with regards to the cut backs that have occurred within the police force. Greater Manchester police has been cut by 2,000 so far and another 300 to go in this fiscal year of 2014/2015. We moved to Salford and three times the kids where we live attacked my poor little black Fiat to death, so I had to send for the police one Sunday. Thursday, they turned up. One real bobby, one plastic bobby, sorry, PCSO. Good job it wasn’t a domestic violence issue when it takes them four days to turn up as a response. What’s it going to be like when we’ve another 300 police missing. I ask you to support.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Seconder? Formally seconded?

Brother Colin Hall – Branch 359 (Leicester): I would ask you to oppose this motion and I’ll tell you why. The police are represented by an organisation called The Police Federation. It’s not a Union that’s democratic, because you don’t get the option to join it or not, you have to be in it. On top of that, every strike you’ve ever had, the police have been used as rottweilers to smash …

[APPLAUSE]

…and to smash and attack Union members, by legal means and in many cases by means that are not legal. The simple fact is, it’s illegal to make a policeman redundant. The way they get rid of them is by so-called natural wastage. Now, if the police were out there, sorting out real crime, going out to my car when it gets smashed, going out to Marilyn’s car when it gets smashed, turning up for domestic violence in double-quick speed and I’ve got to say it, Rotherham but also Leicester, there’s 15,000 kids going to abuse, what did they put, it was reported to the police, what were they doing, (thumping sound).
Hillsborough, there’s still 96 dead, justice, I’m still waiting. They don’t need more policemen, what they need …

…what they need is for these policemen to get their priorities right. As one policeman said to me, the last bunch that were in passed 2½ thousand laws, we’ve not got any more policemen, we’ve got 2½ thousand more laws to enforce, so we pick and choose. It shouldn’t be about picking and choosing. Anyone with half a brain knows that if there’s domestic violence, you need a policeman there now. I ask you to oppose.

Brother Adam Brown – Branch 277 (Bristol): I too am asking you to oppose this. Already the subject has been touched on by the speaker before me, that we must never, ever forget that the police are nothing but a tool of the state and are used by them …

…for that reason. Every time men and women have been on strike, the police have been used to forcibly put them down. I know, I lived for a year in a police-run state. The police lie, as they did at Hillsborough and get away with it. When a policeman retires, he cannot be charged etc. I ask you to oppose this.

Brother Leon Don – Branch 334: I’m here today to support this motion. I’d like to tell you about an anti-austerity march that I went to in London and it was mainly directed at the public sector cuts, for example, the NHS and the police force. The NHS staff that were not working were allowed to attend the meeting and were allowed to strike, however the police did not have this right and if we don’t speak up for them, then who is, so I’m here to support the motion. Thank you.

Brother Keith Hutchinson – Branch 580 (Greggs of Yorkshire, not Pennines – Branch Secretary): Platform, Delegates. I’m also here to go against this one. I remember the miners’ strike, I was pushed about when they had horses, when they were making thousands and thousands of pounds, when they were shipping them in from all over. You’re right, you should feel safe in your houses, but by Christ, once there’s a strike, wherever there’s a strike, where’s the police, they always find them then. Please oppose.

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Any more speakers? Oh, here comes Pat.

Brother Pat Rowley – No. 2 Region:

[APPLAUSE and LAUGHTER]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Calm down now.

Brother Pat Rowley – No. 2 Region: I’ll tell you one thing, the police are not going to catch me.

[APPLAUSE]

Mr President, Delegates. George, is it George Osborne they call him?, I think it is, he has already made cuts that he did not put in the Queen’s speech and he has made big cuts now in the police force, education and health, all of them are, but none of them are in the Queen’s speech because they pushed it over, but as soon as the Queen’s speech was gone, he dived in with the cuts, three billion or something it is. Conference, this government, no matter what we do now, we can, yes, we can lobby, but while they’re in power, you’ll not be in power, that’s for sure. Conference, support the resolution.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Paul McGarry – Branch 347, No. 3 Region: First-time speaker.

[APPLAUSE]

I’d like to say on behalf of the EC, we fully support this resolution and in respect of that, back to my own roots back in Leicester, there was a situation a number of weeks ago in respect I was in a pub one night and obviously there was a female that fell over and cut her leg, but it was an arterial bleed. Again a call was made to the emergency services and on the back of that, the response was it took 30 minutes to get an ambulance to you. The police were there in minutes and it was armed response police that came onto the premises and they dealt with this female.
There was blood everywhere and the actions of that armed response policeman that night, they took her off in the van, as I say there were no paramedics or nothing. He administered first aid, he gave it, probably saved her life that night, because she went into theatre, she was out at 6 o’clock in the morning and everything else and she spent a few days in hospital, so the actions of that policeman that night saved her life. Please support.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Okay Conference, to the vote. Those in favour? Oh sorry, sorry, Marilyn, right to reply, yes, absolutely right, you’re absolutely right.

[APPLAUSE]

and I accept that you are right, Marilyn.

Sister Marilyn McCarthy – Branch 450 (Manchester): How unusual for me to be right. My husband’s at the back of the room. If anybody ever thinks I’ve been wrong, he’ll tell you I’m never wrong.

[LAUGHTER and APPLAUSE]

I’m looking at this from a victim’s point of view, not from a Union point perspective. At the end of the day, the police have a job to do. I don’t know how many times in the last few years I’ve been marching around Manchester for various causes, including axe the bedroom tax and we’ve always had a bobby with us and they’ve always been quite jovial about it, they’re not nasty with us. We’re all, there’s a lot of us will be in London and there’s a lot of us who’ll be in London on 20th June and we will be escorted through London with the police. The ones I’ve been to in London, we’ve never had an issue with the police, they’ve done what they were supposed to do. I know what you’re saying about the miners, it’s 30 years ago, so hopefully all those dickheads that were employed by the police have gone.

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Whoa, whoa, whoa, no shouting out from down there, otherwise you’ll have to go to Standing Orders, that’s not how it works, it’s not how it works.

Sister Marilyn McCarthy – Branch 450 (Manchester): The policemen that were there 30 years ago, hopefully won’t be working for the police force any more. I’m asking you to support. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Okay, Conference. Those in favour? Those against? That’s carried, yes? Carried. 49.

49  Government and Politics

That this conference agrees that more should be done to release documents, freedom of information, so people can get a better understanding of why this country went to war in Iraq. Please support.

Brother Michael Redshaw – Branch 459 (Greggs, Pennines): Platform, Delegates. That this Conference agrees that more should be done to release documents, Freedom of Information, so that people get a better understanding of why this country went to war in Iraq. Please support.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Seconder? Formally seconded? Any other speakers?

Sister Lorna McKinnon – Branch 500: I wanted to support this motion, mostly because for me the Iraq war and the Stop the War coalition was a really defining thing in my life and it was one of the first things that got me into politics and activism. I remember when I was 14 at my school, it was a state school I went to, they brought the army in to our school, they had a helicopter land in the school ground and I remember asking one of the soldiers if the helicopter had been to Iraq and he was quite proudly like yes and then against my will, he lifted me up and put me behind this machine gun and I was 14 at the time and I found it was a really horrifying experience for me, but as well I remember we also went to, it was like a school trip to go and bless this warship that was being sent off to Iraq and I just remember being really terrified by it and actually I think it raises an important point about class, which army recruitment in schools is actually a class thing, they don’t go into the private schools, it’s always working class kids that they try to sign up and go and fight their wars and I also wanted to say, mention my granddad who was forced to go to war at the age of 18. He was in the Navy and my dad always tells me the story of when my granddad was on this warship and they were trying to take it to this approaching German submarine, but my granddad’s gun was the only one that had the right angle to take it out and he did and he was 19 at the time and he was, right to the end of his life, he was tortured by this memory. It is a class thing, they make it out like it’s some kind of adventure, working class people, they get to travel the world, but actually they’re being sent off to die and fight in legal, barbaric wars of the rich and I just wanted to
finish by saying, bringing it back to today, it is, it was being a part of the Stop the War movement that put two million people out onto the streets in opposition to the illegal war in Iraq and that did actually achieve a lot, we drew a line in the sand, they made it difficult for politicians to ever repeat something like Iraq again, case in point, when they wanted to go to war in Syria, they couldn’t because of, like I say, the Stop the War movement and now we face the most brutal assault on working class people in decades through the guise of austerity, but the lessons of the Stop the War movement is that mass mobilisation can draw a line in the sand and we need to be doing exactly that against austerity on the 20th June demonstrations. That day is, I think, massively, a massively crucial moment for us and we have to build it as a launch pad for strikes and mass action and build a movement the same scale as the one that opposed the war in Iraq and I think people should go to the Unite the Resistance stall and collect big piles of leaflets, if they can and take them back to their Branch. I’ll be supporting this motion. Thanks.

[APPLAUSE]

**Brother Pat Rowley – No. 2 Region:** Mr President, Delegates. Conference, this is the time when parliament gets together and they have a cross-party meeting to stop us from knowing what they’re doing. You know that this resolution was here some, a few years ago before, they get together and they have a meeting up until about 2 o’clock in the morning, trying to stop us from knowing what was going on, not to release it to the press. Conference, support this resolution, because it’s very important that we know what’s going on, so that we can make decisions and do something about what’s going on. The politicians seem to, at question time, rubbish each other, but when it comes down to the hard facts, all sides of the House get together to stop us from knowing what they’re doing. Look at what they did with Dr Kelly, look at the way they hounded that man, they brought him to his death with the way they hounded him in the Houses of Parliament, because he asked for six more weeks before any attack on Iraq, there was no chemical weapons there, there was only …

[APPLAUSE]

…there was only the mustard gas factory that Maggie Thatcher gave to them and called them The Great Liberator.

[APPLAUSE]

That’s what caused these things. Conference, we have to know what’s going on, we have to know and we must act. Conference, I support the resolution. Please support it as well.

[APPLAUSE]

**Brother Gary Gallagher – Branch 417 (Hovis, Wigan):** I am in full support of this motion, the reason being, I should say, that this Conference should put pressure on this government to release documents, not probably on other things, if this is brought to the public domain, then this will open up more, more debates and then we can release more documents in the past, because this has been going on for too long, they just bring all these policies in, people have been waiting 30 – 40 years, it’s not good enough, they just wait and hope that you’ll go away, so I fully support this motion and hopefully we’ll get more justice done for the people that deserve it. So, I’m in full support and also why do we give them so much time, we should set timescales, we should give them time, all the time, to tell us, not in the future, but we want it now, so I fully support. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

**Brother John Fitzpatrick – No. 4 Region (speaking on behalf of the Executive Council):** This document should be released under the Freedom of Information, but under national security I believe this information will never come to light. Too many soldiers were killed needlessly. The weapons of mass destruction were never found, just one big cover-up found, that’s all there was. To-date, plenty of questions still to be answered, still nothing to be done. I strongly ask you to support this resolution.

[APPLAUSE]

**Brother Ian Hodson, National President:** Okay Conference, to the vote. Those in favour? Against? That’s unanimous. Emergency motion No. 5.

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**Emergency Motion 5**

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**Brother Mark McHugh – Branch 503:** Speaking on emergency motion 5. Speaking on behalf of the Executive Council also. Platform, Delegates. Dungavel Detention Centre is set in rural Lanarkshire, about 20 minutes away from where I live and was once an open prison, where prisoners could wander about freely around the grounds. I’ve give you an example, about 20 years ago myself and my brother were fishing not far from Dungavel Detention Centre and this guy wanders up to us, we thought he was fishing so we asked him what he’d caught, he said nothing, he said I’m from Dungavel open prison.
In 2001 its role changed and it started being used as a detention centre, this resulted in 30 foot metal gates with razor wire being erected and it’s now classed as a security level B prison, it looks more like Alcatraz now. There have been many people attempting to get asylum, this results in arrests, then detention and at this moment in time there’s 260 detainees in Dungavel Detention Centre. One family actually stated living in Dungavel Detention Centre as being in a prison, you could count your sentence, you count down your time, but in Dungavel and other detention centres in the UK, you count up your sentence. This is only down to the fact that it’s a direct breach of International Laws, with the UK being the only country in Europe that detains indefinitely.

Many of these people are fleeing their countries from torture, rape, massacre, under brutal regimes, with 600 children over this time being arrested and detained, but many of them being in the position of being detained through human trafficking. This means no humanity, no compassion. Do you think these people wanted to leave their country and extended families, the weather, another one, to give up their life savings, to strap their kids, many who are under the age of five, onto a life raft and spend 36 hours at sea in the hope of getting to safety? What happened to the Human Rights Act we signed up for? [unclear] has to close all the detention centres in the UK. Brothers and Sisters, please support this motion.

[SAPPLAUSE]

Sister Toni Bruce – Branch 500 (Glasgow): I’m here to support this motion. Comrades, Dungavel is a sad, sad place. It was bittersweet to be there, as it was heart lifting to see so many different organisations joined in solidarity, but it was saddening to know that we had to be there in the first place. I remember sitting on the bus there, looking at the sheep in the field and thinking how much more freedom they have than people trapped in Dungavel. I think it’s a really important thing for Trade Unions, such as our own, to be involved in, as we were there waving the Bakers Union flag, standing together with others united in racism and anti-migrant issues. I firmly believe that everybody has a right to freedom and safety. We as a country should be embracing and welcoming people who are fleeing danger in war-torn countries, situations that these people played no part in creating. However with barbaric detention centres such as Dungavel, they are met with hostility and being thrown into places no better than prisons.

What is their crime? Wanting a better life or rather wanting to live a life is not a crime. People can be detained for years in Dungavel without knowing when they will be released. Try to imagine living in this kind of way, it’s abhorrent and these things are happening in our own backyard. Our Union must lobby the government to shut Dungavel. I’m just going to quickly plug the People’s Assembly on 20th June, it’s very, very important for as many people as possible to attend the battle against austerity, but also issues that Dungavel relates to, structures of governing that treat migrants like animals and we won’t stand for it. If it’s alright with the Executive, I’d like to invite Lorna up to the podium, so we can, it’s a tiny, tiny, tiny song about Dungavel that we’d like to share with you. Is that okay?

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Go ahead then.

Sister Toni Bruce – Branch 500 (Glasgow): Come on.

[SAPPLAUSE]

I had a drink with lunch, so that’s probably the reason. So it’s quite jazzy, it goes …

[SISTER TONI and SISTER LORNA SING]

[SAPPLAUSE and CHEERS]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Follow that. Come on, give us a tune.

Brother Jim Carlin – Branch 503: Thanks, Ian. I hope you’re not expecting me to sing. I’d just like to say on the issue of Dungavel Detention Centre, there’s always a quote comes into my mind. When I think about detention, I tend to think about economic migrants and there’s a quote that says when you feed the hungry, they call you a saint, but when you ask why they’re hungry, they call you a Communist and that is particularly relevant on this subject. MPs have called for a maximum 28 day detention and that’s particularly relevant because following a study, a psychiatrist stated that those held for more than 30 days are inclined to develop mental health problems, including post-traumatic stress disorder, depression and anxiety, now that’s particularly relevant for people that have been detained within Dungavel Detention Centre. In some cases, detainees have been held for up to 2½ years, with many detainees struggling to cope with the uncertainty of their release dates. If you’re in prison, you tend to count the days down, in Dungavel it’s exactly the opposite, you count the days up and that’s a clear breach of peoples’ human rights. I’m asking Conference to support the motion. Thanks.

[SAPPLAUSE]
Brother Pat Rowley – No. 2 Region: Mr President, Delegates. Just before I go into the resolution, I have to say on behalf of all Conference the two young speakers that spoke there today, it’s great to see the young people coming to Conference…

[APPLAUSE]

…and with young people like that, Comrades, the future is ours, without them it’s not.

[APPLAUSE]

Conference, asylum seekers come into the country to be treated in a way, in these conditions is a terrible shame, it’s a terrible shame to see it happening. They have to be treated humanely and respectfully, they have left countries where there was terrible, they weren’t able to, they had to leave for fear of many things, I don’t know all of the things that happens in these countries, but they are trying to get to a safe place so that their lives will be saved for them. That’s why they came here, they knew that we would …

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Hold on a minute, Pat.

Brother Pat Rowley – No. 2 Region: to land them and to put them in places like this and even the …

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Hold on a second. Conference, can everybody keep the noise down and listen to the speakers when they’re on the rostrum. I believe people are struggling to hear …

[APPLAUSE]

…let’s give people the courtesy when they come here to make a speech, so you can hear what they’ve got to say and then you know exactly what you’re voting on and people who are using mobile ‘phones, if we catch you, we’ll fine you a fiver, so turn it on silent as well, okay, Pat, sorry about that.

Brother Pat Rowley – No. 2 Region: Okay, that’s alright, thank you, Chair. Thank you, Chair. I would have to say that Delegates that make noise and doesn’t want to listen at Conference, why the hell do they bother to come?

[APPLAUSE]

Conference, support the resolution. The speakers and the speaker who spoke before me and especially the two young girls, they’re massive speakers and I’m proud to be here at the Conference that they’re at. Conference, support the resolution.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Okay. Oh, sorry.

Sister Carmina Kaszoni – Branch No. 7: Good afternoon, Delegates. I just want to tell you that we should support this resolution. I believe that the government, instead of keeping those guys which are seeking for asylum and they are illegal immigrants, should keep them detained and spend our money, our taxes to keep them detained, they should organise some sort of programme where they can integrate those people over the period which they’re supposed to be detained and they can work in the community, they can do voluntary work and they can get food. Why should they get food on our taxes, why shouldn’t they be given a chance to integrate and after that whenever the decision is made, to be released into society or to be sent back to their countries depending on the case. I believe that the government needs to do something about it, they need to think properly in a money-wise and in a human rights way as well. Thank you very much.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Okay Conference, to the vote. Those in favour? Against? That’s carried, unanimous. Okay, motion 50.

50 Education Greggs 580

That this conference agrees to lobby the government to reduce prices of accommodation for 1st year students living in halls for all universities.

Sister Angela Shortreed – Branch 580: Here to move motion 50. That this Conference agrees to lobby government to reduce prices of accommodation for first year students living in halls, for all universities. The amount that students pay for accommodation is absolutely ridiculous. Universities should stop profiting from student halls of residence, especially when student finance is inadequate. My daughter pays £127 a week to live in halls, which is a tiny little room, no space at all and she can make a mess, so for her she relies on me to give her money, I’m working class, I don’t have spare money to give all the time, so the youth of today should not be leaving education with £43,000-worth of debt, so please support.

[APPLAUSE]
Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Are you seconding it? Okay.

Sister Dawn Scott – Branch 253: Chair, Platform, Delegates. Here to support this motion. It’s difficult for any young students moving away from home for the first time, let alone having to worry about the cost of accommodation. Please support.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Chris Lay – Branch 253: Also here to support this motion. It’s bad enough that tuition fees are now up to nine grand a year, let alone the high rise in university education halls as well. I was in halls of residence and as Angela quite rightly said, it’s a pokey little room and luckily I only paid £67 a week, but that was 13 years ago, £127 a week, I’d have told them to shove it where the sun doesn’t shine. Please support this motion.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Pat Rowley – No. 2 Region: Mr President, Delegates. Conference, yes, support this resolution. We should be and we have enough money to support our children at schools. Conference, they can even go to Europe, if you have European citizenship, which is a card you apply for, I’ll be talking about it later, you can get education free in Europe, free and in the countries where they charge, it’s only £1500 for the year, £1500 for the year, in Britain it’s £9,000, £9,000. Now, Comrades, this country can afford better than that. Support this resolution.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother David Byrne – Region No. 6 (speaking on behalf of the Executive Council): To support this motion. If your child’s ‘A’ level results means that they have confirmed a place at university, the next task is to make sure that their first year accommodation is sorted out. Many universities offer a guarantee that first year students can get a place in a hall of residence, rather than having to seek a room in private rented accommodation. The average rent per week for a university hall is £120. These rents will vary pending where the student is studying. London is the most expensive, averaging £160 per week. The east of England has the second highest at £135 per week and Northern Ireland at £85 per week. These figures are from the National Students Union. Money is tight for students. This Tory government needs to be aware of the hardship and these students and their families have to provide for accommodation. Please support.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Okay Conference, to the vote. Those in favour? Against? That’s carried, unanimous.

Put your Agendas away for the next few minutes, probably even longer. As you will have noticed, we’ve just been joined on stage by our special guest. Anybody who was here last year, I think you’ve been talking about it all year if you were here last year and we’re really, really pleased and really proud of our association with our mate, because he’s our mate now, he’s officially our mate and our mate agreed to come back again, so I’d like to introduce, he doesn’t need any introduction. Comrades, Sisters, Brothers, welcome to Conference Ricky Tomlinson.

[APPLAUSE and CHEERS]

Ricky Tomlinson Addresses Conference

Ricky Tomlinson: Thank you very much, lovely. Thanks very much. I’ve really only come along to speak for a few minutes, because really it’s just to thank you about what you’ve been doing for us since last year, but I’ve just been talking to my Comrade here, who tells me that you’ve got Arthur Scargill speaking tomorrow. Now Arthur is a personal friend of mine and I want to tell you a true story about me and Arthur. Arthur was sitting in my house in Liverpool five years ago and we were having a cup of tea and a sandwich and it was a Wednesday afternoon and I said Arthur, what are you doing on Saturday night, are you around Liverpool at all? and he said I don’t know, I might be, why what’s the problem? I said it’s not a problem, I said they’re putting a big party on for my 70th birthday. I said it’s going to be great, I said all the local entertainment is going to be there, Ken Dodd and Mick Miller and all the boys, there’s two live bands and a disco, hot and cold buffet, I said everything and I said and the bar is absolutely free. He said that sounds good, he said, that sounds good, he said where are you having it? I said in the Clubmoor Conservative Club. He said bollocks to you and the Conservative Club and he never went!

[LAUGHTER and APPLAUSE]

He wouldn’t go. He wouldn’t go. I said Arthur, it’s only a Conservative Club in name, there’s not a bloody Conservative goes in there, but anyway I love Arthur and I’m going to be mentioning Arthur. I don’t want to go over everything I said last year because I’d bore you to death, but for anyone here who may be a bit young and didn’t understand, in 1972 we building workers had the first, well the one and only ever official building strike that there’s ever been, but
it was very, very successful and although I’m a Scouser, I was living in a little council house in North Wales with my wife and two small boys and obviously working on the Wrexham bypass, by trade I’m a City & Guilds plasterer, but as you know, anyone who’s in the building industry, work is very, very scarce, so I was working as a glorified labourer with the health and safety gang and of course a strike was called, we got visited by the lads, we took a vote and decided obviously to come out and join the strike. Although I was, as I say, a Scouser, I was asked to be the mouthpiece for the site and that’s what I did and I never missed a single meeting which we held every week in the Bull & Stirrup.

I went on the picket line every single day and as I say, I was practically in charge of the North Wales area and we had a very, very successful, a very, very successful campaign. We were out for 12 weeks and we got the biggest pay rise that the industry’s ever had, but it wasn’t only about pay, it was about health and safety, because what people don’t realise in the building industry, then it’s not a lot better now by the way, someone died every day, a building worker died somewhere in the country every day when they went to work. The fatality rate in the building industry was equal to that of the mining industry and the farming industry put together and that’s what we were out for, better health and safety, but as I say, the strike went well. We actually visited on the day eight sites, the seventh site was called Brookside, which played a part in my life a little bit later on, but we were accompanied by 60 – 80 policemen, because we were in coaches and they were in a coach and we went on the site, the Brookside site, we did what we had to do, we called a meeting, got the lads to agree to go on strike and to join in the dispute and that was it.

I went back to work, the lads all went home, that was it, until 15 weeks later, I was visited on the site by two detectives who said can we have a word, I said what is it? He said we’ve been looking into your family background here, he said and you come from quite a respectable family. I said well, thanks very much. He said so what we want you to do is, we’re going to bring some charges against these pickets and we want you to be a prosecution witness. I said how can I be a prosecution witness, I said I was in charge of this, I was in charge of the whole site. They did everything I asked the lads to do and nine times out of 10 when I went to a meeting, if they said something I didn’t agree with, I would vote, if I was on my own, if I didn’t agree with it, I would put my hand up and say so and one of the things I did disagree with and time and time again I voted against it, was they would put a motion forward that if some firms who were out on strike agreed to pay their building workers the rate we were asking for, they should be allowed to go back to work, but pay a pound levy into the strike fund and that would be it, that’s wrong, that’s out of order. You can have two families living side by side, one fella’s working and throwing £1 into the strike fund, the other fella’s out on strike, he might have the same amount of kids or whatever and he’s not getting a carrot. In my opinion, I told them and I said it time and again, the rules are it’s one out, all out, one back and then we all go back.

[APPLAUSE]

Not in dribs and drabs, that’s finished with, but anyway to cut the story short, the police had to say well, we’ll have to charge you and do you know, listening to this, this is the depths to which the employers will go to get their own way. As I say, I’m a plasterer by trade. McAlpine’s offered me a job to go to Portugal and manage a new road that was being built through Portugal. Well I can tell you, I can’t read a theodolite, so it would have ended up like Spaghetti Junction if I’d have gone, I haven’t got a clue, but that’s what they were prepared to do, send me out there to Portugal on boss wages to get me out of the way, so obviously the police said if you’re not going to do what we asked you, we’ll prosecute you and they did and what happened is, we went on trial, the trial lasted, by the way when we went on trial, the day of the court, 4,000 police on duty, 4,000 police, can you imagine that, more than for the IRA bombers, more than for the Kray Twins, more than for spies, 4,000 police on duty and I was late getting there and I went to go in, this copper, because we were standing shoulder to shoulder, he said you can’t come in here, I said that suits me, thanks very much …

[LAUGHTER and APPLAUSE]

…and when he realised who I was he said well, you better get in there now and I went in and I want to tell you, I’ve never been in trouble with the police in my life, didn’t have a clue about a court, a crown court at that, so there’s all the briefs all in their wigs and their gowns and the judge in his red and whatever and the trial lasted for 55 days and it cost in today’s money between £10 – 15 million, that’s how keen they were to get a guilty verdict.

Well, obviously, I can’t go through it all, so I’m just going to say a few of the little things. They couldn’t come to a verdict on me and Dessie, so the judge said to me I’ll tell you what, these are going back to jail for the night, you go to a hotel which has been set up for you and carry on discussing the case, now that’s illegal, the only place they can actually discuss the case and what’s going on is in the jury room, so they went off, we went back to jail for the night, we came back the next morning and within 15 minutes they had reached a verdict. It had been 8:4 the night before, it was now 10:2, guilty by a 10:2 verdict.
So he started handing out the sentences this fella, suspended, suspended, suspended. Now Mackie Jones who was here on the left of me, Mackie Jones got nine months and that to me was worse than what I got and worse than what Dessie got, although our sentences were a lot more severe and I’ll tell you why his was worse, because he was the treasurer of the strike committee and on the day when this alleged conspiracy was taking place, he wasn’t there, he’d been, he’d collected the subs that had been sent in from factories and the railways and the docks, he’d signed for the money and he’d gone, he’d gone before the meeting started and when this barrister said this to the judge, the judge said it doesn’t matter, it doesn’t matter, a nod’s as good as a wink and Mackie got nine months and then he came to me and I made a statement from the dock and I read it out and he said I’m neither going to increase nor decrease your sentence because you’ve spoken and I was given three lots of two years, two years for each of the three offences we were charged with and with that, the jury foreman and his mate jumped up, turned around and started physically fighting, boxing, with other members of the jury and the judge banged his gavel, these two lads got up, ran out and went into the jury room and he had to wait for them to come back out because Dessie Warren hadn’t been sentenced, so they were dragged out by the court usher and Dessie got three three’s, he got three years on each count.

Dessie got worse than that really because and what I’m going to say now and I don’t care who’s here and I don’t care about repeating it, they actually killed Dessie Warren when he was in jail, because he died from chemically-induced Parkinson’s from the shit they gave him in jail. Now I took it once, they give it to you to help you to sleep, you become a zombie, I took it once and so what we did then, me and Dessie, when we got in, we got Mackie, we asked that Mackie got sent to an open prison because he just couldn’t do, he was, he took it terrible and by the way, Mackie’s wife had a little girl 12 months old and she was having a second baby when he got sentenced and I met them a couple of years ago and it’s 43 years now since we’ve been jailed, those girls only got told about his imprisonment two years ago, because he was that ashamed to tell his daughters that he’d been in jail, but Mackie Jones now is a high-flyer, he came out, went back to university, changed his job, flies all over the world, a real high-flyer.

The youngest of the pickets was a fella called Terry Renshaw, Terry Renshaw’s only a baby, he’s only 68, he got a suspended sentence, Terry, he went picketing on one day, he only went one day because he had a broken leg, but it was the day that the police were with us and when they were with us, by the way, on the day they never took a name and address, they didn’t charge anyone, they didn’t caution anyone, they had to carry Terry Renshaw into the dock with his leg in plaster and he got a suspended sentence and that Terry Renshaw is now, he’s now the Lord Mayor of Flint, he’s also a sitting councillor in Flint and he’s also been on a North Wales Police Authority for bloody years, so that’s what they were dealing with, they didn’t know the, anyway me and Dessie decided that we weren’t going to soldier and we wouldn’t work, we wouldn’t do as we were told, we did most of our time in solitary confinement, we wouldn’t wear clothes, so obviously if you don’t wear clothes you can’t have visits and I can honestly tell you, the whole of the time I was in prison I never once shut my own cell door, I said I shouldn’t be here, so I’m not locking myself in, if you want to lock me in, you shut the door and I’ve actually seen prison officers fighting, once on our side and others against us.

Now I was sent to Leicester prison and I suffer from asthma and I was in what they call a segregation unit, which is solitary confinement within solitary confinement, so I was below ground level and I was ill one day, really bad, couldn’t breathe etc. and one fella said put a blanket around him and take him for a walk around the moat, it was an old castle and the other fella said no, leave him and they actually ended up, these two, fighting, physically fighting and in the end this fella got hold of me, got another prisoner and they walked me around the moat until I could get my breath back. So that’s the sort of thing that went on, that’s the sort of thing that went on, but you know, we did what we had to do, we were bloody nuisances, but then one day I was in Leicester prison and the governor there was a wonderful guy, a real, real nice man, he didn’t walk around with other officers, he used to walk around the prison on his own, wore his own clothes and he came in and he said listen Rick, he said you know you’re a political prisoner don’t you, I said yes, I do, I said I’ve actually been told and I was in 14 prisons, Dessie was in 17. I said I was in one of the prisons, I said and a Roman Catholic priest came in to see me, I said I’m not a Catholic, but he came in to see me and he was talking to me and he said now listen, you realise you’re a political prisoner. I said yes, I do.

He said well, there’s six in jail in Great Britain at the moment. I haven’t got a clue who the other four were, there was me and Dessie and the other two of them were the Price Sisters who were Irish terrorists, so who the others were I don’t know, but even then they knew we were political prisoners and this will become relevant in a couple of minutes, but one day the governor came in to see me and this is the man by the way who gave me the Ragged-Trousered Philanthropists and that changed my life, it absolutely changed my life and it changed my politics and I’ve sent them all over the world, people have read articles, I’ve sent them to China, I’ve sent them to Russia, I’ve sent them to Canada, I’ve sent them to America, anyone who writes to me for a copy, I send them, so anyway he came in to me one day and he said listen Rick, he said, you’ve got a visit tomorrow. I said I don’t have visits, I won’t wear clothes. He said no, this is a bit different, he said, the visit is in my office, in the governor’s office.
He said you’ve got to come, he said you’ve got to come and I trusted him, so the next day I put a pair of shorts on and went up to his office and there were three blokes there, a lad called Alan Abrahams, a joiner on a teaching hospital in Liverpool, Billy Jones, a lad from Kirby, another joiner from a teaching hospital and there was an MP from the Midlands called Tom Litterick and Tom Litterick said now listen, Rick, he said you’ve got to go home and I was about 18 months I think, 17 or 18 months into my sentence. I said listen, I’m not going anywhere, I’ve seen my wife, she knows the score, I’ve lost all of my remission, I’ve got to do my full time and he went no, he said listen, we’re not asking you, you’ve got to go home, because Dessie Warren and I didn’t know up until then, Dessie Warren he was in a bad way healthwise and he said Rick, if you don’t go home, Dessie, if you do your full time, Dessie will make sure he does his full time and Rick, we’re frightened of him not making it, they knew, this is how serious it was.

Well, we’d made a pact, we’d made a pact, we wouldn’t do anything, we wouldn’t soldier, we wouldn’t work and I had to write him a letter, because I couldn’t tell him what was going on. He said don’t mention it, don’t tell him, because you know what he is. I had to write Dear Dessie, I’m missing the kids, I want to go home, blah, blah and he sent me a terrible letter back, a dreadful letter, he may as well have stabbed me, he said you cowardly bastard, you cowardly bastard, I thought we were mates, I thought we could trust each other and he gave me this letter, it was awful and 48 hours later, I was let out of Leicester prison at 8 o’clock in the morning, the world’s press was there and Paul Foot, the journalist, Jim Nicholls, the civil liberties lawyer, Peter Carter from Birmingham and that was it. I went around the country then, talking about Dessie, trying to get him out. I went to the TUC Conference in Blackpool, where I was expelled, it was headline news on the 6 o’clock news, me ranting and raving from the gallery because they wouldn’t let me get up to speak and the Delegates were shouting let him speak, let him speak and the Electricians Union, a fella called Break? was saying don’t, don’t let him speak, don’t let him speak, he’s a thug, he’s a political thug and it was murder and we got thrown, that was the headlines, that was the headlines, but anyway a couple of weeks later Dessie was released, but he wasn’t released at 8 o’clock in the morning, he was released at midnight and he went out the back door with no-one, no-one knew he was there and it was many years before I saw Dessie, because when I came out I found that there was stuff going on in his private life that I couldn’t go and see and tell him and I got a little letter one day, got a letter shoved under the door. It just said Rick, Dessie would love to see you and it gave me an address in Chester and I went to this address and I shouted hello and a woman’s voice shouted come in and I went in and I walked through to the lounge and there’s Dessie lying on a mattress, lying on a mattress on the floor, with a rope from the floor screwed into one of the joists and he pulled himself up, he kissed me and he said do you know how long it is, Rick and I said Dessie, I don’t, because he knew, he knew what had gone on, he knew why I hadn’t been to see him and do you know, he never worked again, his hair was snow white.

The last time I went out with him was actually with Arthur Scargill and Dessie, the night before the Durham miners gala, where he was strapped in a wheelchair, he couldn’t hold his head up, but that’s what they did, that’s what they will make sure he does his full time and Rick, we’re frightened of him not making it, they knew, this is how serious it was.

…all we wanted was justice. So I’m going to finish off by saying this. The oldest of the pickets now is a fella called Ken O’Shea, he’s 89. We lost one of the lads last week, he was 86. We’ve got a couple in their late 80’s, Ken is losing his marbles now and I want to make a documentary, I want to go to around again to get as many stories from them and from their wives and from their kids about what went on, but anyway a couple of weeks later Dessie was released, but he wasn’t released at 8 o’clock in the morning, he was released at midnight and he went out the back door with no-one, no-one knew he was there and it was many years before I saw Dessie, because when I came out I found that there was stuff going on in his private life that I couldn’t go and see and tell him and I got a little letter one day, got a letter shoved under the door. It just said Rick, Dessie would love to see you and it gave me an address in Chester and I went to this address and I shouted hello and a woman’s voice shouted come in and I went in and I walked through to the lounge and there’s Dessie lying on a mattress, lying on a mattress on the floor, with a rope from the floor screwed into one of the joists and he pulled himself up, he kissed me and he said do you know how long it is, Rick and I said Dessie, I don’t, because he knew, he knew what had gone on, he knew why I hadn’t been to see him and do you know, he never worked again, his hair was snow white.

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The last time I went out with him was actually with Arthur Scargill and Dessie, the night before the Durham miners gala, where he was strapped in a wheelchair, he couldn’t hold his head up, but that’s what they did, that’s what they said to him who was Tomlinson and what was he? He said Tomlinson was an agitator and a political thug and in the same programme, they say to Arthur Scargill and this is one of the best, best ever replies I’ve ever heard in my life,
Mr Scargill, would you be surprised to learn that during the miners dispute, six members of the NUM Executive were in the pay of MI5 and Arthur said yes, I would be surprised, I thought it would have been a lot more than that.

[LAUGHTER and APPLAUSE]

Fabulous, but Peter Hain, Peter Hain is in the same programme, because around about that time he was leading the anti-apartheid regime and he was arrested and charged with armed bank robbery. Of course he got away with it because he was nowhere to be seen, he just had someone like him on the CCTV, so I wrote to Peter Hain not long ago and I wasn’t very happy with the reply we got. He just said we know all about the case, but unfortunately I don’t want to get involved in the campaign, don’t ask me why, but there you go, but as I say, I’m just going to finish off by saying we’ve got a wonderful researcher who’s been doing all the gear for us, her name’s Eileen Turnbull and she’s like a Rottweiler, well no, she’s more than a, I was going to say a terrorist, but at least you can negotiate with a terrorist can’t you …

[LAUGHTER]

Eileen Turnbull has got papers that would make your bloody hair curl, she’s found papers right up, right up to Ted Heath setting the unit up, against us, setting us up, the trial was political from day one and she’s got the papers and what the main thing is, when we were in prison, I was, as I say I was two years three times, Dessie was doing three three’s, she found a document by a fella called Laurence Lustgarten, who was a visiting law professor who’s still working in Oxford and he said, he wrote a letter in the law journal that said these sentences are illegal, the most these fellas could have got was three months and she delved a bit further and she found out that the Home Secretary had been informed about this and he’d written to the Attorney General saying look at this, they’re still in jail, but the most they could have got was three months and she got the letter, the reply from the Attorney General saying you’re right, but their defence team have missed it, so leave them where they are.

So they knew, but our defence team hadn’t missed it, because my junior, who’s a very, very well respected high court judge now called David Altaras, we got his documents and he said these sentences are illegal, the most these lads could have got is three months, so when we went to prison we were in for five months, we came out on appeal and we had to go in front of a fella called Lord Justice Salmon, but when we got there, Lord Justice Salmon had gone west, John West …

[LAUGHTER]

Lord Justice Salmon had gone west and sitting in his place was Goddard, the Lord Chief Justice, the No. 1 guy and he squashed two of the charges and when it came to the sentencing, he said to our barristers do you want to challenge the sentences and they said no, they said no, but they had the proof that the sentences were illegal, so I can only assume that they were got at. Anyway, it’s all water under the bridge, the battle goes on, we’ve been in touch with the CCRC, they’ve got all sorts of evidence, they’ve interviewed Dessie’s wife, who’s now 81 and frail in her little home and they’ve done all sorts of things, but listen, I’m just going to finish off by saying this, we’re going to get there, we’re going to bring this to a conclusion, it’s not for our sake because I’m ready to hand my knife and fork in, I haven’t got long for this world. What I’m saying is, this is about my kids and your kids and your grandkids. Keep up the fight and don’t give in.

[APPLAUSE]

Onwards and upwards. Thank you very much.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ronnie Draper, General Secretary: Right, just a few minutes, I’m just waiting for something to come out of the Standing Orders office and then I’m going to get Ricky to do some presentations for us, but before we do, I want to tell you that Ricky said that he’s happy to have his photograph taken, a lot of people will have had their photo taken with him last year, but if you want your photo taken again, Ricky’s prepared to do it, but don’t get your photo taken yet George, it’s going to cost you a quid and it’s going to the Shrewsbury …

[LAUGHTER]

…so we’re going to get somebody with a bag somewhere, we’ll grab maybe a bag off the Comrades in the front here, a little canvas bag and we’ll give you it back after and if I can get John Owens or someone to collect the money. If you want a photograph, it’s a quid, with Ricky Tomlinson and it goes to the Shrewsbury 24 Campaign.

[APPLAUSE]
Hang on, John, I’ll come down and the other thing is, Ricky, I was going to say before, I know you’re eager to get down there and do these presentations, you got a baker last year and I said this morning you’ll end up with more bakers than Hovis, so instead of that what we’re going to do, we’re going to make a donation of 100 quid to the Shrewsbury Campaign, so our Executive and the members, we’ll put 100 to start that off …

[APPLAUSE]

…and Ricky and maybe if you want to do a few questions as well, question and answer, shall I leave these up here and you can come back and get them after. Yes, I’ll come down Ricky, hang on.

That’s it. Right, Comrades, we’re going to make two presentations and these are probably the biggest sort of presentations that we ever do within the Union, that’s 40 year badges. I’ve got to say, the loyalty, to get to a 40 year badge and I’ve got there myself, but I’ve had a little bit more of an easier ride as an Officer, a National Officer, when you’re working in a factory and you had the choice, because think about it, 40 years ago was 1975, there was a choice about which employer you were with, you could move around industries and of course with that, you probably had about 100 Unions that you had the choice of and so the people I’m going to make the award to today have been with us 40 years and I’m really proud. So the first one I’m going to ask Ricky to present is to, when I get the stuff out, is to Geoff ‘Grumpy’ Crawford, who’s a 40 year badge member, he’s …

[APPLAUSE]

…Right, just to say, Ricky, before you present it, Geoff, as I say, 40 year member, worked for Greggs at Gosforth and he’s the second person from that Branch who’s achieved that, the 40 year honour from the Union. He was a Shop Steward for many years and since he’s retired from that factory, he never misses coming to Conference and I always look forward to seeing him, so what he’s going to get, Ricky, is the certificate, he’s going to get a free card, he’s going to get a cheque for 150 quid …

Ricky Tomlinson: Oh lovely.

Brother Ronnie Draper, General Secretary: so you might want to hang around him tonight.

Ricky Tomlinson: Lovely.

[APPLAUSE]

When he pulled that out, I thought it was going to say catarrh, that’s it kid, yes, you can go and have a drink now.

Brother Ronnie Draper, General Secretary: The second one, Ricky, unfortunately we didn’t find out about the 40 year award that we were going to make to this person until we actually got to Conference, so what we’ve done, we’ve mocked-up a sort of certificate, just so we can actually do the presentation and honour this person at Conference. Of course what we will do is we’ll do it on our return back and the award’s going to be made to one of our full-time Officials, a Regional Secretary, Dave Dash, who’s from our No. 2 Region. He was a Branch Secretary at Hovis for many years and served on our National Executive and from there he was made an Auxiliary Officer and now we know that he’s a Regional Secretary.

I’ve got to say Dave’s one of those unique Officers that has led our political education, he’s really been, when he was asked to take up the cudgel on this by the Executive, he led our political education scheme and that was bringing young people through on courses, taking them down to the House of Commons, making sure that they got to meet, see how the political system worked and then on top of that, when we did the Fast Foods Campaign, which now is snowballing right across the country and it’s actually a global campaign that we’re involved with, Dave actually helped us lead that and he’s a co-ordinator and Officer for that. We sent him over to America, I get Southport, he gets America, but he’s been over there with the SEIU, the Unions over there doing the campaigns, he’s been helping us in that. I know this is going to be a really proud moment for Dave, I know that Dave’s proud that he’s worked for the Bakers, Food & Allied Workers Union, but he should be more proud that he’s achieved 40 years and been a great, loyal servant. Dave.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Do you want a cup of tea, cup of tea? Yes, go ahead then. Tea-time. Listen, he was here last year, I know it goes chaotic now, so let’s go for quarter to, yes?

Okay Delegates, just a reminder tonight at half past five in the Ramada. Obviously we want you to, we’d like all of you to go to the meeting tonight, there is food provided and obviously we want to show solidarity and support to strikers and we’ve got a number of people who are currently on strike that will be attending that and we want you to go and show them how we stand with other workers in dispute. So please go along to that, half past five next door in the Ramada Hotel.

Okay, Ricky, could you come back, if you don’t mind, cheers mate.
Brother Ronnie Draper, General Secretary: Right, Ricky, as I said before, we’ve got a presentation for you. First of all 100 quid to go in your fund, your fighting fund.

Ricky Tomlinson: Thank you very much for that, kid.

Brother Ronnie Draper, General Secretary: Call him at the back for this. We’ll give you one of our Hungry for Justice, Fast Foods Campaign T-shirts for when you’re coming on marches and all that. I said you’re about a medium, he said XXL, him, over there.

Ricky Tomlinson: Thanks very much.

Brother Ronnie Draper, General Secretary: So you’ve got that and of course, I’ll say it quietly in case your mates over there hear, a tin of biscuits, Fox’s biscuits, made by Trade Union members.

Ricky Tomlinson: They’ll be eaten by Trade Union members.

Brother Ronnie Draper, General Secretary: They always taste better and can I just say, the collection we had, for photographs and all that, we’ve also raised another £100.35, so …

Ricky Tomlinson: Thanks very much, I’m made up, thanks very much.

Brother Ronnie Draper, General Secretary: Cheers, thanks for coming, Ricky.

Ricky Tomlinson: Can I just say, I know, I don’t know whether you’ve seen on the television some time ago, about that woman who picked the cat up and threw it in the bin, do you remember? She’s just been fined £300 for putting it in the wrong coloured bin.

Brother Ronnie Draper, General Secretary: The other thing, Ricky, one thing you can do, I know you go around a number of Trade Union Congresses, different Trade Union Conferences, don’t forget this one, the General Secretary served you tea, don’t forget that.

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Conference, Mark Brooks from Standing Orders.

Brother Mark Brooks, Chair of Standing Orders: Thank you, Mr President. Please turn to your Agendas. Emergency motion 8 will be taken after motion 56. That’s all I have to put to Conference. Thank you.

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Do Conference agree? All show. Against? Okay, thank you. We’re on motion, what motion are we on?, I’ve forgotten. Motion 51.

51  Education  No 2 Regional Council

That this conference agrees that comprehensive education is our children’s best hope for their future.

Brother Pat Rowley – No. 2 Region: Mr President, Delegates. Conference, this resolution is about comprehensive education and you all remember the Wilson government and Shirley Williams and in that government put this education programme through. Previous to that, you know what you had, you had the grammar schools, your child was written off at 11 years of age, it had no longer any chance of making it anywhere in the world in education, written off, that was it. That’s why today they’ve brought out another system called free schools. Free schools are private schools, financed by the tax payer. Cove? took 400 million out of the schools budget to shore up his failing schools on the, what do you call it, the free schools. That’s what’s happening and they’ll continue that until they rob the comprehensive education, between that and the academies, they will rob the education system of money and then it’s a failure, they’ll say it failed and then they’ll have these free schools.

Now these free schools are for the elite, it’s cherry-picking of the neighbourhood, much the same as the grammar schools were, they’re cherry-picking, they’re taking the best kids. Out of 120 children in some areas, only one or two kids make it into it and if there’s a lot more, they do eliminate them on several different, there’s a way of doing that, they do it. Conference, we must keep comprehensive education and life-long learning, life-long learning is important for all of us, all of us and if we have that and free too. Look at the amount of education I had through the Trade Union and through the west of England colleges,
I went there to try to improve myself as much as I could, without having to pay. Now that’s all gone, you have to pay about three or four hundred quid now if you take a part-time course in colleges, because it’s a rip-off. Believe you me, if we don’t, nothing will beat comprehensive education. Academies are free schools. What they should do is take out the A and put a P in there and you’ll call it private education, that’s what it is, that’s what it’s about now. I got into hot water with them about it in Bristol, in Barton Hill Primary School, they went for academisation and the governors went for it, I opposed it and I tried to get them not to do it, because no academisation or anything else will do anything for a school. The only people that can do anything for the school is first the parents, the teachers and the head of the school, that’s where it’ll be done. Academisation is privatisation, it’s a firm going to set up on the outside and take profits out of the school budget. Now, is it right to make profit out of education or health? It is wrong to do so, make no mistake about that. Conference, support the resolution.

"APPLAUSE"

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Seconder? Formally seconded? Oh, are you seconding it?

Brother Colin Hall – Branch 359: Comprehensive education, it’s quite simple. When my kids went to school, I couldn’t afford to send them to public school because public school is paid for, private education, as a lot of people know. Comprehensive education isn’t the best, it isn’t necessarily the best, but it’s the best we’ve got and at the end of the day, if you don’t educate your kids properly, your alternative is ignorance and ignorance causes all sorts of problems, including inevitably wars. Comprehensive education is the best we’ve got. No child should ever get a better education just because mummy and daddy can pay. Please support this motion.

"APPLAUSE"

Brother Steve Nevin – Branch 504: Good afternoon, Conference. I’m here to support this motion. Ofsted, league tables, public schools, private schools, free schools, academies, get rid of them all.

"APPLAUSE"

All they care about is making money, it’s all about profit. Education is all about teaching all children, each and every single one of them, regardless of financial considerations. Please support this motion. Thank you.

"APPLAUSE"

Brother Leon Don – Branch 334: I have a friend who works at a nursery, she recently decided to leave the nursery for personal reasons and she found a job working with eight year olds in an academy. She’s not qualified for this role, I’m sure in the future she will make a very, very good teacher, but our children and our grandchildren should be taught by qualified teachers …

"APPLAUSE"

…and she should be in university, learning that qualification, not getting paid less than qualified teachers, teaching our students and the government complaining about the grades they get. It’s not on, so I’m supporting this motion. Thank you.

"APPLAUSE"

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Any more speakers? Okay.

Brother Joe Knapper – Branch 566 (Warburtons) – speaking on behalf of the Executive Council: The Executive Council would ask Conference to support the motion on the basis that comprehensive education does not select its intake on the academic achievements or aptitude, in contrast to a selective school system where admission is based on selective criteria and of course the ability to pay. Education is the right of all. Delegates, please support. Thank you.

"APPLAUSE"

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Okay Conference, to the vote. Those in favour? Against? That’s carried. Motion 53. 54, no it’s 53, it is 53, who told me it had been withdrawn? Yes, you’re confusing me.

53 Family

Branch 215

That this Conference agrees life does not end at retirement; it can begin in a whole new way.

Brother Pat Rowley – No. 2 Region: Conference, this is about people. Life does not end at retirement. Yes, the hard work of life and the grind of going to work finishes, but people that’s retired they can do so much in the communities working, they can either be councillors, community organisers, work on everything and they do spend a lot of time helping their children and grandchildren and helping them and looking after grandchildren so their parents can get to work and get a living. Conference, I move the resolution. Thank you.
Brother Chris Lay – Branch 253: Totally here to support this motion. My dear old nan, she’s 91 this year, fair play I got married in March and she did more to help me than anybody ever would, fair play to her, she was absolutely amazing. She was the first one on the dance floor and the last one to leave, fair play to her, so really made me proud, but also on a weekly basis, she attends dance clubs on a Tuesday and a Thursday, but I feel we must do more to actually help the elderly to get to these places, so they can get out and socialise with other people of their age as well, so please support this motion.

[SUPPORT]

Sister Marilyn McCarthy – Branch 450 (Manchester): Obviously up here to support this. Since I’ve retired, I do two mornings a week voluntary work, I’m on the EC for Manchester Trade Union Council, I do scrounging work with Oldham Domestic Violence Unit, I’m active with Axe the Bedroom Tax, feed the Manchester homeless, chauffeur for Geoff/Jeff McCarthy and an active Trade Unionist. There’s plenty out there for us to do …

[SUPPORT]

…you’ve got to keep doing it. I ask you to support.

[SUPPORT]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Okay. When we looked at this motion, we invited, we thought who around the table would know most about retirement, so we decided that Ronnie should be the one that responded on this. You were the closest to it.

Brother Ronnie Draper, General Secretary: That’s actually a lie. I mean, have a look around, have a look around the Executive, you can see I’m not the oldest one. I think what I did, I made the mistake of going for a pee at the wrong time when they were selecting who was going to do it and when I came back, I found I’d copped for the motion, but Chair I don’t mind, I’ll take that responsibility for us all. We would ask Conference to support the motion clearly. I have to say that the Executive full-time Officials and National Officers sincerely hope that life doesn’t end at retirement, given the close proximity to the pension age of most of them.

[LAUGHTER]

You started it, pal. If you need living proof that life really can start again after retirement, you don’t need to look any further than the mover of the motion. I was trying to think of all the things that Pat Rowley does and I thought I’ll list them down, so first of all a serial exerciser, I mean you’ve seen him run across there, none of the Executive could run that far, I’ll tell you and then speak after it. I’ve got pictures on my ‘phone of him disco dancing, he’s a school governor, he’s a Labour Party activist, he’s a Regional Council Delegate and he’s been a chef on the Occupy Campaign in Bristol, where he got lots of time staying and gathering food and cooking it for those people who were on the Occupy line, so he does a great job.

[SUPPORT]

On top of that, he’s out with Gary Johnston organising on a regular basis, to make sure that this Union continues to grow and his influence means a lot to us. He’s the first name down when there’s Trade Union marches. He asked me, he ‘phoned me a couple of years ago about a march that was taking place and asked could he join it and it was the march that was going from Jarrow to London and asked, he said would we be okay with him marching on it. I thought he’s not going to go all the way from Jarrow to London, but he did join the march, I think, somewhere north of London and walked in with them, so again an absolute credit to our Union.

[SUPPORT]

The last two years, I’ve met him at Tolpuddle in Dorset, the martyrs rally, to remember where Trade Unionism started in this country and Pat is there, he’s the first one there on a Sunday, making his own way to be there, under his own steam, to support a campaign that has been supported by the Trade Union movement for many years, but of course Pat’s not the only retired activist we had. We got the likes of [unclear] helping out quite a lot, Gloria Martin’s very active at Regional Councils, Mickey Lynch, who’s sat at the back of Vi Carr, George Tittensor, who I’ve had some dealings over the last few weeks, but George is very active within the Union. Of course we’ve then got the likes of Martin Kelly, who chairs the No. 5 Regional Council and is a great campaigner for disabled people, on our Union’s behalf and then of course there’s Joe Marino who, I’ve got to say, retired, still does a little bit of work for us but the difference that his involvement with the credit union has made and people who’ve been around the credit union will see that as a Trade Union activist with an understanding of finance, has made an absolute world of difference, Chair, to our credit union.
YOU KNOW, THE NAMES OF OUR RETIRED PEOPLE WHO’VE BEEN ACTIVE IN WORKING LIFE, WHO ARE STILL ACTIVE, THEY TRIP OFF THE TONGUE. IT’S LIKE A WHO’S WHO OF TRADE UNIONISM AND I HOPE IN A FEW YEARS TIME, WHEN PROBABLY ABOUT 25 YEARS WHEN I RETIRE, THAT I WILL BE EXACTLY THE SAME AS THEM. OF COURSE WE’RE NOT JUST TALKING ABOUT TRADE UNION ACTIVITY THAT GIVES A NEW LEASE OF LIFE. IT’S DOING THE THINGS THAT WHEN YOU WORKED, YOU Couldn’T DO. THINGS LIKE HOLIDAYS, IF FINANCES ALLOW, SPENDING TIME WITH FAMILY, I SUPPOSE ESPECIALLY GRANDCHILDREN. JOINING LOCAL CLUBS AND I REMEMBER GOING TO PORTADOWN AND INTO NOEL MULLEN’S CLUB AND MEETING HIS DAD AND HIS DAD’S ABOUT 17, OR HE THINKS HE’S ABOUT 17 AND HE ACTS THAT WAY, HE RUNS A PENSIONERS CLUB AND I’LL TELL YOU, I’VE NEVER SEEN A BUNCH OF PENSIONERS SO ACTIVE IN THINGS WITHIN THE COMMUNITY AND WE’RE TALKING ABOUT WALKS, TRIPS, PARTIES, DANCING, ABSOLUTELY FANTASTIC TO SEE AND ALSO THE OPPORTUNITY TO TAKE UP HOBBIES MAYBE, THAT YOU DIDN’T DO BEFORE.

THE OPTIONS AND THE OPPORTUNITIES, COMRADES, ARE ENDLESS. OF COURSE, MUCH POINT, MANY OF THE POINTS I’M GOING TO MAKE ARE DEPENDENT ON FINANCE BEING AVAILABLE AND THAT IS SOMETHING THAT IS A MAJOR PROBLEM TO MANY AND WILL BE AN EVEN GREATER PROBLEM IN THE FUTURE FOR RETIRED PEOPLE. ATTACKS ON PENSION FUNDS, LOW WAGE CULTURE, JOB INSECURITY AND SPIRALLING DEBT ARE GOING TO HAVE A DEEPER IMPACT ON THE GENERATION NOW AND THE GENERATIONS TO COME, THAN IT IS ON THE PENSIONERS TODAY, SO IT’S GOING TO BE SOMETHING THAT’S GOING TO HAVE A MAJOR EFFECT ON PEOPLES’ ABILITY TO RETIRE WITH DIGNITY. IT’S COMMON KNOWLEDGE, AS I SAY, THAT THEY’RE GOING TO BE WORSE OFF THAN THEIR PARENTS. GOVERNMENT POLICY NOT ONLY DESTROYS THE OPPORTUNITY FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS TO RETIRE IN DIGNITY, IT PRESENTLY PLAYS ON THE GOOD NATURE OF FAMILIES TO ASSIST WITH WORKING RELATIONSHIPS. WHEN I SAID BEFORE ABOUT YOU HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO TAKE TIME WITH YOUR GRANDCHILDREN, THAT SHOULD BE A PLEASURABLE EXPERIENCE, IT’S NOT MEANT TO BE AN ENFORCED CHORE THAT’S DONE SO THAT YOUR OWN CHILDREN CAN GO TO WORK BECAUSE THEY CAN’T AFFORD TO STAY AT HOME. THAT’S A PRIME EXAMPLE HOW THIS GOVERNMENT EXPLOITS WITHOUT LEGISLATION, PLAYING ON THE GOOD NATURE OF FAMILIES TO PROPP UP A WORKING REGIME THAT DEPENDS ON IN-WORK BENEFITS, CHARITY AND GOOD NATURE OF FAMILIES.

COMRADES, IT’S EVIDENT THAT THE POLITICAL PARTIES ARE NOT GOING TO ENSURE AN EASY PASSAGE INTO THE RETIREMENT YEARS. WITH CUTS TO SOCIAL SERVICES, BUS SERVICES AND I SAY ABOUT BUS SERVICES, WHERE I LIVE IN A SMALL VILLAGE IN THE SOUTH, MY PARTNER WAS TELLING ME LAST WEEK A COUPLE WHO’D RETIRED AND THEY WANTED TO ENJOY THEIR BUS PASSES AND GET OUT AND AROUND THE COUNTRY, THEY WANT TO GET RID OF THEIR CAR AND DO THE THINGS THAT THEY SHOULD BE ABLE TO DO AND THE BUS COMPANY WHERE I LIVE, YOU’RE LUCKY IF YOU EVER SEE A BUS INCIDENTALLY, BUT WE’VE GOT BUS STOPS, THEY’VE GONE BUST AND NOW THERE’S NO BUSES IN THAT VILLAGE AND SO WHAT THEY’VE DONE, THOSE PEOPLE ARE CAPTIVE, THEY’RE ISOLATED IN A SMALL VILLAGE WITH NO OPPORTUNITY TO TRAVEL ANYWHERE AND SO THEY’VE HAD TO TAKE THE DRASTIC MEASURE OF MOVING HOUSE, THEY’RE LOOKING TO MOVE AWAY FROM A BEAUTIFUL VILLAGE TO GO SOMEWHERE JUST BECAUSE OF GOVERNMENT CUTS TO THE BUS SERVICES AND THERE’S, IF YOU LOOK AT THE MANIFESTOS OVER THE PAST FEW MONTHS, THERE WAS PRECIOUS LITTLE THAT ACTUALLY HELPED PENSIONERS.

YES, THEY GIVE SOME TAX CUTS, BUT THEY ONLY AFFECT PEOPLE WHO’VE GOT MONEY. YOU CAN ONLY GET INTEREST ON SAVINGS IF YOU’VE GOT SAVINGS IN THE FIRST PLACE AND THAT WAS NEVER EXPLAINED TO PEOPLE, ALL IT WAS APPEALING TO THOSE RICHER OR MORE WELL-OFF PENSIONERS WHO MAY WELL HAVE VOTED TORY. AS I SAY, IT ONLY HAPPENS, GIVING TAX BREAKS ONLY WORKS IF YOU HAVE THE MONEY IN THE FIRST PLACE. WE NEED A TOTAL OVERHAUL OF A SYSTEM PRESENTLY EMPLOYED IF WE ARE TO FULLFIL THE AMBITIONS THROUGHOUT OUR WORKING LIVES, TO RETIRE IN COMFORT, TO RETIRE WITH DIGNITY. CONFERENCE, IT IS CAMPAIGNING TRADE UNIONS AND CAMPAIGNING TRADE UNIONISTS WHO ARE THE ONLY AVENUE OF HELP. ENJOY RETIREMENT, LET YOUR HAIR DOWN, MAKE A DIFFERENCE, YOU EARNED IT. PLEASE SUPPORT.

[APPLAUSE]

BROTHER IAN HODSON, NATIONAL PRESIDENT: OKAY CONFERENCE, ALL THOSE IN FAVOUR? AGAINST? THAT’S CARRIED. MOTION 54.

54 FAMILY

54 FAMILY NO 5 REGIONAL COUNCIL

THAT THIS CONFERENCE AGREES THAT THIS TRADE UNION PUT IN PLACE SOME KIND OF COUNSELLING BODY TO SUPPORT MEMBERS WHO HAVE LOST CLOSE FAMILY. UNDER THE BANNER OF STRENGTH IN UNITY.

BROTHER SEAN MOLLOY – BRANCH 558 (RATHBONES, WAKEFIELD): MOTION 54. THAT THIS CONFERENCE, THAT THIS TRADE UNION PUT IN PLACE SOME KIND OF COUNSELLING BODY TO SUPPORT MEMBERS WHO HAVE LOST CLOSE FAMILY, UNDER THE BANNER OF STRENGTH AND UNITY. THIS MOTION CAME ABOUT, WE’VE GOT A SISTER IN THE WORKPLACE CALLED DEBBIE HUDSON, SHE LOST HER SISTER TO CANCER LAST YEAR AND I SPOKE TO DAVE [UNCLEAR], I SAID DO WE HAVE ANY SORT OF SUPPORT OR COUNSELLING FOR PEOPLE WHO HAVE LOST CLOSE FAMILY, OBVIOUSLY SHE’S UPSET AND I ACTUALLY RANG PUDSEY AND VICKY SYKES SENT SOME INFORMATION THROUGH FOR COUNSELLING SUPPORT AND STUFF LIKE THAT AND IT WENT DOWN REALLY WELL. I THINK IN THIS MODERN DAY OF 2015 WHERE IT’S NOT ALL CLOSED SHOPS, I THINK SOMETHING LIKE THAT SEPARATES A MEMBER FROM A NON-MEMBER.

[APPLAUSE]
Brother Leon Don – Branch 334: This is quite a, quite a difficult one for me. I would like to support the motion. On 23rd May I was at work and I, sorry, okay, my ‘phone was going mental in my pocket and when I went outside, thank you, when I went outside to see who’d been ringing me, I had about 10 missed ‘phone calls from my mother. When I returned the ‘phone call to ask if she was okay, she said your father’s on his deathbed, so I explained that I had to go to the hospital and they rushed me to hospital quite quickly, to be fair to them and in the car they asked me what was going on and I explained the situation. When I got there, there was nothing they could do, he’d slipped, fallen. It took five days, those five days were not classed as sick pay, they were not classed as bereavement, as he was alive and I was fit and well. I don’t think that’s right. What made it even worse is four months later, a young lady’s car broke down and she got a week off work as an emergency holiday. Why wasn’t I entitled to an emergency holiday? Please support this motion.

[APPLAUSE]

Sister Dawn Scott – Branch 253: How do you follow that? Chair, Platform, Delegates. Here to support this motion. I lost my husband almost two years ago. Fortunately for me, I’ve got a very close family that surrounded me with love and comfort at a very difficult time, with the love, sorry, unfortunately not everybody has the support that I was fortunate to have. We all need support for all our members at such a difficult time. Please support.

[APPLAUSE]

Sister Rachel Mullen – Branch 529: I don’t want to take anything away from what other speakers have said, because obviously I realise how difficult it is for people to come up here and talk about work stuff and Union stuff, let alone personal stuff like Comrades before have just said, but I’ve got, I’m going to oppose it on, I totally get the, don’t label me as a bad person or insensitive because, I’m not being funny but at the end of the day we come here and we preach solidarity to the end of the earth, so why would the Union have to put a counselling service in place to provide under the banner of solidarity, when we ourselves as members, not even reps, just members, colleagues, I mean everybody’s lost somebody, death is about as certain as being taxed in life, so if you know somebody in your workplace has lost somebody, it doesn’t take a genius to go and talk to that person or even if they don’t want to talk, just let them know that if they need anything or even need somebody to sit with or talk to, that you’re there whenever they’re ready, so that is the basis on what I’m opposing the motion on and also when it says close family, what’s classed as close family? At the end of the day, my cousin is like my little brother, but that wouldn’t be classed as close in some peoples’ eyes, so how do you define that to some people? Please support.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Colin Hall – Branch 359 (Charnwood Foods, Leicester): It’s simple. If you try and get counselling from the so-called professional counselling services, a lot of the time the answer is simple, no. Furthermore, if you’re looking for support or sympathy from your employer, pigs might fly, but usually their answer is man-up, get back to work. The simple fact is, if you lose someone and you end up in black dog, down that hole, a lot of people start thinking about suicide. I’ve seen it, I’ve been around death too much. We need to reach out and support and counsel every member that we can, because not everyone can get through some of the experiences, some of the experiences I’ve been through and get out the other side. Please support.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother George Lonsdale– Branch 459 (Greggs): I think the best people to support you are the people that are sat in this room now. Your Brothers and Sisters are there for you whenever you need them. I think everyone deals with death in a different way. My mother died a few years ago back and I got a ‘phone call at work, in my Greggs uniform, went straight to hospital and I sat next to her bed for 36 hours, until she actually passed away, but I know my mum would not want me to rot, she’d want me to get on with my life and with people around you, especially people at work who you’re close to, they are the ones that, for me, can support you the best way. Yes, counsellors help, there’s no doubt about that and some people may need that, but look to the left, look to the right and the people are there to help and support you. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

Sister Marilyn McCarthy – Branch 450 (Manchester): I’m here to oppose this, not because I don’t believe in it, but one of my, I’ve got three daughters, my oldest daughter is a trained counsellor. She went to college for two solid years to learn that. This is not about just giving somebody a hug and saying there, there, things will get better, this is about people that are really, really struggling, that’s what counsellors are there for. You’re asking for counselling and for the Union to sort that out for them. It won’t happen and I’m asking you to oppose it, sorry.

[APPLAUSE]
Brother Ian Hodson, National President: General Secretary.

Brother Ronnie Draper, General Secretary: Thank you, Chair. A deeply moving debate. I’m going to ask the mover to remit back to the Executive Council. We’ve had a lot of soul searching ourselves and if you won’t remit it, then we would ask Conference to oppose the motion, but let me start by saying we would have loved to support the motion, absolutely would have loved to support the motion because there’s a lot that we could get our teeth into. The problem is, it’s way outside our sphere of expertise. Probably everybody in this Hall, at some time, has been touched by a bereavement of a loved one. In fact John and I, within a week, we lost our mothers, within a week of each other and I know what we went through. So, we know that feeling of utter despair that’s there and the emptiness that the death of somebody close brings, but counselling, as Marilyn’s just said, is a very, very specialist subject. It’s not just carried out by people who’ve got deep compassion and deep sympathy, it’s carried out by people who’ve undergone really rigorous training to do it, because you can do damage if you don’t do it right and that’s why, one of the reasons why we would not do it. Obviously given all the debates that we’ve had regarding finances and the structure, it’d be wrong for the Executive Council to challenge, to channel money into employing a counsellor on either a full-time or a part-time basis, due to the prohibitive costs of it.

The alternative is that we train somebody within our ranks to a necessary standard of competence, but that in itself, Comrades, presents itself with its own set of problems. If you talk to any of our full-time Officials, they will tell you that we already put pressure on them to take on more and more duties to do with their job. They’re out there to increase membership and to represent people and to, we’ve recently, as I say, asked five of them to take on the extra duties of dealing with tribunal cases, duties that used to be with our lawyers. To alleviate the pressure on the Regions, we’ve employed extra personnel to deal with the load and I’m sure that if we were giving to them the extra duty of bereavement counsellor, then that would impact severely on the roles that they do on a day-to-day basis. Conference, as a Trade Union we have a certain sphere of expertise, employment law, health and safety, adult learning and negotiating skills.

Through our network of lawyers, we can provide consumer rights, medical negligence, house buying, road accidents and through our benefit providers we provide insurances, investments advice, accident cover and a multiplicity of other subjects where we can go out and ask experts in that field to deal with it. I would say to the mover, I am happy to talk to them, if the mover knows of any organisation or individual who would be prepared to do these services for the Union, then I would be more than happy to talk to them, but other than that, it’s hard to see what the Union can conceivably do if we’re going to do it justice. As I say, we know the deep emptiness of bereavement and what it does and I fully understand how the mover felt when he was down here. It’s not a lack of sympathy on behalf of the Executive or the fact that they’re callous to those who may be at the lowest ebb in their lives. Believe me, if we could, we would, but occasionally we can’t. On that basis I would ask the mover to remit the motion and if not, I would ask Conference to oppose the motion.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: He’s on his way down.

Brother Sean Molloy – Branch 558 (Rathbones, Wakefield): Yes, I’ll agree with the General Secretary, I’ll remit it, okay.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Motion 55.

55 Family Executive Council

That this Conference agrees to support the work of the white ribbon campaign UK that aims to eliminate domestic violence by raising awareness that it is happening.

Sister Sarah Woolley, speaking on behalf of the Executive Council: Moving motion 55. Conference, every act of violence is wrong and everyone, whether male or female, has the right to a life free of violence. Domestic violence against men is increasing in the UK and women’s violence against men and violence in same-sex relationships without doubt does occur. However, this being said, men remain by far the main offenders of domestic violence. The White Ribbon Campaign is the largest effort in the world of men working to end men’s violence against women and wearing a white ribbon is a personal pledge to never commit, condone or remain silent about it. A cultural change is needed, Conference, domestic violence is not spoken about enough. People shy away from it as they don’t know what to say or do. It makes us feel uncomfortable, as it can be going on under our noses without us knowing and we don’t think we can change anything, but the reality is, one in four women will experience domestic violence in their lifetime and two
women a week are killed because of it. Raising the issue and getting rid of the taboo by talking about it more means we can enable friends of women suffering to understand and therefore be there to help them when they need it and as Union Stewards and Branch Officials, we can be effective, confidential people that our members can turn to for help.

In Australia, the White Ribbon Campaign’s Deputy National Secretary is also a National Officer for the Maritime Union, one of their most militant Unions and in all of their workplace agreements, they have secured paid leave for victims of domestic violence, much like the public sector over there, so that victims can escape without the worry of losing their job or not having any financial help. This is something I believe that we, as a pro-active fighting Union should be aiming to do in all of our workplace agreements too. So, Conference, look into the White Ribbon Campaign please and I hope all the men in the room will sign up to it for the pledge and for the women here that want to make a difference, tell people about the Campaign and get men in your workplaces and at home to take the pledge too and speak to Marilyn McCarthy or myself about other organisations that deal with domestic violence.

The 25th November is International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and there is a great booklet by the TUC called ‘Domestic Violence: a guide for the workplace’ which talks through how to make domestic violence a workplace issue and their four forcing? policies on it. Let’s be the Union at the forefront of pushing for the eradication of domestic violence, because like I said at the beginning, everyone has the right to live a life without violence in it. Thank you. Please support.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Formally seconded? Speakers?

Brother George Tittensor – Branch 392 (Birmingham & West Midlands): Mr Chairman, Conference. I’m in full support of the resolution, but I’m wondering how we can get around domestic violence. Domestic violence is done behind closed doors and you all know that if a lady is beaten up, she’ll say don’t tell anybody because I’ll do it again and if a man has got beaten up, he’s ashamed to go out and say to you yes, the wife beat me …

[APPLAUSE]

…so how do we get around that? I move.

Sister Marilyn McCarthy – Branch 450 (Manchester): It happened to me once, not the guy I’m married to now, my previous husband, he’d been out all day on the beer and he punched me. I got up Sunday morning and where he’d hit me at the side of my head, black eye, went across my nose and started to creep black the other side of my face. I’d just got a new job and a car was part of the package and I couldn’t drive because one of my eyes was shut and I had to tell people. When we went in the pub, people went oh my God, have you fallen. I said no, he’s hit me, so needless to say …

[APPLAUSE]

…he never did it again. I’m the mother of three girls, that’s probably why I’ve got involved with domestic violence and what I do is I scrounge stuff, because these girls might come from Southampton and their partner has been so violent they’ve had to get the girl miles away with the kids so they’re then residing in Oldham, so when they’re given a property to move into, they’ve got nobody to fall back on, that’s where I come in. Me and Facebook sort it out, because I put it on Facebook and people say I’ve got some pans, I’ve got some curtains, I’ve got a settee they can have, that’s how I got involved. Others of you can do, but if any of you blokes are guilty of domestic violence, hang your head in shame.

[APPLAUSE]

Sister Helen Stacey – Branch 580: I’ve been a previous victim of domestic violence. I grew up with parents that didn’t want a girl so they hit and punched me, so I moved straight out as soon as I was 17, straight from the frying pan into the fire. The man I met was a lot older than me and he gave me five years of mental and physical abuse. He knew where to hit me where people wouldn’t see the bruises. I had to move to South Wales to get away from him and I lived in the Midlands. There needs to be more awareness that this is happening and awareness for the victims that there’s help out there, because I didn’t know. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Leon Don – Branch 334: Someone touched on a subject earlier that when men are domestically abused, they don’t want to talk about it and there is a truth in that. I know this because I am currently a victim of a domestic violent relationship and I’ve tried leaving the relationship, but the fact of the matter is my three year old boy lives with us and I’d do anything to live with him and when we did briefly split up, I didn’t get to see my boy for three days and that’s why I went back to her and that’s why I don’t say anything, because I’d do anything to be the best father I possibly can be and my intentions are, when he’s a bit older and he understands what’s going on, I’ll find somewhere else and somebody else. Thank you.
[APPLAUSE]


Brother Mark Brooks, Chair of Standing Orders: Thank you, Mr President. Could you please turn to your Agendas. You should have two pieces of paper being handed out by the Head Office staff and they should be emergency motions 9 and 10. Emergency motion 9 will be taken after motion 57 and emergency motion 10 will be taken after motion 58. That’s all I have for Conference, thank you.

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Does Conference agree? Okay, cheers. Motion 56.

56 Miscellaneous Branch 450

That this conference agrees that we must support the fight of our emergency services, examples such as firefighters to work over 60. Are they fit to be running up ladders and carrying an 18 stone person out of danger?

Sister Marilyn McCarthy – Branch 450 (Manchester): Can you hear me? Right, okay. I’ll start again. That this Conference agrees that we must support the fight of our emergency services, examples such as fire fighters being asked to work until, not asked, but told to work until they’re over 60. Are they fit to be running up ladders and carrying an 18 stone person out of danger? If we have a fire at my place, I don’t want some 60-odd year old bloke coming carrying me out, I want somebody who’s about 36. I ask you to support.

[LAUGHTER and APPLAUSE]

Brother Steve Nevin – Branch 504: I’m here to support this motion, although myself and the police have not seen eye to eye. I was on the picket line last year at the Tyneside Safety Glass strike to support Unite members. A police car pulled up and I thought bloody hell, here we go again, but they wound their windows down and they gave us their full support, telling us how much morale was so low amongst the officers and if they could strike, they would and I’ve been on the picket line with the health workers at my local hospital in Gateshead. Again I heard shocking tales of 14 hour shifts, with no breaks, low staff levels and I’ve stood with fire fighters several times in my Bakers Union T-shirt in support of their pension struggle. £4,000 a year out of their wages, only to get less once they retire, it’s so wrong. These men and women put their lives on the line every time they clock in to work. Imagine a 60 year old fire fighter lifting our President over his shoulder and carrying him down the ladder.

[LAUGHTER]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Easy.

Brother Steve Nevin – Branch 504: Mind you, I think a 30 year old fire fighter would struggle on that one, Ian.

[LAUGHTER]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: I’m lightweight.

Brother Steve Nevin – Branch 504: I’ll buy you a pint. You’re a Man U supporter anyway. Uniforms or not, they are still working class people, they’re Comrades and they’re Trade Unionists. Let’s stand side by side and support these guys. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Sean Molloy – Branch 558 (Rathbones, Wakefield): I’m here actually to oppose it, because I think it’s ageist. People are living longer, but I also look back to my father. When he was 60, he was fit as a butcher’s dog and he could carry Ian over his shoulder at 60, believe you me, so I’m just going to oppose it because I think it’s slightly ageist. People are living longer and it’s the ages isn’t it, so it’s ageist.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Any more speakers? No? General Secretary. No, no, it’s not. After Ronnie.

Brother Ronnie Draper, General Secretary: Get thee behind me, Satan.

[LAUGHTER]

Conference, the Executive Council would ask Conference to support the motion. Different reasons that Marilyn’s looking at, 36 year old, I think that’s just a uniform fetish with Marilyn, no? Clearly, whilst age is a critical issue in determining capability to carry out the tasks necessary to perform your duties as far as work goes, it’s only one factor that should be taken into account. Clearly the fitness of the person has to be taken first, the size and strength of the person is also a key issue.
Of course we accept that fire fighters will need to attain and retain certain levels of fitness, strength and technique to rescue people from burning buildings and that’s irrespective of whether or not the person being rescued is 14, 18 or 25 stone, it doesn’t, that’s not really the consideration. We recognise that our police personnel have to be capable of fighting crime and with it subduing criminals from time to time. Fitness will be a key factor in their ability to carry out those duties and like fire fighters, age will clearly have a profound effect on them doing their jobs to full potential and don’t forget Comrades, ambulance personnel, lifeboat personnel and of course members of the military. If we don’t want our military to end up like Dad’s Army, then what we need to do is have a serious debate at what age they retire, but Comrades, there’s something far more sinister afoot here. The retirement age that all our services have all negotiated within their respective services and as far as I’m concerned, that is sacrosanct, absolutely sacrosanct.

[APPLAUSE]

Too many companies and government bodies, whether that be local authorities are seeking to take pensions away. As far as I’m concerned, pensions are deferred salary. You’ve paid for them and you should get them.

[APPLAUSE]

You know, if they’re not workplace agreements, Chair, why do the Fire Authority sit down at any time with the FBU and discuss pensions, because if it wasn’t a workplace agreement, they’d just take them away anyway, they wouldn’t be up for discussion. Comrades, there clearly are places in our society and within our services for older people. The problem is in the army and I’m not a military man, as you can probably see from the stature, in the army they normally have a stick under their arm and every time they walk past, somebody salutes them. They’re called brigadiers, they’re called generals, they’re not the poor buggars who are right out the front with the tanks and the rifles, they’re not the retired ones, they’re the cannon fodder, they’re the people who are expendable, get them to the front, whilst those at the back who are sit in an office, as I say, with the stick and the handlebar moustache, they’re paid vast salaries and brilliant pension schemes as well and similarly Comrades, in the fire service. The older ones who find it easier to go beyond the retirement age of 60, they generally sit behind a desk. When the fire’s there and the firemen, fire service are going that way, they’re sat back there at a desk planning what happens next and you know, the one area of our public service under constant attack on pensions, terms and conditions is our NHS.

Look at the levels, Comrades, of injuries to nurses and auxiliaries within hospitals caused by lifting, not having the proper stuff when they’re moving patients. A catalogue of back and neck injuries caused by a lack of equipment and a lack of duty of care by their employer. Yet the answer seems to be to extend their working life, not shorten it, therefore exposing them to even more risk. A clear case of a government playing on the dedication of a vocation. Comrades, I do care about asking people to do things beyond their capabilities and I also recognise, after being involved with health and safety for many years, individual capability is a prime guide to manual handling assessments, but clearly both the motion and the mover are looking from the aspect, are looking from that aspect, but remember that successive governments have seen the civil and public service pension pots as a cash cow to be raided and that extending the retirement age helps cut the deficit.

Comrades, I don’t care whether they’re climbing a ladder, shooting a gun, dressing a wound or pushing a pen for a living. Their retirement age is mapped out when they started in that profession. It formed a central part of their terms and conditions, right throughout that working life and when it comes to the end, they’re being given draconian changes that they are not given the time to compensate for. It’s about time, as a Trade Union movement, that we started seeing the benefits of supporting each other, like Mark Serwotka talked yesterday, against the onslaught that this government is waging. We need to stand together and say enough is enough. Keep your grubby hands off our public services and that goes for employers in the private sector as well. The time’s going to come when the workers in this country are going to talk about forcing collective action. Call it a general strike, call it co-ordinated action, I don’t care what you call it, but the only way of protecting and enhancing what we have will be by worker supporting worker. Comrades, support the motion, protect the retirement age, but more importantly support the principle of protecting the hard won negotiated rights at work. I move.

[APPLAUSE]

Emergency Motion 8  Branch 561

We request the TUC to be pro-active against any attacks this government makes against any Trade Union Rights.

Brother Wasili Ali – Branch 561 (Hovis, Bradford): I’m here to move the motion. We request the TUC to be pro-active against any attacks this government makes against any Trade Union Rights.

If attacks on any Trade Union Rights arise, the TUC to mobilise its affiliates and action against this government. Why do I say so? I’ve been listening to most speakers, I’ve heard many motions, good motions, but we don’t seem to have agreed any course of action in case the government does something that we are against it, so what I was suggesting is to be pro-active like we’ve agreed that, I’ll go back to emergency motions 6 and 7 when we talked about the Labour Party having lost its ways and we passed the motion, we’ve asked our EC to look into it, but we haven’t agreed on what to do, so what I was requesting the Conference was to have a pro-active plan in place, in case the favourite for the Union, Jeremy Corbyn, doesn’t get elected. When he doesn’t get elected, what do we do as a Trade Union movement? We need to have plans, so I was requesting the TUC, our EC to be tasked with a mandate, given a mandate to go and lobby the TUC to be pro-active against attacks on our Trade Union Rights. I move the motion. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Seconder? Formally seconded? Oh, are you seconding it?

Brother Steve Nevin – Branch 504: If there’s any attacks on any Trade Unions by this government, the TUC should do one thing, one thing only, call a 24 hour general strike. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Sean Molloy – Branch 558 (Rathbones, Wakefield): I’m here to support it. There’s been a couple of meetings this week about organising and attacking this government. I think we really need to sort. I like the word pro-active in this, we really need to start flogging ourselves and advertising ourselves against what’s going on. You come to these places and you learn and I think he’s bang right, there’s got to be pro-active action against it.

[APPLAUSE]

Sister Marilyn McCarthy – Branch 450 (Manchester): Yes, I’m here to support this, but I’m a bit bemused really by the wording of it. What’s this request to the TUC, we should be demanding that the TUC …

[APPLAUSE]

…we should be demanding that the TUC be pro-active. Without the Trade Unions, there’s no Trade Union Congress. Support it, please.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Andy Moorhouse – Branch 417 (Hovis, Wigan): Here to fully support this motion. We don’t strike for the fun of it, we don’t take industrial action for the fun of it. When we went on strike, it cost us a hell of a lot of money, but if industrial action didn’t work, they wouldn’t be trying to ban it. That’s why we must support this …

[APPLAUSE]

…and stop them preventing us taking action.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Adam Brown – Branch 277 (Bristol): I too fully support this motion. This government will try and pick us off individually one at a time. It’s only through a united force that we can oppose them. It’s no good waiting for it to start, we need to be united now and we need to be ready for the fight, so the moment they attack us, we can hit them back as hard as possible. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Pat Rowley – No. 2 Region: Conference, please support this resolution. Any attack on Trade Unions, we’ve had enough attacks now on the Trade Union movement, but I want you to go home to your Branches and instil this resolution in your members. Make sure that we’re all together, it’s no good half of us walking out and half of us staying, they love that. Conference, go home to your Branches, make sure we get this right, because if it happens, they can’t kill all of us, no matter what they do. We must take action. I’ve a long-held belief when the law is unjust, break it, that’s my philosophy. When it’s unjust …

[APPLAUSE]
…break it. Why should we have to take such, why do we, why are we forced into such actions by a right-wing Tory government? Conference, support the resolution.

[APPLAUSE]

**Brother Ian Hodson, National President:** No more speakers? General Secretary.

**Brother Ronnie Draper, General Secretary:** Thank you, Chair. The Executive Council would ask Conference to support the motion, but the motion asks for everything that you should be expecting of the umbrella organisation that we belong to. I’ve got to say, the chances of achieving it are somewhere around lottery proportions.

You know, we affiliate to two organisations as far as Trade Unions go, we affiliate to the TUC and we affiliate to the General Federation of Trade Unions and the General Federation of Trade Unions was an educational trust and that’s where it started to provide education for the TUC, clearly now they’re two different organisations and I sit in the Executive of the GFTU and I’ve got to say under Doug Nicholls and I’ll praise him for it and Sarah sits on the Executive with me, we’re trying to do everything we can to support Unions, not just to support them educationally, but how we support them industrially in dispute. That’s how far apart the TUC and the GFTU are.

The TUC, as far as I see, offers so little support. You know, I’ve told the story many times about going to Conference at the TUC. I’ll never forget, I got there on a Sunday morning, lunchtime, just before the Conference started and Marilyn French and Pauline McCarthy were outside and Pauline McCarthy helped me in with my gear out of the car and I went and put my suit on and came down and when I came down, there was a pint waiting for me and I thought that’s great, summer at the TUC and as soon as I sat down, a General Secretary from a different Union came along and said what do you think about Trotsky and I said to him what do you mean, Trotsky? Who’s Trotsky? He said that Steve Gillan from the Prison Officers Association, he said the motion, he said that’s calling for the feasibility of a general strike. He said what are your views on that? I said I think I’m actually seconding it, but …

[APPLAUSE]

So it started off that Steve was really being castigated by a Trade Union Colleague and I think that is abysmal that that happens and okay, we didn’t second it, I supported it as well, but I didn’t get to second it because Bob Crowe got up and seconded it and he sort of took preference in the fame stakes and do you know, the TUC Congress carried that motion, they carried the motion because all it was talking about is the feasibility of a general strike, but yet another General Secretary from another fairly big Union, got up and said a general strike, we tried it once and it failed. For Christ’s sake man, your parents weren’t born when that happened, tried it once in 1926 and it failed so he thought that we shouldn’t do it. Steve Gillan at that meeting went from a pariah to a Messiah, he was castigated before the Conference started and then when Trade Union leaders recognised what they were there for, what they were elected for, leading people, leading people and not deflecting Trade Union action away from them, then Steve became the Messiah. He’s lead and he still speaks on the same subject to this day and what this Union did, is we ran a consultative ballot, but what we didn’t do is say to people right, we’re all going on strike, Bakers, Food & Allied Workers Union members all on the cobbles.

What we did, we asked a question that if the TUC calls a general strike, will we be prepared to take action? and it came back yes and it was about 71% - 72% a yes vote, because people were absolutely gutted about what was happening within industry and within the workplaces. What happened? The TUC did absolutely nothing and to-date they’ve still done nothing, except they’ve organised a couple of marches. To me, marches are a show of strength, it’s great that we all get our banners out, but should they be seen as the be-all and end-all of what a Trade Union movement can do. A march as far as I’m concerned should be the first step on an escalating action, cumulating in our ultimate action and that is our right to strike. Comrades, at the GFTU Congress three weeks ago, Frances O’Grady made quite a long and impassioned speech about the Trade Union movement and about the TUC’s value and at the end, she gave the opportunity for questions to be asked and I thought I’m not going to go on first, because I’m never going to be picked, because even when I moved the £10 thing, Frances told Congress what I was going to say before I said it, so I waited and I got the last question in and the question that I asked, I said to Frances where do you see the TUC going as far as taking action on these very subjects, if we come under constant attack from government, I said, because I don’t see that marches do anything really.

It’s great, it’s great for the day out and it’s great that we can show our banners and it’s great that we have a walk around and a show of strength, fantastic, but when you think about it Comrades, from the Trade Union Congress’ point of view, all we’ve done is showed our strength, we’ve blocked the roads of London and Belfast and Glasgow, wherever it is and then what we do the day after, we all go home and it’s forgotten about and I said to Frances you know, that approach, Frances, to me is like North Korea, I said, once every day on his birthday, they go, they block the roads of
Phnom Penh, whatever it is, with missiles and tanks and the soldiers all come along and they’ve got the banners and they’ve got all the people out waving flags and the day after, all those people have gone back to poverty, the missiles have been put back in the bunkers and the tanks are back in the garage and we’ve achieved absolutely nothing other than a show of strength.

Comrades, you know during the Hovis dispute and Andy’s already touched on it, we had great support from individual Trade Unions, I mean we won it because of the collective action of individual Trade Unionists and individuals from other organisations who were sympathetic to the cause. We didn’t win it because we got the support of global Trade Unions. It was done on the individual basis, but you know there was absolutely nothing that came to help that strike from the National TUC. In fact, quite the opposite. I went to the TUC down in Bournemouth and I asked the Finance & General Purposes Committee, I had to go before them to ask could I address the Conference about support for the Hovis workers in Wigan and they said no and I said why? and they said because it wouldn’t be like an emergency, because you could have put a motion in on it. I said but I couldn’t, Chair, because it only happened in August and we’re only in the beginning of September now, so it is an emergency and I would like to move it and I’ve got to say to their credit Unite were bang on, they were saying you’ve got to give him the opportunity and the TUC still said no and so we weren’t allowed, so what we had, the likes of Julie and people like that, outside, campaigning to collect money and that was all we could do and get the message at fringe meetings.

It was absolutely diabolical the way workers in struggle were treated by the TUC. You know, I’d love to be able to rely on the TUC for help and assistance, but Comrades, you know you’ve got more chance of plaiting fog to be honest with you. I reiterate that it is going to be up to us and the Comrade said it eloquently before, I say we won at Hovis in Wigan and we can win elsewhere. It is us that can ensure victory at Burtons, Llantarnam, Penmire, Gunstones and anywhere else where our members are in struggle. It is down to us to win it and to get collective action. We need to trust our members and our members need to trust us and it isn’t about the TUC. Comrades, the TUC, as far as I’m concerned, over the next five years has got to grow some balls, to support Unions who are ready to take action, Unions like PCS who are standing up for their members. Unions like ours, who will stand up against oppressive employers. You know, if the government want to curtail our rights and employers want to exploit our terms and conditions, then we need to react with equal vigour.

Whether it’s a general strike or it’s a series of co-ordinated actions, we need the TUC to call it. I’m telling you now, there’s not a workplace in Britain that hasn’t got some beef with their employer. So yes, Colin, if your terms and conditions are being cut there, you’ve got an excuse and in another place where pensions are being attacked, you’ve got an excuse and if you’re getting bullied by your manager, you’ve got an excuse and if somebody’s going to be dismissed, one of our members, you’ve got an excuse and what we need is the TUC to pull that together.

[APPLAUSE]

There’s one thing for sure Comrades, as far as the TUC is concerned, they will never know the answer whether people will come out on collective or general strike unless they ask the question. I’m saying to you now, ask the question.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Okay Conference, to the vote. Those in favour? Couldn’t be anything else really could it, unanimous. I believe Marks Brooks wants to make a point.

Brother Mark Brooks, Chair of Standing Orders: Conference, making a point of order of information for you. It came to Standing Orders information that yesterday a Delegate witnessed someone else actually intimidating and harassing another Delegate from this Conference. We’ve just passed a motion to stop domestic violence. It’s in our Rule Book that we don’t intimidate, harass or bully anybody, so I’m just saying please, don’t do it. If you see it being done, please do something about it.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Don’t forget tonight, across the road, support Watkins & Gunn’s event and obviously make sure you support the punk night, the rock night down at the something & Anchor, the Ship & Anchor, but, but don’t forget now, go and show our support and solidarity. You’ve just passed a motion that says we want a general strike, go and support those workers who are in dispute and on strike at the Ramada at half past five tonight. Make sure we show our support and solidarity to people like Candy Udwin, who needs us, who wants and deserves our support. Please don’t forget to go. Solidarity. Half past nine in the morning.
Wednesday 10 June 2015

Single Session

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: General Secretary to do the roll call.

Brother Ronnie Draper, General Secretary: Region 1, cheers Steve. Region 2. Region 3. Region 4, okay. Region 5. Region 6 and Region 7, thank you. There’s 195 Delegates in the Hall, thank you.

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Okay Conference, I’ve got a number of announcements to make. The winner of the prize draw from PayPlan, so he’s got some money to spend at the bar, is Roy Prance? from Fox’s Biscuits.

[APPLAUSE]

The winner of the prize draw from Lighthouse and I’ve got three here, so it’s Andy Moorhouse, now I don’t know whether this name’s right, this has been written down for me, so you can’t blame me, I’ve got John Charcewycz? from Park Cakes, I do apologise if I’ve not pronounced it right, did I pronounce that right? Right, okay. David and Ann Magofian, Magof, that’s what that one looks like, McGothigan. I’ve also had some messages given to me. Watkins & Gunn karaoke night raised £337.19 …

[APPLAUSE]

…for my sponsorship walks for Alzheimer’s Society, thank you so much and if you were not there last night, you’ve not sponsored me, I have my sponsor’s bucket with me and so can I have any loose change and that’s from John at the bottom there.

[APPLAUSE]

Wigan Diggers Festival is Saturday, 12th September and it’s what Conference passed a motion to support. If you can get there, do so, it’s a great day out, with music, poetry and of course our stall. Jake’s bit of a do, a big thank you to Jake for good music, but aching bones, I’m not sure who that message has come off and then I’ve got, apparently this is breaking news, it’s been on, this will interest Ronnie actually, breaking news, due to financial restraint Liverpool FC have been re-named the Poundsavers Club …

[LAUGHTER]

and that comes from Manchester City FC, so I don’t know what that’s all about. It will, won’t it.

Okay Conference, okay Conference, obviously we’ve got a busy morning this morning, we’ve got to finish off on our Agenda, we’ve also got an organising presentation, but probably the most people in the room, one of the highlights of this year’s Conference will be Arthur Scargill who’ll be around about from about 10 o’clock this morning and obviously when he comes, obviously we need to make sure we give him a rousing reception. I mean he is a legend, he’s an historical figure from our past and he still is a major, major influence, I would imagine, on most Trade Unionists in this country, so let’s get back to the motions and I believe we’re on motion 57.

57 Miscellaneous Branch 215

That this Conference agrees that we don’t flounce out of the EU, Britain needs the EU and the EU needs Britain. The cost of leaving the EU would be costly to Britain.

Brother Pat Rowley – No. 2 Region: Mr President, Delegates. Conference, a resolution very close to my heart …

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Can you put the microphone on?

Brother Pat Rowley – No. 2 Region: Well it must, is it? Conference, the EU is not all about immigration, it’s about rights as well. Conference, the European Union was born 70 years ago, many thought it would never exist, many thought it would never get off the ground, many thought it would be run by the Deutschmark, that didn’t happen, then many thought it’s going to be run by the Bundesbank, that didn’t happen. The countries got together and they formed the European Bank, so that included everybody. The European Union will never be a Euro state, a super state, it will never be that, it will always be each individual country with their own individual culture and nationality, that will always be and that’s what it should be, make no mistake about that, but it’s about unity, it’s about unity, it’s about countries sitting down together and discussing their problems and finding a result. You will never, you will never go to a meeting or come here even to Conference, you will never achieve everything you want at one time, so they sit down and they discuss their problems and then they make a decision. Yes, there may be, there will be a vote in 2017 or maybe before and the rights of people to vote in it and Cameron is trying to bar people of 16 and 18 years of age from voting, now that it totally wrong and that is not law in any country.
If you have the right to vote, if there’s an election, 18, 20 or 100, you have the right to vote, it’s your right to get a vote in that and if there’s European people living here in England and they have registered the same as we do and you can’t register today and vote tomorrow, if an election is coming up, you have to register and that could be 6–9 months before and you register to vote. Now if there’s European people here, different nationality, people should be allowed to vote, he wants to bar people from Europe from voting in that election, that is wrong, because the European Union is about all the individual countries. It started out with six or seven and then they moved to 12, then they made a very big jump to 27 countries, that was a big step, it was like, say you have a small little bakery and you moved to a big plant bakery, that was too much for them and it would be too much for a small bakery as well. So that’s how, it did have problems there and it still has problems, everything has problems, but they can be debated and isn’t it better than war?

You’ll hear people say the cost of Europe is high, the cost of World War I and World War II was high and I’m not going to talk about money, but in human life. The Second World War took away 12–14 million young people in this country, it took them away, they lost their lives, their bodies strewn on the fields from Dunkirk to Belgrade and nobody to say a last goodbye to them, they died with their boots on, they were buried with, probably a shell thrown in the ground and blown a hole and them all shovelled into it. Wars are always started by the rich, but they’re always fought by the poor, they use them …

[APPLAUSE]

… and Conference, you see big men with money, we’re just tools of their society, we’re not, we’re not, as far as they’re concerned, there’s racehorses and field horses, they think we’re not there, we’re just their subjects, they call it, but we have to fight against that and we will fight against it if we have unity and if Europe stays together, it will always be nations, make no mistake about that, we will never, never go away from that, it will be nation states in Europe with their own rights and cultures, but we have to have laws. Now, in Europe, we have so many rights and there’s a lot of rights that people do not know that they have in Europe and they do. The rights, their phones are capped so that they cannot be overcharged when you travel abroad, either ‘phoning home or ‘phoning out. If I had to go through it all, it would take a long time and Ian would ask me to cut it short.

Conference, compensation and food and keep, if flights are cancelled or late, you have a right to that and it’s up to £600 can be claimed for that, a lot of people are not claiming it, only 2% of the people that do get caught up in this claims that money and that is their right. What we need to do is to educate people, to bring to what the European Union can bring to us and what we can bring to the European Union. Also the right to study in Europe. Students have the right to study all over Europe and on the free and the most is in some countries £1500 a year. In Britain it is £9,000 to get a year’s tuition in a university. That is not acceptable, that we have young people that we need to carry our lives forward, engineers, everything to bring this country forward, we should be the same way treating them. The right to state healthcare, you can have state healthcare across Europe, all you have to have is a state insurance card and that is free, that is free, you don’t have to pay for it. Medicines are cheaper, when it comes to buying them at the chemists, they are cheaper than they are here. So there is a lot in Europe for us, a lot there and that’s it and the movement of people.

Yes, there’s a bit about immigrants, we’ll be flooded with immigrants and we’ll be overrun and the country is too small to take any more people. Comrades, the amount of land that’s taken up by houses and roads in England is 2% of the land available to us, so there is no such thing as that we’re overrun or that we’re overcrowded, we’re not. This is hype that comes from like this geezer Nigel Farage, he played on that about immigrants coming to the country. Immigrants bring a lot to us and there’s always a net? on the people to come. Yes, you will get people to do things wrong and when you find people that do things wrong, you deal with that, but you don’t deal with the people that don’t do it and you don’t make them scapegoats for what happened. They’ll always do that, the press gets on that and you get a lot of publicity.

Comrades, make no mistake, we have had 70 years of peace, prosperity and jobs. Let’s keep it that way. I move this resolution that we stay in Europe as we are, not to pull out of it, it’s costly and it will cost us more. Even small enterprises can trade across Europe, they’re able to trade across Europe because they don’t have to be a big commodity to get across Europe. They can trade across Europe and they want it. Eight out of 10 businesses wants to stay in Europe because it’s important, 60% of everything we do goes to Europe and Cameron said oh, we’ll deal with the rest of the world and Farage, we’ll deal with the rest of the world, we have, we’re able to deal. Well, if they do, the Republic of Ireland is a small nation of 3½ million people, you do more business with the Republic of Ireland than you do with China, Japan, Korea, South America and the lot of them. That is what it’s about, we trade with Europe. Yes, when the thing is down, the buying power is down in countries so the exports are down, this was a great exporting nation. There’s a lot of services, industries in this country now, but the manufacturing industry that England once had is not,
is down and of course it’s down because other countries have come up and are producing goods. Make no mistake, we will get back there again and be able to produce goods that the world want and that’s what we should do. Conference, I move the resolution.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Gerry Corbett – Region 6: To second the resolution. Over the years, coming to Conference, I have taken the rostrum here to argue strongly about more European integration. Pat has covered a lot there, I’m not going back over that now, but I would like to concentrate on, is this upcoming referendum you’re going to have. I listened to the news last night on BBC1 and the Commons yesterday voted overwhelmingly, with just the Scottish Nationalists voting against, to put the machinery in motion to have the referendum. Now I can tell you we are pretty used to referendums, because our constitution is a written one and it can only be changed by means of a referendum. In theory, referendums are a good thing, you’ll say it’s democratic. It’s one person, one vote. In practice, things are brought in to the referendum that have no bearing whatsoever on what it is you’re supposed to be deciding on and you are going to get that when the debate starts here. We’ve recently had a referendum, as you may know, on same-sex marriage. Thankfully, the first country in the world by popular vote to vote in favour of same-sex marriage.

[APPLAUSE]

But as that debate progressed and I was a staunch yes, so I may be biased, but those on the yes side continued to argue for equality, compassion and that won those, but on the other side, it seemed to be about children, surrogacy, adoption, I’m just using that now to tell you the type of red herrings that will be brought into the debate when you have your debate on whether to stay in or stay out. That is a decision for the British people, but they should really and truly inform themselves. I’ll give you some example, that I was reading there in the Socialist Worker and Pat, we’ve gone from 3½ million to 5 million, we have increased a bit. For every German person drawing benefits in Britain, there are four Britons drawing benefits in Germany and here is the real surprise, that for every Irish-born citizen drawing benefits in Britain and I use the word Britain rather than England, there are five Britons drawing benefits in the Republic of Ireland. Now a lot of those people would be pensioners.

At the last census, the British population in Ireland was 100,000, it was by far the largest, followed by the Polish community. As a pensioner myself, I know my benefits. I am entitled to free transport within the whole island, because there is an arrangement with our colleagues in Northern Ireland that it applies for citizens from the Republic in the North and for citizens from the North in the Republic and it’s not confined to buses only, like it is here, it also applies to trains, the tram system in Dublin, internal ferry services, like it gives me great pleasure every year to be able to get on the boats and to go out to the islands which are something like 30 miles out in the Atlantic and I can do that without paying, but so can the pensioners from Britain that have come to live and settle in Ireland, they also have the same benefits, but by listening to the debate over here, you would swear that the only country in the world that has a welfare state is the United Kingdom and that everybody else throughout the world wants to come into the United Kingdom to live off the welfare state, that’s a myth.

It might have been the first country in the world and is something for you to be proud of, that had a welfare state, but the rest of us have caught up and not only caught up, we have overtaken. So when you will hear on your televisions, radios, right-wing newspapers, all of these foreigners coming in here to live off your benefits, be informed, it’s a two-way process. You cannot come in today and draw benefit tomorrow in any of the European Union countries. Far be it for me to come up here and try and advise people how they vote. This is your country, you decide what you want, in Europe or you want out of Europe. In lots of respects you are now out of Europe, you’ve taken up doubts on treaty after treaty, Britain has had enough doubt. They’re now going to withdraw from the European Court of Human Rights. The European Court of Human Rights, despite its name, is not an organ of the European Union, it was set up a long, long, long time before the European Union. It is the one area where ordinary citizens can go when they are not getting rights, when they’re not getting justice from their own system, they can go to the European Court of Human Rights and get the justice.

Going back, I remember, it must be about 20 years in this country, members of the defence forces, if they were members of the lesbian or gay community, they were barred from being members of the defence forces. It was the European Court of Human Rights that forced Britain to change that law and to give them equal rights. So I will just say, I’m not going to go on any more, I will just say inform yourself. Watch out for the mis-information that will come your way during the referendum. Be informed, read up on it, study it and then make an informed decision either for yes or no, but at least let it be an informed decision. Thank you very much.

[APPLAUSE]
Sister Marilyn McCarthy – Branch 450 (Manchester): Up here to support. Since 1979, the working people of the UK have lost dozens of rights that have in the past protected us from unscrupulous employers and owners of companies that exploit the workers at every opportunity. In fact, since 1979 the only protection we’ve ever received to ensure our working rights and safety have come through the EU and without the working time regs, we would still be working 50, 60 or 70 hour working weeks for less than a pittance. In fact, when the likes of UKIP and right-wing media talk about red tape, they mean anything that protects the workers of the UK. If we withdraw from the EU, our employment rights and protection will disappear. The bosses and the owners will create a race to the bottom, meaning no protection of your employment rights and a race to the basement with regards the wages and a return to 50, 60, 70 hour contracts of employment as the norm and not the exception. Please support the motion.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Sean Molloy – Branch 558 (Rathbones, Wakefield): I’m here to oppose this. I think the EU and I know the EU, it’s a boy’s club, it’s business men looking after their pals, it’s a golf society mentality. It’s very undemocratic, especially with Cameron and his people going in and trying to fleece us all the time. Also, this referendum they’re trying to call, it’s going to split the Conservatives, so I’m going to be sitting on the sidelines enjoying the Conservatives getting split apart. Oppose it.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: No more speakers? No? Okay. Conference, the Executive Council would ask you to oppose the motion. Our anti-EU stance isn’t based on little England mentality, our position is based on facts and the evidence and the evidence is that the European Union is anti-working class, it’s anti-Socialist and it’s anti-democratic and Marilyn, if it was true that the European Union was the saviour of employment rights in this country, we wouldn’t have zero hour contracts, we wouldn’t have a minimum wage at £6.51 …

[APPLAUSE]

…we wouldn’t have people facing the sack, we wouldn’t have people facing the sack because they’ve got no rights and no rights to recognition of a Trade Union in the workplace, they wouldn’t have those issues if the European Union was the saviour of working peoples’ rights. The only people that saves working peoples’ rights in this country is the Trade Union movement and solidarity, that’s what saves workers.

[APPLAUSE]

That’s what we need to make sure happens in this country. And let me tell you something, because Cameron intends to re-negotiate the position and the guy from the bosses club, Sir Mike, recently let out the actual truth about the reality of what’s intended behind Cameron’s re-negotiation and why the CBI want to support the approach that Cameron’s making, because he admitted it was to negotiate away workers rights. He admitted that part of the re-negotiation is about making workers even easier to sack. Now if anyone in this room wants to stand on a platform with Conservatives in 2017, then adopt this motion, because that’s what you’ll be doing, because you’ll be tied to supporting a move to stay in a European Union that offers no workers rights.

We’ve had a long tradition of supporting workers in struggle across, not just the EU, but across the world, but we believe that workers have a right, a right to a social democracy, not one based on a bosses future, not one based on a situation where people are subject to zero hours contracts, not one where people are threatened and intimidated that if they don’t accept what the European Union says, that our rights, our rights will be taken off us, one where the bosses make the decisions away like in TTIP with the Americans, which will put our National Health Service at risk, those are what those European unelected so-called democrats are doing, so we urge you, we urge you don’t change your position on the EU If you change your position, you will put at risk every single thing that you have in your workplace, because they re-negotiate it, that’s what you’re facing and you will be campaigning to support it, that’s what you’ll be facing…

[APPLAUSE]

…you’ll be facing the return, not just to a Victorian era, but to an era even further back than that when the Normans were here, so let’s be clear, we oppose membership of the EU, not for being a little Englander, because it’s anti-worker, anti-democratic and anti-Socialist and if you believe it, you will make sure that you oppose this motion.

[APPLAUSE]

You have the right of reply, you have the right of reply.

Brother Kevin Flood: Before Standing Orders closes the book on things, Mr Draper, you answered your ’phone at Conference yesterday, will you be paying the fine?

[LAUGHTER and APPLAUSE]

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Pat Rowley – No. 2 Region: Mr President, Delegates. There’s not much I have to say. Now, all I can say to the person that opposed it is, bring your complaints forward, that’s what Europe is about, your complaints will be dealt with and we will do everything we can in Europe to try to get your problems solved and I can’t say any more. The President and Jeremy Corbyn said it all. Conference, I’m pleased that it’s done.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: To the vote. Those in favour? Those against? That’s lost. Emergency motion No. 9. Just to let you know that emergency motion 10’s been withdrawn.

Emergency Motion 10

Branch 347

This Conference calls for the permanent dismantling of The Smiler ride rollercoaster at Alton Towers, after the Health & Safety Executive have concluded their investigation into the tragic accident

Brother Mark Brooks – Region 3: Moving emergency motion 9. This Conference calls for the permanent dismantling of The Smiler ride rollercoaster at Alton Towers, after the Health & Safety Executive have concluded their investigation into the tragic accident.

Most of us know, just over a week now, there was a rollercoaster went around and 16 people were on the carriage. Four at the front have been seriously injured. There is a 17 year old girl called Leah Washington, if you don’t know, Google it, she’s lost her leg above her knee, left leg. Her boyfriend, his knees have gone, the other girl, Vicky Balch, is still in a critical condition and Daniel Thorpe, four people in there, four young people that went out for a thrill. I think that ride should be dismantled and never erected again. Just thinking, they’ll come up to you and go yes, we’ve fixed it, we’ve put all the safety systems there, how many parents out there now will let their 16, 17 year old child run a chance. We think it’s safe, well just think that four people now are literally sat there with life-changing injuries. Please support the motion.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Seconder? Formally seconded?

Brother Leon Don – Branch 334: I’d like to second this motion in support. When you read this motion, it might sound a bit harsh, dismantling The Smiler ride, however I would like to give you guys some information that might help you make an educated decision.

The Smiler ride was built in 2013 for the price of £18 million. It has 15 sensors and has cameras, the sensors failed. Before the people went on that final ride of The Smiler, there was a test run and it failed that test run and the car was not where it was supposed to be, it was on the tracks. Nobody who was operating the CCTV cameras spotted that car and the most concerning thing to me is that this car hit the empty car at full speed. The people who made this ride are lucky that nobody died and one other thing as well is that The Smiler ride is the only ride at Alton Towers that doesn’t have platforms that access every area of the track, which meant that when the emergency crews got there, they had to build a platform to evacuate the people, hence it took four hours to evacuate everyone off that car. Please support this motion. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother George Lonsdale– Branch 459 (Greggs): I’m here to oppose this motion, which I believe to be a feeble attempt to jump on the publicity bandwagon. I’m a self-confessed TPA, theme park addict, to which I go on a course at least once a year. In the 35 years of Alton Towers’ existence, this is their first serious accident due to a major ride fault. Credit to Alton Towers owners, Merlin Entertainments, they’ve come out and accepted full responsibility and will do anything, everything to help the 16 injured parties. I feel devastated for the injured, especially those sat in the front row, whose carriage felt the impact of the 20 mile an hour crash, that’s how fast it was. It was a tragic accident, yes, an accident, one like many others that could probably have been avoided, with all the safety measures in place. The accident on the M62, which prevented Arthur Scargill getting to us, do we close the motorway? Planes, cars, trains, all crash and have accidents, some leading to fatalities. Do we stop using them? No.

We as a consumer demand higher safety precautions and I believe Alton Towers need to be given that chance, with the aid of the HSE. Statistics from the International Association of Amusement Parks, IAAPA for short, quote the odds of sustaining an injury as one in nine million. You’re actually more likely to have an accident travelling to or from the theme park than you are actually visiting the theme park, that’s a fact.
A petition was created by the Daily Mirror, a Labour paper, on a website called change.org, to which 870 people had signed to close and dismantle The Smiler. On the same website, over 1,000 people had signed to keep it open. We are a great Union and have always given our members the right to choose, because it is our right. The public will decide by either attending the theme park or boycotting. The only good to come from this is that the ride’s designers and engineers will now be put under the microscope to impose higher safety measures on all rides past and present. Finally, I wish a speedy and well recovery of all those involved in this terrible accident, on behalf of myself and I’m sure of all at the Union. Thank you very much.

[APPLAUSE]

**Brother George Tittensor – Branch 392 (Birmingham & West Midlands):** Mr Chairman, members of the Platform, Conference. I’m here to oppose this and so should you. What kind of a message are you going to send out to your employees, your bosses, in saying I don’t care what the Executive say, we’ll overrule it, we want it dismantled. Shut half of your bakeries, as they’re unsafe. Just think of what you’re doing and I ask Conference to oppose this.

[APPLAUSE]

**Brother Ian Hodson, National President:** Okay. Conference, the Executive Council would ask Conference to oppose the motion too and Brother Lonsdale now has the same name as Rihanna, as George, every time he comes to Conference. I think the actual, what you said was absolutely 100% right. We’re being asked to pre-judge the outcome. Make a decision after an investigation happens, but calling for the closure of the ride first, I think it would be wrong to pre-determine an outcome. If there is an issue with the ride, of course, then I’m sure the HSE after investigation will make sure that the appropriate action is taken, but I think to call for the closure of something while there is an investigation in the offing would be wrong and I just want to re-endorse what George said, I think that was a perfect, perfect example of a reason why and a reasonable argument why we should await the outcome of the decision of the HSE. So, Conference, we’d ask you to oppose the motion. You do have the right of reply.

**Brother Mark Brooks – Region 3:** Right to reply. I hear what you’re saying, it’s choices, but think of it this way, every parent in here, if you were the parents of those four people on there, what would your decision have been? So each child sitting there, I’m going in the front seat, they’ve fixed the ride, or maybe, do you take that chance? The most important thing in a person’s life is a child. We were all children here once, your parents would protect you. Yes, there was an accident on the M62, there’s accidents every single day, but accidents are down to, you get in your car, you’re responsible for that. This was a funfair ride. Please support the motion.

[APPLAUSE]

**Brother Ian Hodson, National President:** Okay Conference, to the vote. Those in favour? Those against? That’s lost.

Okay, Conference. Listen, when you have a legend in the room, you know you’re in a room with a legend. I mean, I think for most people in the Trade Union movement, the opportunity to sit on a platform with Arthur Scargill is something that dreams are made of and for me, this is like a dream come true. I mean, the Miners Union, the Miners Union has stood up for our class throughout history and they knew that the only way that they could force change on this country was to destroy the NUM and that’s what they set about doing, but the person that stood in the way of them and the person who was a real true class hero, a working class fighter, stood up and fought back and they didn’t like it, so they attacked him and they tried to undermine him, but he showed the strength and determination that all workers and people in this country need to show, that despite in the face of those attacks, despite what they wanted to try and do, he was prepared to stand up, take the beatings and still take them on. Arthur Scargill is a legend to this class, is a legend to the Trade Union movement and we’re really, really privileged to have Arthur Scargill talk to this Conference 30 years after the miners’ strike and I’m sure that people in this room, Arthur, who moved a motion last year to invite you, because we adore you, we appreciate what you did on behalf of those working people and the communities, because we all know now, we all know there is absolutely no denying that what you said was 100% right, that cow lied, you told the truth …

[APPLAUSE]

Arthur Scargill, please welcome and address the Bakers, Food & Allied Workers Union Conference.

[APPLAUSE and CHEERS]
Arthur Scargill Addresses the BFAWU Conference

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Arthur Scargill: Arthur Scargill, miners section of the Bakers, Food & Allied Workers Union …

…moving emergency motion A. This is an opportunity to look back over the four days that you’ve had your Conference, analyse the kind of speeches that you’ve heard and put forward views that may resonate one way or another. I understand that you’ve had people speaking from a militant, determined point of view and I congratulate the Executive Council and the Comrades here in having the common sense to invite a moderate, reasonable man like me to address Conference.

[APPLAUSE]

This is the second time I’ve had the privilege of addressing Delegates to this Conference. I want to make it absolutely clear, as the Chairman said, that I come here from a working class point of view. I do not accept and never will the argument put forward by the sociologists and those from academia that there are different classes from the working class, the lower middle class, the upper middle class and the higher class. As Mark said, there are only two classes within society, those who work by hand or by brain and those who own control. Every Delegate in here belongs to the working class …

[APPLAUSE]

…and we should remember that. Now I know that you will have been addressed this week by people who want to do a number of things, first of all to continue support for the Labour Party, to continue to support the European Union, discuss the issue of immigration, migration, the minimum wage, pensions, the health scheme, a whole range of issues. I want to make my position absolutely clear and that of the party which I now lead, the Socialist Labour Party. It was founded not in 1996, as you’ll find on the internet, it was actually founded by James Connolly and others in 1903 and they warned that the Labour Representation Committee, which had been established in 1900, was no solution to the problems within society which were fundamentally a Capitalist, Imperialist system. As Connolly said in the struggle for Irish independence, Irish independence will be useless if it means independence where we only have the replacement of the English as the rulers of the Capitalists of Ireland taking over. The same principle I recall from Mandela, I knew him and he said to me, we have to have a system where in South Africa we replace not merely apartheid, but we replace the system which is owned and controlled by the multi-national corporations and we do not want to see black Capitalists take the place of white Capitalists and I think it’s a fundamental lesson that all of us need to take into account.

[APPLAUSE]

Now, we in Britain are facing austerity, yet there is one difference between Britain at the moment and most of the other countries within the European Union. Throughout Europe, you have marches and demonstrations and strikes from people in the working class who are not prepared to any longer accept the austerity created as a result of the system under which we live. What a system. They tell us that we’re in difficulty because of the crash, mainly the United States. So what do they do? The banks say we’re in trouble, the banks are private, so the government prints money, gives it billions and says that will save you, but then who pays? We pay for their debt, their crisis, their catastrophe. I’ll tell you what we should have done. We should have put the buggars in jail, for what they’ve done to our system.

[APPLAUSE]

Now if there was a real, a real desire to do anything, the billions that were made available should have been given to people with mortgages, with debts, to people in difficulty, so they could pay off any debt with the bank and who can argue with that? The debt will be paid off, the banks’ debt will be paid off and people would have money to spend, but that is not the way Capitalism works. It works in the interest of their class and their system and if there’s one thing every person in this room, particularly the youth, understand or should understand, it is this. That whenever and wherever we take into our hands any section or the whole section of society, we impose the same restraint upon their lot that they’ve imposed upon ours …

[APPLAUSE]

…during their 100 years rule. The policies that I would advocate were scathingly attacked in a number of places, but not one, not one political party could point out a deficiency. I remember that Ken Capstick, a member of our party and former Vice Chairman of our Yorkshire area, had a debate with Andrew Neil, a bit caustic that bloke you know, ‘Listen here, Mr Capstick, you know’, he said, ‘You’re going to take money from private wealth schemes, pension schemes to pay for your policy’, so of course Capstick says, ‘Absolutely, there’s £3.6 trillion trillion in these private pension
wealth schemes. We only need £746 billion to pay for the entire programme we’ve put forward, so Andrew Neil’s response was a classic, I mean we ought to engrave it, he said, ‘In that case’, he said, ‘The entrepreneurs would leave Britain’ and Ken said and I’ve said, ‘Put them on the bloody Queen Mary, sail it out and get rid of them once and for all’.

[APPLAUSE]

They wouldn’t be missed. Now obviously I heard the tail-end of a speech when I came into the Hall about the European Union. I’ve just come back from Dublin. There’s more brass plates in Dublin than there is in a brass foundry. Every company are there for tax breaks, but the people of Ireland are suffering, so don’t let people say that Ireland’s doing alright within the European Union. I’ll tell you what’s happening, shall I? The Irish people and I’m half Irish, were told after the rising that never again would a family be evicted, no matter what the circumstances. Never again would there be a water charge in Ireland, there’s a slight drop of rain drops in Ireland every year and what have they done? They’re evicting people in Ireland. What have they done? They’re imposing water charges. There are massive demonstrations all over Ireland, you’ve read about them, have you?

Not on your life. There isn’t one single newspaper, no television programme, broadcast any opposition that takes place and the reason is simple. They don’t want you to see that other workers in other countries are opposing what is happening. Now I believe that we need to discuss the issues fundamentally. Our party and I have always fought for a Socialist system of society and I want to make my position absolutely clear. The European Union was established to create a United States of Europe. It was the concept of Adolf Hitler and Winston Churchill, for those who don’t know. It was a system created and established in order to create a European army, it’s now called NATO. The irony was that during the debates on television, when the Scottish National Party leader, Nicola Sturgeon, was arguing her case very eloquently, not one speaker opposed her on the fundamental weakness of her case and their policy. Her argument is that we want to stay in the European Union if we get independence, but in the event that we don’t, we want to stay in the European Union and we also want to stay as a member of NATO. Well how the hell does she square that argument with the policy they’ve got of getting rid of Trident, because they wouldn’t let them do it. The quicker we do that, get rid of Trident and all nuclear weapons in this country …

[APPLAUSE]

…the better. The health service. I’ve got a vested interest in it in many ways. I’ve half a knee, I’ve two wrists that are completely knackered as a result of 20 years working underground and I know what’s needed in the health service. It needs an input of £20 billion now, not in five years or eight years’ time. We need more doctors, more nurses, more staff, more ancillary workers, cleaners, all those people will go towards making the health service that was the vision of Socialists throughout the centuries. Why can’t we do it? This lot in power now and the Labour Party both said we can’t afford it. Well, I’ll give them a mathematical solution. Cut the defence budget by two-thirds, scrap the Trident programme and you can pay £22 billion immediately on Day 1, that’s the way that you fund the National Health Service.

[APPLAUSE]

The question is, do we vote, do we support death and destruction, or do we support the concept of human life and the dignity of human life, irrespective of the costs involved? I know that every family, possibly in this Hall, will have been touched one way or another by possibly non-admission to a hospital or there’s no room or the drugs are too expensive. The drug companies should be taken into common ownership …

[APPLAUSE]

…immediately and the drugs that are available should be given to people free of charge, as they were in 1948. That’s the way to tackle the health service, but of course there are other major issues like the minimum wage. What debates we’ve had about the minimum wage. Ed Miliband said we want a living wage. Well, I’ll accept the same living wage that MPs get, I think it’s a reasonable one.

[APPLAUSE]

If it’s good enough for them, it’s good enough for you. If it was good enough for me when I was a full-time Official, it’s good enough for miners who worked down the pit, or for people who work in your industry, but I’ll tell you the solution, shall I? We should have a minimum wage equal to the national average wage. If you do that …

[APPLAUSE]

I’ll tell you what you get. Your national minimum wage today would be £26,000 a year.

[APPLAUSE]
It would end this so-called zero hours contracts. It’s called really slave labour and I’ve got nothing but utter contempt for those Trade Unions who are actually employing youngsters on zero hour bloody contracts, it’s time they stopped…
[APPLAUSE]
…and looked at themselves. Of course linked with that are pensions. Pensioners were promised, we’re always given promises, they were promised that when they retired, they would have a guaranteed pension, linked to inflation or the highest increase in the average wage for the rest of their lives. It was a pledge by a Labour government and what happened? The Tories scrapped it. So much for decisions in parliament. Well, in my view, pensioners in their twilight years ought to have the very best, not a second rate. They ought to be in a position where they can live with dignity and that’s why I argue and my party argues that the national pension should be equal to the national average wage. They would get immediately £26,000 a year and they have earned it.
[APPLAUSE]
Of course, what I’m talking is real militancy, isn’t it? and some people like the Daily Mail, yes and the Daily Mirror, they’ll accuse me of saying that Scargill is wanting revolution. Too bloody true I am.
[APPLAUSE]
I actually thought in my simplicity that Trade Unions had got the right to strike and I actually thought throughout the ’70s and ’80s that not only the rules of our Union and yours provided you with that right, under the United Nations Charter and the International Labour Organisation, Article 87, to which Britain is a signatory, but I was wrong, apparently. They took me to court and they said do you realise that you are in breach of law because you’ve called a strike without a ballot, pretty bloody rich isn’t it, from a government that’s been elected by 20% of those entitled to vote, telling us …
[APPLAUSE]
…what we should do and what we shouldn’t do. From a historical point of view, the then National Coal Board and government decided on a new tactic. They would launch closures on an area basis and so we decided, we’d studied warfare, we would fight back on an area basis, within our rules. We were taken to court, McGahey, Heathfield and me and we went to see this eminent barrister, very eminent and our lawyer, she said this man’s so good you’ll have no problem, you will win hands down. So we saw him and he said ‘Mr Scargill’, he said ‘If you can give an undertaking that you will not move the monies that you apparently [LAUGHTER] relocated abroad’, he said, ‘I’m quite sure my opposite number will agree that this case can be stayed and that will be the end of that. You won’t be in sequestration or receivership’. So my solicitor, she said, ‘Willie’, that was his name, ‘Do you think it will be necessary to use Foss & Harbottle?’ I thought she was talking about a sauce.
[LAUGHTER]
He said ‘Oh dear, dear me, no Jane, not at all, no we can’t go that far, no, no, no, no, no’ and he picked up the telephone and he ‘phoned his opposite number and he said ‘Yes, I’ve got Mr Scargill here, with his colleagues, yes, he’s perfectly willing to leave the monies where they are, yes. Oh good show, good show, see you in court’. So we go along, they’re all in there, like penguins. So my barrister stood up and said ‘We’ve reached an agreement’ and their barrister stood up, representing the case against us and said ‘My Lord, that is absolutely correct’.That’s great. There’s a bloke at the back of the court stood up and he said ‘My Lord, I realise I have no right of audience in this court, but may I pray to be heard?’ I thought who’s he?
[LAUGHTER]
The judge said ‘You do realise you’ve no rights of audience here?’ ‘Yes, my Lord’. He said ‘Umm, go ahead’ and he spoke for four hours …
[LAUGHTER]
…and at the end of it, they ruled that we were acting unlawfully. This barrister said ‘I can’t believe it’ and we went to the Court of Appeal on a Saturday night. Three judges, he said ‘I’m going to have to throw Foss & Harbottle’. I thought they’re in trouble, this lot, they don’t know what’s coming. By the way Foss & Harbottle, I learned, is a very famous case and it says, by the way it was designed not for you as Trade Unionists or me, it was designed for companies and if a person who works for an organisation has a complaint, say in a factory where members of this Union are working, you are required to go through the various stages of a complaint at local level, a complaint at area level, a complaint at national level and if you’re not satisfied, you then have to wait for the annual general meeting in a year or it might be two years’ time, dependant on the articles of association and so of course Foss & Harbottle applied to us, so if they wanted to appeal against the decision we’d taken, they would have to wait for a year, reasonable.
He put Foss & Harbottle and they threw it straight back at him and said, 'We don’t accept it' and so for one year and four months, that’s the accurate figure, we were on strike, fighting for a principle in which we believed. We didn’t fight for an increase in wages, we didn’t just fight because we wanted to take a strike, we fought for the right of future generations, our sons and our daughters …

[APPLAUSE]

…to have a job. I doubt whether there’s one person in this Hall, apart from the Officials who I told last night, in 1984 at the same time as the court was hearing the case in England, the Scottish High Court was also hearing the case from McGahey? & Co. and the Scottish High Court ruled that the strike was legal and one barrister said, 'We can always go to the European Court'. I said, 'How long will that take?' He said, 'Two years'. I said, 'Forget it'. We decided that we were right and we had a responsibility to fight for our rights and what did they do? They turned out a paramilitary force against us and they attacked us from all angles and if we, if we had had the support of the Trade Union movement and of renegades in the Labour Party like Kinnock, instead of urging an end to the strike in conciliation, that strike would not only have been won in weeks, but there would have been no action taken against any other Union and that government would have fallen.

[APPLAUSE]

That’s the price that was paid for refusing to support us. They don’t know how, they say they’re going to make housing available at affordable rents in Britain. Why not? Why don’t we have a million new or refurbished homes constructed each year? It’s not a dream, it’s a reality. The reason they don’t want it is if they build that number of houses, they can’t charge the exorbitant rents that they’re charging or the exorbitant mortgages that they’re demanding. It works in the interests of the Capitalists who own and control, otherwise they would have no difficulty putting the unemployed construction workers to work to build the houses, so that people can live in dignity …

[APPLAUSE]

…in the 21st century. Education is another argument that we put forward. Education is the right of every child and every child’s got a right to the best education. We’ve got a Cabinet and a Shadow Cabinet where all of them virtually come from Oxbridge and that’s their right, if they go to a university, but most of them have been to private schools at Winchester and Harrow and Eton and they say it’s their birthright to rule this country and the problem is, what do we in the working class do about an education system that creates that division between the two classes? Well, our solution is simple. We will close all those privately-owned schools they call public schools and we would make them state schools so that our pupils went to a state school …

[APPLAUSE]

…everywhere in Britain. Now, we’re also against faith schools. How can anybody support a faith school in a world where religion of all types is preaching hatred, intolerance and injustice? None more so than our religion, the Christian religion in Britain, who took across to Africa and India and Asia a Bible to try and persuade those populations to accept a religion. To go to their schools. It creates division, if children are going to different schools. If it’s right for a Muslim and a Hindu and a Buddhist and a Christian and a Sikh and any other religion to go to a university together in Britain, it’s right they should go to a school together …

[APPLAUSE]

…from the age of nil. I have to say I have a confession. I’ve had some experience of it. When I was a little younger, I was going out with a young woman and we were getting on famously and then suddenly she stopped seeing me and I thought what, stopped seeing me, how could she do that? I’d more hair on then.

[LAUGHTER]

So I waited one night whilst she came home from work and got off the bus and I thought well, face to face, if she tells me she doesn’t want to go out with me, or she’s got another bloke, fine, I understand that and so I waited for her. When she saw me, she came to me and she started crying. She said, 'I love you' and I said 'Well, it’s a strange way of displaying it really, isn’t it, not seeing me'. She said 'I’m not allowed to', I said 'Why?' She said 'Father says I can’t'. I said 'Well, that’s crackers'. I said 'Look, let’s go down and see your dad and I’ll have a talk to him'. I knew him very well. 'She said 'No, no, no, I don’t mean my father', she said, 'I mean my father at church, the priest'. I said, 'Why’s that?' She said 'Oh, I can go out with you and I can marry you, providing you’ll resign from the Young Communist League and join our religion'. I said 'Have you told him everything?' She said 'Yes'. I thought 'Christ' …

[LAUGHTER and APPLAUSE]

You think this is a bit difficult. It’s only six months since I saw her. She’s a lot younger than me, she’s 76, I’m 77 …
She said to me, 'You know I’m on my own now, don’t you?' I said 'I didn’t'. She said, 'I go to the club every Friday playing bingo, you ought to come down'. I thought, 'Not likely, after all these bloody years', but you know what religion does, it creates division doesn’t it? and therefore we are in favour of a sensible, funded education system where teachers are teaching small classes, so they can be taught properly. They should be paid properly, the care assistants should be paid properly, the other ancillary staff, the cleaners, everybody should be paid properly and of course our minimum wage proposal would do just that. In other words, we would begin to build a real nation of people where dignity was the first priority. I have to say that unless people change their attitudes, nothing really will alter, nothing really will change.

I have to touch gently upon energy policy, if for no other reason than I understand from press reports that a large Union in Britain has signed up to an agreement for fracking, absolutely deplorable. It’s one of the worst things that can happen on this earth and I know about geology, I understand geology. I worked long enough at a coal face down a mine, to know the nature of what happens. If you crack the strata plates, as fracking does, using masses of water which is contaminated immediately, you disturb the whole landscape. The noise is incredible, there is an emission far greater than the emissions they talk about in the mining industry and on top of all of that, you’ve then got problems in and around the environmental issues across the board. That’s why there are movements all over the world saying no. In France they’ve said no, no fracking here and that should be our policy in the Labour and Trade Union movement of Britain. It’s ridiculous.

We’ve been lied to, we’ve been lied to for years. You were told, all of us were told that the mines in Britain had to close because they were uneconomic and then we were told that they were an environmental problem and so they’ve gradually closed down economic pits, pits that could produce a wonderful product and what have they done? They import 44 million tonnes of coal from Russia and South Africa and use it here. What’s the difference between that pollution and the pollution they argued we had in Britain?

If you look very carefully at the government papers, which they’ve published after 30 years, I couldn’t believe my eyes. It says Scargill was right.

I must admit I would have preferred Scargill is left, but that’s another question.

But how many people have ever been told that in North Wales we developed, in the mining industry, at the Point of Ayr, a completely new concept where we brought the coal out of the ground and we turned it immediately into liquid. From that liquid we extracted oil, all that we need. From that coal we extracted gas, all that we need and don’t forget until the 1970s, all the gas in the United Kingdom came from coal, but this was an entirely new concept of gas without pollution and thirdly, your petroleum for a car and all the petrochemicals, for example nylon, you name the fabric, whatever, all of it made from coal, synthetic wood, all of it available. What did they do? In 1985, at the end of the strike, they closed down this immediate concept that would have revolutionised not only this country but many areas of the world. The coal industry could have been the centrepiece of a sensible policy which would lead us on to solar power, which really is the future for energy and the environment in Britain. We, in the Socialist Labour Party, want to see a sensible integrated energy policy, one that means something to all people and improves the quality of human life. Transport, well Bob Crow was a member of our party, he was the first industrial organiser and we wanted to see all the transport industry taken back into public common ownership.

Every time an industry gets in trouble, they nationalise it. Nationalisation should not be confused with common ownership. There’s more common ownership in the United States than there is in Britain. If there’s anything they want, like an armed force, it’s in public ownership in America, unless it’s secret, then it’s black water, so a secret operation could go ahead and yet here we are, with a transport policy which is at least 80 years out of date and instead of upgrading the systems that we have and putting the branch lines back into action, they’re spending billions of pounds creating new connections which, in my view, are completely unnecessary. I believe that there is an answer to our problem and that is to take into common and social ownership the whole transport industry…
...and if we did that, we would have a better environment. One trainload of any commodity, it could be coal, steel or anything you want, one trainload takes off the roads 700 juggernauts, from all over Europe on our roads. Just think what it would do as far the environment’s concerned. 80% of the pollution in our atmosphere is emitted from gas and from oil, fact from the Department of Energy. I know the nuclear industry is unethical? to anybody with common sense. I was telling your Officials last night, I was the advocate at the Windscale Public Inquiry and the Windscale debate proved a lot, but even more so at Sizewell and Hinkley Point. I called a witness at Sizewell, called Tony Benn, I thought he knows a bit, does Tony and I asked if I could put a question to him and the judge said, 'What’s the question?’ I had to see him privately.

I said, 'I want to know if I ask Mr Benn to name the Prime Minister of Britain and the Foreign President who have reached a secret agreement to introduce the fast breeder reactor, the most deadly of all nuclear stations, into Britain?’ 'Nobody knows, can I ask the question?’ He said, 'You can only do that if you go to see the legal adviser to the Inquiry’. I said, 'But you’re the judge’. He said, 'You’ve still got to see him’. So I had to go right the way back to London and I saw this leading counsel. He said, 'There’s secrecy involved here, there’s the 30 year rule you know and there is the Official Secrets Act’. I said, 'I know, but what’s it got to do with my question?’ He said, 'I’ll tell you what, go back and see the judge and ask him’. I said, 'I’ve just been there, he sent me here’.

[LAUGHTER]

I went back to the judge. He said, 'Well, I will allow you to put the question, but if I feel the answer is going to reveal something, I’ll stop it’ and he did and Benn said, 'Could I help the Inquiry?’ He said, 'I understand perfectly what Mr Scargill’s getting at’. He said, 'And it is possible if you go to the Cabinet Office and/or the Department of Energy, the information Mr Scargill is seeking is obtainable there’ and that ended that cross-examination. So the second hearing was at Hinkley Point and Benn and I met secretly. I said, 'I’m going to put the same question, but I’m not going to tell anybody’. He said, 'Fair enough’. So I stood up and it was, these Inquiries drone on, so I put the same question and the judge must have dropped asleep, he never said a word, so I said, 'Could you tell me the name of the Prime Minister in Britain and the name of a Foreign President who reached a secret agreement to install the fast breeder reactor, without the knowledge of parliament or anyone else?’ He said, 'Yes, Mr Scargill, the Prime Minister was James Callaghan and the President was the President of France, Giscard d’Estaing’.

I bet you didn’t see one word in any newspaper, but that was a fact and that alone should tell people what they’re doing in secret. What happened with the government papers that were published in December, January this last year and the year before? One of them said, as a result of Scargill’s activities on the Grunwick picket line, something has got to be done to get rid of him. I think they just meant move me on and if you think that, you must be in serious shock and the second one said, how can we defeat the miners and what proposal can we do to outwit them and can we use the armed forces? Well, I’ll tell you this, I know that the armed forces were used. They brought armed forces in from Ireland and used them on the picket lines at Orgreave, where they knocked hell out of the miners and I’ll tell you something else, those 10,000 miners on that picket line fought back like bloody heroes they were …

[APPLAUSE]

They fought back for their rights. We’ve also got a policy for taxation and our policy for taxation really lifts the eyebrows. We would scrap VAT. Value added tax is a European tax by the European Union. It means that a multi-billionaire pays the same tax as an old age pensioner. A person should be taxed on the amount of income they get and if they did that …

[APPLAUSE]

...you wouldn’t have a problem with our economy. How many people realise that 1% increase on income tax, with the first £15,000 of income tax-free, would raise 5 billion, 1% increase. Are we such a backward nation that we can’t say put up the taxation, the direct taxation and fund our health service, education system …

[APPLAUSE]

...and social welfare. Help those who can’t help themselves. In other words, look forward and don’t look back. Now, I came here today not meaning in any way to be militant or putting forward arguments that were revolutionary in nature and if you think that’s true, you’ve not been listening to what I’ve said.

[APPLAUSE]

To quote a few chosen words from Shakespeare, but not necessarily in the right order, 'I come to bury the Labour Party, not to revive it or resuscitate it'. Just like the Liberal Party of the 1900 period, there were Trade Unionists who supported the Liberals, because they were our party. The leaders of the Miners Union, in 1910 were Liberal MPs, so those people who say we’ve always voted Labour, I’m telling you the truth.
The Labour Party wasn’t founded until 1918, Keir Hardie was a General Secretary of the Independent Labour Party, but I’ll tell you who my heroes are. My heroes are Larkin, who stood and fought in the Dublin lock-out in 1913 and fought the fight.

[APPLAUSE]

My heroes are James Connolly, whose foresight brought about a revolution in Ireland.

[APPLAUSE and CHEERS]

My heroes include Keir Hardie, who had a knowledge and understanding to know that the policies being pursued to form a Labour Party would end in disaster, because it would become a social democratic party and not a Socialist party and by the way …

[APPLAUSE]

…people will say he was a member. Keir Hardie died in 1915, the Labour Party wasn’t founded until 1918, but I pay tribute to the role he played, particularly with, not for, alongside the Suffragettes like Sylvia Pankhurst, who fought for women’s rights …

[APPLAUSE]

…at a time when they were being opposed by workers, even into the ‘70’s and ‘80’s. In my Union, there were still people who argued should we have women members? I stood on my feet at that Conference and said, 'Should we have women members?' I said, 'Their courage, their determination, their faith and their commitment ought to mean they’re sitting on this platform as leaders of this bloody Union, never mind members'.

[APPLAUSE]

If a vote had been taken of the women at the end of the miners’ strike, it would still be going on.

[APPLAUSE]

They didn’t just serve in soup kitchens, they went onto the picket lines and fought back.

[APPLAUSE]

They demonstrated that we are an equal body in the Labour and Trade Union movement. Mr President, I’ve been a Socialist all my life, from the age of 15, when I first went to a political meeting and I saw the vision of a Socialist system of society, where the means of production, distribution and exchange came into the ownership of ordinary people. I still have that belief and that dream and that faith and I hope that this Union could be the first, as other Unions were, when they left the Liberal Party, to consider affiliation to the Socialist Labour Party. It’s a decision for you, not for me, but I can tell you, I would appeal to every Delegate to examine our policy, it’s on sale with Kim and Barbara at the back, the best read you can get. It’s not like the Gideon Bible, it puts forward a real policy for the future.

[APPLAUSE]

I put it to you, Comrades. When people say to us, your demands are too much, repeat the words of Connolly. ‘Our demands most moderate are. We only want the earth’. It’s a privilege to have addressed you.

[APPLAUSE and CHEERS]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Can you put a mike on down there, please?

Brother Ronnie Draper, General Secretary: Trying to gag Trade Union leaders, it’s absolutely terrible isn’t it, Arthur? While Arthur’s here, we thought it’d be really nice if we could get him to do some of our presentations and one of the things we’ve had debate right through the Conference about, the need for organising and how much it’s the lifeblood of the Union and we’ve had some outstanding things put in to the Executive Council for where people, members, activists, have created new members by their effort. So, we’ve got organising certificates for those people. I’m going to ask Arthur to do them and if I can call you down, we’ll get your photograph taken with Arthur. The first one is Omar Al-Amoudi.

[APPLAUSE]

Well done, Omar.

[APPLAUSE]

The second one is Marianne Birkin.

[APPLAUSE]

Well done, Marianne.
APPLAUSE

Right, okay. The next one is and forgive my pronunciation, is Tadeusz Hojden?, is that right?

APPLAUSE

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: I thought it was me that was bad at pronouncing names, Ronnie.

APPLAUSE

Brother Ronnie Draper, General Secretary: The next one is Damian Sawa?.

APPLAUSE

Well done, Damian.

APPLAUSE

The last organising award is Agnieszka Szadkowska.

APPLAUSE

We also have some organising awards as well. We have the Thompsons trophy, which is for, it’s one recipient that the Executive awards every year, so I would ask Julie to come forward and the winner of the Thompsons trophy this year is Lukasz Bemka.

APPLAUSE

We also have the, a great pleasure, but I’d like Arthur as well to be here for this presentation. We have the youth award, we just used to call it the Bakers Union Youth Award and those of you who have been coming for many years will know the part that Olive Molloy played in our organisation, Chair of Standing Orders, but a very, very well loved activist throughout the country and I think people thought her and I were married when we used to go the Labour Party Conference, because we always went together for about 11 years, so clearly everyone sorely misses her and we thought this year it would be nice to bring her daughter to come and present the trophy …

APPLAUSE

…but nice to do it with Arthur.

APPLAUSE

Right, the winner of this is Natalie Kelly, unfortunately Nathalie’s not at Conference, so I think it would be fitting if we bring the Branch Secretary from her Branch to come down and receive it on her behalf and then you can take it back.

Oscar

APPLAUSE

Olive Molloy’s Daughter: Ladies and gentleman, I have the honour of having been invited here to present the youth award, which Thompsons have renamed it Olive Molloy Youth Award. Why me? Olive Molloy was my mum, although Molloy came from Bill Molloy who I think you all know and I’m forever grateful that she brought him into our lives. If she was here today, she’d wonder what all the fuss was about, but deep down she’d be thrilled to have this honour. She’d also be amazed to see me standing here in front of so many people, hence I’ve taken my glasses off so I can’t see you.

LAUGHTER and APPLAUSE

I’m the other speaker from Barnsley, by the way. Mum loved this Conference and only stopped coming in recent years as she felt she could no longer keep up with the younger ones and did not want to let anyone down. Letting people down was simply not my mum’s style at all. Both me and my family would like to thank Thompsons for renaming this award after my mum, to Ronnie Draper for inviting me along to present it, although I did naively think it would be in a room of just a very few people. I’d also like to thank Julie Blackburn for arranging today and for the friendship she gave to my mum over the years.

Young people, in any organisation, are very, very important. We have a responsibility to teach them and teach them well, but we also need to learn from them as they have so much to offer. Mum had many sayings, but one of her favourites was our old age depends on the youth of today and the reason for the recipient Kelly was nominated, Natalie Kelly, I feel sure, like me, you will agree that with more people like this young lady, our old age is certainly in good hands. The young lady who has been successfully nominated to receive this award is Natalie Kelly from Greggs, South-East Retail.

APPLAUSE

Brother Ronnie Draper, General Secretary: Last, but by no means least is our learner rep award.
It’s something that isn’t done by the Executive Council, it’s actually done by the National Union Learner Reps Committee, they pick somebody out who they think has done astounding work in learning, building adult learning, obviously benefitting thousands of our members. The recipient this year actually not only does a great job within her own Branch at Moy Park in Ballymena, she was also recognised by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions as being their learner rep of the year and so I’m going to bring forward Clive Thomas from Watkins & Gunn to make the presentation to you, with Arthur, but on top of the award that you’re going to get, Carmina, the union learner reps have looked at, we have a fund called the Brian Hilton Fund and those of you who don’t know, Brian Hilton was a very prominent Executive member who sadly lost his life very, very early due to cancer and so we set up a learning fund because he was so progressive in that area and we have a learner fund and we know that you want to go through an interpretation class, is it, to learn to be an interpreter, which she does for the Union anyway and the cost of that is £485 and we’re going to give you £485 as well.

[APPLAUSE]

Sister Carmina Kaszoni: Thank you very much for this award. I owe you one, Laura. I would like with this award to thank the Union, especially to Laura Graham and all who supported me over the years. It’s true, since I came here, even if I came with university finish in Romania, I always each year wanted to progress myself. It’s not the first time the Union helped with the cost of a course. Over the years I have tried to do more and more courses. The thing is, what they want to say and probably everybody here it’s believe that, the employer, whatever they don’t like, they don’t like people which have the knowledge. Whenever a person has the knowledge, that along with the knowledge is coming the power, the strength, the willing to fight for them and to fight back for the people which are not so brave and that’s why I believe that we need to stick together, we need to educate ourselves, we need to try to push our members and educate them and by educating them, we’re going to give them the strength to stand for themselves and stand for the others. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ronnie Draper, General Secretary: Right, well, I mean I’ve been inspired by Arthur Scargill millions of times over the years and do you know, it never gets boring listening to you and the fight that you fought for working people and in particular within the mining industry. We’d like to make a presentation to you today, which we do to honoured guests who come to Conference and it’s, I’ll show you a picture, I’m not going to open it because they’re so difficult to get back in the box and what it is, Arthur, it’s a pewter baker and it portrays the roots of our Union, going back to 1847 when cellar baking was the norm, we didn’t have the plant bakers and so what it is, it’s a limited edition pewter baker that, as I say, explains the industry. We hope it’ll take pride of place in your home and remind you of the day that you spent with friends and Comrades within the Bakers, Food & Allied Workers Union and thank you so much for the job that you do, not just for inspiring people here, but millions of people across the country and across the world. Cheers.

[APPLAUSE]

We also and we know this is why you came really, we present everyone with a tin of Fox’s biscuits and the beauty of these biscuits is that they’re made by Trade Union people, so it’s one of those companies and the Delegates are here who’ve probably made some of these. We hope you enjoy them. We’re also going to give you a tin for David and we’d like to say our thanks also to David who’s, he’s over there at the back …

[APPLAUSE]

who, Arthur just tells me, is an ex-miners Official and David brought Arthur over on Monday, or tried to bring him over and they were stuck in traffic, I think, for nine hours. He also then brought him back last night and we enjoyed a meal and a drink together, so David, thank you on behalf of our Union for bringing Arthur over.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Do you want a brew? Okay, then. 20 to? 20 to.

[BREAK]

We would prefer different people to ask questions, yes? So, who wants to ask Arthur a question? One, two, three, Sean, four, five, five? Yes, you, yes, waving at me. Yes, you, yes, you. Anyone else? One more. Andy Moorhouse, come on. I’m going to stick with these for the time being and see how long we’ve got. Ask your questions, don’t make speeches, just ask questions. If you ask a question, there’s more chance of getting more people in as possible. Questions only, no statements. One.

Brother Colin Hall: Arthur, I know what you did during the miners’ strike. What I’d like to ask you is a lot of time has passed, a lot of water’s gone under the bridge, do you think that the police today are the tools they were during the miners’ strike?
[APPLAUSE]
Brother [unclear]: I just wanted to ask, as everyone in this Conference has been calling for a general strike and as much as influential as you are, would you be the face and take the general strike to the TUC?

[APPLAUSE]
Brother Leon Don: Arthur, you were speaking earlier about the fracking and I was reading, it reminded me of something I was reading in the news this morning about the underwater power station that they’re going to build in Swansea and I was just wondering by doing that, whether there’d be any consequences and how much we know about it. Thank you.

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Hold on a minute, he didn’t hear you.
Brother Arthur Scargill: I can’t hear you, Comrade.
Brother Leon Don: You were talking about the fracking, about how they drill for the oil under the ground and stuff and there was talk in the news about them making an underwater power station in Swansea, which obviously is going to talk about going under the ground to do that, so I was wondering if there’s going to be any consequences if they did it.

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Okay.
Brother Sean Molloy – Branch 558 (Rathbones, Wakefield): I’d like to ask Arthur the question, it’s a two-part question, the first part is did Arthur bring a load of lions to fight a bigger lion and I don’t mean Thatcher, I mean neoliberalism and secondly, it’s from the pub’s, drinking around Huddersfield and Rothwell where I live in Leeds, my mate’s dad and his grandfather …

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Sean, speak further into the mike, mate.
Brother Sean Molloy – Branch 558 (Rathbones, Wakefield): they’re still calling them pits. How are they going to get it out in 50 years’ time?

Brother Mark McHugh: Arthur, what would you do to revitalise today’s Union movement and also what would you do to get some of the more right-wing Trade Unions on side?

[APPLAUSE]
Brother Andy Moorhouse – Branch 417 (Hovis, Wigan): Arthur, given that history’s now proved everything you said during the run-up and during and after the strike was true and that the government and the press and everybody else was lying, can we not take some action, take these people to court for being the lying bastards that they were then and are now?

[APPLAUSE]
Brother Arthur Scargill: Right, well, the first question that’s being posed is about the police and basically as I understand it, although the hearings don’t go from there, is were the police and are the police the tool of the state, the answer to that question is yes, they are and they’re also …

…endemic, it’s endemic in the police force, they’re racist and they’re also xenophobic to an n° degree. There’s no question about that. You only have to look at the role that they’ve played. When they come up to you and say we’re only doing our job, it makes you laugh. When I was arrested, I was arrested six times, but when I was arrested at Orgreave, they stated in court that I had obstructed the highway and obstructed the police for a period of eight minutes. Michael Mansfield, the QC representing me said, ‘Eight minutes?’ and played a video and from the moment he stopped me, assaulted me and arrested me, 15 seconds. It gives you an indication of where they are. When the chips are down, they’ll support the establishment and if you’re going to do anything, I’m telling you now, this battle’s going to have to be fought on the streets of Britain …

…like they’re being fought throughout Europe. I was asked a question about the general strike. The TUC betrayed the Miners Union in 1926. In 1984/85 we had a number of betrayers. I call them traitors, quite frankly.

[APPLAUSE]
We had on the one hand the TUC, who kept drafting new resolutions that could possibly win over some kind of terms that would be acceptable. The final draft was ten times worse than the original draft of the Coal Board and the government. They then refused the call that we made at the TUC Conference, the idea was there that we should take action. I don’t know how many people have either, are able to recall this in 1983, but there was a Special Conference of the TUC and everybody, Eric Hammond, the whole lot of them, they all agreed that if there was any attack on the Trade Union movement, we would resist it. If that means going to jail, we’ll go to jail.
I must admit, I spoke passionately in favour of that, although the prospect of sharing a cell with Frank Chappell filled me with bloody horror …

[LAUGHTER and APPLAUSE]

but they didn’t do it and had they done it, none of the problems that are now facing our movement would be there and we wouldn’t have a government in power that are now threatening to impose even further sanctions upon Trade Unions.

[APPLAUSE]

So the answer is, if there is the willingness to do it, there’s a Comrade I spoke to from Africa, he said when we decide to strike in Africa, we do, that should be the same principle here. Incidentally, I would never advise anybody in the Trade Union movement to do something that I wasn’t prepared to do. Throughout my career, I’ve tried to lead from the front. If it’s a picket line, I thought all the time I was at the front. If it was good enough for them to fight, it was even more important that I was there to fight as well.

[APPLAUSE]

The important thing is that you’ll come into conflict with the law and you’ve got to take a decision. Either you adopt a policy of non-compliance and a demand for a return of our Trade Union rights, reclaim our rights. If you do that and there’s five of you do it, they’ll probably arrest you, but if we all do it, they can’t stop us.

[APPLAUSE]

As Mahatma Gandhi once said, first they ignore you, then they’ll laugh at you, then they attack you and then you win…

[APPLAUSE]

…and it’s important to remember.

The third question was about fracking. I could even pronounce a better word for it, but there is no question that fracking is a deadly, deadly form of extraction of anything. It interferes with the whole geology, as I tried to explain during my speech, but it also contaminates the water, so the whole water table is contaminated to an nth degree and in America there are now areas where the water is simply undrinkable and there are real major problems throughout the state, therefore any campaign you can join to stop fracking, stop it straight away, do it. I was also asked how long it would take if we decided to re-open pits, or open new pits. Well, they’re opening a new pit, by the way, in Yorkshire and it’s anticipated it should be open within 15 months, so it’s not a long time to drive a pit and the problem that we’re facing is that the government doesn’t want to use coal, even though they’ve got the technology to produce clean coal that does not give off emissions, all the acid rain is taken away. They know it, I know it and any scientist worth his or her salt knows it as well. We could have the pits in Britain producing the coal that is currently being imported, 44 million tonnes of coal produced by people in South Africa and Russia, people who are paid low wages and even from Columbia where children aged seven are producing coal, that’s called a free market. Well, if that’s a free market, using kids of seven, I want nothing to bloody well do with a free market.

[APPLAUSE]

I was then asked, I think it says this, what would I do to revitalise the movement. I could give them a shot of Viagra…

[LAUGHTER]

I told them that at the TUC when Willis was attacking me from the platform. Don’t forget, the Trade Union Congress are conspicuous by their silence to their absence. It’s fine to have a platform speech almost in the mode of the CBI or the Institute of Directors, but it’s high time we stopped using the technology of looking into screens and we began to speak from the heart as well as the mind. Use both facilities. If you yourself are impassioned, it will convey itself to those who are listening. More important, they’ll believe what you say and more important still, if you put into action the promises that you make, then they’ll trust you. A

If I can say is, I have every faith in the working class. I have my doubts about loads of working class leaders in certain Trade Unions. Even more so, I am disgusted with the leadership of the Labour Party and the Labour Party itself and I want to say this, because it’s important. When the Labour Representation Committee was founded in 1900, it was founded by Socialist societies and affiliates from Trade Unions. It wasn’t a party, it was a representation federal body. It didn’t become a party until 1918, but fundamental to that party were two important points, points of principle. One, the demand for proportional representation and two, a demand for the abolition of Capitalism and the common ownership of the means of production distribution and exchange.
The first principle for PR was removed by Ramsey MacDonald, who betrayed the Labour movement and the second was removed by Tony Blair in 1995, the man who took us into an unlawful war in Iraq and who should be facing trial in the Hague for war crimes.

[APPLAUSE]

I couldn’t quite grasp the last question that I scribbled down here and I’m not bad, but it said something can we take the message to the country, I wasn’t too sure about it, but can I pose a question to you as well, because it’s one that I touched on very briefly, but I think it needs just a brief explanation from me, because I did this some years ago and it concerns immigration and migration and I think it’s important that this Conference understands the difference between the two things. You are being fed a monumental lie, when they talk about immigration and migration. We support immigration in the Socialist Labour Party. All those people who have come to this country from their former Commonwealth countries, or countries still attached by the Commonwealth or in any other way, like the West Indies, Australia, Canada, wherever it may be, or Africa, should be made welcome, but listen to these statistics …

[APPLAUSE]

…listen to these statistics.

Last year, in 2014, we had 251,000 people who were people who came into this country as immigrants. The number of people leaving this country to go and live abroad, in the same year, was in fact 327,000. Now my maths is my weakest subject, but I reckon that if 327,000 go out and 251,000 come in, the population should be decreasing, not increasing.

So what is the problem? Well the problem is clear. What happened is that the biggest movement was as a result of the Maastricht and these treaties which introduced what was called the free movement of capital and labour and the two are interconnected. It means that companies can close down the steel works in Wales, like the Tata Steelworks at Port Talbot and LLanwern and move it abroad. It means that the Dyson hoover bloke can close down his factories and take them to Czechoslovakia or Poland or Hungary and blithely say it’s because he can get them produced with cheaper labour. I was speaking in Scotland where they were moving the Volvo plant from Scotland in Ayrshire to Czechoslovakia and I asked why. I challenged him to a debate, the managing director at the gates. Astonishingly he agreed and the workers were there and I asked him ‘Is this plant profitable?’ He said ‘Yes’. I said ‘Why are you then moving it from Ayrshire with the result that all these workers are losing their jobs and their pensions and moving it abroad?’ He said ‘Because I can get the work done 40% cheaper by way of wage rates that we have to pay’. That should be stopped and equally …

[APPLAUSE]

…equally there is no problem in a policy that says we do not accept the free movement of migrant labour. That is a Socialist policy, by the way. Let me tell you how it would work, shall I? All these thousands of people who are being picked up in the sea, struggling for life, struggling to get to land, if we didn’t have the free movement of labour, migrant labour into Britain, we could have picked up all of those and given them asylum in Britain …

[APPLAUSE]

…and it would not have made a bit of difference. Our policy is, the number coming in should equal the number going out. I’m talking about who are not immigrants, who have an absolute right to come in, but migrant labour is a threat to everybody, not in Britain but throughout all the 28 countries in Europe and it’s becoming a real topic and it shouldn’t be one that’s left to the lies and distortions of the Farage’s of this world and the UKIP’s and other right-wing stupid parties.

[APPLAUSE]

We should confront it and we should challenge it, but it’s most important to understand that you make it clear that we’re in favour of immigration and giving sanctuary to those people who are in fear of their lives or who are suffering, whether it be in Syria, whether it be in Iraq, wherever it may be, as a result of our policy of bombing and killing people. We’ve a right to give them sanctuary …

[APPLAUSE]

…but we have a responsibility to recognise that you cannot have unrestricted migrant labour movement at the whim of an employer or of the whim of a government and unless and until we adopt that message, which would give us the best of both worlds in the Labour movement, in other words all migrants could come in freely as they did up to 2000 without a problem and migrants who want to come in, at the present time there’s nearly 90,000 who, if they came in, would not increase the population of Britain by one and yet what we’ve seen since that policy came into operation, the population has risen from around 61 million to around 68 million.
Now, you don’t need to be a mathematician to work out that if you’re paying for your social services, your health service, education, pensions and all the other welfare benefits that we have and you’ve calculated on the basis of a population forward-looking of around 60 million and possibly decreasing, it’s not going to be enough to find the same money with no increase for a population that’s approaching 70 million and so the policy, if you examine it and it’s here in this booklet, have a look at it, read it and if you do, I think you’ll find that there is at least a message that makes sense. In other words, it’s a sensible challenge to all these who are racist or xenophobic. That is the policy that we should be putting forward as a positive and not a negative. We certainly shouldn’t be saying we’ll do better than the Tories and what we need is to ensure that we slow down the debt that we’ve got. It’s their bloody debt, not ours and we shouldn’t be paying for their debt.

[APPLAUSE]

So the sooner we get that in our minds, the better. I’ll tell you, this Conference has inspired me and the people I’ve met have inspired me even more individually. It’s great to come to a Conference where there is a feeling for the movement, a feeling for the Socialist concept belief and dreams of the Socialist pioneers. You are a credit to the women and the men who built the movement, who built the movement for the Suffragettes and got the vote, but above all, you’re the movement that created the state that gave us the health service, the education system, a nationalised transport system and the things that our forebears fought for and in some cases died for. If they can do that, we can do the rest and make it come true.

[APPLAUSE and CHEERS]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Okay, Conference. Motion 58. Follow that, yes. Great to you, Marilyn, aren’t I? Following Arthur Scargill, what an honour.

58 Miscellaneous Branch 450

That this conference agrees anyone using a mobility scooter needs to receive training in how to use them on footpaths and roads and needs knowledge of the Highway Code.

Sister Marilyn McCarthy – Branch 450 (Manchester): What an honour. You’ll be pleased to know, this is the last time I’m getting up this year.

[APPLAUSE and CHEERS]

That this Conference agrees that anybody who uses a mobility scooter needs to receive training in how to use them on footpaths and roads and need some knowledge of the highway code. Now I don’t really expect people to have to take a driving test to use a mobility scooter, but I can’t tell you how near to death I go every time I go to Salford Precinct. You’d think there was a football match on, there’s that many of them racing about all over and they just don’t seem to like, well I’m on this so you better move. You’re right, I’m moving. I think they need some training on this and obviously I ask you to support.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Second?

Brother Leon Don – Branch 334: I would like to second this motion. I’m going to keep this short and sweet. In the highway code, it says people on the roads with mobility scooters are supposed to have orange beacons. I constantly go past a lot of these mobility scooters and those mobility, whatever, mobiles without these orange beacons, as do the police and the police don’t do anything about it. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Any more speakers? No? Okay. The Executive would ask you to support the motion. Those in favour? Against? That’s carried. Motion 59.

59 Miscellaneous No 4 Regional Council

That this conference agrees public houses’ rates should go on their annual profits not what they earned five years ago. Public houses are closing at a ridiculous rate and should be treated as small businesses. Also these are part of the community.

Brother Andy McDuff – Branch 429 (Warburtons, Burnley): That this Conference agrees public houses rates should go under annual profits and not what they earned five years ago.
Public houses are closing at a ridiculous rate and should be treated as small businesses. These are part of our community, so I’m asking you to get out there and support your local pub and always drink responsibly. Please support.

[APPLAUSE]

**Brother Ian Hodson, National President:** Seconder? Seconder? Formally seconded? Okay.

**Brother Leon Don – Branch 334:** I know this is going to make me very, very unpopular, but I actually would like to oppose this motion. The reason being, I think it sends out the wrong message from our Union members. I think it makes us look like a bunch of alcoholics. Thank you.

[LAUGHTER and APPLAUSE]

**Brother Ian Hodson, National President:** That’s probably because we are.

**Brother Andy Moorhouse – Branch 417 (Hovis, Wigan):** Hello again, Conference. I’m here to support this motion. Pubs are shutting at a phenomenal rate, it’s terrifying. A side issue to this is the fact alcohol is being sold so cheaply in supermarkets, it’s not part of the motion but it’s one of the problems and that needs dealing with as well. If they changed the pricing structure so it was actually cheaper to go to the pubs, Britain has an alcohol problem and pubs are shutting. If people were going to the pubs, there’d be less trouble. People are getting very, very drunk and it’s got nothing to do with the pubs. Please support this motion.

[APPLAUSE]

**Brother Terry Povey – Branch 277 (Warburtons, Bristol):** Yes, I support the motion. Basically after what we’ve been drinking over the last few days, I think we are a bunch of bloody alcoholics, but that’s besides the point, okay.

[APPLAUSE]

On a more serious note though, it’s costing jobs, it’s costing peoples’ living. I have a pub local to me, it’s empty all week, there’s hardly anybody there. He makes most of his money on the weekends, but he can’t live like that, it’s a stupid way to live. They need help, keep the rates at a reasonable level. Okay, thank you very much.

[APPLAUSE]

**Brother Clive Priestley – Branch 417 (Hovis, Wigan):** Turn right at the Dog & Duck, down 500 yards down the road, turn right at the [unclear] Duck. Dog & Partridge, 500 yards down the road, you have reached your destination. Best Sat Nav ever. Please support.

[LAUGHTER and APPLAUSE]

**Brother Jonathan Manning – Branch 202:** First-time Delegate, first-time speaker.

[APPLAUSE]

I’d like to support this motion. Public houses are struggling all over the UK. I live in Devizes, a small town in Wiltshire. There were 27 pubs when I was 16 years old. I’m 23 now, there’s only 11. Wadworth Brewery is the biggest brewery we have in Wiltshire so far. They have pubs all over the UK, from Birmingham to Wales, all over. Wadworth’s tie contracts to these pubs and they have to pay a rent. My local pub is £2½ thousand a month. The landlord does his best to get disco, karaoke, to do food and all sorts, but he’s still making a loss. Go to the cash and carry, it’ll cost you £80. How can pubs live like this? How can people run a business and be charged at really silly prices? I say support the motion. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

**Brother Pat Rowley – No. 2 Region:** Mr President, Delegates. I support the resolution. I support the resolution because pubs are a part of the community, they have always been. They were a meeting place for people. I remember back in the early ‘50s when we came to England, they were a place for us to meet and you met with your people and because we were strange and away from home, it was a place of association. We believed in the pubs. In actual fact, we thought they were banks and we put all our money in them, so we want to keep them going. Support the resolution.

[LAUGHTER and APPLAUSE]

**Brother Ian Hodson, National President:** Sorry. I was talking, sorry.

**Brother Joe Knapper – Branch 566 (Warburtons, Wakefield) – speaking on behalf of the Executive Council:** We know. Public houses. It’s a subject close to my heart.

[LAUGHTER]

For too many years now, we have the pubs that were meeting places for local people are closing due to falling sales and increased rates. We are now in danger of seeing the local pub disappearing altogether, to be replaced by Tesco Expresses, Nisa Stores and all the mini-markets.
I know you’re not going to believe this, but I can remember going into the George Hotel on East Mall? when I was 18. I know you’re thinking that’s a long time ago, but I can remember it. You used to go there and meet your mates. It was an important place where you met all your mates from school, but as one of my fellow Delegates knows, Trevor, he’s up there, the George Hotel is now a mini-market, Nisa. Delegates, please support. We need our pubs. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: I can’t remember if someone did oppose it, I think they opposed it in a strange sort of, was it actually, was it actually opposition to it? It was, was it? I wasn’t 100% sure. So you do have a right of reply. There’s nothing like stating the obvious in a room full of Trade Unionists who might be alcoholics. To the vote. Those in favour? Those against? Thank you, Conference and …

[LAUGHTER and APPLAUSE]

…thank you very much for your indulgence. That’s the end of the actual final Agenda.

Conference, I’m now going to ask, he’s just scribbling away here, so he’s probably making some notes. He’s going to come down. While he’s coming down, we can do one of two things. We can stop for dinner or we can run through, because obviously I’m a bit concerned that if we run through, that might get you in the pub a bit too early, is that okay?

Brother Ronnie Draper, General Secretary: Health and safety, Chair.

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: I was contemplating health and safety issues, yes. Obviously your health and wellbeing. Are you ready now? Are you ready?

Brother Ronnie Draper, General Secretary: Yes, I’m ready, Chair, thanks very much. I was a bit shaky with you mentioning running.

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: You’re buying the first round, by the way, for everyone, yes? Is that okay? First round on Ronnie, yes, yes? By the time he’s finished at the bar, I’ll be on my way home.

Brother Ronnie Draper, General Secretary: Do you know, I probably would, but Standing Orders took the money off me. Shirley only gave me a fiver today. I’m going to make a presentation. One thing I would like to say, just before I do make the presentation to somebody else, is that I believe Adel Mahmood is going to be retiring, it’s going to be his last Conference, everybody knows Adel …

[APPLAUSE]

35 years at Hovis. I’ve got to say he’s been a fantastic Branch Secretary, he’s building his Branch towards 100% and it’s a really active Branch. Now, somebody’s got a real difficult task in taking over from Adel because, as I say, it’s been superb what he’s given to the Union and given to the membership at Forest Gate Bakeries in London. The other thing I would like to say a personal thanks to Adel is that when we had an Egyptian delegation over here, he actually acted as an interpreter for me, him and his wife helped us out and it was obviously absolutely fantastic and the people…

[APPLAUSE]

…the Egyptian Trade Union love them as well, so Adel, thank you very, very much for everything you’ve done for the Union. The presentation I’d like to make, it’s somebody who’s been associated with our Union over many years in different guises, well always in the same guise but with different companies. Julie Blackburn, who’s over there, is going to retire, I believe and I can’t believe that she looks younger than me and she’s retiring, but Julie used to be one of our National Solicitors when Whittles were on the go, sadly Whittles had to amalgamate with Thompsons, I don’t know whether that’s a bad thing or a good thing, but Julie obviously took over her partnership, over into Thompsons and has continued to do a fantastic job with the Union. She’s definitely one of the…

[APPLAUSE]

…PR people of Thompsons and in fairness any time that I’ve got a beef or members have got a beef and it comes through me or Officials come through me, then Julie’s the first point of contact that I have and so very often she’s getting, not just the good things that we do when we meet to negotiate stuff, but she also gets the sharp end of the tongue when maybe service just dips a little bit. So, Julie, on behalf of the Union, I hope you have a really wonderful retirement. I’m sure there’s plenty of things that Gary can get you to do. I take it Gary’s not retiring, is he? Oh no, he’s still going out to … Anyway, on behalf of the Executive, Julie, the members and in particular all those members who benefitted from your actions as a lawyer, I’d like to present you with a baker.

[APPLAUSE]
Julie Blackburn: Hi everybody, that’s really unexpected and I want to thank you very much. It’s been my very great privilege to act for you and your members. I think it’s about 33 years, I know, I’ve had a tough paper round, but it’s been an absolute delight. You’ve got one of the nicest memberships in the whole of the Union movement. I’ve been lucky to act for a lot of Union members, but I can say from the bottom of my heart that I love the Bakers Union members, they’ve been absolutely fantastic.

[APPLAUSE]

I think what I wish for you as a Union, is that you can continue to go from strength to strength. That you can keep your much prided independence, because I know that that’s so dear to all of your hearts and I’m sure that with the current Executive and with all the hard work that you do out there, that you will achieve that and for a very long time to come and I really do hope that’s the case. If I can just say one thing about something that’s just happened this morning, that made me really think about my career in the law and that is that education is everything.

I came from a background where my parents had no money at all, but they gave me every confidence that I could do whatever I wanted to do. They made me believe that if I wanted to be the Prime Minister of this country, I could be the Prime Minister, I could do anything and even sometimes a little bit of me still believes that and Christ, the Labour Party needs some help at the moment, so who knows, but anyway, I think if you can continue to support your education, your learning agenda and help people do what I was able to achieve, to qualify as a solicitor and then to use those skills to help other working people to do things that they couldn’t achieve themselves, then I think that would be one of the greatest gifts you can give to your membership. So thanks once again. I’ve got some great friends in this room, I couldn’t begin to mention you all because there are too many actually, because nearly everybody in here is, I hope, a friend of mine. I’d like to thank you again for the privilege of acting for you all and wish you well for the future. God bless.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Okay, Conference. Organising is the lifeblood of this Trade Union and recruitment is essential if we’re to stay here. I mean it’s not just about having policies, it’s not just about representing people. The recruiting of members is what enables us to be able to do a lot of the things that we do and why we’re able to continue to represent working people, not just in your workplaces, but in workplaces that are currently outside and new ones that we’ll identify. Now, as an organisation, we’ve been concentrating very heavily on how we can improve on what we do and how we can communicate and connect with different groups of workers.

I mean, you all have the benefit of understanding the Trade Union and recognising what we have to offer, because you are the leaders and the pioneers of the workplace reps. So you understand exactly, but there’s other stuff that you may not be aware of, that’s been going on up and down the country, that we want to bring to your attention and so I’d like to invite Lukasz and Mark McHugh to address Conference on organising and I, are you coming up George?

If I can just say one thing about something that’s just happened this morning, that I think it’s about 33 years, I know, I’ve had a tough paper round, but it’s been an inspiration when it comes to organising and obviously some of the stuff that you’re going to hear about, George has had an absolutely huge part in playing, but I want to congratulate all of our organisers as well for the role that they’ve done right across the country, but they are a team, they do work very well together, so I’d like to congratulate all of our full-time Officials for what they do in making sure that we organise and we continue to remain an independent Trade Union. I’d like to now introduce Mark and Lukasz.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Mark McHugh: Thanks very much, Chair. I’m just going to speak briefly on some of the stuff we’ve been doing in Scotland. I’d like to start with the Fast Food Rights Campaign. About two years ago, Ian asked if I’d get involved in it in Scotland and from a kind of selfish viewpoint I’ve taken it up, because at that time my son had just started working at McDonald’s and he came in and he was telling us about the conditions and all the rest of it and straight away he signed up for a Union, so I’d an insider working for us straight away. He approached his manager and mentioned about the shifts he was taking, one week he was getting 50 hours a week, the second week he was getting 16 hours and it’s no use to him, so he approached his manager and said look, if this doesn’t improve, I’m going to contact my Union.

I’ll give you an insight into my son, he wouldn’t say boo to a ghost, but he found the courage to stand up to this manager and straightaway the following week, the manager started giving him tons of shifts, but what was happening was he was getting shifts off someone else, so my son turned around and said well look, we’ll get together all the workers in the place and we’ll divvy out the shifts between us, so that started getting us some members in his place and we also got a couple in Pizza Hut in Coatbridge and there was one of the girls who [unclear] day off and Sean knows this kind of stuff, so she went in at 10 o’clock.
Her manager came in at 11 o’clock and said you weren’t meant to start until 11, so I’m not paying you for the first hour. So they ended up having words, but the girl ended up working 7 hours 20 minutes without a break. She ‘phoned me that night, half-nine in tears, so I spoke to Alan about it and took some advice and I was up there first thing, for the doors opening, to speak to the manager. That day we picked up another three members.

Alongside the Fast Food Campaign we’ve led, it’s pushed the STUC into doing a bit of action round about it and again when people, when I went to the STUC and I said look, I’m looking for a bit of support on this. Some of the other Unions kind of looked and said the Bakers Union?, they’ve no chance of organising the Fast Food Rights Campaign, but that was the same Unions that said the same when we went to Hovis in Wigan, we’ve no chance and look what happened there. The other Unions came out and supported us. So again, we’ve got the STUC behind us and they’ve recently started a campaign called Better than Zero and they came to the Bakers Union and asked for advice about a way to get young people into the Trade Union movement.

They never went to Unite or GMB or Unison or anybody else, they came to the Bakers Union. So that’s one of the websites, if anybody’s interested, it’s called Better than Zero and it’s a fabulous website. Again run by the STUC in conjunction with ourselves and some of our young members. We’ve also got a website, I’m never off the ‘phone to Lukasz on it, the Polska website, which has been invaluable in some of our workplaces, but there’s also another website that we use and it’s called Ameto and what it is, it’s a website where anyone coming over to look for work, accommodation, they go onto this website and I inquired about getting an advert on it, straightaway, saying that anybody joining the food industry, join the Bakers Union and it was costing £800 or something for six months, but I was speaking to one of our Polish reps in Dawnfresh Seafoods, Wally Brennan’s Branch and she mentioned she was already on this website, so she started advertising on it for free, again so we started picking up members.

That was probably one of the ways where we got inroads into Johnstone’s Just Desserts. People started asking about the Bakers Union. We’ve been trying for years to get into Johnstone’s and it’s been a nightmare. We were stood outside there and the manager wouldn’t talk to us or anything else, but we picked up two members and then we picked up 10 and then we picked up 15 and within the space of about three or four weeks, we were up to 70 members. There’s only 98 people working in there and we’re up to 70 members already.

[APPLAUSE]

But in doing that, I’m going to be totally honest with you, it’s kind of re-energised us in Scotland, because it’s given us that one success and we’re determined to push on and I spoke to Lorna and Toni, Monica, Paul and Jim and we’ve kind of made that our mark to find one day a week to pick a site and maybe it’s one of our existing sites and go in and build up a density or pick a completely new site and start from scratch. A couple of years ago, just over 2½ years ago, we lost a full-time Official, Jim McClelland, a close Brother and a close childhood friend and it would have been quite easy for us just to sit back and what are we going to do now?, but I think Jim would have liked us to turn around and say well look, to coin a phrase, don’t mourn, organise and that’s what we intend to do. We intend to go out there morning, noon and night, picking up members. Thanks very much.

[APPLAUSE]

**Brother Lukasz Bemka:** Conference, Platform, thank you very much for the opportunity to have a word with you. Basically I’m going to concentrate about Region 3 and one of the tools we’re using over there to recruit new members, which is our website and our Facebook profile for Polska.com? and basically the website started in 2006 and it started for basically Polish workers in R.F. Brooks, Leicester, just to make them a bit more aware of employment law and any day-to-day issues which people coming to this country may have, especially Polish people, but it actually lifted off in 2012 when we created the Facebook profile for the website, which is a lot easier to manage. It’s a lot easier to feed information through Facebook and it’s a lot easier to access the information from Facebook if somebody liked the website or liked the page itself and basically there’s only a few rules we need to follow just to make it successful and I’ve been told recently that Region 3 is unique in generating members, new members.

It’s something extraordinary I would say and I would say Polska’s one of the tools. We’ve got loads, loads of Eastern European workers in our Region and Polska is doing really well, so basically the rules are quite simple. You need to be on board, you need to control the website, you need to know all sorts of information on it. A very important thing is to answer all the questions which are being asked and for that, basically how it’s working now, because it’s only the Facebook page, it’s not a group like our BFAWU group. We’re going to generate a group, but when people comment on our articles or articles we’re posting from other websites, it’s very important to like take part in discussions and some of the discussions are really, really hard. We’ve got like some articles with 300 comments on them basically, especially if it’s about politics, UKIP and Tories, believe me or not.
Okay, we decided to not put any advertisements on our Facebook and our website, so it just makes it clear and, as I said before, very easy, accessible. Through Polska we actively support all the BFAWU actions and yes, obviously we support £10 an hour, Fast Food Rights and all the others.

We support the Cool It Campaign as well, because loads of Eastern Europeans and Polish people are working in the bakeries in very hot environments and basically we need that regulation, one of our policies anyway and recently and I’m really happy that the motion has been passed at this Conference, we started to concentrate on the Allied bit of our Union, so we started recruiting in different types of industries and for that, I’m in touch with one of the reps, one of the Unison reps in Region 1 at the moment, basically he will get like one or two days to recruit members for Unison obviously, but if it’s not related with any sort, if it’s not a nurse, doctor or somebody working in a hospital, basically he’s been told to not recruit, so on behalf of BFAWU, he’s going to do it for us, he’s going to recruit all the other small, small services like people working in transport, in supply chains for the hospitals and believe me or not, loads, loads of people are going to join because they’re not able to join their Union, they’re going to join us. So I think that’s going to be a very good idea and what else can I say?

Yes, obviously it’s not just me, it’s my team, the team sitting there, so Agnieszka, it’s Damian, basically giving up their time to go out with us, promote the Polska website, promote the Bakers, Food & Allied Workers Union on the Greenfield sites, on any road shows, in existing Branches as well, promoting Union learning, because that’s one of the main things the Polish people are going to use and it’s a great tool, it’s a great tool. You can basically learn English, you can learn for free, you don’t need to spend any of your money and as you are aware, most of migrants they are working on zero contracts, they’re working for £6 an hour and they really struggle, so once again it’s very important to send the message that yes, we are here, we’re going to fight for you, we’re going to fight for your rights and yes, but the main thing is that you need to know your rights, you need to know what you can do and you need to know how to do it and that’s where Polska is, I would say, very successful and it’s working.

On top of that I would like to finish off, because I never had a chance to do any speech after receiving the Thompsons trophy, I would like to thank obviously my team, I would like to thank the whole Region 3, all full-time Officials, especially George Atwall, who is pushing us to always, always give more than we think we can give and yes, if you need any more details about our website, if you need some materials, if you need some support, please let me know. My contact, my telephone number is available. Thank you very much.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Thank you both for that. It is so, so important that we recognise the importance and some of the stuff that we have available. We’ve got a great message to sell and anything you can do to assist us, we really do appreciate and obviously if you do need any more information, if you want any of those contact details that they spoke about, please, please see them after Conference.

Okay, Conference. Obviously we’ve got to that point, we’ve got to that point in the Agenda now where we have the opportunity to thank everybody. So, I’d like to thank everybody from Standing Orders, I’d like to thank Mark Brooks and the Committee for running Conference. I think it’s been a pretty smooth Conference. I think we’ve had a, I think that we’ve had a fairly enjoyable Conference, well, I feel like it’s been an enjoyable Conference, so I’d like to thank the Standing Orders Committee. Thank you very much.

[APPLAUSE]

I’d really like to thank my Vice-President, because without my Vice-President you wouldn’t have had a brew, because I kept forgetting, so I think you should thank him very, very much.

[APPLAUSE]

I’d like to thank all of the Scrutineers. I’d like to thank the FTOs for doing the door and making sure that everybody got here on time and making sure that those that didn’t paid the fines, so I’d like to thank all the full-time Officials for all they’ve done during the Conference.

[APPLAUSE]

I think I’d also like to thank obviously Jan and Carol and all of those people that’s been in the back room staff. I mean, our office staff right across the country, their skills and their ability make most of the work that we do pretty effortless, so I’d like to thank all of our office staff and obviously Jan and Carol and everybody who’s been in that back room, making sure you get all of that stuff on the table as well.

[APPLAUSE]
And obviously the people who set up every morning for us, I’d like to thank all of the staff, I’d like to thank the lighting crew, the filming people, the recording people. Obviously any recording that shows me making a mistake, don’t forget we’ve still got that deal, you edit that bit out, make me look good, but I’d like to, so I’d like to thank all of them, so thank you and obviously we look forward to seeing that stuff. I’d like to thank the hotel owners who’s had to put up with us, the Prince of Wales, the Scarisbrick Hotel and anywhere else where our Delegates have been staying or people that have been here doing all the stalls. Any of those hotels that’s had to tolerate us, well, I congratulate them, because no doubt we got in late and put a lot of money over the bar, but probably did a bit of noise as well, so let’s thank all the hotels for assisting us.

[APPLAUSE]

I’d like to thank the sponsors, Warburtons, Fox’s Biscuits, Walkers Union, Watkins & Gunn, Thompsons. I’d like to thank those, because obviously they make sure that this Conference runs year-in, year-out, because obviously financially their aid and assistance to help us run some of the events that we run is so, so important and so, so critical and obviously we thank you very much for your continued support and we look forward to that support and our relationship continuing as we go through the next few years. So thank you very much to them.

[APPLAUSE]

I’d like to thank the stall holders, the Credit Union, the Union Learning, obviously Walkers Smith Way and Watkins & Gunn and Thompsons and the GFTU and Northern College, Payplan and Lighthouse, the Shrewsbury 24 people, the Tamil Solidarity, the Socialist Labour Party, the Youth Fight for Jobs, the Unite the Resistance. Unite the Resistance, Unite the Resistance phenomenal, phenomenal meeting last night, fantastic support that we’ve received from them up and down the country and I hope I haven’t missed anybody out, if I do, I apologise, but you know what, all of our stallholders that came, you give a load of freebies away, which everybody takes home with them, so we thank you very much for the support you do. We thank you for obviously helping us make Conference really enjoyable, so we thank you as well for continuing your support for us.

[APPLAUSE]

I think one thing that’s for certain this year, I think one thing’s for absolute certain this year, we’ve never had a Conference that’s probably had as many speakers, but I think the speakers that we’ve brought to Conference this year are unbelievably inspirational orators, but more importantly, class fighters, people who we need at the forefront if we’re going to make any challenges or make any difference in our society. I mean, the speech that was given from Richard Burgon, the Bakers, Food & Allied Workers Union MP, the inspiration as always from John McDonnell, the unbelievable contribution made by the General Secretary of the PCS, all of those people contributing to making our Conference and I believe a very, very incredible event and of course, you can’t forget Hilda Palmer, obviously Willie, who’s going to be coming back soon anyway and Ricky Tomlinson, what more can be said and then of course today, Arthur Scargill, living legend, unbelievable guy, so I think we should thank all of our speakers and …

[APPLAUSE]

…absolutely. And so now, obviously, after thanking everybody, I think I’ve thanked, did I thank everybody? Oh, what about the Executive Council, Executive Council, because if I don’t thank the Executive Council, the first thing that they do and then we go into that meeting afterwards, is remind me I’ve forgotten to do it, so I want to thank our Executive Council and all the work that they do throughout the year …

[APPLAUSE]

…and thank you very, very much, because the contributions that you make are incredible. You didn’t buy me a drink, you never bought me a drink, did he buy anybody a drink? So, with the exception of the General Secretary, who didn’t buy anybody a drink in the Hall, that’s going to have to make that up tonight I think, I’d like to thank the whole of our Executive and we’ll thank him as well, so thank you very much to all of our Executive as well.

[APPLAUSE]

It now gives me great pleasure to invite Mark Brooks to address Conference for the final time today. He’s probably had a very hectic week, I know they’ve been put under pressure in there and let’s give everybody, let’s give Mark Brooks, because he’s had a very, very difficult job, he’s had to keep coming up and down to talk to me, so that was difficult enough in itself. So let’s welcome Mark Brooks to give his final address to Conference.
Brother Mark Brooks, Chair of Standing Orders: Giving his closing address. Thank you, Mr President, you’ve just taken half of my thank-you’s away. Well, another great Conference, some very inspirational speakers, Mark Serwotka, Hilda Palmer, Willie, Richard Burgon, Ricky and Arthur, what truly inspirational speakers we can take something back to our Branches and more [unclear] when we go recruiting. A very good Agenda and each motion meaning something to the movers. Great debates on the motion. There’s nine emergency motions, the most in a very long time. There are a few thank-you’s. For Ronnie and Ian and the way they run the Conference, the Executive Council, Conference Delegates, without you we wouldn’t have one and the first-time speakers, not easy and being up here, it definitely isn’t easy, I prefer to be down there but unfortunately I have to be up here.

To the solicitors that work throughout the year and for sponsoring the Union events. Clive, thanks for a good night last night. Conference Hall staff and full-time Officials, we all need them, 24 hours a day they’re on the end of the ‘phone. The Scrutineers and the Standing Orders Committee’s professional manner in which they deal with your inquiries and for the people that came in there, thank you for the manner that you handled yourself in, very professional. The Head Office staff, well, what more can we say, the backbone, they come out here, your packs are ready for everybody, so without them this Conference wouldn’t definitely run as smoothly as it does. The fines totalled £55 this year, so to all those who donated thank you, from the General Secretary …

[APPLAUSE]

…to the Chair of Standing Orders, who got fined for holding up Conference, we decided this year we’re going to give it to the Alzheimer’s charity.

[APPLAUSE]

So Mr Owens, would you like to come up and accept this cheque, well this cash for £55, please.

[APPLAUSE]

I’m sure John would like to raise a lot more and I’m sure he will do over his next few walks. So I wish you all a safe journey home, whether it’s by land or sea and I hope to see you all here next year. Thank you, Conference.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Okay, Conference. Obviously there’s been a geezer sat at the end, just over there, most of you know him and I know he knows everybody in here on a first name basis, an incredible memory. Anybody who can remember exactly what it says in the way he did the other day, it just goes to demonstrate his unbelievable knowledge and obviously he’s been our guest to Conference all week. We hope you’ve enjoyed your opportunity to take some time with the Executive Council and with all of our Delegates in Conference as our special guest and we’d like to invite you up to say some words to Conference, if we can.

Willie Colquhoun, brilliant.

[LAUGHTER and APPLAUSE]

Brother Willie Colquhoun: Wow.

Mr President, Delegates, Friends. I’m just wondering, I always have trouble starting what to say. Once I get started, I’m okay, but I thought there are some things in life that are quite impossible, like finding the non-existent Loch Ness Monster, getting a pint from a Yorkshireman …

[LAUGHTER and APPLAUSE]

…Dave Ratnik excepted, climbing Mount Everest without the proper gear or speaking after Arthur Scargill. I don’t know which, but anyway I’ll do my best. It’s just so wonderful, so inspiring, Mr President and a lovely little précis of what Socialism is about, how simple it is and how reasonable it is …

[APPLAUSE]

…from the greatest Trade Unionist of my lifetime, absolutely wonderful, but anyway, beyond that, I asked the General Secretary how long do I have, about 10 minutes? He said yes. I didn’t ask if it was 10 chronological speaking minutes or 10 Ian Hodson speaking minutes …

[LAUGHTER]

so I’ll just see how it goes, because Ian comes into my class to do a quick session and when I have guest speakers come into the class, it’s a great opportunity for me to go and get a little bit of my paperwork done. When Ian and Richard Burgon came into the class, I got a whole week’s paperwork done. It’s absolutely brilliant, it means I get a flyer on a Friday, so keep it up.

[LAUGHTER]

But anyway, I thought I’d like to say a couple of words to Conference. I thought I’d quite like to do a couple of things that Ronnie usually does and sort of comment on a couple of quips and anecdotes that have come across through the course of the week. To do so unfortunately, to get my research, I had to go round a lot of pubs …
…and the first one I got was on Sunday afternoon, I went into the Victoria. Dave Lawrence came in. He said marvellous news, Willie. What is it? He said Angela Shortreed lost her voice.

Yes, unfortunately for Dave, her hearing was very good …

…and he got a slap. So I love stuff like that and I just heard also at breaktime the other, Clive Priestley was propositioned last night.

Good on you, Clive. But the most amazing experience I’ve had this week in observations happened yesterday afternoon in the Victoria across the road. Some people might not believe this. Noel Mullen refused a vodka.

Honestly. Cheers, Noel and Kevin Flood made a very, very serious comment about it. He said this could bugger up the Russian economy …

…which will have repercussions throughout the entire globe. Fortunately, Noel saw sense. That would have buggered up Capitalism. Anyway, those were my observations anyway. Just one thing about Conference, about the motions, was motion 2, I was very pleased that opening up the Union to, well to non-fit workers pretty much, because I had a text from Anthony in the Monkey and he’s off on one of his rants and he needs a platform he said, so can he join the Bakers Union, because he eats bread anyway.

But just one thing. People have been asking me, I’ve got a little scratch on my head and numerous people have asked me what I did and I’ve told one or two people and I said I may as well tell Conference. I was sitting at breakfast on Sunday morning with my wife and my wife says wifey-things, she said did you sort out with Ian Hodson what you’re doing about the health and safety session? I said yes, I said I emailed Ian, Ian made a recommendation, that sounds good for me and she said don’t make a mess of it. I said what do you mean? She said just don’t make a mess of it, do it properly. I don’t know why wives say things like that. My wife says things like that anyway. I said look Liz, I’m not blooming stupid. She said you’re getting older. I said I may be getting older, love, but I’ve all my faculties about me, I’m still sharp you know. So it was about an hour later, I began to load the car up and I came into the kitchen because my forehead was bleeding. She said what did you do? I said I closed the car door and I forgot to move my head out of the way.

So she gave me that, you know that nod that only wives can give …

So she gave me that, you know that nod that only wives can give …

…and and I just said oh, but anyway that’s how the bang on the head came, but what I would like to say, Friends and Comrades, is that I’m hugely honoured to be here today. When Ronnie told me that the Executive Council had decided to honour me with this privilege, I was really overwhelmed and it was the day I also won my council seat, so it was absolutely fabulous.

So we’ve doubled our council representation, Gary and as has been said this week, people should be getting back there, getting involved and getting into the political room because it’s not going to happen from the outside, it’s going to happen from the Trade Union movement, I hope. Pardon me, silence. Right, I feel as though I’ve lost it again. Yes, when I was informed of that, I was really, really, truly honoured and privileged, Mr President. I feel absolutely wonderful about it and I’ve had a marvellous week as well and it’s lovely to sit there, because I see things better than I do at the back and to listen to some of the excellent speakers this week, some of the speakers have been absolutely marvellous and younger speakers as well and a more diverse range of speakers, it’s been absolutely truly amazing and if we keep this going, it’ll be absolutely fabulous. The only disappointment of course was that we were a bit short on motions, but we’ll work at that and we’ll get more in for next year, hopefully.
But I would just like to conclude anyway, Mr President, Executive Council, again by thanking you for bestowing this honour on me and to all the Delegates, most of whom I know. I must confess I’ve forgotten the names of three people in the Hall, I really chide myself for that, but I need to work on that for next year.

Just to finish off, folks, on the room and I’m looking around and pretty much a huge chunk of the people in the room have been with me at Northern College and in a couple of factories. I would like to say thank you very, very much.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ronnie Draper, General Secretary: I’ve got to say thanks very much, Willie and clearly on behalf of everyone, thank you for what you do in making sure that we’ve probably the best educated Shop Stewards and Health and Safety reps in the Trade Union movement and that’s why we want the consistency of keeping Willie Colhoun? at the helm when it comes to training, but I’ve got to say, Willie, just one thing, you are the most unlucky Scotsman I’ve ever known, because the intention was that we were going to give you a baker, but of course we didn’t realise that Julie Blackburn was leaving, so we gave her yours …

[LAUGHTER]

…but we will make sure that the next time I see you, we will have a baker for you, or we’ll send one out for you, but of course while you’re drowning your sorrows in the pub, there’s a tin of fabulously Foxes biscuits to eat, Trade Union members who incidentally you’ve probably educated.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Willie Colquhoun: Thank you, Friends.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Okay, Conference. It now gives me great pleasure to introduce, for his final Conference address, our General Secretary, Comrade and Brother, Ronnie Draper.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Ronnie Draper, General Secretary: Thank you, Comrades. It worries me when you say to give his final Conference address. Do you know something that I don’t?

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: We’re going home today, we’re going home today.

Brother Ronnie Draper, General Secretary: I’m hoping to be back next year. Just before I do start my address, can I just personally wish our President, Ian Hodson and his wife, Deb at the back, a really happy anniversary, it’s their wedding anniversary today. I don’t know whether Deb’s got the medals on or whatever, but I’m sure she’ll be parading them tonight, if she gets her voice back and she can ask where they are.

[APPLAUSE]

General Secretary’s Address to Conference

Brother Ronnie Draper, General Secretary: Comrades, when I, over the last few months, putting together and believe me, Ian said it before, you come to Conference it’s pretty seamless, it just works, it always works, but you know, when you’re looking at building Conference and making sure the hotels are booked, I mean Jan’s been run ragged and Adrian at Head Office, they’ve been absolutely fantastic, but the thing that worried me and it clearly worried the President at the time as well, was the size of the Agenda, it was a really small one and I’ve got to say and pay credit to Ian for the timings that he’s done, because we haven’t had massive gaps where we’ve had nothing to do. The whole thing and if you like, we’re probably running a little tiny bit later than normal and that’s down to the great work that you’ve done, Ian, it’s fantastic.

[APPLAUSE]

I think one of the things that the Agenda does show is the great diversity our members have throughout the Union, when you look at the items, the different things, the topics that we talk about and so we could spend all week as Branches, as Regions, talking about the exploitation that we face from our employers, on terms and conditions, overtime, pensions, wage cuts and of course harassment of members by companies who target and we know who those companies are very much, they advertise themselves pretty well in doing workers down, but also the army of henchmen that they employ to deliver those sanctions on workers, but I’m really heartened, Comrades, by the fighting spirit that seems to be rekindled within our organisation, the fighting spirit that is coming back to take on those employers.
I’m not talking either as a revolutionary, I’m talking about somebody who absolutely deals in fairness and we’ve seen it time and time again with the debates that we’ve had, the speeches that we’ve had and of course the dialogue that goes on outside of these walls and the President was right on Day 1 when he talked about you can only kick a dog so many times and then it’ll bite you, well I think that’s where we’re getting to now, we’re seeing more and more people and we’re not talking about militant Branches, because I wouldn’t call Llantarnam a militant Branch, I wouldn’t call Gunstones a militant Branch, but the fact is they’re being driven to the edge of despair and now those Comrades in Gunstones, Pennine and Llantarnam are looking to bite back. But one thing I will say, Comrades, their fight is our fight.

[APPLAUSE]

I said in No. 2 Regional Council, we had quite a long debate on this and what I did, I pledged the support of the Executive Council to you and I know that there’s Comrades from outside organisations in this room who are dedicated to this Union, who will help us in making sure that the victory is sweet when we get to those Branches, but when the call comes, Comrades, I hope that everybody in this room jumps to that call as well and that we make sure that we rally round and make sure these people aren’t starved or defeated back at the Branch.

[APPLAUSE]

And talk about being inspired by people, I was most certainly confused by something that David Cameron said a few weeks ago. I don’t like the guy, don’t particularly listen to him often, but he said and I quote, he said he would pledge to make illegal work illegal, Aye, the man’s a genius isn’t he, aye? So if it was already illegal, why would you need to make it illegal? Unless of course, you can make it more illegal, so God forbid if we’re going to be talking about that, but let me, I’ll tell you what illegal is and what my thoughts are on what should be illegal. I think it should be illegal that companies can breach your contract. I think it’s illegal that they be able to service notice on you, just to change terms and conditions and take away the right to justice. I believe that should be made illegal. Comrades, whether you’re injured at work now, you’re dismissed, you’re discriminated against, you’re harassed, your access to justice has been curtailed by this government and the past coalition and we have to make sure that we support lawyers in their fight to regain these things and when barristers take to the cobbles, I don’t mind standing with them if they’re fighting to get access to justice back for working people.

[APPLAUSE]

And I’ll tell you what else I’d stop, Chair. I’d stop Cameron and Osborne using these petty words like aspiration, when it means absolutely nothing to the vast population of this country. Our aspiration at the moment seems to be not to use food banks. We’ve got millions of people who are being exploited. Not to have to do zero hour contracts. Not to be on casualised labour, where you stand outside a factory waiting to be called and aspiration not to be low paid. They should be ashamed. As I said, the Trussell Trust said over a million people now are using food banks. The 7th richest country in the world and people are being starved. So Comrades, we need the aspiration to get out of poverty pay. We need the aspiration to live in dignity for the rest of our lives and you know, another point like Arthur said in his speech before, I’m absolutely dismayed when the news came through yesterday that another Union had backed the fracking. Without real debate having taken place, without any real research into what damage it’s going to do and we’ve all seen the videos where in America people turn on their water taps and gas comes out, you can light the water and that’s all around these sites where fracking is, but you know, I’m really proud and I mean really, really proud that this Union still retains its opposition to fracking and everything that that means.

[APPLAUSE]

But, Comrades, I’m even prouder that people like John Fox and Comrades in the North-West who’ve taken to Barton Moss, which was a site where fracking was meant to be taking place and they’ve been part of the body that has stopped that happening …

[APPLAUSE]

…and they should be proud of what they’ve done, because it protects, it protects not only the people there but the ecology in that area. Yet another example of how when working people and people come together, we can beat even the biggest, most powerful employers. You know, Delegates, we’ve had and the names, it’s like a who’s-who isn’t it, the speakers we’ve had at Conference. Arthur, how do you follow Arthur, lucky Marilyn, John McDonnell, Mark Serwotka, Ricky, Hilda, all great speakers, all on their own things, but I’ve got to say the one speaker who really puzzled me was Richard Burgon and I was sat there, I was just doing a few notes on what I was going to speak on next and I heard him say, I’m sure I heard him say that Windsor Castle is the place where the Queen goes to live when she’s not on the throne. Well, I’m telling you in our house when we’re on the throne, we have to whistle, we haven’t even
got a lock on the door. We’ve got nowhere else to go. Having a different house to do that? It’s absolutely amazing. I’ve said it before, Comrades and I’ll say it again, if they’ve got that many residences where she can skip the light fandango from one to the other, then surely there’s rooms in those houses, we own them, there’s rooms in those houses for homeless people …

[APPLAUSE]

…and we should be taking them back and making sure that they’re fit for purpose, not just a luxury for one family and you know, we’ve got buildings like Chequers. Somebody explain to me why the government, the Cabinet, have to go off to the beauty of Chequers to have a meeting when they’ve got a perfectly decent place in Downing Street, it’s a pretty good building isn’t it? Nothing wrong with it and of course municipal buildings. I was walking around Belfast with Noel Mullen a few weeks ago and you see municipal buildings that are empty and it’s a scandal that people are living on the streets in Belfast when there’s municipal buildings that are empty, not doing anything, not serving a purpose to anyone. Let’s do them up, let’s make flats and let’s get some families into them.

[APPLAUSE]

Chair, I want to finish off by talking about the Conference and the role that young people have played in this Conference and I know that Mark touched on it before and Willie’s touched on it. When I come to Conference, I expect the likes of Pat and Marilyn and even Sean Molloy’s now joining that group who are down on most things, they have a view on lots of things and they use that experience for real good, but I want to pay a tribute to, I actually picked three out and I’m sure there’s more people, but three young people who really inspired me this week. Leon, Lorna and Toni over there, first time at Conference.

[APPLAUSE]

I believe that those young people have epitomised everything that this great Union stands for. That’s the thing that we need to do, we need to bring young people in to take us forward, otherwise, I think Pat said it on Day 1, we stagnate, we stay there, it’ll always be the men in grey suits and I hope that when I go and it’s not too long, that we have somebody younger to come in who’s going to get a really good run at a job of making change within our organisation. I hope their example will inspire other young people, not just to join our ranks, but to play an active part, because you can. New members to the Union, you can inspire people to do it and young people can look at the experience of what you’ve done here and come in and know that they can play a part in this family that we call the Bakers, Food & Allied Workers Union. If I do have a downside about young people and it’s not a criticism, if anything it’s a criticism of Branches, that we passed a rule that allowed every Branch in this country to bring an extra Delegate to Conference if they were under 27.

[APPLAUSE]

That would have been immense. You know how many Branches took advantage of it this year? Seven, just seven Branches brought people under 27. Next year, let’s aim for 70, that’ll be even better and it will make a much better Conference.

[APPLAUSE]

I just want to, I want to thank, finish off by thanking, we thank everybody in the room who does it, but to thank partners as well, because I’ve got to say my partner, Shirley, she never knows when I’m going to be away, I do spend a lot of time away from home, but all of you, to enable you to carry out your duties within the Branches, very often means that somebody at home makes a sacrifice, whether it’s a wife looking after children and all that, but the split and the pressures that that could put on family life and I would like to thank and you take the message back to those who you love, that this Union really cares for you as well and we thank you for everything you do to make sure this is possible.

[APPLAUSE]

Conference, you’re an inspiration to our class, our movement and our membership. Thank you for the support and loyalty and I hope you have a safe journey and I hope to see you all next year.

[APPLAUSE]

Brother Joe Knapper: Delegates, Conference. I’d like to introduce my good friend and Comrade, Ian Hodson, to give his closing address to Conference. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]
Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Conference, what an amazing inspiring week and you know, there’s lots and lots. What’s really inspired me this week is the amount of new Delegates that’s got down to this rostrum. Unbelievable speakers, unbelievable confidence. I pay respect to all of you, all of our people that have attended this week, I pay you great respect, but all of those first-time Delegates, to get up and, I never had the bottle to do that, you were absolutely superb and phenomenal. You should congratulate yourself, because you, you will be the reason why this Union drives forward.

[APPLAUSE]

You are incredible people and you’ve done an incredible job this week, every single one of you. I want to also say, on 15th and 16th June, when our people go out on strike, we want every single person in this room to send them a message of support and solidarity. No worker in this Union who goes out on strike should ever not expect to receive the support and the backing of every single person in this room.

[APPLAUSE]

So give them your support and give them your solidarity and today dig your hands in your pockets, because when they’re losing money, let’s make sure we put money in those buckets on your way out, to give them a bit of funding too and let’s talk about, because the speeches this week have been absolutely inspiring, we’ve had some great speakers. We’ve all talked about one or two things, mainly solidarity, because solidarity’s the key.

We’re in a time now, because I was fortunate a couple of weeks ago to go to the Manchester Trades Council, I had to follow Matt Wrack and all of these people that talked about history, so I decided that one of the things that I would do was talk about something a bit further back, when the Bakers Union was just starting to get going, round about 1381. In 1381, I don’t know how many people realise, there’d just been this thing called the Black Death and it wiped out an awful lot of people, but it also meant that our labour, our labour, our labour was valued, so we were able to start doing things that we hadn’t done before, like move away from the employers that owned us and move into a bit of a community and start to do things differently and we realised that actually we didn’t need employers to own us any more, we had the ability to actually sustain ourselves by giving ourselves confidence.

Well the powers that be, a bit like the powers that be today, thought that they controlled and owned us, but the reality was nobody ever controls and owns people. They only control and own us if we allow it to happen and in 1381 we did a couple of things, we did a couple of things. The first thing we did, we didn’t have social media, we had no media-friendly press, we came together and we spoke to one another and we said do you know this lot, they think, they think that they can control us, what are we going to do about it? So we said, we’ll have a meeting, so we had a meeting, we had a consistent meeting. We went round all the little villages that we were starting to build up and we said to each other do you know what?, they think, they think that we can’t do anything. They think that we’re unable, we’re unable to challenge them. Let me tell you what happened in 1381, because it’s a key, key part, key part of our history, when people thought that nothing could be achieved individually. It’s a key element of why we should never accept their argument that we should be individual and not act collectively, because those people came together and unfortunately for those Normans that ran the country at the time, they did another thing too, they taught us to use bows and arrows. Now the problem with using bows and arrows is when you go and march on London and you use them, you can beat the bastards behind the wall and that’s exactly what we did in 1381, because in 1381, after they’d tried to impose a poll tax on us, we marched on London and removed the head of the Chancellor that tried to impose the poll tax.

Now I’m not suggesting, by any means, by any means that we do that to George Osborne, although maybe some in the room would disagree, but I don’t think we’re actually in that part of society, but I want to talk about the confidence that we should have, because whether or not, whether or not you realise it, history, history and working class people have always been in struggle, we’ve always, always been in struggle.

We’ve never had to and we’ve never gained anything without a fight, we’ve always had to fight. So let’s remember that it was us, it was us and let’s believe in the power and our ability to change our lives. We don’t need them, we don’t need them to make decisions on our behalf, we can make that decision ourselves. We know what’s right, we know what’s wrong. We know when people are being exploited and we know, we know how to challenge that back and I’ll tell you what it is. It’s called Collectivism.
Collectivism is how we respond when they try to drive us apart and we say to them and I also want to echo some words about the TUC, what Arthur Scargill touched on, because he’s right you know, the TUC did let the miners down and they did let us down in 1926, as they’re letting down Trade Unionists now, activists who comply with the laws and comply with the rules but still face dismissal. Let’s tell the TUC General Council and all of those people that sit around the table in TUC General Council, we don’t want you talking, we don’t want you not doing anything, when they sack activists, then the only one thing to do is send a clear concise message, sack our activists and we will go on strike …

[APPLAUSE]

…because that’s how we deal with people who constantly, constantly want to make our people pay for the mess that they’ve created. We’re not accepting it and that’s what we want our leaders in the TUC to tell people. Why should our people be sacrificed so they can have jobs as bureaucrats at the top of an organisation?

It’s time to take action and it’s time to take ownership back into the hands of our people and the Trade Union movement deserves leadership and that’s what we call on the TUC to do, leadership and next week or whatever week it is when they decide to have a meeting to tell us that they’re going to restrict us and take our, put laws into place to restrict us from taking action, there’s one response, a general strike. We don’t take it, we don’t accept it, we’re not having it, we’re not having it.

[APPLAUSE and CHEERS]

And I’ll tell you something else we’re not having either, we’re not having Workfare, no Workfare, bring it on, we’re going on strike, absolutely. Zero hours contracts, shove it, we’re not having that either. £10 minimum an hour, we’re not asking for it, we’re demanding it, every single one of you. Nobody deserves to be treated like a second-class citizen, not a single person in this room. You deserve respect, you deserve dignity and let me tell you this, because I love the lot of you, but, but, I love my wife the most and she keeps telling me I forget to tell her, so I couldn’t have made it any more public, because you know what, you inspire me, you encourage me, you make me go out week after week and want to represent you.

You’re unbelievable people, believe in yourself, have confidence in yourself, because you’re the people, remember this, you’re the people that gave the right of men to vote. You’re the people that gave women the right to vote. You’re the people that created a welfare state, that was your, that was your predecessors, your parents, your grandparents, that was us that did that, that was us, we did that, we built the welfare state, we created the NHS, we said we’re not having our people to live in poverty, we’re the ones who built homes and we’re the ones that said full employment is the right, people have a right to work, to earn a living, to be treated with dignity. Have a great week, enjoy yourself, go home, build, build the Union movement, build our class. Let’s tell them we’re coming, we’re not going to accept any less than dignity and respect, for every worker and every member of our class. Solidarity.

[APPLAUSE and CHEERS]

Is that a bit quiet? Comrades, it’s going to give me great pleasure to introduce two singers, two singers who’ve been out on Fast Food Campaigns, who created a little song which has gone right across the world and then they’re going to lead us on doing a bit of Red Flag as well, so can Toni and Lorna come down and give us a rendition of the song that you recently made famous across the world.

[APPLAUSE]

You’re going to do the Fast Food one first, yes? Okay.

Sister Lorna McKinnon: So me and Toni were out really late and our voices are quite shot, it’ll be fine, so it’s a call and response, so we will call out and you have to sing back to us exactly what we sing to you. So it goes …

[SISTERS LORNA and TONI SING]

[APPLAUSE and CHEERS]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Are we ready? Red Flag? Were you waiting for them to sing something else? They’re very good, aren’t they? It’ll probably be the first time we’ve been in tune on the Red Flag, you realise that?

Brother Ronnie Draper, General Secretary: It probably will, Ian’s not got any words in front of him.

[LAUGHTER]

[RED FLAG SUNG]

[APPLAUSE and CHEERS]
Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Okay Conference, Auld Lang Syne.

Hey, Scottish people, you must know Auld Lang Syne.

[LAUGHTER]

Do you want a whisky, is that what it is, do you want a whisky?

[AULD LANG SYNE SUNG]

[APPLAUSE and CHEERS]

Brother Ian Hodson, National President: Have a safe journey home.

[APPLAUSE and CHEERS]

[END OF CONFERENCE]