No one particularly wants to pay taxes but most of us ordinary folk realise that in order to pay for schools, hospitals, welfare and pensions we have to do our bit. But the super-rich, the arrogant, the global corporations think they are above this. The massive scale of tax-dodging disclosed in the Panama Papers makes your blood boil. These vultures extract profits by paying poverty wages expecting you and me to subsidise their profits by paying in-work welfare benefits. The percentage of the national wealth paid out in wages and salaries continues to decline (dividends to shareholders continue to rise). Don’t get us started on Amazon, Vodafone, Starbucks, Boots... It is utterly outrageous.

The NEC’s motion 63 summarises the important background. Investment in public services must be the cornerstone of a fair and just society. A fair taxation system – where we are truly in it together – must be the basis of a better society.

Our North West amendment 63.1 reminds us of the Tory chancellor’s reckless squandering of tax money – cuts to corporation tax rates (already amongst the lowest in the world), cuts to capital gains tax, cuts in business rates...

63.2 wants the campaign to include retired members’ groups – support. 63.3 from Coventry is a distraction from what is a very good well-focussed motion. Nationalising the banks may not be a credible position. 63.4 calls for a mega demo at this year’s Tory party conference in October. Hands up for a day trip to Brum. It’ll make a change from St Peter’s Square. 63.5 which falls if 63.4 is carried restates the issue about tax dodging – support if we get there.
Coming up today - Wednesday

We’re not sure when but at some point... Speaker – Jeremy Corbyn MP, Leader of the Labour Party

121 Gateway to the future: stable and sustainable branch resources

123 Branch funding
124 Branch funding—withdrawn

Young Members’ Organising Awards presentation

1 An organising response to the Trade Union Bill
1.1
1.2

2 Organising for growth in the community and voluntary sector

73 Campaign for a living pension

Composite B Housing crisis

2pm
63 Fairer taxation and the future funding of our public services
63.1
63.2
63.3
63.4
63.5

65 Austerity – how much worse will it get for Black members?

Composite D Social Care crisis

48 Women, the refugee crisis and trafficking

28 Public Service campaigning - Stop outsourcing and protect members
28.1
28.2

1, 1.1. and 1.2
An Organising Response to the Trade Union Bill

Once again the North West is at the forefront in Conference, kick-starting this important debate on how we, as a trade union, organise. Our motion was of course submitted before the Trade Union Bill became an Act and before the government stepped back from some of its wilder positions. Remember that the Bill sought to attack the very foundations of the trade union movement, particularly in terms of a ban on DOCAS, cuts to facility time and a requirement to re-sign all existing members up to the political fund.

It is important to remember that we have had a reprieve rather than a victory, but we know that government wants to weaken trade unions and why it wants to do so.

We have to be able to adapt to the new legislation regarding industrial action and be clever as well as vigilant with facility time.

Our North West motion urges us to re-engage with members in the workplace and calls on the NEC to support the drive to organising with a series of campaigning initiatives, with the ultimate aim of repealing the Trade Union Act.

Amendment 1.1 needs to be supported in that it takes out our now redundant call to switch all members on to Direct Debits and Manchester’s 1.2 urges us to reach formal DOCAS agreements with all employers in the scope of the Act. Support.
2. Organising for growth in the community and the voluntary sector

The Community and Voluntary sector is increasingly providing public services yet employers in the sector have little experience of dealing with trade unions. As a result employees suffer from poor terms and conditions together with unacceptable standards in terms of dignity at work and Health & Safety.

This motion resolves to prioritise recruiting, organising and supporting workers in the Community and Voluntary sectors. It also wants to look at UNISON Scotland’s Organising for Growth strategy with the aim of rolling out a similar plan nationally.

Support.

Jeremy Corbyn

Jeremy was born on 26 May 1949 in Chippenham, Wiltshire. He was educated at Adams’ Gram-mar School in Newport and grew up in Shropshire.

After leaving school at 18 with two grade E A-levels, he spent two years working with Voluntary Service Overseas in Jamaica. Jeremy was originally a full time official for NUPE (now part of UNISON) and when in Parliament is a member of, and supported by, UNISON.

In 1974, he was elected to Haringey council before entering Parliament in 1983 as MP for Islington North. He is involved with a number of groups which include the Socialist Campaign Group, Justice Unions, Family Court Union, Trade Union Group, the Performers Alliance, Defend Council Housing and he is a member of the Labour Representation Committee.

Jeremy is a vegetarian and does not drink alcohol. His hobbies include running, cycling and cricket.

Jeremy is also a member of the All Party Parliamentary Group for Cheese, the purpose of which is “to raise the profile of the UK cheese industry amongst parliamentarians and discuss the many issues that the industry faces.”

He supports Arsenal, the purpose of which is unknown.
121 and 123
Gateway to the future: Stable and sustainable branch resources

Whether stables and gateways are a good title when 134,000 members have bolted in the last few years is an interesting point!

The NEC Report attempts to square the circle on branch funding – how do you resource active branches more when the union’s overall income continues to fall? And in truth it seems a bit of a fudge – do nothing about branch reserves; do nothing about the allocation formula; but set up a process where branches can get some extra funding if their activities merit it. The report itself is full of interesting detail. No, honestly.

In 2011 UNISON’s income was at a peak of £173.4 million. By 2015 it had fallen to £166.8m – that’s £6.6 million or about 4% less. The reason is clear – membership over the same period fell from 1,374,500 to 1,239,750 – just short of 10%. Frankly given the assault on public services it could be a lot lot worse.

The branch funding formula since 2002 has allocated 23.5% of income to branches. But there are massive differences between branches. 365 branches hold reserves equivalent to £58 per member, while 57 branches have a deficit equating to minus £4.87 per member. Some branches have paid staff and their own premises, others have none. An increasing number of branches are operating deficit budgets – spending reserves - but this of course is not sustainable.

An increasing amount of the union’s money is held in branch reserves. In 2015 that reached nearly £44 million. So by simply increasing the percentage of subs income passed directly to branches there’s a real danger that even more cash would end up in branch reserves rather than being used for genuine activity. It’s a difficult one to sort out and the NEC believes that one size cannot fit all.

We do not have a regional position on this but the core of the issue is how much branches are given from the central pot of subscriptions. The NEC will argue that nearly £30m has been invested from the top into branches via the Fighting Fund despite a £5 million loss in revenue caused by the loss of membership income. The argument will be that branches have sufficient funding already and this can be evidenced by the annual increase in the amount of reserves branches have.
The NEC’s original proposal in motion 121 is to introduce ‘activity based budgets’ that do not alter the percentage allocation of subs to branches but seek to focus branch activity on measurable targeted activity. The proposal is not to decrease branch funding but to make it “smarter”.

The counter proposals—from Manchester and Salford amongst others in motion 123 see this as the slippery slope to centralisation of branch funding and seek an increase in the amount HQ passes on to branches to reflect where the work takes place and the increased activity that branches now have to undertake. The alternative proposal is not to monitor branch spending but to review national and regional offices’ expenditure and achieve efficiencies there whilst increasing the subs retained by branches.

The issue therefore is how best to financially support all branches and how best to ensure members’ money is used to best effect. The two ‘sides’ have a different view on how this should be managed: one believing in activity-based budgets and the other on an increased share of the overall income.

For the record our region has nearly £250,000 Regional Pool Fund that year on year is under-spent despite it being available for branches to tap into. The only thing that is certain is that this will be a debate you won’t want to miss.

Remember that if 121 is carried 123 falls.

**Back to the snake...**

**Composite B Housing Crisis**

Housing – one of life’s essentials. But owning your own house is increasingly an impossible dream for many. Prices in the South East are now an eye-watering 11 times average salaries. Social housing continues to be flogged off with very few replacements being built. Private rents rise and rise – the average rent in England is now £816 a month. Tens of thousands are in overcrowded accommodation; thousands more in temporary accommodation. And all the Tories do is pass laws to make things worse.

Housing Associations and councils stand to lose £10 BILLION in rents because of revised funding rules introduced by the Tories last year. That’s billions that could be spent on building new social housing.

The Composite, based on **South East’s motion 34** and **Halton’s 36** reaffirms our long-standing policy on housing. We want more and better quality social housing. More secure tenancies. We demand better jobs so people can actually afford to rent or buy. Support.
Beer and Bites in Brighton

To the far east...

Beyond the Palace Pier is the Old Steine – check out the splendid art deco concrete bus shelters – and beyond that is St James’s Street. The street is full of fun - but not for those of a nervous disposition. It’s full of places to eat and drink but it’s probably best to avoid the Poison Ivy Bar (karaoke with Gloria Hole gives you the idea).

The Raneleigh is as good a place to start as any – a music pub with a charming diversity of regulars and fine Harvey’s Best Bitter. Neighbourhood Bar is one of those modern bistros. The Gelateria de Luca is an ice cream parlour cheek by jowl with betting shops, barbershops, sex shops, charity shops and independent, family-run cafes like Little Miss Piggies. The Pavel Indian Restaurant is a good spot for that chicken tikka we stopped you having yesterday.

Shott’s live music bar, the Metродeco gin bar on the corner of Charlotte Street both look worthy of further investigation. The Anatolia Meze Bar does a fantastic range of authentic kebabs and is well worth a visit – if you’ve a healthy appetite.

If you’ve got room for more, carry on out of town. In five minutes you’ll come to the excellent Hand in Hand. An old favourite of ours this tiny street corner local brews its own ales. We chanced a swift half of East Sussex's Longman Brewery’s American IPA (£4.20 a pint) which was perky if not a little cheeky.

Until now we had never walked further but we struck out into uncharted territory. Another half mile or so brings you to the truly delightful Kemptown and the Barley Mow. Good Beer Guide listed, pizzas delivered direct to your table from a nearby shop, Arundel Brewery beers, coconut snowballs and live vinyl DJs every Sunday! Perhaps best to get a cab out there and amble back gently.

Tomorrow – north to Hanover!

Sadly missed
Our sympathies go to the families and friends of all those in the North West who have lost loved ones and good friends and comrades this last year. But it would be remiss of us not to fondly remember June Poole of Rochdale Branch who died last year. June was a stalwart of UNISON Welfare and along with Anne McAleer, organiser supreme of past North West Nights and raffles too many to list (a bit like the number of prizes some years –Ed). It was a brave person indeed who tried to avoid June on one of her raffle ticket selling drives. We miss you June – the North West won’t be the same without you.

Well done Mark
On a cheerier note, congratulations to Mark “ripped gusset” Rayner for his ennoblement to chair of the Standing Orders Committee. The boy done good.
It was 20 years ago today…
(part two)

The Liverpool Dockers dispute was an important issue for our region. Sacked dock worker Jimmy Nolan spoke passionately to our 1996 Conference – nine months into their campaign for reinstatement. Conference agreed a donation of £10,000 to the Dockers Fund - the NW had wanted £50,000! Liverpool Branch put up an emergency motion calling for support for Bayo Omoyiola who faced deportation.

And of course the IRA bombing in Manchester had taken place just two days before the start of conference. 212 people were injured but by a miracle no one was killed. Our line was that we had to redouble our efforts to support the Irish Peace process. Inez McCormack the Northern Ireland Regional Secretary had only recently attended our Regional Council and gave one of the finest speeches ever heard there. Inez was again at conference – with Labour’s Mo Mowlem at a fringe event on the Peace Process.

Outside Conference Eddie and the Hotrods headlined the Morning Star Social. The ‘Spoons in Bournemouth was selling pints of Ringwood for a “whopping £1.82”. Denis Goldberg spoke at a Community HEART fringe meeting and fringe events also featured John Prescott, some bloke called Jeremy Corbyn, and Youssef Allen from Palestine. North West Night was a disco in the Durley Dean. Rodney Bickerstaffe presented the branch newsheet awards.

So it was on to local government conference – regional delegates were Wendy Simon and Bob Oram. Long-standing Salford branch activist Dennis Maginn who was chair of the National APT&C Committee (remember those pre-single status days?) was about to retire. FE was in crisis, attacks on local government, white collar CCT, single status and pensions were all on the agenda as we looked forward to either a Labour Government or another Tory Government with ever tighter budget settlements and “outright opposition to our very existence”. Sound familiar? SG

And finally…
Introducing the delegates

Cleethorpes General Branch Treasurer Wilfred “laughing boy” Wolstenholme parades his winnings from the East Yorkshire whist drive competition.
SOLIDARITY WITH PALESTINE

Wednesday 22 June
5.15pm, Meeting Room: Syndicate 4
Inside the Brighton Conference Centre

Hasan Barghouti, Director Democracy and Workers Rights Centre Palestine
Josie Bird, UNISON NEC – reporting from the April 2016 Delegation to Palestine
Mamoun Derra, Chair of the Palestinian Palm Farmers’ Cooperative Association
Tricia Rich, Deputy Director Palestine Solidarity Campaign
Chair: Paul Glover, Chair of UNISON International Committee

UNISON has been at the heart of Justice for Colombia’s work supporting trade union rights in Colombia. In December 2015 a UNISON delegation visited Colombia where they saw firsthand the trade union and human rights situation in the country. Whilst a peace agreement draws nearer the violence against trade unionists and political activists has spiked in recent months. 534 activists have been killed in the last 5 years in Colombia and trade unionists have been at the forefront of calling for an end to the violence. Come and hear the UNISON delegates report back on their experiences in Colombia and discover how you can be involved.