



REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS 2016

89th CONFERENCE

11 – 13 MAY 2016

CREDIT: TIM SMITH





Established 1 October 1918

REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS

89th CONFERENCE 2016

President: **Alan McLean**

Vice-president: **Ian Murray**

General secretary: **Matt Wrack**

Assistant general secretary: **Andy Dark**

Treasurer: **Andy Noble**

National officers:

Dave Green

John McGhee

Sean Starbuck

Bradley House
68 Coombe Road
Kingston upon Thames
Surrey
KT2 7AE

Telephone: 020 8541 1765
website: www.fbu.org.uk
email: office@fbu.org.uk
twitter: @fbunational

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**A full list of all Resolutions, Policy Statements and Conference Decisions
has been made available to all Officials and Members
in the booklet 'Record of Decisions 2016'**

This is also available on the fbu website www.fbu.org.uk



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BLACKPOOL 2016

11-13 MAY 2016

MORNING SESSION

THE PRESIDENT:

Good morning and welcome to Blackpool. I think we're going to have a very busy week but it's going to be a very eventful week as well. I now call upon Steve Shelton, chair of standing orders committee, to give the standing orders committee report.

THE CHAIR OF STANDING ORDERS (Bro Steve Shelton):

Thank you, president. President, conference, good morning. *Good morning*

The standing orders committee seeks your cooperation with regard to conference credentials. Would all delegates and officials please make sure they have filled in their details on their credentials so stewards can identify them. The standing orders committee stress the importance of delegates stating their name and brigade or section when addressing conference as this assists the president and the verbatim report. We also ask you to speak clearly into the microphone at the rostrum.

Visitors and observers to conference are identified by different coloured credentials which must be displayed at all times. No visitors or observers are allowed on the floor of conference amongst the delegates.

Voting cards should have been obtained from the standing orders committee by regional officials and handed to leaders of delegations.

Access to the standing orders committee room is through the doors behind you, turn left along the corridor, through the door on your right which is clearly marked.

Delegates that have business for the standing orders committee should inform the steward of their business and wait to be called by standing orders committee.

The standing orders committee must report to conference that the whole of the Imperial Hotel is a no smoking building and trust this will be adhered to. Also, may I request that all delegates, officials, stewards, visitors and observers switch off mobile telephones, laptops, tablets and other portable devices while the conference is in session.

May I remind you that conference is in session from 9.30 am to 5.15 pm every day. Also, may I remind conference of Standing Order 16 which clearly states assembly, adjournment and comfort break times, all of which must be adhered to.

Tea and coffee for all is to be served in the hotel reception.

May I bring to your attention the provision of meals. Breakfast for those staying in the Imperial Hotel will be available from 7 am in the Palm Court, which is situated directly opposite this room from the corridor behind you. Breakfast for those staying in the Hilton Hotel will have been explained in your hotel welcome pack. Lunch for everyone is at 12.45. Evening meal for everyone is from 6.30 pm until 8.30 pm. All lunches and evening meals are here in the Imperial Hotel and are served in the Washington Suite, which is located through the doors behind you. Turn left along the corridor, pass through reception and follow the corridor to the left, through the door on your left which is clearly marked. On Friday there will be a packed lunch provided for all by the Imperial Hotel. If business is to work through lunch on Friday there will be a short break to allow everyone a comfort break.

The list of scrutineers and tellers has been circulated; the list of the final appeals committee has been circulated. These lists will now be placed before conference for endorsement.

The standing orders committee must be kept informed of any changes to delegations, and we in turn will keep the president's list up to date. I will inform conference of any changes. We rely on the regional officials to exercise some influence on this procedure.

Can you please turn to your delegates list. Scotland: insert Jamie McCallum. West Yorkshire: delete Matty Herrin; insert Paul Drinkwater. Cumbria: delete Graeme Higgins; insert Ben Jones. Lincolnshire: delete Daniel Taylor; insert Bob Machin. Nottinghamshire: delete Steve Bull; insert John Muggleton. West Midlands: delete Neil Johnson; insert Annette Robertson; delete Steve Price-Hunt; insert Sasha Hitchins. Mid & West Wales: delete Jeremy Oliver. North Wales: delete Shane Price; insert Arwel Roberts. Essex: delete Kieran Davies; insert Mav Langdon. London: delete Patrick Mageean; insert Paul Embery. Wiltshire: delete Tony Littler; insert Hamish Daya.

Stall facilities. The standing orders committee have agreed stall facilities for the following organisations: Bookmarks, Unite Against Fascism, FBU learning fund, UIA Insurance, Unite the Resistance, FBU IRMP, National Unemployed Centres Combined, Trade Unionists against the EU, Ruskin College, Morning Star, Wortley Hall, Another Europe Is Possible and Stop the War. The stalls will be situated in and around the hotel reception area.

The standing orders committee has agreed the facility of the FBU shop at this conference. It is located through the doors behind you, turn left, carry on along the corridor, through the door on your left which is clearly marked.

The FBU press and research departments are in attendance at conference. They are located through the doors behind you, turn left, carry on along the corridor, through reception and take your last door on the right which is clearly marked.

Fringe meetings have been agreed for the following: tonight at 5.30 downstairs in Imperial Suite 3 will be the European Union Referendum fringe meeting; tomorrow night at 5.30 downstairs in Imperial Suite 3 will be the Support the Labour Party fringe meeting. Please make every effort to attend and support these important events.

Closed sessions. The standing orders committee can report to conference that at this moment in time there is no plan to have any closed sessions. Conference will be updated if the need should arise.

The standing orders committee has received a number of emergency resolutions in line with the guidelines and instructions that were sent out from Head Office. Emergency resolution 1 Dealing with Mental Health in the Fire & Rescue Service, Greater Manchester; emergency resolution 2 NJC Negotiations on Future Work of Firefighters and Fire & Rescue Services, executive council; emergency resolution 3 Future Arrangements for Payment of Subscriptions, London; emergency resolution 4 Pensions Appeal Mechanism, Cheshire; emergency resolution 5 Duty Systems – Condemnation of Excessive Hours of Work and Other Terms and Conditions which are Inferior to Those Contained within the Grey Book, South Yorkshire; emergency resolution 6 The Right to Criticise, Merseyside.

Could you now turn to your Programme of Business. Starting on page 2, no change. Page 3, after resolution 46 insert emergency resolution 3. Page 4, after Paragraph B12 insert emergency resolution 4. Staying on page 4, after Paragraph J2 insert emergency resolution 5. Page 5, after Paragraph A4 insert emergency resolution 2. Paragraph D5 Marauding Terrorists and Firearms Activity (MTFA) – delete “and”, delete “activity”; after “Firearms” insert “Attack”. So Paragraph D5 reads: “Marauding Terrorist Firearms Attack (MTFA)”. Page 6, no change. Page 7, after resolution 33 insert emergency resolution 1. Page 8, resolution 19 Introduction of New Mobilising System should read “Systems”; after Paragraph F1 insert emergency resolution 6. Page 9, no change. Page 10, no change.

Could you now turn to your booklet titled Proposed Alterations to the Rules of the Union moved by the executive council. The standing orders committee apologises on behalf of College Hill, the people that do our printing, for a typo on page 23. Turn to page 23, it's the green booklet, Proposed Alterations to the Rules of the Union, moved by the executive council. The column which is headed “New rule as amended” (I'm sure most of you have already noted this) – there's a paragraph there which is (iv) and then (iv)(a) straight after it. The (iv) which is next to (a) should read (v). Is that clear? I will take that as a yes.

Speakers' times. EC policy statement EU Referendum – Vote to Remain, general secretary 20 minutes.

Can I now go on to the voting on a challenge to the chair of conference? May I draw your attention to Standing Order 15. The number of delegates to conference is 137. Therefore, the number of delegates voting to carry a challenge is 92. Please note that NRC delegates, ONC delegates, CSNC delegates, NWC delegates, B&EMM

national committee delegates and LGBT national committee delegates are all entitled to vote on procedural motions and challenges only. Regional officials who are not delegates have been issued with different credentials and they are not permitted to vote at all. May I remind conference that all credentials issued are the personal property of the persons to whom they are issued and cannot be transferred to other persons without the approval of the standing orders committee. We therefore rely on the integrity of all to comply with this procedure.

The standing orders committee election will take place first thing this morning. Completed nomination forms must be placed in the ballot box at the rear of the hall by 1230. Stuart Kinnon is eligible for re-election.

President, that concludes the first standing orders committee report. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thank you. Speakers? Challenge? Sorry? Come to the rostrum, please, London. You have just challenged standing orders committee. You haven't challenged on an issue; you've just challenged standing orders committee. I've got to say, you shouted "challenge" there; I have to put the challenge to the vote. He's just challenged standing orders committee. All those in favour of the challenge please show. All those against please show. *That FALLS.*

BRO PAUL EMBERY (London):

President, can I speak, please?

THE PRESIDENT:

Normally you shouldn't be. Listen, can I just ask you conference, please, you of all people, you've been around for a long time. I'm going to allow you to speak here. But you don't sit from your seat and shout "Challenge"; you come to the rostrum, you have clarification, you do what you do, and then you would normally, if you decided to challenge, you would challenge. I'm going to allow you to speak. I'll not doing this forever, by the way; this isn't kindergarten.

BRO PAUL EMBERY (London):

Thanks, president. If I have misunderstood the procedure I apologise, president. Our understanding is that we indicate that we wish to challenge the standing orders committee report and then we come to the rostrum to set out what our challenge is and then that challenge is put to the vote. I obviously bow to your superior knowledge, but that was our only intention, I have to say.

We are challenging the standing orders committee report, conference, because the standing orders committee ruled out of order our emergency resolution on the EU referendum. They said that it was not of an emergency nature. Now the date of the referendum was announced on 20 February. That was six weeks after the closing date for resolutions. Our resolution calls for a Leave vote. We would like that to be debated by conference. Obviously, some people have got disagreements with that, I suspect, and that's fine. We can have that debate. But to suggest, we think, that the resolution is not of an emergency nature is perverse because it was announced by David Cameron on 20 February that the referendum would take place on 23 June. The cut-off date for resolutions was 8 January. If you submitted resolutions after that, they had to be of an emergency nature.

In support of their decision the standing orders committee have cited the European Union Referendum Act 2015, which was passed by parliament at the back end of last year, which provided for the referendum to take place. The standing orders committee is saying that we ought to have known that the referendum would be taking place in 2016 as a result of that legislation going through parliament at the back end of last year. But as well as completely missing the point, I think they have actually got it wrong, because when you lot were in the bar last night I actually sat in my room and read the European Union Referendum Act 2015. I have to say, all it says in terms of any date is that the European Union Referendum must take place by 31 December 2017. That is all it says in terms of dates. I think there are two qualifications about two dates that it could not take place because it clashed with other elections.

Conference, we could not have conceivably known, prior to 8 January, that a referendum would be taking place this year in this country for certain, still less could we have known that it would be taking place just after conference itself was taking place. It was on 20 February when David Cameron announced the referendum, that the campaign

started in earnest, that everybody knew the battle was now on, and that the referendum process effectively got underway. So we think that our resolution has been ruled out for the most tenuous and the most spurious of reasons. We shouldn't accept it. They've given flawed reasoning. We should have a debate on this subject, we deserve a debate on this subject, and if you agree with us please support the challenge. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

Chair of standing orders committee.

THE CHAIR OF STANDING ORDERS (Bro Steve Shelton):

Thank you, president. The standing orders committee ruled out of order the emergency resolution submitted by London titled European Union Referendum on the grounds that it was not of an emergency nature in that the standing orders committee struggled to find an emergency nature. Not only did we struggle to find any reason for an emergency, no attempt was actually made to fulfil the criteria of an emergency resolution.

The cut-off date for resolutions to be included in the preliminary agenda is 8 January 2016 at 5 pm. The vast majority of the resolution could have been submitted in line with that time frame.

Conference, the emergency resolution makes reference to a date and this is what London are pinning their hat on. They are also using the fact that the executive council policy statement on the same subject matter is a reason for this being submitted as an emergency resolution. But that attempt fails because the business still could have been submitted as previously stated.

Conference, the European Union Referendum Act 2015 was given royal assent on 17 December 2015. There is a clue in the title of the Act: "2015". Conference, you and delegates before you have agreed the rules, the standing orders and guidelines on submitting business to conference. The standing orders committee can't deviate from those rules, standing orders and the clear guidelines laid. It is not for the standing orders committee to second-guess what a brigade or section is thinking. It is the responsibility of the standing orders committee to ensure that business is competent to be debated and falls within the correct timescales when submitting business for conference. London stated that the obvious reason they submitted their emergency resolution was because the executive council submitted an EC policy statement, and that conference should have an alternative to what the executive council submitted so as the FBU had a policy for either stay, or leave, after debate was had.

All conference business has to be managed appropriately with no second-guessing and on its own merits, only taking into consideration what is presented in front of us and you. Now, conference, if this challenge was to win, that puts the standing orders committee in an impossible position to manage resolutions and business for future conferences, as we would have no set timetable or timescales to work with. If we can't find an emergency nature in an emergency resolution submitted, using the procedures we are given to work with, and this challenge goes through, what is an emergency resolution? How do we set a conference timetable? How do we manage future preliminary agendas for amendments? How do we achieve a final agenda in the future? All of the above would be unachievable and unworkable.

Conference, before you make your decision, bear this in mind too. The last part of the emergency resolution states:

"Conference believes therefore that the interests of UK workers would be better served by leaving the European Union. To this end, Conference instructs the Executive Council to actively campaign on behalf of the Fire Brigades Union for a leave vote in the EU referendum on 23 June. This will include recommending to members that they vote to leave. Irrespective of the referendum and its outcome, Conference calls on the Executive Council to continue to support efforts to build solidarity and unity between European workers now and in the future."

The emergency resolution is also omnibus, and the clue is in the wording of the last paragraph: "irrespective of the referendum and its outcome". The title of the emergency resolution, "European Union Referendum", clearly gives it subject matter, but the last paragraph clearly moves on to another subject matter. Guidance note 11 states: "You are strongly advised to review proposals prior to submission to ensure compliance with Standing Order 5 and Rule

C2(vii)". Part of standing order 5 states: "Resolutions must deal with one subject only and not be of an omnibus nature." The resolution is clearly dealing with more than one subject matter.

Conference, please bear in mind the importance of this decision, so important that after listening to the reasons from the standing orders committee, I would ask London to withdraw the challenge in the interests of the parliament of our union. The resolution is not of an emergency nature, is clearly omnibus as well, and was ruled out of order on those grounds. Conference, I urge London to withdraw, and if not, I urge you, conference, to uphold the decision of the standing orders committee and reject the challenge. Thank you, president.

THE PRESIDENT:

Come to the rostrum. Please, conference, come to order. We want to hear what the delegate has got to say about it.

BRO PAUL EMBERY (London):

President, conference, I have to say, first of all, I think that was one of the most passionate speeches against a resolution I've ever heard at conference, to be perfectly honest! President, it is a point of order and the point of order is the chair of standing orders committee has just set out a justification for rejecting the resolution, ruling it out of order, which was not put to us last night when we met with standing orders committee. The reason given to us last night was very clearly because the resolution was not of an emergency nature and that London could have submitted that resolution before the cut-off date of 8 January. Had they said to us last night "By the way, it's also omnibus," then we would have constructed an argument against that as well. In fact, I think that argument is nonsense anyway, to be perfectly honest. But that was not what was said to us last night. I don't think it's in order, president, for the chair of standing orders committee to introduce new reasons for rejecting resolutions that were not given to us at the time.

I have to say, I think a lot of what the chair of standing orders committee said was, in the great scheme of things, completely meaningless to what was under discussion. The very simple question that I would put is: could our region conceivably have known, prior to the cut-off date of 8 January that a referendum on the European Union was going to take place this year? Less still, could we have known it was going to take place on 23 June? I think all reasonable people would conclude that no one could conceivably have known that, and we were not in a position to write that resolution prior to 8 January.

I've seen some spurious reasons for resolutions being ruled out of order in my time. This has got to rank among the best of them, to be perfectly honest. Don't let them get away with it, let's have the debate, support the challenge. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

Just so you're clear, Paul, it will be the last time I invite you up on this particular challenge. OK? Thank you. Chair of standing orders committee.

THE CHAIR OF STANDING ORDERS (Bro Steve Shelton):

Thank you, president. It's quite simple really. When somebody comes to standing orders committee they ask us for a reason why we've ruled their business out of order. We gave them a reason why we'd ruled their business out of order. I can remember some years ago, going back to Bridlington I think it was, when the chair of standing orders committee then turned round to, I think it was some delegates in Scotland, and said: "I only have to give you one reason."

This resolution is clearly omnibus. This resolution could have been submitted. London knew they wanted to leave before the Act even had the royal assent. So put something in prior to 8 January. It is as simple as that. It could have been on the preliminary agenda, everybody could have done a little bit of an amendment, whatever, join in the executive council's policy statement, amend that, nobody did. It's quite simple, conference. You are going to put the standing orders committee in a very, very awkward position where we don't have any guidelines, rules, standing orders to work to, because you're going to take them away. It's your standing orders, it's your rules, you make them, people before you have made them. It's very important that we actually get this right. I must say, I'd like to thank

Paul for stating that the challenge was the most passionate he has heard, because I am very passionate about looking after your rules, the standing orders and the guidelines that we have to adhere to. I still urge you to reject the challenge. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks very much, chair of standing orders committee, and thank you very much for the contributions made. As you will know, this is very much a procedural matter and everybody can vote on this. I put the challenge to the vote. All those in favour of the challenge please show. All those against please show. I'm going to put that to the vote again. I need to be completely accurate, to be honest with you, and I will be. All those in favour of the challenge please show. All those against please show. The challenge is *CARRIED*. (Applause)

I think what I have to do now, conference, bearing in mind that decision that you've just taken, I have to adjourn conference for a wee while. I need to see exactly where we are procedurally and I need to see exactly where your standing orders lie. What I'm going to do is I'm going to adjourn conference for half an hour. Can the rest of the standing orders committee report be agreed?

BRO DAVE WILLIAMS (West Yorkshire) (from the floor):

I asked for a challenge to standing orders committee as well.

THE PRESIDENT:

You've just said "challenge" again.

BRO DAVE WILLIAMS (West Yorkshire):

Well, I know.

THE PRESIDENT:

Come to the rostrum.

BRO DAVE WILLIAMS (West Yorkshire):

It might just help your deliberations. President, conference, apologies to your greater knowledge. I was in the bar because I knew my comrade at the back would do the work for us.

We are in exactly the same position. West Yorkshire moved a motion that was ruled out of order, not being of an emergency nature, despite everything that Paul has already said, and the decision taken by Cameron on 20 February.

We do need the debate, and our motion calls for EU neutrality from the position from the EC. So whilst we're considering where standing orders committee are going, we'd also want to put that to the vote as well, president.

THE PRESIDENT:

Chair of standing orders committee.

THE CHAIR OF STANDING ORDERS (Bro Steve Shelton):

I've got to be honest, I'm not actually sure what I'm doing now. I tell you what I'm going to do.

THE PRESIDENT:

Can I ask you to maintain some order. This is your union's parliament; it's not some sort of laughing show here. This is a serious business of your members. They are your rules and you abide by those rules while you're in this room. I'll not be having people shouting out while that's happening. People should know better. Carry on, please.

THE CHAIR OF STANDING ORDERS (Bro Steve Shelton):

Thank you, president. Basically, everything I'm going to say (I'm not going to waste conference time) is more or less exactly the same as London's. You have heard what the standing orders committee's view is. I just stress again that vote is very, very important. If we can't find an emergency nature we can't do anything other than apply the

rules that you have put before us. If you want alterations to standing orders, then put alterations in, as Dave has attempted once. But I just don't know where the standing orders committee sits now. There is just no timetable for us now to work to.

I'm just going to finish off by saying the smooth running of conference is what standing orders committee is here for and we need to get on with business. The resolution again is not of an emergency nature and that is what it was ruled out for. I would urge West Yorkshire to withdraw their challenge and I would urge conference to uphold the decision of standing orders committee and reject the challenge. Dave, I would urge you to withdraw it. You've listened to the arguments, you're a veteran of conference. You know how important these rules are. Please.

THE PRESIDENT:

Do you wish to come to the rostrum or do you wish to just indicate? Do you wish to withdraw it? OK, I put the challenge to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. *That FALLS.*

OK, I'm going to adjourn conference for something like half an hour, but your executive council members will be in touch with you if it should last for longer. I want to speak to the chair of standing orders committee, the secretary of standing orders committee, the general secretary and the vice-president in standing orders committee. I want the executive council to go to the executive council meeting room. Thank you very much. You're adjourned for half an hour at least.

Conference adjourned

THE VICE-PRESIDENT:

Conference, come to order. I now call upon president Alan McLean to give his presidential address.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks very much, conference. Nice to get a nice early start, and I thank you for that. For those of you who were here in the break and who witnessed me take a tumble on the stage, the fact is it has proved one thing: that my knee (which has been giving me a lot of jip, for the last month I've been on crutches) hasn't healed; that's gone again. For those of you who have different thoughts on how that happened, I will say that it certainly wasn't a sniper from London! (*Laughter*) Although I heard somebody with a head of red hair gave the gun to Daniel Giblin.

It is my pleasure to address you, conference. Despite the weird start that we've had to this, I think that it's incumbent on me to congratulate you on the hard year's work you've done, and certainly to remind you of the hard week you have ahead of you on behalf of the members of this union. It's not a week that should be solemn, but it's a week whereby we should do the business for our members in the right manner. I insist, I insist as president of this union, that this conference will be run in the right manner. It won't be solemn and it won't be sombre, but I won't have people at the rostrum, or standing orders, or anybody who is speaking, anybody who has a chance to speak to conference, being drowned out by conversations, or being cat-called, or being the subject of abuse or jokes. It won't happen. It doesn't happen from me, and I know that the majority behave. Some people sometimes get carried away, and I understand that. I myself, for instance, have been a bit of a joker in my time!

To be honest with you, we're facing some major decisions, decisions that will have an impact on the industry we serve well, and the industry that I think we lead in on behalf of our members. You are going to be making some big decisions on emergency medical responses (EMR). I would just like to congratulate Region 6 on the crutch and the splint. It's clear to me that they are behind the door with that, and certainly the speed and the agility with which my demise was met, I'd really like to thank Region 6 for that.

It's not so much important for individuals, but I think that the way it ties up with EMR, will undoubtedly have a bearing on the future as to what we can demand on pay. This government certainly isn't rushing to give us any more money. They are blinding us in the name of austerity, as they have done with all public sector workers. But I think it's right and proper (and I got a reminder on Saturday) that we never have the situation that we had firstly in 1977 and then in 2002 where we fall so far behind on pay that we fail to address it. I'm not saying that the fight is now – you'll

tell me when the fight is. I'm not saying what the fight will consist of, but what I am saying is we have to be smart in how we fight while this government's in office. We have to be smart, we have to think it out, and you have to be making sure that not only can you carry our members but that you can lead our members.

I've noticed, and you will have noticed, there seems to be a lack of resolutions to this conference. There are fewer resolutions than there have been at most. Also, and I've checked this out, it seems that the executive council have supported the greatest percentage of resolutions ever that I've known as president. That either means that you've eventually got it right, or it means that you've beaten these into submission. Whichever. I'll be really pleased whichever reason it is.

I think we've also got to look at the future of the union with regard to our reorganisation. Because it isn't here, and because things don't seem to be happening full in your face, I can report to you that the committee that was set up at the last recall conference has met on several occasions. On your behalf they're getting to grips with a lot of reorganisational issues. They do and will always report to the executive council, and we will report to you on their behalf. But this union needs to be fit to face the next 100 years. It's not about short-term fixes. This union needs to get its act together in the next year and to come to conference – and you as delegates if you are delegates, and you as activists, and you as brigade and regional officials – you will need to get on board with this. You will need to get on board with how this union is going to look. You don't have to be precious about how it finishes up either.

At this stage I'd like to thank Regions 11 and 12 (who are Regions 11 and 12 maybe for another ten minutes or so) and the way that they've embraced the last reorganisation, and the way that they've handled themselves. I think that the transition and the way that they've interacted, and the way that they are – both in the job and with each other – is a great testimony to those individuals who have taken part in it and driven it. I'd like to thank them personally for their help and support on the reorganisation of this union.

As I say, an eye on the future. The future for us all is going to be defined in June. I'm not here to put a position and I won't ever put a position on whether we should be in or out, but what I do know is this: as a national union representing members from every single corner of the UK, it would be absolutely ridiculous of us to come out of here without a position, whatever that position is. It would be absolutely ridiculous of us not to be able to have an opinion on how trade unions will function or flourish in or out of Europe. I do expect that that debate will be a lengthy debate, and I do expect that it will be a comradely debate, and I do expect that whatever decision this union makes, we'll all embrace that decision. I'll say no more about that.

We also, for the first time in our history, have a visit of the leader of the Labour Party and the leader of the opposition. I'd quite like it to be the leader of a Labour Party in government but unfortunately it isn't that. In Jeremy Corbyn we have a man who some have described as too decent to be a politician. I don't think so; I think he's a very, very decent man and also a very, very decent politician. He's been at the forefront of lots and lots of campaigns that this union has been involved in. He has been on our picket lines, he's been a member of our parliamentary support team, and over the years Jeremy Corbyn has given us absolutely everything. It will be my pleasure to introduce him to conference, hopefully on Friday. I hope that he feels that he's welcome here.

I will say this, anecdotally when we were told that Jeremy Corbyn was standing and was going to be put up to be leader of the Labour Party, the executive council met and of course we agreed to support him. I remember turning to Matt and saying "he's got no chance whatsoever". Matt mouthed back to me "he's got no chance". Then we had a moment when we looked at the price at the bookies. If we had put the money on that we gave him, this union wouldn't have been in as much problem. It's down to Matt that he wouldn't put that bet on with your money. I had it covered in the annual accounts, but Wrack wouldn't budge, so we ended up giving it to Corbyn! As you know, it became something of a weird situation. The irony of it wasn't lost on me. I do apologise to anybody with religious beliefs. I'm not mocking your religion, but the idea of a man with a beard with the initials JC moving around the country and being almost evangelical in his preaching and speaking to crowds, and then the fishermen got involved, basically I was thinking "can't be". I was waiting for a miracle. I was absolutely waiting for a miracle, and the miracle didn't happen until January this year when the Labour Party eventually let Matt Wrack back in. I'll find out what the quote was, but he said "I wouldn't want to be a member of a club who let him in" so I'm considering my new position in the party.

I think that you're going to have some great debates this week. I think that the future of the union very much depends on you. I think you're very much the right people to make the right decisions, whatever they are. I thank you for your input so far today. As far as the standing orders committee side of things, we need to address that between this conference and next. I think that's maybe something I can set about with gusto after this week.

So once again, thank you for being here. Have a great conference, enjoy all your debates, and please continue the good work on behalf of the Fire Brigades Union. Thank you very much. *(Applause)*

OK, we're on Section N Obituary and we will stand for a minute's silence.

(Conference stood in memory of those who had died)

Thank you, conference.

We are on Section M Financial Accounts. I now call the national treasurer to introduce the finances.

NATIONAL TREASURER (Bro Andy Noble):

Thanks, president. Conference, before I present the accounts I think it's only right that I thank Nigel Headley and his team from head office for the preparation of the accounts. I also think it's only right and proper that I should extend my gratitude to the previous national treasurer, Dave Limer. Dave's tenure as treasurer was one which took place during a very challenging period of this union's history. He both identified and began to address a number of issues which wouldn't have been required of previous treasurers given the comparatively comfortable environment in which they were required to operate. Dave found it necessary to become involved in what were some frankly difficult discussions/debates, resulting in some cases unpopular decisions which remain unpopular decisions. Nevertheless, in his view and in conference's view, those decisions were necessary.

Dave only gave me one piece of advice on becoming national treasurer and that was to be mindful of what I said when presenting the accounts to conference – not in terms of the numbers themselves; after all, the numbers are what they are; they are audited independently; they are a matter of fact; we may not always like them but we can't change them. However, what he did caution about was getting the tone and the balance of this contribution right. Sound too optimistic and people won't see the need to see those difficult decisions through; sound too pessimistic and people will think you were over-egging the pudding and consequently appear to be scaremongering.

I've given that advice some pretty serious thought, and to be honest there's only one way to prevent any misinterpretation of what I'm saying and that's to be as clear, concise and up front as I can be. That's because those numbers in front of you won't suddenly change. As I've said, they already are what they are.

The more experienced or eagle-eyed amongst you will notice that the formatting of the accounts is slightly different from those of previous years. This is simply as the result of some enforced changes in financial regulations that apply to the audit process, specifically the financial report and standards. Previous accounts have been audited in accordance with a range of financial reporting standards, but it's been necessary this year to complete these in line with FRS102¹ which essentially requires us to value some of our assets at real market value as opposed to the purchase cost.

I will move to the accounts themselves now, president. The introduction is pretty self-explanatory and indicates that we have an operating surplus of some £559,746 as opposed to £597,755 last financial year. The first graph clearly shows the impact on the general fund of seven years of austerity, seven years of operating in a climate of cutbacks resulting ultimately in job losses, and importantly in terms of the accounts, a year on year reduction in income over that same period.

The second graph shows how we've addressed that reduced income by reducing our own expenditure. By making some of those tough decisions at previous conferences that I mentioned earlier, it is clear from these graphs that

¹ FRS102: Financial Reporting Standard applicable to the UK

had we not made those decisions we would be in an extremely precarious financial position. Those decisions have allowed us to make some progress resulting in a general fund operating surplus for the year ending 2015 of some £650,982, although a note of caution here is that some of this is attributable to one-off receipts. Unfortunately, we will still need to monitor all areas of expenditure to identify if we can make further year on year reductions. We have got to become more structured, not just at head office but in regions as well. We need to become accustomed to working within proper budgeting processes as they are developed, and we need to have an eye on cost in all areas of activity. That is not to say that all of our activities should be cost-driven, but it should become second nature to consider cost versus benefit in everything that we do. Inevitably, this will mean change in the way we administer our funds, both nationally and regionally.

I am pretty confident now there is an acceptance across the union that we need to plan more strategically, be more organised and forward thinking regarding our finances. Consequently, under the previous decision of conference to review all contracts and services, we may need to explore whether this could be aided by the appointment of auditors and advisers who are experienced in this very precise area of work, and if we do identify someone who is able to assist us, then I am seeking conference approval, on behalf of the executive council, to make any necessary changes to these arrangements.

The following is by way of setting out the context within which we are operating at the moment before I go to the detailed accounts. In simple terms – and this is where I really do want to get the tone right – we have been operating in a very precarious financial environment, caused in the main by events outwith our control, although areas that we should be seeking to influence. I'm talking about cutbacks, station closures, loss of appliances along with the job losses that result in reduced income. We have sought to address this by looking at the one area over which we do have control: expenditure. While we may not like what we've had to do, and some of the measures we've taken are not ones we'd celebrate doing, I certainly think we should congratulate ourselves on being brave enough to take those decisions. I don't even want to contemplate where we might have been had we not taken those decisions.

Taking these measures has helped, but the question we've got to ask ourselves (given the likelihood of further reductions in public expenditure and what that entails for us) is: will that be enough? The honest answer is we can't rely on that being the case. We're still a long way from our stated aim of a general fund surplus equal to 60 per cent of the general fund income. If that seems aspirational at the moment, the fact is by not aspiring to that and not working towards that figure, we invite further problems. It would be imprudent, even irresponsible, to gamble with the future of this union by not planning for what seems the most likely outcome in coming years. Yes, that means we've got further difficult decisions to make. But the one thing that gives us confidence that we can negotiate our way through this difficult time is that we've already proved that we aren't afraid to take those difficult decisions.

With that, president, I'll go to the statement of the accounts which show that for the year ending 31 December 2015 total income fell from £11,676,957 in 2014 to £11,190,550 in the year ending 31 December 2015. That is a reduction of some £486,407. The bulk of that reduction is attributed to a decline in contributions which amounts to some £471,285. Expenditure reduced from £11,079,202 in 2014 to £10,630,804 in the year ending 31 December 2015. It should be noted that the reduction of some £448,398 incorporates one-off investment returns and the disposal of assets worth some £287,528 – neither of which are year on year reductions.

With the notable elements of reduced expenditure, some £165,000 is attributed to legal fees. These are covered in Note 2 in the accounts on page 123. These are mainly attributable to the pensions campaign. Obviously, the legal costs in 2014 (given the circumstances) were much higher so we show a drastic reduction in that expenditure. The decline in both income and expenditure results in an operating surplus on the general fund of some £650,982, and a total operating surplus on all funds for the year ending 31 December 2015 of £559,746. That is down by £38,009 on the year ending December 2014.

The political fund shows an operating deficit for 2015. However, this was down to increased expenditure in the run up to the general election. The political fund retains a healthy carried forward balance in excess of some £680,000.

Cash in bank and at hand is £4,584,605. That is the cash that we have in our accounts both nationally and regionally. This increase is down to the reduced expenditure on our day to day activities, resulting in a slightly

improved cash flow. Of the £4,584,605, a large proportion relates to the value of the accident and injury fund. We have reduced our current liabilities by some £552,929 as per Note 8 in the accounts, which essentially means that we owe less than in previous financial years.

The whole of page 119 is due to the changes in the financial reporting regulations that I mentioned earlier. It's never appeared before. Basically, what this does is illustrate the 2014 operating surplus as if that surplus had been calculated employing the new accounting mechanism, to make last year's surplus comparable to this year's.

Page 120 details and confirms the slightly improved figures on cash in bank and at hand, essentially illustrating our cash flow is up from £4,287,644 to £4,584,605.

In closing, president, while the total funds are assets valued at £6,763,294, £5,236,117 of this is attributed to the accident and injury fund, which is obviously subject to stringent spending restrictions for very good reason. £680,791 is attributable to the political fund, and again extremely strict legislation applies on how that can be spent. This leaves the general fund and this is the fund that pays for all our day to day activities and this is the area that we need to focus on in particular. The reality is that there is going to be even greater strain placed on the income into the general fund, and the only counter to this is for us to control our expenditure to a greater degree. So whilst I would say we've previously taken measures to address this issue, there is no escaping the fact that we need to do more; it's an inevitability. Some of this work is already ongoing from previous conferences, but the likelihood is we will have to explore even further areas, some of which is likely to be contentious, difficult to contemplate or simply unpopular. The truth is, it will be necessary and I have said before, we might not celebrate taking some of those decisions but should congratulate ourselves on having the ability to do so. With that, president, I will move the accounts and make reference to the required agreement of conference on the issue of potentially appointing new auditors.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thank you very much for that. Is there anybody wants to speak? No? Paragraph M1, paragraph M2. You have been asked by the national treasurer to agree the possibility of exploring new auditors for the union, or certainly exploring what we should be doing. That needs to be done in accordance with law, but in accordance with law you have to agree that. Is that agreed, conference? *AGREED*

OK, conference. I will be calling the executive council policy statement at the start of business on Thursday morning. Can I just press on now. What I intend to do is to motor on until lunchtime. I notice that a number of you have had tea. Is that agreed? You've had an hour's break. Is that all right? *AGREED*

OK, conference, thanks. It's now my intention to put the following rules to the vote. These rules are as a result of decisions taken by previous conferences. I will call the following rules, which are natural consequences of decisions you have made. I need to call them. They are Rule B2(1)(x); Rule B2(2)(vi); Rule B4; Rule C1(2); Rule C3(1); Rule C3(2); Rule C3(5); Rule C4(12); Rule C5(1); Rule C9(2); Rule E3(3)(i) to Rule E3(3)(iv); Rule E4. All the contents and index pages in the union rule book will be amended consequentially.

I've just had something pointed out to me by the general secretary. Rule B4, which needs to be amended and rightly so, the general secretary needs to educate you as to what that is and move it. So if you do take Rule B4, Matt. Thank you.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Thanks, president. Conference, I haven't had any tea by the way, but there you go! Yes, if I can draw your attention to Rule B4 on page 6 of the booklet on the rule changes. Actually, this is a legal matter. Hopefully it is not controversial. I will read out the name of the Act: The Transparency of Lobbying Non-Party Campaigning and Trade Union Administration Act 2014. It was an Act that was brought in supposedly to deal with business lobbying in terms of parliamentary lobbying and so on, but has also been directed in relation to trade union administration. It requires us to appoint assurers, and the proposed rule is a new rule set out in accordance with that legislation. So that is as a consequence not of previous decisions but of legal requirements.

Can I also, president, turn to page 5 on the proposed rule changes. This is Rule B2(2)(iv) on conditions of membership and contributions. Hopefully this is something that your executive council members and your regional officials have reported back to delegates, because we are seeking licence of conference to slightly amend the position that is put before you. We have had a discussion, as you know, about retired and out of trade members. The rule change proposes to increase the contribution rate that we require of retired and out of trade members. It refers to £25 per year. We have undertaken some work about this and that work is still underway. We don't propose to start charging retiring members more without making clear what services and benefits they get from that. So there is going to be clarification in terms of legal services that are provided to retired members, financial services and advice provided to retired and out of trade members, to membership services that are available to ordinary members also being applied to retired and out of trade members, as well as education and learning services. So the intention is actually to provide a package to retiring members which we think will be of benefit, as well as the affinity that they have with the union and their desire to maintain that membership.

Obviously, we've done a great deal of work around direct debits. I don't want to pre-empt that debate and discussion, but the view of the executive council is that currently retired and out of trade members normally pay by cheque. As you know, many people don't actually have cheque books in many cases, so the view of the executive council is we should move to a direct debit system for retired and out of trade members, who clearly can't pay by check-off as they are not employed by a fire service. Having thought about it, after the rules were submitted it is accepted, we felt that actually presenting that on the basis of a £2 a month contribution we thought made more sense. So it is a proposal to alter the annual total from £25 to £24. As I say, we explained this to the executive council, hopefully that's all been explained to your delegations. It is a bit of an unusual way of doing things. We don't think it should be controversial as it is in fact a reduction in the charge that we would apply. So we would ask conference to support that rule change too.

THE PRESIDENT:

We will be covering Rule C6(2). That is also an amendment that's required due to recent changes in law, but the rules that have been mentioned and explained by the general secretary, can I ask you to vote on that. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. *They are CARRIED.*

I now call Rule C6(2). As I said just now, this amendment is required due to recent changes to law.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Thanks, president. C6(2) which is about brigade committees. It proposes to bring into the rules the establishment of joint health and safety committees with the employing authority. Obviously many of you will sit on joint health and safety committees, or will have sat on joint health and safety committees that are recognised under the health and safety legislation. I think it's clear that the reason for us bringing this rule change is the review of our health and safety structures, including a survey of brigade committees that most of you responded to. It became clear that in a number of parts of the country the joint health and safety committee structures that are allowed under the legislation and provide certain rights for us under the legislation don't currently exist, or have lapsed, or fallen by the wayside in some way or other. So this was discussed at the health and safety committee, and the executive council, and it is as a result of that that we propose the rule change to require brigade committees to engage in that process, and, jointly with the employing authority, to establish a joint health and safety committee. Hopefully, conference, you will also approve that rule change.

THE PRESIDENT:

I put Rule C6(2) to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. *That is CARRIED.*

We are on Section L paragraph L1, paragraph L2. I now call resolution 39 – Resolutions to Conference, Derbyshire. The executive council oppose.

Resolution 39 – RESOLUTIONS TO CONFERENCE

Conference instructs the Executive Council to produce separate Standing Orders specifically for Recall and Special Conferences. This should include orders to ensure that all resolutions that are submitted, with the exception of emergency resolutions, are distributed prior to the commencement of the Conference in question. This will ensure that all Brigade Committees will have the opportunity to debate and discuss all available options and resolutions to resolve or progress any issue. These Standing Orders should then be brought to Conference 2017 for final agreement and acceptance into The Fire Brigades Union as the formal Standing Orders for these type of Conferences.

DERBYSHIRE

BRO CHRIS TAPP (Derbyshire):

President, conference, it's a pleasure to be up here with the first resolution of conference 2016. Conference, this resolution refers only to recall and special conferences and it won't affect anything with regard to emergency resolutions. However, I believe this is also about engagement with our membership and it's about getting them involved with all the issues that we face, but mainly the biggest issues of all that require us to recall a conference. We have asked the executive council to produce standing orders specific to recall and special conferences. Once they are produced we can debate them, we can look at the potential impact, and ultimately we can decide at conference 2017 whether we should adopt them in full.

A crucial part of the standing orders that I assume has generated the much-expected opposition is that the resolutions to these conferences are all circulated to committees prior to the commencement of conference. So what we're basically saying is: as committees let's have a look at some of the different opinions that are out there and see what we think. I'm sure the general secretary will tell us that it's all unworkable and it all happens the night before. Realistically, comrades, we all know that there's a number of weeks before a special or recall conference when we have to organise, we have to book, we have to do all these things and arrange our business. So time is there for us to get information out.

If resolutions are submitted in accordance with the said standing orders, they are distributed during the time, even if it's just to give a small window for our committees to actually view them, debate them, and have a look at them and give our officials a steer for where they want to go at this special or recall conference. It is some of the most important or urgent business, hence the reason for a recall or special conference. So I can't understand why we want to spring it all on us the night before.

Conference, this has to be a good thing: engaging with the members and letting them see what the choices are. It's incredibly hard to engage with the members at the moment in these difficult times. People are turned off by a lot of things, and trying to get in there and get them involved is difficult. So I just ask that we consider that point.

On the most important issues that we could potentially be taking industrial action over, we have this night-before rush job that relies on our officials alone to try to correlate the views of their committees across with the resolutions in front of them, and decide which one kind of fits best. Currently, we often get a sight or a bit of an opinion on the believed direction of the executive council and their view of how it should progress. Then the night before a special or recall conference we get a plethora of other resolutions from brigades and alternative thinkers around this union.

Conference, I appreciate that we have to take decisions on behalf of our members, but when the issue is one that requires a recall or special conference, should we not at least look at the ability to construct a decent set of standing orders that will afford our members a chance to decide and have a say on how this union moves forward on a very important issue? Conference, we have heard all about the importance of standing orders already today, so I don't need to go into that. Steve Shelton has already given us the exact necessity for them and why they should be in good order. So let's have some that exactly do that and that are tailored to the business that we're conducting at these conferences. Currently, the best situation that we've got is I believe Standing Order 28. President, I'm sure you'll have the most up to date version, and it just says: "In the case of special conferences the above order shall be adhered to as closely as possible." Is that any kind of a standing order, just to do as closely as we can? Conference, I ask that you support this and have a robust set of standing orders that will organise our business and will allow our

members to get further engaged with the direction of this union. They are not going to be introduced overnight. We can discuss them, we can change them, we can sort them out properly, and then, via our normal channels, come with a set to conference 2017 for a final decision to be made. Conference, I urge you to support. I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

Do we have a seconder for that? *(Formally)* Formally seconded. The executive council oppose. It is down to the general secretary to give the executive council's opposition. Nobody has indicated they want to debate.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

President, conference, the executive council are opposing the resolution 39. You've seen some of the complications this morning around standing orders committee already in this conference today. We think that the proposal from Derbyshire will further complicate matters. It is a very difficult job to try to manage the planning and running of conference. I think standing orders committee do a very good job in what are sometimes very difficult circumstances.

We have consulted with standing orders committee on their view on this, as the people who would have to administer any such change. Our view, as Chris said, is that it is going to be unworkable. If such a proposal was easy to have done, then obviously I suspect that Derbyshire would have written a proposed amendment to the standing orders committee that they would require us to introduce, rather than asking somebody else to go off and write that amendment to standing orders committee that they seek.

The truth is that the resolution doesn't actually seek to deliver what was said, because the resolution says that this should include orders to ensure that resolutions are submitted and distributed prior to the commencement of the conference in question. That is what standing orders committee already comply with. It was said that that would allow it to go to brigade committees. Actually, the resolution ensures that those resolutions were distributed to brigade committees or section committees in advance of the conference.

The truth is that we hold special conferences or recall conferences for particular reasons: issues have arisen that require us to hold those special or recall conferences. Sometimes they are because of industrial matters that have arisen; sometimes they are because of organisational matters that have arisen. Nobody wants to keep recalling conference. A number of you were around at the time of the 2002/2003 pay dispute. We had a whole series of recall conferences to discuss what was an extremely complicated and difficult dispute. The proposal in this resolution, I think, would have actually limited the democracy of the union because it would have prevented us being able to hold some of those conferences in the time that was necessary to hold them. So yes, brigade committees might not have been able to meet, but actually the conference, the parliament of the union, probably wouldn't have been able to meet in some of those circumstances. So we do think it is unworkable and we urge conference to oppose the resolution.

THE PRESIDENT:

There's nobody speaking in the debate, so right of reply.

BRO CHRIS TAPP (Derbyshire):

Thank you, president, conference. Just replying to Matt's comments. Firstly, thanks for the offer, Matt, to rewrite some standing orders for the committee. I've got plenty of time for that, but I appreciate that's an option but it's not a realistic one! I thought the idea was that we put the resolutions together to ask for some work to be carried out and then bring that forward. Unfortunately, I don't have resources to rewrite a set of standing orders.

Just when you commented on the actual resolution, after the sentence that Matt quoted it does say: "This will ensure that all brigade committees will have the opportunity to debate and discuss all available options and resolutions to resolve or progress any issue." So I've written it in such a way that gives the executive council enough room to manoeuvre something that would be realistic. If I wanted to tie them down I would have said it must be distributed seven days prior. It was intentionally written in this way to give the executive council room to manoeuvre something. So I kind of accept/understand the opposition to it, but I'm not convinced that it's a negative thing. I think we do need to allow our committees to see the important issues that we are discussing, and from my position

as brigade secretary on the floor of conference, accepting a different view that may be held up here, I see that that time is available. I will allow conference to decide how they wish to proceed with it. So thanks for the comments, Matt. I do appreciate and understand them, but I do think that when you're talking about pensions, pay and these things, our members are easily frustrated and I just think they need to be part of that debate. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

Thank you. I now put resolution 39 to the vote. The executive council oppose. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. *That FALLS.*

I now call resolution 42 resolution Progress Reporting by the officers' national committee. The executive council give that qualified support.

Resolution 42 – RESOLUTION PROGRESS REPORTING

Conference demands that all resolutions passed at Conference, which require any work to be undertaken, have six monthly updates provided to all Officials on work carried out, or still outstanding work with action plans for completion.

This is to ensure a greater degree of transparency and accountability, and to demonstrate progress against such resolutions.

OFFICERS' NATIONAL COMMITTEE

BRO CRAIG DRINKALD (ONC):

Thank you, president. Conference is a mechanism for ensuring that our members' views are represented and that we, the union, carry out the members' wishes. Resolutions are presented and some are purely statements of intent, but others call for important work to be done. For these resolutions the officers' national committee are requesting that in order to be able to demonstrate to conference and to our members that progress is being made against these actions, the executive council delegates individual responsibility to an executive council member or a national officer, and regular updates on the progress of the resolution are reported to regional committees. This will ensure accountability and prevent important resolutions being lost or not actioned.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thank you. Does that have a seconder? *Formally* Formally seconded. That's open for debate. Nobody wishes to debate. I will ask the general secretary to give his qualification.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Just a very small qualification, president. Head office do provide to the executive council updates at each business meeting of progress on work undertaken as a result of decisions made by conference. The executive council is quite happy that that is circulated. The mechanism that we suggest – because the resolution says to all officials which is an email list – would be to regional secretaries to bring those reports to the attention of regional committees. With that qualification we are happy to support.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks very much for the qualification, Matt. I now put resolution 42 to the vote. The executive council have given their qualification. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. *That is CARRIED.*

I now call resolution 44 – Resolution Amendment from West Midlands. The executive council oppose.

Resolution 44 – RESOLUTION AMENDMENT

Conference notes that, following the submission of resolution proposals for inclusion in Conference preliminary agenda, when proposed resolutions are ruled out of order by Standing Orders Committee, no opportunity is afforded to Brigade Committees and Sections to change or amend their proposal so that it may be approved for inclusion.

Conference calls upon the Executive Council to review this matter and compose the required proposed amendments to Standing Orders which provide the facility to allow resolutions which are ruled out of order to be amended in a timely manner for reconsideration.

The Executive Council proposed amendments to Standing Orders must be prepared and submitted to Standing Orders Committee in time for their inclusion in the agenda for Conference in 2017.

WEST MIDLANDS

BRO ANDY SCATTERGOOD (West Midlands):

President, conference. Many times in the past resolutions for conference have been submitted to standing orders committee only to find that they have been ruled out of order, and this could be for a variety of reasons such as factually or grammatically incorrect. These errors can be slight and unintentional, such as mistakenly using the wrong word or arranging a sentence badly. Every official's ability, when it comes to their literacy skills, differs; some find it easy; others not so much; and some may struggle with dyslexia. Brigades and sections have no opportunity afforded to them to amend their resolutions so they satisfy standing orders committee. Our resolution is not seeking the ability to change the substance of the resolution, and most certainly not seeking to change the intent of the resolution. But some resolutions which could have formed important debate and potentially changed union policy or the direction of the FBU, have been ruled out of order when very minor change would have allowed the amended resolution to be debated and voted on at conference.

Conference, surely a democratic union like the FBU should allow every opportunity for debate and for its members to raise important issues. The resolution simply calls for an administrative change, a small change in the rules that in future would allow more resolutions to be heard, debated and voted on, and for important resolutions not to slip through the net. If resolutions are rejected by standing orders committee then reasons are already given. We are just asking for a small period of time after that to correct the error and then re-submit. In this modern age of technology when resolutions can be passed between people at the touch of a button, this process would not be long-winded and drawn out. It would require small changes to the timetable for conference business, which we believe is more than possible.

If we can organise rallies in London with thousands of firefighters attending from around the British Isles, and if we can force a debate and vote in parliament on pensions, then surely this small admin change, which would allow a fairer system for resolutions, is not difficult. Please support this motion. Conference, I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

Does that have a seconder? *Formally* Formally seconded. That's open for debate. I ask the general secretary to give the executive council's opposition.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Thanks, president. The executive council is asking conference to oppose the resolution. Again, we do believe this is an unworkable and impractical proposal. Andy said that it would lead to more resolutions. I think in our assessment that is not the issue; it is not the question of wording and resolutions that are ruled out of order that is the main factor in resolutions not coming to conference. There are more fundamental issues such as workloads, brigade committees not meeting or whatever. I think if you look at the final agenda of this conference you will see that there is a whole number of brigade committees who have not submitted business at all. It hasn't been ruled out of order. We don't accept that that's the problem.

What is being sought actually is a second bite at the cherry, that we have a deadline, you submit your resolutions and if you've made errors you get a second bite of the cherry to do that. I think that's where we have the big problem with the proposal. We think that should be addressed by various other means. We take some of the points that were made about skills, about developing people, about dyslexia and so on. But I think that is a matter for us to address through the union's education programme, through the discussions at the brigade committees, through the supervision and assistance of the regional committees. I think there is a role for regional officials here in assisting brigade committees, particularly where there are new brigade officials, in learning how do you write a resolution,

how do you ensure that that resolution is competent, and how do you ensure that you meet the timescales within the conference standing orders committee? All of that should be going on, and if it is not I think that's a matter we need to discuss within those regional committees.

Already, if you look at the conference timetable of when we finish conference and when the next conference process starts, we take up almost the bulk of the year on conference business. This would further elongate the process, when actually the view that we've started to discuss through restructuring debates is we should probably be trying to shorten that, picking up on the points that Andy made about modern technology, how we communicate, how we submit business and so on.

So, conference, I understand some of the concerns raised. We don't think it is remotely workable and ask conference to oppose the resolution.

THE PRESIDENT:

West Midlands right of reply.

BRO ANDY SCATTERGOOD (West Midlands):

Conference, thanks Matt for that. I sort of agree with a lot of what Matt said, apart from the unworkability. Those ideas of putting in more support for brigade officials and more education around writing the resolutions I think is needed. However, that should be a given anyway; it shouldn't be something that we should be looking at. If that is then given, and at the same time, even if those are in place and your resolution is still rejected because of a minor error, I still think you should have the ability in a small window after that in order to put that right. Like I originally said, this is not a change, it is not a second bite of the cherry as in if you write a resolution and then want to change the meaning of that resolution. I will give you an example. You may have put "brigade committee" instead of "executive council". You know what you meant, you just got it wrong and let it slip through the net. This is just giving you the ability to put that wording right in order for it to be debated at conference. I appreciate your comments, Matt. I think that is definitely something that the union needs to look at with more support for the officials on that, but I also believe that if it does still fail, we should be looking at a way for us to put that right. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

I now put resolution 44 to the vote. The executive council oppose. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. *That CARRIES.* You get nothing but a fair chair here!

We are on Paragraph L3, paragraph L4, L5, L6, L7, L8, L9, L10, L11, paragraph L12. I now call resolution 37 from Tyne & Wear with the amendment from Shropshire. The executive council support both the resolution and the amendment from Shropshire.

Resolution 37 – FIRE BRIGADES UNION CARBON FOOTPRINT

This Conference instructs the Executive Council to conduct a review in to the communication methods that Head Office employ when keeping Members up to date in terms of postal circulars and publications. The purpose of this review is to identify alternative ways of communication methods with the aim to reduce the Fire Brigades Union's carbon footprint.

TYNE & WEAR

AMENDMENT

In second line, after "Members" add "and Officials"

SHROPSHIRE

BRO RUSSELL KING (Tyne & Wear):

President, conference, we are accepting the amendment. We also welcome the EC's support. We think the resolution on communication is the right way forward. The reason why we brought this to conference was last week, as a brigade official, I received through the post a copy of FIRE magazine. I've no doubt a lot of people in here did as well. I also received one in the office and they were on every branch as well. This is not the only time we're getting stuff duplicated, both to our homes and offices and to the branches. At present, we're collecting direct debit

forms and on those direct debit forms we're asking for people's emails and mobile telephone numbers. There's got to be an easier way to send a message out in either a group text or an email. Andy got up before and he mentioned about the finances. I know this isn't about the finances; this is about carbon neutral. However, the two go hand in hand. If you reduce your postage, you are reducing your carbon effect, and you are also reducing your costs. I move. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

Does that have a seconder? *Formally* Seconded formally. Shropshire to move their amendment. *Formally* Formally moved. Does that have a seconder? *Formally* Formally seconded. That's open for debate. I call upon the general secretary.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

President, I just wanted to make a couple of points on it. We are supporting this, and clearly we should review our carbon footprint in all ways that we can. However, there are a couple of things that we need to alert conference to. That is that, for example, electronic communication isn't the be-all and end-all. Russ mentioned the survey that we've done. When we're communicating with our members, clearly you as people who are heavily active in the union, may have one view of how you understand and accept communications. It may be very different from rank and file members working on fire stations or in control rooms or anywhere else. What the survey has sought to do is to ensure that we're actually communicating not just with people who are fully involved and active in the union but with people who may be less so.

For example, I know that it's often raised: why don't we shift to more electronic communication in terms of the magazine? Actually, the evidence suggests that there is far less of a take up and reading of magazines in particular which are circulated electronically. Therefore, you cannot simply say that everyone has got iPads or whatever, let's shift to that form of communication.

However, I will just take this opportunity to make this point about some of the new forms of communication that we've shifted to. You will see that we've now developed a Facebook page, we've developed a Twitter account. Just in terms of some of the effort that has gone on at head office in doing that, there is a survey conducted each year on the influence of unions on social media. In 2012 the FBU was 26th in that, in 2013 we were seventh, in 2014 we were sixth, and in 2015 we were fifth. So there's been a lot of effort. I think all of you play a role in that. It is a way of engaging with members of our union in non-traditional ways. There is no getting away from face to face communication, but I think a lot of people are involved with social media and it can play a very valuable role. So we are constantly trying to review the whole package of communication – what needs to go out in print. If you take communications that go to officials: the brigade, regional and other circulars that go to officials are no longer sent as hard copy; they are sent solely by email precisely to address the issues that the Tyne & Wear resolution addresses. The only circulars that are sent by hard copy are ones that go to branches, i.e. to workplaces because the idea is they should be put up on noticeboards and so on. So I think we are doing a lot of work that is said, but we are happy to proceed and take on board the points that are made in the resolution. Thanks.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thank you. I now put the amendment from Shropshire to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. *That is CARRIED.*

I now put the resolution 37 as amended to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. *That is CARRIED.*

I now call resolution 43 with the amendment from Merseyside. The executive council support the resolution and support the Merseyside amendment. Resolution 43 from Durham.

Resolution 43 – FIREFIGHTER MAGAZINE

Conference notes the discussion and debate had during Recall conference November 2015 on the subject of "Organising FBU Structures and Finances to Address the Challenges of Austerity", the basis of which was to give consideration on the future financial implications to the Union.

Looking at the need to reduce expenditure, conference proposes a reduction in the number of issues on a permanent basis, to start in January 2017, of Firefighter Magazine from 8 issues to 6, with an ability to produce the occasional special edition if the political or campaigning climate should dictate, with authority for this being sought through the Executive Council.

DURHAM

AMENDMENT

Second paragraph, first line: delete 'proposes' insert 'agrees'

MERSEYSIDE

BRO JIM BITTLESTONE (Durham):

We are accepting the amendment from Merseyside. Conference, this resolution isn't about reducing communications in our union; its sole purpose is to realise savings in these difficult times we find ourselves in. In the past it would have been easy to argue to have *Firefighter* magazine issued every month, but in these digital times, as mentioned earlier, and the ease in which we can reach our members via social media and email, the reduction in the number of *Firefighter* magazines issued seems a logical step to take.

At the recall conference last November where we debated the reorganisation paper, some hard decisions were made to achieve savings. This resolution offers a saving that is neither hard nor difficult to accept. The cost of *Firefighter* magazine in 2015, according to the executive council's report 2016, was £234,554. This is quite a significant cost. We believe that by reducing the number of issues from eight to six, a saving of around £60,000 per year could be realised. This would be a year on year saving, and as stated in the executive council's report 2016 on page 114, long-term planning is necessary to continue reducing expenditure. This isn't a massive saving, but at the end of the day it is a saving. Having the national treasurer in our region, we need to save somewhere!

I'm a strong believer in the old adage if you look after the pennies and the pounds look after themselves. This is what we need to do, conference, because all these small savings add up. In reality, conference, we should all be experts at making savings because I doubt there's a person in this room today who hasn't had to challenge them or deal with them in the fall-out, in the guise of cuts in all our services over the last six years after the financial attacks served to us by Dodgy Dave and Gideon.

We've been told recently that for the FBU to continue as an independent trade union and not a section of some larger union we need to cut our cloth accordingly. This resolution, conference, achieves a small saving but a necessary one if we are to survive. Conference, please support this resolution. I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

Thank you. Do we have a seconder, please? *Formally* Formally seconded. I call upon Merseyside to move their amendment. *Formally* Formally moved. Do we have a seconder? *Formally* Formally seconded. The debate is open. Yes, come to the rostrum please, and welcome!

BRO PAUL EMBERY (London):

That's the most insincere welcome I've ever been given! *(Laughter)* We are opposing this resolution. I think we just need to think a little bit carefully before we reduce further the number of *Firefighter* magazines that we produce. I think Matt himself touched on it. One of the arguments almost made the case against the resolution when he said that the digital take-up of people reading it online is nowhere near the number of people who read it through hard copy. We do understand the financial issues, of course we do, but we just think that *Firefighter* magazine should be one of those areas that really needs to be ring-fenced from those savings. It is credit to the executive council, credit to the comms team who produce it, it is a hugely impressive magazine, I have to say. It's won awards and deservedly so. I think it's far better than it used to be ten years ago and much more relevant to the job that we do as firefighters. I think that's why people read it now on stations more than they ever did.

I just think for many people as well, it can be the only contact they have from the union. If you're in a brigade, area or branch that isn't particularly active and you're not meeting regularly, it can be the only source of information

that people get from the union. It is packed with decent information and it's a way of keeping members active and keeping them interested.

We just think that once every eight weeks, as it would be probably isn't enough. It's a good magazine; it is widely read; it is a good source of information for our members; it can be a key tool for organising people in disputes and at other times. For that reason it should be ring-fenced and protected and we would ask people to oppose the resolution. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

Still open for debate. Executive council supports. General secretary.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

I very much welcome Paul's comments there. I think it is a very difficult debate, this. We put a huge amount of effort into *Firefighter* and we have a fantastic team of staff who produce it, and it gets great input from people around the country. We've gone through a whole range of work to discuss with members – because it's not my magazine and it's not your magazine; it's a magazine for our members – and identify at various times what are members unhappy with about the magazine, how can we improve it, how can we make it more engaging. We have made various changes over the years and we continue to make changes. But I think Paul's right: it is our key point of contact with every single member. I know it is not what the mover was saying, but to endanger that in any way would be a very dangerous thing to do. Coming back to my comments earlier, I have heard people say: "We can all get it on our iPads, why do we need it?" That's not our assessment, having spoken to members on the ground, and surveyed members on the ground. So it is a very serious matter to address.

I think in the annual report the executive council already had made the decision that the Durham and Darlington resolution refers to. We had already made the decision to reduce the number of *Firefighters* for this year after discussion at the EC and after discussion with the communications team. It's been mentioned that we've done a survey. I think our communications strategy has to be based on evidence: i.e. what do our members say they want and what works in communicating with our members. I think that has to be the guide for future discussions about how we communicate. Resolutions may play a part in that, but I think having a thorough assessment of what our members want in terms of communications has to be key to this.

So *Firefighter* is a valuable asset and resource for the union and we need to protect it. But that decision has already been made and we support the Durham resolution.

THE PRESIDENT:

Durham right of reply.

BRO JIM BITTLESTONE (Durham):

Conference will be forgiven for thinking that I'm suggesting here that we are going to have a demise of *Firefighter* magazine. That's not where we are going at all. As Matt has already suggested there, this has already happened for this year, this reduction from eight to six. Within the resolution itself it is written "with an ability to produce the occasional special edition if the political or campaigning climate should dictate, with authority for this being sought through the executive council". So I believe the flexibility is written within that resolution to satisfy everybody. Thanks. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

Thank you. I now put the amendment from Merseyside to the vote. The executive council support. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. *That is CARRIED.*

I now put resolution 43 as amended to the vote. The executive council support. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. *That is CARRIED.*

Paragraph L13. We are on Section K, paragraph K1, paragraph K2, paragraph K3. I now call resolution 35 Rebuilding and Developing Sectional Interest in the FBU to be moved by the national retained committee. The executive council support.

Resolution 35 – REBUILDING AND DEVELOPING SECTIONAL INTEREST IN THE FBU

This Conference notes the difficulty in establishing fully populated committees at Regional and National level. This Conference demands that the Executive Council and respective National Officers with the responsibility for the Sections consult with the Sectional Committees and draw up a plan to address this shortfall, to facilitate and sustain sectional interest and participation in the business of the FBU.

NATIONAL RETAINED COMMITTEE

BRO SEAMUS McMAHON (NRC):

President, conference, I am speaking for the first time at conference. *(Applause)* Conference, we know that coming on the back of the decision taken to remove the remaining sectional EC members in November last year, this resolution may seem as criticism of that decision. While, like us, many of our sections may be still deeply unhappy with that decision, we are where we are and we need to move forward. The fact is that we are seeing a decline in involvement in many brigades and regions from our sectional members. This decline has hit many sections very hard. It doesn't seem that long ago when the majority could boast of a full committee of 15 reps and officials. I doubt there's many of our sectional committees can boast a full membership now.

Over the last five years or so maintaining the numbers we currently have has become a struggle, and given that the retained membership of our union consists of around 9,500, this paints a worrying picture for our union as a whole. Conference, if we are to halt this decline in interest and engagement in the activities of the FBU and the benefits that this brings, we need to act and we need to act now. Our committee now has almost half the positions vacant. Our committee is not alone in being under-represented. Let's be clear about this. If we don't have an organised activity and engaged membership then our pumps, stations, jobs and conditions are even more at risk in the current climate we find ourselves operating in. Support our resolution and give us the resources to rectify this situation before it gets any worse. I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

Thank you. Does that have a seconder? *Formally* Formally seconded. That's open for debate. No, no debate. I now put resolution 35 to the vote. The executive council support. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. *That is CARRIED.*

I now call resolution 36 Recruitment from the officers' national committee. The executive council give it qualified support.

Resolution 36 – RECRUITMENT

At Recall Conference November 2015, the Executive Council resolution to remove Executive Council Members from the Trade Sections was carried. Conference was told that this was necessary due to the potential financial hardship the Union faces. In the Executive Council Policy Statement on Membership, Recruitment and Organising, which was carried at last year's May Conference, it was discussed in detail the need to recruit from other roles within the Fire Service.

Now without any Sectional Executive Council Members, now is not perhaps the easiest time to recruit from other staff groups, but given the financial threat to us continuing as a Union, as noted by the Executive Council at Recall Conference last year, Conference instructs the Executive Council to recruit new Members as they proposed.

OFFICERS' NATIONAL COMMITTEE

BRO SIMON AMOS (ONC):

Conference, president, in terms of our membership then, so thankfully the threat to direct debit seems to have been lifted for now. Who knows when it will come back! It doesn't lift the threat in maintaining our membership going forwards though. The cuts agenda isn't going away any time soon, appliances and personnel. We've just heard a report in Section K that mentions 2,000 members lost in the last 12 months. So we need to work hard on recruiting and maintaining the firefighters and control staff we've got of all ranks and roles. First and foremost let's maintain what we've got. But in order to maintain this union going forward we need to look a bit further afield. Resolution 42 was just carried to give updates on progress from resolutions carried at previous conferences. At last

May's conference, the executive council policy statement on Membership, Recruitment and Organising was carried. Twelve months later, there isn't a lot of detail in Section K on what progress has been made on that. I'm sure the general secretary will give us a full update in a second of what progress has been made in recruiting from other roles hopefully. It can't be a tick in the box. It can't be too difficult a thing for us to do. We need to move forward; we need to recruit from other roles in our organisations. Let's put a working party together, let's have somebody's name in the frame for doing this bit of work who we can ask for updates and find out what's going on. The policy statement was last May. Let's now start the work, let's now start recruiting from other staff groups. I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT:

Thank you, Simon. Does that have a seconder? *Formally* Formally seconded. That's open for debate. Nobody wants to debate that. Can you give the qualification please, general secretary

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Thanks president. There are a couple of qualifications. I think in the final paragraph it instructs the executive council to recruit the new members that we proposed. I think it's not simply a matter for the executive council; it's a matter for all officials of the union if we're going to embark on recruitment campaigns. So that's the qualification. It is a matter for the relevant brigade, regional and sectional committees to organise that campaigning recruitment work.

Simon mentioned the question of the organisation and recruitment of new layers of members in accordance with the change to the rules that we agreed and the policy documents that we agreed, and asked what has been done since then. What has been done is that the executive council has considered it, discussions are underway. We said at the time, by the way, when we moved this at conference that this wasn't going to be a straightforward change to the rules and suddenly there would be a flood of new members into the Fire Brigades Union. We said it had to be structured, it had to be planned, and that work is certainly underway.

We have, for example, looked at the issue of contributions. If we recruited people who were not on Grey Book rates of pay, what would we charge them for membership of the Fire Brigades Union? That work has been done and been agreed by the executive council in accordance with what conference has authorised the executive council to do. We then discussed the question of what would need to be put in place. Of course, if we recruit people who are not currently in Grey Book roles, for example, we have to make sure that we can maintain that membership. That means that we have to make sure that we are able to organise, represent and address the needs of those groups of new members. Again, that's not straightforward. These are people who may be on different conditions of service. We've had discussions, by the way, with groups of workers in quite a range of areas. The rule says "fire and rescue and related areas", so including people not in local authority fire service employment. That raises a whole range of issues and demands. What are the pay negotiations? What are the industrial relations arrangements? What are the bargaining arrangements? We can't simply take that on without having a plan in place.

I can assure you that work is underway. John McGhee is leading on that. For example, there have been a number of detailed discussions with certainly one of our regional committees where we're discussing the possibility of trialling some of this work. That is proceeding. I'm sure that we will be reporting in more detail soon. Hopefully conference will realise that simply launching this as some sort of free for all is not the way forward. The work is underway. It has been overtaken (there is no getting away from it) by the fact that we launched the direct debit campaign.

Just to correct one thing from Simon, we're going to have that debate, but that issue has not gone away at all. The executive council's view is we need to continue with that campaign. But since the beginning of the year we've spent a huge amount of time driving on a membership issue. That membership issue is getting our members on to direct debit. We've done a fantastic job, by the way. We've got over 50 per cent of our members on to direct debit. That's quite an achievement in that space of time. But that has probably detracted some of the attention from the issues that the ONC resolution raises. I can assure you it is not off the agenda; some work has been done; some detailed discussions have taken place; and that work will proceed in due course. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

OK. With that qualification I will put resolution 36 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. *That is CARRIED.*

I now call resolution 46 Brigade Organiser Toolkit from Nottinghamshire. The executive council give qualified support.

Resolution 46 – BRIGADE ORGANISER TOOLKIT

The role of Brigade Organiser within the FBU has been identified as having an overall responsibility for developing an effective and efficient Union, with a range of key responsibilities given to that role.

However, Brigade Organisers who are new to the role are given little guidance from the Union on how to carry out this important role and the responsibilities it entails. Instead, the handover of responsibilities is left to the existing Brigade Organiser, who themselves will have received no guidance on how best to hand over the responsibilities.

The FBU stated its intention to develop an Organiser pack/handbook in a draft Brigade Organiser Role Description, dated 20th July 2012. We are still waiting for this to be produced.

Conference instructs that this toolkit is completed and sent out to all Regions within the next 12 months, with Brigade Organisers being consulted on what they believe the toolkit should contain.

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

BRO RICHARD JONES (Nottinghamshire):

President, conference. The role of brigade organiser within the FBU has been identified as having an overall responsibility for developing an effective and efficient union, with a range of key responsibilities given to that role. On 20 July 2012 the FBU created a draft brigade organiser role description. This document is only four pages long, and I believe is insufficient in providing support for brigade organisers – containing little or no explanation of how to carry out this role. In the first paragraph it states:

“The intention is that an organiser pack or handbook is developed to assist and provide guidance to the individual undertaking this role.”

To this date, the good intentions of this statement have not been followed up on, with the organiser pack or handbook not having been developed.

I’ve been brigade organiser in Nottinghamshire for six months now, and have relied almost solely on the handover from our previous brigade organiser. Without her guidance, knowledge and understanding of the brigade organiser’s role I would have had an extremely difficult time taking on the challenges that I faced in my new role. It is apparent to me that the union currently relies too much on the quality of handover from one brigade organiser to another, and instead needs to provide better support for those who take on this role in the future.

On 23 March the FBU released a circular announcing that a brigade organiser seminar was to be held on 18 May 2016.

“The seminar will focus on the role of the brigade organiser and look at providing ways of supporting and developing the work that is currently done by brigade organisers.”

Conference, we urge that this renewed support for brigade organisers does not end here. It is my belief that the FBU can do so much more to support our brigade organisers. A brigade organisers’ training pathway that can identify the relevant courses that can develop the skills required would be a great help to both future and current brigade organisers. Recruiting new members to the FBU is probably one of our most important roles that brigade organisers undertake. The union could provide more training and resources to enable us to be as successful as possible when recruiting prospective new members.

Conference, everyone involved in the FBU can benefit from this increased support for our brigade organisers, including both union members and our hardworking staff at head office. Most importantly, and in the current

financial climate, a better trained and better educated brigade organiser can help to increase the FBU's membership numbers, thereby increasing the union's finances. In Nottinghamshire our FBU membership level is currently at 95 per cent. However, it's my understanding that this may not be the case in other brigades.

Conference instructs that the FBU follows through with its intention to develop a brigade organiser pack or handbook and that this toolkit is completed and sent out to all regions within the next 12 months with brigade organisers being consulted on what they believe the toolkit should contain. I urge conference to support this resolution. I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

Does Nottinghamshire have a seconder? Come to the rostrum please.

BRO DANIEL GIBLIN (London):

We are seconding resolution 46. Well done to Notts for bringing this. I think this is a hugely important resolution. What we've heard today a lot of, and for the last couple of years, is save and save and save and save. I think Notts have hit the nail on the head: we need investment. The ONC and NRC have both made the points today. Organising is key to the future of this union. Alan has already said today we want a FBU for another hundred years. The only way we're doing that is investing in recruitment and organising, and bringing income in through membership. To be fair, I do believe the executive council support the organising agenda. We're hamstrung with resources. We understand that is going on. But we do seriously need investment. Paul Embury said today about the work we've had on the comms department and the investment head office have put into that. We have invested and look at the results. We've got a great magazine now. The comms are fantastic compared to what they once were. But that only came from investing.

A little bit of an anecdote. When I was doing the national organising at head office, our organising department was me and Sean Starbuck. You know, when you look at every other union in the country they've got a huge organising department. They invest in it because they know it is key to the future of the union. It's about not only recruitment but something we need to take head on in this union now, it's about retention as well. That is the key part. Things aren't what they once were. We've got to keep hold of these people. We'll go on to this with the direct debit, but that is a massive threat that we're faced with at the moment with losing members in the future. We need to be working so hard on the retention of members. To be fair, Sean and John McGhee, both have done brilliant jobs with what they have done around organising. John especially has done some great stuff over the direct debit as well. But it is a secondary remit unfortunately. There's so much workload on us as officials, in regions and brigades, and on head office officials. We've got national officers who've got so many other remits and organising comes somewhere down the bottom. I understand that. It's not always the sexiest thing. It's hard work, let's be honest. Those of us who are out there on stations speaking to members are working with difficult people and all the things that we do as organisers, it is hard work. There is nothing sexy about organising really, but it is the bread and butter of our union movement. At the end of the day, this is where we started. This is what the movement was built on. It was built on organising. That's what people went and did all those years ago to start the trade union movement. I think we forget that sometimes and it plays second to a lot of the other work we do. I know we are all absolutely lumped with all the other work we are doing in brigades and regions, but it needs to be going to the forefront.

I think, back to the resolution which talked about the brigade toolkit, we need a national organising strategy as well. That's what I will be asking the executive council to support in that. How can our organisers know what they are doing if we haven't even got a national organising strategy to instruct people what we expect as a national union over that coming 12 months? That has got to be a key part of any future toolkit that does come out.

To be honest with you, there's nothing really to add to that. I'm not going to labour the point. We know where we are with it. EC are qualified support. I'd like to see it fully supported, but there you go. I second. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

John McGhee, who you've already declared as great, will give you the qualification.

BRO JOHN MCGHEE (National officer):

I'll take a bit of licence actually and say that it's not really qualified support; it's full support from the executive council. The qualification really is just about how. I suppose it is about the feeling that there is guidance given, but I will set that qualification aside and I will just take the opportunity to say a couple of things about organising if I can, president.

We've got to be very careful that we don't simply rely on those that have the title of brigade organisers. In my view, in my eye, everybody in this room is a union organiser. Every time you go out to do a job on behalf of your members you should be organising. That's what we are doing, whether it's organising to represent at a grievance or a discipline, or whether it's to take the message about cuts, or whether it's even to simply say that we're being attacked through the Trade Union Bill and we need you to change over to direct debit, that's an organising role.

I accept and I understand the frustration from those that are in those positions of brigade organisers. Richard did say we've got a seminar organised for next week. He made a plea to say that he hopes it's not going to be the end of the line. I think I can give you assurance it won't be the end of the line. We're currently carrying out an organisational audit. We've involved the regional secretaries and the brigade secretaries to give us as much information as we possibly can gather on the current structures we've got, how well populated they are with officials so that we can see where those gaps are.

Dan talked about having a national organisational strategy. That's exactly what we want to bring to you. The first part of that has got to be an audit of what we've got at the moment. As you know, we've been looking at restructuring the union for some time and, in my view, the audit has got to inform the way that we might want to organise for the years ahead. We can look and see where the officials should be – whether it's a branch chair, a branch secretary, a brigade chair, a brigade secretary, a brigade health and safety rep – all these positions! I can look around here and probably pick out several of you that I know are carrying more than one role in the union, whether you are actually the brigade secretary and also the brigade health and safety rep and so on. So we want to make sure that we stop that happening. We want to encourage activity of as many members as we possibly can and fill the roles adequately so that we spread the workload and we improve our organisation.

But there is an absolute commitment from this executive council (I don't think I'm at any risk in taking the licence) that we take the organisation agenda very, very seriously and we want to make sure we've got a very strong union going forward for the next 100 years. I look forward to seeing you next week, Richard.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thank you very much, John, for that. I now put resolution 46 to the vote. Sorry, the qualification has been given. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. *That is CARRIED.*

Now, just to prove that I'm not only a fair chair, I'm also a benevolent chair. I'm going to knock you off for lunch 10 minutes early and be back here at two o'clock. Thank you very much.

Break for lunch

AFTERNOON SESSION

THE PRESIDENT:

Conference take your seats, please. Come to order. I now call upon Steve Shelton, chair of standing orders committee to give the standing orders committee report. Steve.

THE CHAIR OF STANDING ORDERS (Bro Steve Shelton):

Thank you, president. Could you please turn to your programme of business page 9. After executive council policy statement, insert emergency resolution 7 European Union Referendum, London. Can I ask scrutineers Brian Gibson, Sheldon Fenning; Tellers Kevin Wilkie, Daniel Giblin to meet with Dave Green at the back of the hall now, please. This is done first thing, but due to the adjournment this morning it was slightly overlooked. So if you wouldn't mind just going to meet Dave now, that would be much appreciated. Thank you. That's it, president, from me.

THE PRESIDENT:

Is that agreed, conference? *AGREED*

Thank you. Do we have a guest? Is our guest on her way? Conference, I want you to give a warm welcome to our guest, Frances O'Grady, the general secretary of the TUC. Frances – as you know, anybody who has been here before – is a great, great friend of our union. She's been a regular at a number of our events and has attended a number of picket lines and conferences of ours over the years. She spoke at our conference last year and the year before. It seems like it's an annual event. Frances has always been here for us, and she's always been very, very solid with this union. We've said already that we face many battles ahead, we know the Tories are attacking our unions. We know that worker solidarity and unity is the answer in our response. Frances, once again, I welcome you to our conference to explain what the TUC is doing to respond to these attacks, so no pressure! *(Applause)*

SIS FRANCES O'GRADY (TUC):

Sorry, that was a big thank you to you. Also, it's always a pleasure to bring solidarity greetings on behalf of the whole TUC to the FBU, especially, I have to say, at a time when it seems like the Eton boys have formed a circular firing squad, and when all those predictions of disaster for a Corbyn-led Labour Party in the local elections came to naught, and when, despite what in my view was the dirtiest, most racist, most despicable campaign I've seen in a long time, we now have a Labour mayor in London. *(Applause)* Plus, I have to say, Bristol, Salford and Liverpool too!

First, I want to put on record my admiration for the brilliant work that not just firefighters but control staff do too, protecting communities the length and breadth of Britain and in Northern Ireland too – not just fighting fires but dealing with emergencies of every kind: crashes, chemicals, accidents, flooding and terrorism too. Last year alone you rescued 38,000 people, and you saved over 7,000 lives. As the FBU slogan puts it so well: you rescue people, not banks. It's work that's demanding and it's dangerous and it requires total dedication. I would just add I think all of our thoughts are with those brave firefighters in Canada at the moment who are really struggling with those fires. But I'd also like to remember firefighters like Stephen Hunt in Manchester, and Ewan Williamson in Edinburgh who, I think, made the ultimate sacrifice. In what are most difficult times, the FBU does an outstanding job, speaking up for your members, for your profession, and for public service values. So in answer to the question I saw that had been posed by Cambridgeshire fire chief, Chris Strickland, when he asked whether being a union official gives you the right to say what you feel, even if it contravenes service policy, I would say this: as long as unions are here, little tin pot dictators will never have the right to silence workers from speaking the truth! *(Applause)*

The FBU's voice in organising power is critical and never more so. You've led the debate about national standards, exposed the failings of regional control, and campaigned to show how the cuts are not just wrong-headed, but dangerous too. I would like to pay tribute to your general secretary, Matt Wrack. He's a leading example in my book of intelligent and determined trade unionism. There may have been times when I have questioned his singing talent, but what happened there stays there. *(Laughter)* Is there a question and answer session later? *(No)* But I don't think anybody can doubt his commitment to the members. You should all be proud of what Matt does and the job that he does.

Conference, we're going to need every ounce of our collective strength; that's going to get called on. Our movement, of course, faces some of the toughest sets of challenges that we've faced in generations. We've got an economy enriching too few and failing too many; we've got a jobs market (especially for our young people) that too often is low-skill, low paid and zero hours; and we've got a government which, as its very first act of power, set out to crush organised labour with its nasty and vindictive Trade Union Bill.

I'm very proud of the campaign that the whole movement has run against this bill, and I have never seen the movement so united in our opposition. We built a coalition that was as deep as it was broad, and it wouldn't have happened without tens of thousands of our activists taking our message out, not just to MPs and peers, but into workplaces and communities too. I want to thank every FBU member for playing their part. The truth is that we hit back and we hit back hard. The government wanted to attack our funds by banning check-off, and we defeated them. They wanted to criminalise pickets, police our use of social media, even – bizarrely – the requirement by law that we would have to wear armbands, and we defeated them. They wanted to remove our right – which I think is a crucial right for working people – to have a political voice; they wanted to silence us and stop us campaigning against the cuts. And we defeated them. We won many other important concessions too before that bill got royal assent last week.

But I want to send a strong message to the government from this hall. It's not over; we're not finished yet. Make no mistake, delegates, there will be battles ahead. The Tories still want new regulations to let bosses use agency staff to break strikes, the new powers they've given to the certification officer could still be abused, and while, with your track record the FBU will, without doubt, smash those new ballot thresholds, without that right to electronic and workplace balloting many other unions might struggle. So of course it's going to be tough. But, delegates, let's be clear about this one. There is no law known to man or indeed woman that can stop people fighting injustice where they want to. Where there's a will there will be a way. So let's hold our heads high, let's be proud of what we've achieved, and let's redouble our determination to fight back.

Conference, our second priority at the TUC is the EU referendum. We all know all too well that that vote is now just over 40 days away. I believe that there will be a bit of a debate in the FBU about this issue. I'm sure that there will be different views among union members, just as there are in the country as a whole. Frankly, truth be told, I am personally as fed up as everyone else with the debate that seems to be dominated by posh blokes in suits talking about what's in their best interests. The FBU is absolutely right to say that we've got one set of pro-business politicians who believe that workers can be best exploited outside the EU and another group of pro-business politicians who seem to believe that workers can be best exploited inside the EU. Frankly, for many the idea that either Cameron or Farage give a toss about what all this means for working people is a stretch too far. But there is more at stake here than the official campaigns on either side, backed by the banks on one side or the hedge funds on the other. I believe that we cannot afford to walk away from this debate. Unions are the only independent, democratic organisations who have the ability, and I would argue the responsibility, to think through, figure out, what's in workers' best interests.

I respect the fact that there are different views in the union movement, but the position of the TUC general council is clear. We believe that a Brexit would be a big gamble with rights, jobs and livelihoods for working people, many of the rights that we all take for granted and rely on, rights that millions of people depend on, and of course, rights that provide the foundation on which our union agreements are built, rights that I want to make clear were not gifted by Brussels bureaucrats, but which unions across Europe, across borders, across generations combined our power to fight for and win. Family friendly rights, parental leave and maternity leave, stronger redundancy rights so we get the chance to get the time and the space to put forward alternatives, information and consultation, equal treatment for agency and part-timers (including, by the way, retained firefighters), better equal pay rights, more robust anti-discrimination protection, and stronger health and safety laws that have cut work-related death and injury by half.

Let's not forget paid holidays. When that Working Time Directive was first introduced (it's easy to forget this one) six million people got better holidays as a result. That included two million workers (especially young workers) who had never had paid holidays before. Crucially for firefighters and for millions of other workers, the directive also put a limit on long working hours.

So the key question that I, in my own mind, had to figure out is what would happen if we left the EU? Does anybody really believe that a Tory government that has already doubled the qualification period for working people for protection against unfair dismissal, that has already looked to batter us with its Trade Union Bill, would keep and protect all those rights? My own view: not a chance. They might not abolish them straight off; they might just water them down. They might find another way to skin the cat by removing workers in small and medium sized firms from those rights. But you can be sure as hell, we won't be getting any new rights if it's all down to this Tory government.

If our manufacturing unions are right – and TUC work suggests that they are – what would happen if we lost that investment, the exports and those highly skilled jobs? I personally take some of those predictions that we'd lose three to four million jobs as a result of Brexit with a pinch of salt, but what I am clear about in my own mind is that good, highly skilled, well paid jobs, would be replaced by worse ones. It's also clear that our balance of trade would suffer. If that means that our economy takes a hit, then that means we would have a smaller tax base from which to fund our public services.

I also want to make it clear that I, and certainly not the general council, do not believe that the EU is somehow perfect. Far from it. Over the last decade or so the EU has become ever more dominated by neo-liberal trade agreements, policies, culminating in that disgraceful austerity programme that was imposed on the likes of Greece and Spain and Ireland. But, delegates, let's not kid ourselves, because in my book George Osborne does not need any encouragement from the EU to privatise or cut public services. He hasn't been led astray by EU austerity; he's the chief cheerleader for EU austerity. We have to ask ourselves: if we came out of the EU what alternative brand of capitalism would the UK end up becoming a satellite of instead? The even more extreme inequality promoted by the US or Russia? The authoritarian models of Singapore or China? George Osborne is very keen on the latter, as we know. So we judge that it is best to stay and fight, alongside our brothers and sisters in the ETUC, for a fairer Europe that puts people before profit, that gives workers the jobs, the livelihoods and the public services we all deserve.

Just one last plea, bearing in mind my surname here, however you decide to cast your votes, and whatever decision you come to here, I hope that we can all unite around this: we will not stand by and let the likes of UKIP scapegoat migrant workers for failings that lie at the politicians' doors. *(Applause)*

It wasn't migrant workers who played the banks like casinos and caused the crash. It's not migrant workers who are robbing disabled people of benefits or axing our precious public services. Migrant workers aren't the cause of low pay; they are the victims of low pay. There's a simple solution to the problems that we face as working people in Britain: stop the cuts, get tough on greedy employers, and make that Panama brigade pay the fair taxes that they owe!

That brings me straight on to the third and the final few words I want to say about what is a massive priority for the TUC and that is speaking up for our public services, and none more so than our fire and rescue service, a service which at less than £1 per taxpayer per week provides astonishing value for the people of this country. We all remember the election campaign in 2010 when David Cameron promised firefighters that there would be no cuts to emergency frontline staff. Since then, funding for the fire service has been slashed, some 7,000 firefighter jobs gone, no fewer than 40 fire stations closed. As a result, you know more than anyone, response times are now longer than they were two decades ago. Little wonder that even the House of Commons public accounts committee has said that this government is risking lives.

Of course, if the cuts weren't bad enough, we also have ministers trying to force through so-called reforms. Where is the rationale for pension reforms imposed after years of pay misery that will mean firefighters work longer for less, and that compromise safety? You and I know, there is none. Where is the rationale for allowing police and crime commissioners to take responsibility for our fire services? There is none. There is no public appetite for it. In fact, from what I remember, there was no public appetite for police and crime commissioners in the first place! And where is the rationale for handing control of key services to the private sector? There is none. Remember when Eric Pickles said: "It is not our intention, nor will we allow, private firms to run the fire service." What about the plans to allow that stellar performing private company Serco to cover firefighter shortages in Cambridgeshire? If that's not privatisation by the back door, then I don't know what is. But whether it's privatisation, pensions or cuts, we have got to defend our fire service. We've got to defend the noble values that underpin it, and the dedicated professionals who serve it.

So, delegates: fighting the cuts, a strong worker voice at the heart of that EU debate, and our continuing campaign for trade union freedom. Like FBU members, there are millions of working people who are not content to go back to business as usual, seeing the idle rich getting richer while everybody else works harder for less. Our movement knows that it doesn't have to be this way and we've got to show it. That we can safeguard our services and our rights, that we can build an economy that works for all, that we will build a better and more equal world. That is possible.

The real test of trade unionism isn't when times are easy; it's about how we rise to the challenge when times are tough. So I just want to leave you by saying this: let's keep the faith, let's stay united. We've already proved our resilience, now let's prove we can win. Solidarity. Thank you, delegates. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

OK, I now call upon the general secretary to respond to Frances.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Frances, on behalf of the conference we thank you for attending and for your words of praise to our members and the jobs that they do, and your words of support from the TUC general council to our union in the struggles that we face. I won't touch on tomorrow's debate; we'll leave that for then.

Frances did give away my singing secret, it seems. I think what she was trying to say was we were in Boston together. We were thrown out of a restaurant apparently! I'm sure that wasn't me; that was her. So there you go, it all comes out here. What was I going to say? I'll sing it. Tomorrow night in the bar.

I don't choose these, Frances, somebody else chose it for me. We have got a gift for you.

We have a range of views in our conference and a range of debates. The president's role is to keep the peace. I think likewise at the TUC there is a range of views. We might sit at one wing of those views, and other people sit at another wing of those views. Frances has a difficult task sometimes of balancing those views. I think the final comment from me would be to touch on the point that Frances made about the Trade Union Bill. We've been very clear, and Frances knows our views on the Trade Union Bill. We believe that unions will come into conflict with that bill and we've made very clear that our movement needs to prepare now for those struggles, and that we will support unions who end up on the wrong side of that law. I think Frances knows those views; it is no surprise to her. But I think we would say from this conference that we ask you to take that back to the general council and make sure that the views of firefighters and of the Fire Brigades Union are known on that issue.

On behalf of conference, I thank you for coming and you've got a big, heavy box there to take back to wherever you're going back to. Cheers. *(Applause)* I always said she was a champagne socialist. There you are!

THE PRESIDENT:

OK, conference, back to business. I now call emergency resolution 3 Future Arrangements for Payment of Subscriptions to be moved by London. The general secretary oppose. Sorry, the executive council oppose! *(Laughter)*

Emergency resolution 3 – FUTURE ARRANGEMENTS FOR PAYMENT OF SUBSCRIPTIONS

Conference applauds the Executive Council for the pro-active approach taken in response to the attacks contained in the Trade Union Bill, specifically over future arrangements for the method of payment of union subscriptions.

Conference also recognises the outstanding work carried out by officials in encouraging members to switch from check-off to direct debit.

The recent U-turn by the Tory government on check-off represents a significant defeat of one of the most draconian elements of the Bill.

Forcing employees to pay trade union subscriptions by direct debit has been used as a tactic in the past by employers seeking to attack union membership levels and thwart industrial action. It is also a vicious attempt to attack our democracy, and could ultimately affect the financial stability of trade unions.

Therefore, Conference instructs the Executive Council to immediately cease actively encouraging members to switch to direct debit. Instead, the union should take a more flexible approach by giving members the opportunity to pay subscriptions by direct debit or check-off.

LONDON

BRO DANIEL GIBLIN (London):

President, conference, I'm going to start off again by congratulating the executive council and John McGhee on the work that they have done on the direct debit campaign. They came under a little bit of criticism around the union whether we were too soon on taking that bit of business on, and I think we did do it at the correct time. I think it was the right thing to do. We were proactive; we had the challenge ahead of us and I think we dealt with it great. As Matt said earlier, over 50 per cent of our members are already on it.

I want to start our resolution off with a bit of clarification, first because I want people to understand where we're coming from with this because, speaking to people yesterday, I don't think they are fully aware of what we are actually saying. We are not saying go back to check-off; we are merely saying give members an option of either paying by check-off or direct debit. Frances O'Grady alluded to it there. This was a massive attack on our members and a massive victory that we reversed this position of the Trade Union Bill. That position has not changed. It's used on so many occasions, within our own union and others, to undermine industrial action and attack our finances and membership. I only have to give a few examples here. We've had Merseyside, Buckinghamshire, Ricky Matthews. We know where all that came from, it came from management trying to impose direct debit to make things difficult for us. I'm sure anyone who comes to speak on that might allude to the issues that they've had in the past dealing with matrices when it comes to industrial action. That's something that we're going to be faced with across the country now with regard to our direct debit set up.

I'm not pre-empting anything that the executive council are going to come back with, but you can bet your bottom dollar they're going to mention finances in this, and the thing that they're going to say is we've got to safeguard the future of the union, we're going to have a financial catastrophic collapse if you vote this resolution through. Actually, quite the contrary, we're saying that if you don't vote our resolution through it will be catastrophic financially. I'll give you one example now. We all sit on fire stations talking to members. How many difficult people do you deal with who will get the hump at something? Under the current arrangements it's a little bit more difficult under check-off because people don't want to phone the brigade up, don't want to cancel subscriptions. The more people we've got on direct debit the more chance of these maverick members turning round and saying: I don't like the colour of the shirt he was wearing today, I'm going to cancel my direct debit on my mobile phone.

Like I say, the EC will refer to finances. I think the figure at the moment, we pay about £140,000 to use the check-off system around the country. I accept that may change. I believe it's between 1 and 5 per cent of brigades would be asked to charge the union, depending on what decision they make on that. But just looking at that £140,000 figure, it's only just shy of 4,000 members that we'll lose and that £140,000 we've lost again anyway, just on the basis of losing people who potentially may leave the union with the ease of leaving under direct debit.

People criticise us sometimes in London of being London-centric about everything we bring. We're quite confident with what we've got set up with direct debit at the moment, but I understand the challenges that other brigades have with regard to retained and different members that they have, and the logistics of the size of people's brigades and the work that we've had to do, getting out to stations and dealing with the direct debit situation. It must be even more difficult. So we're not just taking a London-centric position on this; we are concerned nationwide of the potential impact of pushing more and more people on to direct debit at this stage is going to have.

We're going to look at the finances of our members as well, because that's something that is key. We are not achieving pay rises year after year after year. We're being financially constrained. People will be aware, if you're on debit direct, you have money taken out and it bounces, you're then charged potentially by your bank anything

around £10 and upwards. What a slap in the face to a member who can just as easily get the phone and cancel a direct debit to the union where not only have they missed the union payment (which we're not getting anyway due to the fact that they're paying direct debit) but then they're going to get charged on top. How long are we going to continue to have them as members of this union?

Secondly, it's great to see this conference has brought a couple of resolutions on mental health issues. They are some of the most vulnerable members that we've got who are dealing with mental health in the fire service. They're generally people who could potentially be dealing with financial issues and are going to be suffering. What are we going to do? Whack in with another slap in the face when they lapse in their membership and we ill afford them any representation any more, and we'll be turning round and saying no, sorry, your membership has lapsed. They need us. What we will be doing is punishing them.

Like I say, we're not asking to take people back on to check-off; all we are saying is give them an option. I don't think that is unreasonable. I do not think that is unreasonable. Why wouldn't we do that? That's what I ask the executive council. Why wouldn't we give people as many options as possible to pay?

One final point I want to make with giving people the option is there are some people who would be uncomfortable paying direct debit; there will be some people who will prefer to pay check-off. I don't think we're doing anything wrong by saying to them: we are not going to start pushing the campaign; we're going to pull back a little bit. Let's be honest with you, and what I say to the EC, when we initially came up with the direct debit campaign we were under a lot of pressure, we had to get it done. Why don't we now just sit back, take stock of what's going on and say: OK then, let's give people the option, let's relax it, we don't have to do this overnight any more, let's have a little think, let's be smart and let's be savvy. That's what I'm asking you to do.

Finally, I'll say please listen to what is being said from we who are moving it and seconding it and hopefully anyone in support. Don't just get blinded by what comes from the top table of catastrophic financial issues, and no evidence of things ever affecting membership because it has. My old union, the PCS – we talk about mergers from that top table too many times – is on the verge of a merger now. Why is that? It's because of direct debit and their membership and finances have been absolutely destroyed. So let's not forget that. This is an absolute, hugely important resolution. We're not being militant about it, we're not asking for check-off back, we're just asking for an option. That's why I want you think about it. I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

Do we have a seconder? Merseyside to second.

BRO MARK ROWE (Merseyside):

President, conference, in 2006 an aggressive Merseyside chief fire officer persuaded a weak fire authority to kick us all off check-off, so the check-off facility was withdrawn. It was a nasty little attack, but it had quite dramatic effects. We all know the effects that this is going to have in relation to submitting a matrix in respect of ballots, and it makes ballots much more vulnerable to legal challenge. That's the whole intent of it. What you may not be aware of, conference, are the very real problems that this caused to a significant amount of our members, problems that I think your members will face too. We believe Merseyside's experience is really important here. We believe, as London do, that we must have the facility to present an alternative for our members who can't pay their direct debits subscriptions for whatever reason. That alternative is the check-off facility.

So 2006, 800 Merseyside FBU members removed from check-off and on to direct debit. It was at this point that the role of the brigade organiser changed from organising to debt collecting, constantly having to chase members for missed subs payments. Since 2006 we've learnt a lot about the problems faced by our members when being told that the only facility for payment of subs is direct debit. We eventually persuaded our fire authority to resume check-off voluntarily for those FBU members who needed it. Not who wanted it, who needed it, conference. We did this for the benefit of our members.

Eighty of our members, roughly 10 per cent, went back on check-off because they were having very real problems paying their direct debits. Those members had the same problems month after month, year after year. Conference,

we could actually be failing our members at a time when they need us the most. There are many reasons for our members failing to pay their subs via direct debit. If our members are struggling financially, the first thing that they normally default on are direct debit payments. There are also many reasons why FBU members struggle financially: illness, and subsequently being placed on half pay; struggling to raise a family in light of the significant reduction in our living standards due to pay restraint. It is at this point, conference, when our members are ill or suffering financially that they normally fall foul of either fire service discipline procedures, capability procedures or even the law. This is when our members need us the most; this is when they need our representation. This will be the point that they are possibly lapsed from the union. This, frankly, would be disastrous for them. If your direct debit mandate is refused by your bank, or building society, through lack of funds you receive an AR1, an arrears letter 1, from head office. The second month you get an AR2, and third month you get an AR3. It's at this point you have two choices: pay arrears of nearly £90 or lapse out of the union. For those struggling financially, finding £90 for arrears is almost impossible. As I said previously, conference, this is at a time when our members need us the most.

We convinced our fire authority to open up the check-off facility again and had 80 members on it, but the vast majority of our members remained on direct debit. That was their choice. Conference, check-off became a safety net for our members. It kept 80 FBU members paying subs; it kept 80 FBU members in the union who would otherwise have lapsed. Conference, don't condemn our most vulnerable members at a difficult period in their lives to no representation just when they need it the most. Conference, if only one FBU member needs check-off we should support them. We should always support people who want to be part of our union.

We would ask the general secretary: what do we do with a member who simply cannot pay direct debit? What is their choice? We should not put obstacles in their way. Support the resolution. Give the members the choice when they need it. Let's not inadvertently cast them adrift. Frances O'Grady has just said times are tough for trade unions and their members. Let's not make those times any tougher for our members who are already struggling financially. Please support the resolution. I second. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

That's open for debate.

BRO CAMERON MATTHEWS (Cambridgeshire):

President, conference, I just want to clarify really. I think there is a lot said there which I do agree with from both Merseyside and London. Obviously pay is a massive issue for us in the fire and rescue service at the moment. I empathise with all firefighters struggling to pay, whether it's union fees, your mortgage or your bills. But the part I didn't understand, and I don't know if it can be clarified in the right of reply, is that the actual cost of paying direct debit is the same cost as paying your check-off. Regardless of which way you're paying it, if you can't afford to pay it, it doesn't really matter if you're getting it from check-off or not. I wasn't really sure of the intent of London.

I want to also take into consideration Merseyside's position and what happened there, but I don't really understand why. I wanted to ask the question really and see if they could address that in the right of reply. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks. I would hope that John McGhee might be able to address that in his opposition to this resolution.

BRO JOHN MCGHEE (National officer):

Thanks president. I hope I will cover Cameron's point. I want to pick up on a number of issues that both Dan and Mark have raised. I should say first off, Dan, I think the only people that have been blinded up here is the executive council because the spotlights are pointing in this direction, so I'm certainly not going to try to blind you all.

But I hope what I can do is explain the rationale as to why we shouldn't support London's resolution which doesn't simply call for giving members a choice. What it actually says is: "Conference instructs the executive council to immediately cease actively encouraging members to switch to direct debit." OK? So we've to stop doing it and leave people as they are, give them the choice and that's where we'll remain. So we'll have those that are on the check-off will stay in the check-off until someone wakes up one morning and decides they want to change from one to the other.

Is it going to be financially catastrophic? No, Dan, I'm not going to stand here and tell you that it is financially catastrophic. Andy Noble very eloquently this morning outlined the challenges of the union's finances. You pick up your Annual Report and if you look in the Annual Report you will see that some of our expenditure is allocated as commission. It's about £140,000 a year. £140,000 is the percentage of the contributions taken by those brigades who do charge us, those that do charge us at the moment. I say "at the moment" because it's about half of the brigades around the country who currently charge a commission for collecting our members' money, then to give it to us. £140,000. We had challenges this morning about making sure we're better organised and we've got better training for our organisers. I tell you what, put that £140,000 into the organising budget and we'll do far more use with it than giving it to the brigades for simply collecting that money.

What is that £140,000 going to look like? I'll tell you what the Trade Union Bill says. The Trade Union Bill does not say: OK, we've forgotten about check-off now; what it is saying is trade unions can have check-off so long as they pay reasonable costs. You tell me what the Taxpayers' Alliance and other such bodies are going to be saying is a reasonable cost. In some places we pay 1 per cent, and we pay as high as 5 per cent in other places. So you tell me where it is that is going to be that we will pick what is a reasonable cost. I tell you what, I bet you when we are standing back here in the next couple of years that it's a way higher than the 1 per cent, and far closer to the 5 per cent seen as a reasonable cost.

So it makes no sense for us to back off from this project. Let's not call it a campaign, because we have been careful to try to say that we are not doing a campaign on direct debit. We have been asking people to switch to direct debit and we've been asking you as organisers, as officials and reps to get out there and when you're meeting your members to talk about the cuts, to talk about the motions that were coming here to be debated at this conference, to take up your positions to get your mandates, to be saying: and by the way, whilst you're there, can you fill in the direct debit. This is a better way for us as a union to collect its own finances.

I'm sure somebody down there will correct me, but I think it was about six years ago we actually changed the rules to say that our members could pay by direct debit. It might have been around 2006 when Merseyside had it cancelled. It is interesting that 90 per cent of those who went on to direct debit remained on direct debit.

We've currently got over 50 per cent of the membership across the country on direct debit. If we give a signal now that we're backing away from that, I tell you what, it will cause chaos. It won't cause people to cancel their direct debits and immediately sign back on to check-off, but it may cause some to cancel their direct debit and take three months to get back on to the check-off. Then we will be chasing those AR1 letters that Mark described.

Let me tell you this. An AR1 letter goes out just now if you miss your check-off payment, because we've got members who cancel their check-off if they come into some sort of financial difficulty. But I want you, as organisers and people in the branches, to be supporting those members. If we've got members with real financial hardships, then as a union we should be looking after them. And if there's a problem with someone saying I want to be in the union but I don't have the money and here's my financial position that I'm in, then I don't believe for a minute that the executive council or anybody else in this hall is going to say: well, you're out. Let's look at hardship funds and we'll look to see how we can support people and keep them as part of the union.

So let's not get that mixed up with what is a sensible way for us, controlling our own finances and collecting the subscriptions made by our members to this union. And let's not be paying those subscriptions to those employers who don't do an awful lot of work for it.

Dan talked about the PCS being destroyed. The PCS was in a completely different situation from what we are in now. The executive council, I think, took a correct decision before the end of last year to start moving people over on to direct debit in anticipation of the Trade Union Bill coming into effect and including the removal of check-off. The EC said: Let's not wait because it's our means of income and if we wait until it happens, we've seen what happened in Merseyside, we've seen what's happened in Buckinghamshire in the past; you lose income if it stops immediately, and it's harder to recoup that. So we took that step and started on the programme of getting people switched over. Where we are different from the PCS now is actually that threat has now gone. We will keep paying those commissions for those people that don't sign over on to check-off. We are not to pull down a shutter and

say: if you haven't signed over to direct debit on this date you're out of the union. That wouldn't make any sense for anybody, and there's been no such proposal from the executive council to do that. But what we are asking you to do is continue the push, when you're engaging with your members, continue to encourage them to switch over to direct debit. That is the best possible way for us to collect our finances.

This is not about telling you stories about financial catastrophes or anything else. It is simply the best way – whether the Trade Union Bill was coming or not in my view – and is the way that we should be collecting our members' subscriptions. It makes more sense that they pay it directly to us.

I will finish on this. Mark talked about the production of matrices for the industrial ballots. What a challenge that is. We have done that up and down the country where we have one or two or three or a handful of members already paying direct debits so we had to produce matrices. One of the things that we have done during the collection of the direct debits is building up a database of people's workplaces so that we can produce those matrices, and that will be done at head office. But if you're talking about organising, if we're talking about organising our members and we don't even know where they work, then we're not very well organised, are we?

So this might be a challenge in terms of organising, but it's a challenge that I know that we can all rise to. We can have a better map of where our members are, and we can make ourselves a saving of more than £140,000 a year. That figure could double. So please, oppose the London resolution. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

Right of reply, London.

BRO DANIEL GIBLIN (London):

President, conference – first thing, Cameron's point. I think it's quite clear what we're trying to say about the difference between check-off and direct debit. Check-off comes out your wages. Your wages gets paid in and the brigade takes it. You're not going to default on that payment. We've had a resolution ruled out of order on the payment date on direct debit. We've already had cases in London where it's lapsed because of the date that it's come out. When it's coming out at the end of the month when we're the most financially strained, that's when your payments lapse, that's when you get charged by the bank. That's financial catastrophe for those members.

Contrary to John's point, I do think that was a financial catastrophic argument because that's the only argument I heard. I think me and Mark Rowe put up numerous arguments as to why we think you should pass this resolution. I believe, as expected, the one that came from the top table was based on finances.

Just to come back to a few points that John made. He said about cancelling check-off and us running the campaign signal so everyone doesn't sign up to direct debit. That's not what we're asking. All we're saying is, like we said in our original speech, let's back off, back off, let's have a look and if the EC are right and this time next year it's caused them financial catastrophe for the union and the government have come back and they charge us millions and millions of pounds for using check-off, then we can address that at conference. What I'm saying is as that's not happening at the moment let's relax, take a step back, be proactive like the EC was last time on the starters campaign, and we can take stock of what's going on and we can find out for ourselves. I think the issues that we raised are absolutely poignant and serious. It's more than it's going to cost the union money; it's going to cost us members. It could potentially put members who are in significant difficulty into more difficulty, as Mark Rowe alluded to. It's the difference between your check-off getting cancelled by a member who chooses to do it (as John alluded to) and you getting a letter off the union when you can't afford to pay your bills and put food on the table and some of the issues that our members are going through, and the mental issues that we alluded to in the original speech. Then you're getting a letter off your union that you expect to be there for you in the toughest times, asking you for money. As Mark alluded to, with a bill of £90 coming through the door, there's only one way you're going, you're going to leave the FBU. A number of people will leave the FBU and we'll be licking our wounds and we'll be crying more tears about finances than when our membership levels have dropped even further due to us pushing the direct debit campaign that we don't need to do.

All we are asking is give the members the choice. I don't think there's any other choice that this conference can make here. You've heard a well-balanced argument, not asking for anything more than just relax and we'll give

members a democratic decision on the way they pay their subs. That is all we are asking for. You can either do that, or you can take a dictatorial view and force people on to direct debit.

THE PRESIDENT:

That's what you're here for, conference, to avoid any dictatorial views being taken, to be fair! Right, I now put emergency resolution 3 to the vote. The executive council oppose. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. *That FALLS.*

I'm on paragraph K4 CSNC section report. I now call resolution 45 with the amendment from Merseyside. The executive council give qualified support to the resolution and full support to the Merseyside amendment.

Resolution 45 – REPRESENTATION OF CONTROL MEMBERS

This Conference recognises the current challenges faced by the FBU in relation to the recruitment, retention, and organisation of our Members particularly within Emergency Fire Controls, and calls upon the Executive Council to implement within three months of Conference 2016 the following measures to ensure that the removal of the position of Executive Council Member for Control does not impact adversely on the representation of our Control Members:

- ***Each Regional Committee shall nominate one Regional Official to take on the remit of responsibility for overseeing Control issues.***
- ***The nominated Regional Official will work in a supporting capacity with the elected/appointed Regional Control Staff National Committee Representative on Control matters within their Region. This should include developing "sector specific" knowledge and understanding of Control roles where the nominated Regional Official does not have a Control background.***
- ***In those Regions where a Control Staff National Committee Representative has not been elected/appointed to the Regional Committee, the nominated Regional Official will work in co-ordination with the National Officials of the Control Staff National Committee to liaise with Brigade Officials in arranging local Control Branch meetings, in order to re-start the Control structure within their Region.***
- ***A brief written report from each Region will be submitted to each meeting of the Control Staff National Committee by the Regional Control Staff National Committee Representative, or by the nominated Regional Official in those Regions where a Control Staff National Committee Representative is not yet in place.***

CONTROL STAFF NATIONAL COMMITTEE

AMENDMENT

Final bullet point, first line: after 'of the' insert 'Regional Committee and the'

MERSEYSIDE

SIS AMELIA DIALLO (CSNC):

President, conference, we are accepting the amendment from Merseyside. Conference, over recent years representation of control members on our regional and national committees has suffered and there are many brigades and regions which do not have control representatives. As a union we must address this shortcoming, and as a section the CSNC is asking for all your support to help us remedy the situation. Following last year's recall conference and the removal of the control EC member, the control staff national committee has thought long and hard about how we can maximise the representation of our emergency control members within the new FBU structure. We believe the key is to increase control member engagement at all levels, from the local branch, all the way through our brigade, regional and national structures. But this approach requires a kick start and so we have put forward this resolution with a view to increasing the support for existing control reps, and rebuilding representation in those areas which currently have none.

The support of regional and brigade officials in these areas is vital if we are to re-engage control members and restart the branch-based structure. Of course, our end goal is to have control members representing themselves in all the relevant positions within the structure of the FBU, but in the meantime this resolution asks for the support of regional officials in the short term to enable us to achieve this aim. The CSNC believes that it will be encouraging for control members in those areas currently under-represented to see the FBU take an active interest in control issues.

We understand that in a utopian set up members would not need to be pushed to engage with their union; they would understand the obvious benefits of taking an active role and making their own voices heard. But rightly or wrongly, we are where we are. So it is our hope that with some initial input from regional and brigade officials, supported by CSNC officials, we can encourage renewed interest and create impetus to ensure a strong, self-representing control section within our structure. We therefore request you support the resolution. I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT:

Is the resolution seconded? *Formally* Formally seconded. Merseyside to move their amendment. *Formally* Formally moved. Does the Merseyside amendment have a seconder? *Formally* Formally seconded. That's open for debate. OK, can I have the general secretary to give the qualification, please.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

First of all, I thank the CSNC for bringing the resolution and I hope it will prompt some consideration within regional committees. Clearly, I think what the CSNC are attempting to do is discuss seriously how do we organise our sectional committee in this case, and our sectional committees more widely in this new organisational structure? That is very welcome.

I think the only reservation the executive council had is in relation to probably the final bullet point, that we don't normally get involved in the actual committee business and how committees run themselves in terms of debates at conference. That said, we are happy to discuss with the CSNC, and with regions and regional secretaries, how we ensure that regional committees are addressing not just the CSNC issue but all of our sectional structures to ensure that there is representation, and where there is not, there is the support that is set out in the resolution. Again, this is not the responsibility solely of the CSNC; it is a matter for our branches; it's a matter for our brigade committees to ensure that we are engaging with control branches; we are ensuring that we have control branch reps organised, and we are ensuring that that representation is there at brigade and at regional level.

With that slight reservation about involvement in the committee business in terms of conference and the executive council, we are very happy to support the resolution.

THE PRESIDENT:

I now put the Merseyside amendment to the vote. The executive council support. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. *The amendment is CARRIED.*

I now put resolution 45 as amended to the vote. The executive council have just given that qualification. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. *That is CARRIED.*

Paragraph K5, K6. I now call resolution 41 Support for Officer Members from the officers' national committee. The executive council support.

Resolution 41 – SUPPORT FOR OFFICER MEMBERS

Conference demands that the Executive Council pledges its on-going and continued support for the Officers National Committee.

In light of the Executive Council's further projected losses in FBU Members, there has never been a more important time to have a strong Officers National Committee in order to both maintain and ensure that Officer Members stay with the FBU and are supported throughout their careers.

The Officers National Committee has a unique and special part to play in the continued independence of the Fire Brigades Union and we call upon Conference to support the Executive Council and Officers National Committee to promote officer membership and to have Representatives in all of its Brigade and Regional Committees.

OFFICERS' NATIONAL COMMITTEE

BRO JOHN DENVIR (ONC):

President, conference, like other sections we have lost our EC member and at this point I'd like to pay tribute to John Arnold for all the work he did over the years. But to take up the gap and the workload, we are asking for support from the EC, brigades and regions to strength officer membership in the FBU, and regional representation on the ONC. We don't have officer reps in regions 1, 4, 6 and 8, and of course it would be totally wrong for me to say that out loud, so I definitely won't be saying that!

Officers sometimes find themselves the filling in an unsavoury sandwich. They are under pressure from firefighters on the ground and brigade management at the top. They are often the face charged with delivering unpalatable brigade policies which many of them disagree with. I didn't join the fire service to become an officer, but that's where I find myself. I am proud to be an officer and an FBU member. Let me make my position clear. I am not here to excuse or justify those officers who have lost their social compass, have sold out their principles for personal gain and relish trying to undermine the FBU by their actions. But I will appeal to brigades and regions to recognise is that it is by retaining and recruiting officer members that there are advantages to the FBU. Not only does it assist our financial position, but allows the FBU to have views and values heard at the most senior level of brigade management. Put it another way: if I find myself in a disciplinary hearing I want to have an FBU officer sitting across from me deciding what fate may be upon me.

We must challenge those brigades who have unwritten criteria that if you're in the FBU you're not going to be promoted. How do we do this? To my mind, it is by retaining FBU membership throughout brigades, right up to the most senior officer level. We just stay strong and be relevant, and do not let officers walk away from the FBU. To make this work and stop the loss of membership to FOA or to no union (which in fact is really the same thing, president) we need the support of the EC, brigades and regions. We are asking for that support. Conference, please support this resolution. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

Does that have a seconder? Please come to the rostrum and second.

BRO TONY SMITH (Hertfordshire):

President, conference, just wanted to very quickly speak in support of this and quite proud to second this actually. I think we should, as a group, salute those officer members that we still have. We certainly salute those officer members that we still have in Hertfordshire. They are very few in number now, and that is a direct result of harassment and bullying by the very senior management of the brigade. I think it's outrageous. I've also told those people that are carrying out that harassment and bullying of our officer members that I believe that to be illegal. I think we should recognise that.

I'm quite confident that we will support this resolution, but what I say to you, conference, is if we do support this resolution then we've got to see it through. That means actually turning around the culture that we've been witnessing over the last few years, and particularly throughout our pensions dispute, on that harassment and bullying of officer members, members that are now frightened for their very careers because they stand up as union members.

So let's support this, but let's really support this and let's get out there and make that action. I would ask that the EC take that also to a national level and highlight that plight of those officer members and that illegal action by very senior officers of fire and rescue services. Please, support this and then when you've supported it, get out there and support it. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

That's open for debate. Please come to the rostrum.

BRO GREG ASHMAN (London):

President, conference, I am the officers' chair for region 10. Thank you for inviting me to conference. First one I've ever been to. Thank you for the support in the bar last night! I'm speaking in support of resolution 41 Support for Officer Members. As John has alluded to, FBU members who are officers work in a unique situation. They try to

balance their managerial duties with their union beliefs. We are all firefighters, but some of us have more managerial responsibilities than others. The only way we can get principal management to engage with us is if we can get senior officers to stay in the FBU through their promotions. Some of the work we have done in London through the officers' committee and through the support of LRC and the EC members has meant that in the last station managers round 34 watch managers were promoted, all to station manager and were all in the FBU, and they all stayed in the FBU. In the last group manager round (congratulations, Simon Amos) we had nine station managers promoted to group manager, and six of them were FBU members, and those six are all staying in as FBU members.

We've turned the tide in London. We had less than 50 per cent officers. In London we only represent station managers and group managers and we had less than 50 per cent. We are now over 70 per cent. So I would like to urge you to ensure that your brigades and your regional committees have officer reps on them. As I said before, we are all firefighters and as long as we stand together across the ranks/roles members will get promoted and can remain in the FBU. I didn't join the FBU or the London Fire Brigade to be told that when I get to a certain rank I can't be in the FBU. I'm a borough commander and I'm in the FBU and I'm very proud of it. There is no need for anyone to feel that they have to leave the FBU just to get promoted. There is no viable alternative for officers other than the FBU. Please support resolution 41. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

The debate is still open. Anybody else? The executive council do support but I think the AGS wants to say something.

ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:

Conference, the resolution is quite clear in terms of making demands of the executive council. We welcome that demand because certainly it's something that we have tried to stress for a number of years now. Whatever the structural changes we may have made as a conference, instigated in the first instance by the executive council, our commitment to officers and to the ONC remains unchanged, it really does. We are totally committed to ensuring that the structures of the ONC work well and are able to work well and have the resources. More importantly, that we ensure that officer members are supported and that their membership is maintained and increased.

I've got to say, I think it was Greg who said in London the corner has been turned. I think we're seeing signs of that all around the country. The overtures made by chief officers and principal management teams in terms of wooing (let's be frank, threatening) our people that they need to leave the FBU if they want promotion and on getting promotion – I think that trick has not worked for them. People have seen that the promises that come with the threat aren't honoured by chief officers. We've also seen the way that our officers are vulnerable. We've seen the overtures themselves made by FOA. FOA are seen now as hollow. They offer nothing different from us. They are an echo, if anything, of what the FBU says at every forum that we attend in their presence.

I've got to say that what's happened in terms of vulnerability of our officers when they are on the stand, whether it be at coroner's or court proceedings where either members of the public or our members have died, the finger gets pointed by principal managers, by the insurance companies, QCs, at our senior officer members. The most poignant example of that wasn't so much the chiefs, but certainly was in terms of exposing the vulnerability of our officers, what we saw in Atherstone on Stour. Good middle managers who went to work that morning to do a good job, blamed and accused by the CPS and prosecuted, a prosecution that failed. Our officer members need to know (I think they do know) their place is within the Fire Brigades Union. Our job is to assist them in making sure that those who have left the union, either for another organisation or simply to float along without any kind of membership of any representative body, the place for them is in this union. This executive council commits itself to that task. I've no doubt that conference will as well. Thank you, president. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

I now put resolution 41 to the vote. The EC support. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. *That is CARRIED.*

We are on paragraph K7 Membership Services. I now call resolution 38 FBU Online Shop to be moved by Cambridgeshire. The EC support.

Resolution 38 – FBU ONLINE SHOP

Conference welcomes the improvements and development shown in the latest FBU national website. It is of importance that we utilise technological advancements to improve our communications and interactions both with our membership and wider interested parties. The worldwide web offers a number of opportunities which we are still yet to explore as a Union.

One such opportunity is to provide access to an online FBU shop. During the pension campaign and before there has been widespread demand for FBU branded items, which in the absence of an online shop, has made it difficult to coordinate purchases of such items through Brigade Officials.

Conference therefore instructs our Executive Council to put to tender, negotiate and agree a contract for a national FBU shop to include production, distribution and margins. To also simultaneously begin the process of making a capital expenditure to design and implement a website that incorporates a national online shop by which FBU Members and other interested parties can purchase a wide range of FBU branded products that will be delivered to their desired address. With the upcoming FBU centenary anniversary this would prove a helpful resource to coordinate and distribute any specially produced items. We instruct that the FBU online shop should be implemented and running by no later than Conference 2017.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE

BRO CAMERON MATTHEWS (Cambridgeshire):

President, conference, firstly, I'd like to say that I'm about to talk about e-stuff and I've brought paperwork rather than my tablet because of the rules!

I also want to talk about a couple of bits which are related to this resolution and I thought it was important to mention them because sometimes we don't do enough to celebrate some of the good things that we do. One of them is the good work done on the FBU rebranding by our comms and media team and all the others involved. We've had some great feedback from our members on station. Whilst I will be the first to say don't judge a book by its cover, it would also be remiss of us not to acknowledge the fact that organisational image does have an impact on effective message delivery. So we feel the new branding improves our image, reinforces the expertise and professionalism of the FBU and we'd like to thank all those who were involved in it.

Secondly is the new website. Whilst we will all have different views on aesthetics and preferences, I think most would agree the new website looks clean, clear and professional. There is always room for improvement and adjustment, but that's the same with everything, isn't it? It's important to note our achievements thus far, and again thank all those involved in the development of the new website.

That is a nice segue into our resolution. The internet and the worldwide web is indisputable one of, if not the, most influential innovations of the last century. For good or bad, depending on your outlook, the fact remains that it permeates every aspect of modern life, even more in the younger generations. It has provided huge advancements in communications and sharing of information on a level that hasn't really been seen since the invention of the printing press. It's potentially one of the greatest tools ever provided to the working class movement, which is why we must always ensure we protect its neutrality and also the privacy which should come with that as well. We need to protect that at all costs.

When used correctly, as we saw in the US with Obama, it can win elections and it can also influence the zeitgeist like nothing else before it. If we are being super-critical of ourselves we perhaps have not always been the quickest to fully embrace the advantages of this relatively new medium. However, I consider it a personal success that after years and years of lobbying I eventually managed to persuade our EC member to become a member of Facebook. I think that's a really good thing, and hopefully he now enjoys that!

One such facility of the internet is e-commerce. I haven't become a capitalist, don't worry about that. What specifically the resolution talks about is the FBU online shop. I know a lot of people have talked about this for some time and we want to pass the resolution to kind of get some traction on that, and hopefully the EC may say there is

some work already ongoing so we might be a bit closer to it. But as you know, we do have a shop which is currently run by Kim Napier from Cambridgeshire. She does a wonderful job. She is here at conference this week and I would encourage you all to visit and buy some branded bits so that we can push our brand out there further, and also make some money for the union at a time when we are coming under the cosh financially.

But whilst we have access to it here at conference, the majority of our members don't have access when we get back to brigades. So an online shop would give us the ability for all members across the UK to access and acquire FBU items and help spread our message, and also help influence maybe the few people that aren't members of the FBU to become members by asking questions of those who are.

Firefighters are proud to be firefighters, I believe, in the vast majority. But more importantly, FBU members who are honourable and loyal are proud to be FBU firefighters and rightly so. We should want to promote and share that. Whether that be through a T-shirt, an FBU mug, Christmas cards, pens, lanyards, all of these things help push our message out there and push our brand out there. It's one thing that I think the US firefighters do better than us. They are very good at pushing their fire service out there. I've seen lots of people at conference and around the fire station wear FDNY T-shirts, don't you? You see it all the time. So we should want to have that kind of image for the FBU and get our T-shirts out there a lot more.

We could also utilise this facility as well to get a good deal for firefighters and use our collective purchasing power to negotiate deals perhaps on everyday items that we buy as firefighters – Gerber knives, Leatherman knives, things like that. If we all bought a bulk amount together, sold them on the FBU website we'd get a good deal for firefighters and a bit of money as well for the FBU. PT gear, FBU notebooks, things like that.

Lastly, how many times have we had colleagues who retire and we have wracked our brains about what to get them. So it could be an opportunity to have things like silver axes, FBU bronze tallies, you know, things of that nature. It just makes it a bit easier to buy those retirement gifts for people as well.

What we also must not forget is that our centenary is almost upon us as well. In 2018 FBU will be 100 years old, and we will also want to provide access to centenary items, not just for UK firefighters, but I think a lot of firefighters across the world will probably want to buy some centenary items as well. I think it is a good opportunity to set something up. There is the ability to expand it as well and make some additions as we move on. I think at a time when finances are so scrutinised – we've heard a lot about finances today – it's important that we don't just talk about cuts. We criticise the government heavily, and rightly so, for just going on about cut, cut, cut. This is an opportunity where we could actually seek to look at some investment.

So as such I would urge conference to support the resolution. I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT:

Thank you, comrade. Does that have a seconder? *Formally* Just while you're making your way back to your seat, Cameron, I will say that your EC member maybe a whizz on Facebook but he's not that good at conveying messages because he asked me last week: Could he use a tablet? And I said anybody can use a tablet at the rostrum! So basically, you win you lose, but you've been writing your notes out for no reason, mate! I do apologise for that. It's called a breakdown in communication, but not by me!

It's been seconded formally. That's open for debate. Yes, please.

SIS HELEN TOOLEY (NWC):

President, conference, we do support this resolution but we would just like to request that women's sizes are also made readily available, rather than having to specifically order. There's no women's sizes in the shop here today. Even the free T-shirts are all male sizes! We do have female members who would like to show how proud they are of being members of the FBU as well. Could we also suggest that a children's range should be made available online as well. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT:

Does anybody else want to contribute? The EC support. I will put resolution 38 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. *That is CARRIED.*

Paragraph K8. Take tea break please.

Break for tea

THE PRESIDENT:

Take your seats, come to order. I'd like to call upon the chief scrutineer, Brian Gibson, to say a few words to you all

BRO BRIAN GIBSON (Chief scrutineer):

Conference, as chief scrutineer I'm here to announce the result of the standing orders committee election. The result is as follows: Brother Stuart Kinnon re-elected unopposed. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

That's another year of stick for me! Right, we are on Section B Pensions. Paragraph B1, paragraph B2, paragraph B3, paragraph B4, paragraph B5, paragraph B6, paragraph B7, B8, B9. I now call resolution 11 Same Sex Survivor Pensions moved by the LGBT committee. The executive council support.

Resolution 11 – SAME SEX SURVIVOR PENSIONS

Conference notes with disappointment the outcome of the Court of Appeal in its ruling in the appeal of Walker v Innospec.

The appeal related to the accrual rights of survivor pension benefits prior to 2005. Currently some pension schemes fail to recognise survivor benefits accrued prior to the introduction of legal recognition of same sex partnerships in 2005.

Conference calls on our Officials responsible for negotiating pensions to continue to raise the issue of inequality in pension provision with government and press for survivor benefits to relate to the length of membership of schemes as opposed to introduction of legal recognition of same sex partnership.

LGBT NATIONAL COMMITTEE

BRO PAT CARBERRY (LGBT):

Conference, president, this resolution, we've spoken about this as an issue in the past. I'm pleased to say that for our members in the FBU the firefighters' pension now recognises same sex relationships. So from our pension point of view that issue has been resolved. However, there are many pension schemes out there where it still hasn't been resolved. The government are fully aware of the issue. Many of you will recall how quick they were to come and say to you: you haven't put enough into your pension pot and it simply isn't affordable and therefore we're going to have to take more money and give you less.

What about the other end of the spectrum, whenever someone has put more in? Why is there reluctance from government to recognise that? What this resolution calls for is for our officials, whenever they meet with those government officials, to keep reminding them that this is about fairness and whenever you offer a product to someone, regardless of whatever it is – if you're buying a car or you're buying a house – you can't turn round to someone and say: You're going to end up with a lesser product, even though you put in the same amount of money, purely based on who you love and that person being someone of the same sex.

So, conference, I call on you to support this motion and continue to support our officials highlighting the injustice that's been going on for so many years. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

Thank you, Pat. Can that be seconded, please? Seconded? *Formally* Formally seconded. That's open for debate. The executive council support. Do you want to speak, Sean?

BRO SEAN STARBUCK (National officer):

Thanks, president. The EC support but I do want to raise a couple of points. I spoke to Pat about this. You can rest assured that whenever we meet with government we always raise issues around inequality in all the pension schemes. You know yourselves we've challenged it in various areas; we've currently got a challenge on age discrimination; we've also just won on the 18 to 20s, and we've also pressed it on the modified scheme with some success. What I will say, and Pat did touch on it, is our pension scheme is not affected by the limitations put on *Innospec v Walker*. Our pension schemes, firefighters' pension schemes, are all covered under the full protection for civil marriages and same sex provisions. So if you want to check for yourselves it's Rule C1(2)(a) of the FPS. I'm sure you've already looked at it. You can rest assured, Pat and conference, that we will, and we always will, raise issues around inequality wherever they raise their heads. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

Thank you. I now put resolution 11 to the vote. The EC support. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. *That is CARRIED.*

Conference, can I just draw your attention to the timetable of today. I'm looking at it, and we might well get to the NJC workstreams. I intend to give that a little bit more time than normal. In fact, I intend to give it a lot more time than normal, so we will be bypassing that and dealing with it tomorrow afternoon, so it gets the time that it should. OK?

We are on paragraph B10, paragraph B11, paragraph B12. I now call emergency resolution 4 Pensions Appeal Mechanism moved by Cheshire. The executive council support. Cheshire, please.

Emergency resolution 4 – PENSIONS APPEAL MECHANISM

Conference notes with concern the decision of Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service on 7th March 2016, stating that a member of the FBU was not entitled to appeal the outcome of a review of pension benefits if the appeal is to move to higher tier from lower tier ill health pension.

Conference is also concerned that the scheme rules do not appear to allow any subsequent appeals to move from a lower tier to a higher tier irrespective of the fact that the condition of a member may worsen. This means that an individual who is receiving a lower tier ill health pension later becomes unfit for regular work has no opportunity to receive a higher tier ill health pension.

Conference instructs the Executive Council to look at this in more detail and if necessary seeks to establish the relevant appeal mechanism including a change to the pension rules for the benefit of our members, if that is deemed the most appropriate avenue.

CHESHIRE

BRO STUART HAMMOND (Cheshire):

President, conference, it is clear that in future we will be facing employers seeking to use capability as a mechanism to dismiss our members and erode our establishments further. The provision of an ill-health pension for those who are too ill to carry on serving their communities as firefighters after years of devoted service must be protected. It is with surprise and disappointment that we have recently been made aware in Cheshire, and following talks with national officials, that there is no provision within the regulations for a review to take place that will enable the fire and rescue authority powers to uprate an ill-health pension award from a lower tier to an upper tier, even when it is clearly evidenced that a member has suffered a serious deterioration in his or her condition that is beyond that of the natural aging process.

We are fully aware that an appeal can take place upon the initial outcome of the ill-health pension condition, and that reviews can take place. However, an appeal can only be done directly after that outcome, which clearly prevents an appeal should conditions or injuries substantially deteriorate after the said period. The reviews that can at present

take place can also be seen as detrimental to our members, as the only outcomes are the status quo or the reduction from higher tier pension to lower tier pension, as we have seen previously.

It is our position that we must work towards establishing a fair mechanism within the regulations to ensure our members who are injured or are prevented from being able to carry on their role are both adequately assessed and subsequently protected via ill-health pensions. But also, should there be a deterioration in their condition, they have the right to review to uprate their award if it is established that the initial award is deemed inappropriate. Failure to do so would be an injustice. It is incumbent on us to make sure our officials are trained so members are protected.

Our employers are not interested in the skills, the experience or the value of our members, only whether they are fit enough to remain operational. Conference, we are all acutely aware of the complete lack of any alternative roles; they simply do not exist, despite the claims and promises of the former minister for fire. When the occupational health departments on the IQMP adjudge our members to no longer be fit, they are cast adrift. Their only protection is the hard-won entitlement to an ill-health pension. We must ensure this pension is fair and just. Therefore, this conference calls on the executive council to urgently examine this gap in the regulations and seek to introduce a fit for purpose appeal mechanism to uprate awards where there is cause to do so. Conference, support this resolution. I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

Does that have a seconder? *Formally* Formally seconded. That's open for debate. Anybody want to contribute? No. The executive council support. Sean.

BRO SEAN STARBUCK (National officer):

Thanks, president. EC do support, and thanks to Stuart for raising it and bringing it to the attention of conference. This is an area that is clear unfairness in the pension scheme. Stuart put it very well; he explained exactly what the situation is. Basically, what happens is your ill-health pension can be reduced if you get better, or, if you get worse it can't be uplifted on to a higher tier.

We highlighted this a few times on our pension medical appeals and we've shown people a way to get round it. But the way we've shown people to get round it is only a sticking plaster. After I saw the case Stuart's dealing with, I recognise that we've got to do something more.

I've informally raised this already with Home Office officials and they are looking at it. Now I've got to raise it formally and I'll be raising it formally at all the scheme advisory boards around the UK. But we've got to be realistic about it. This is going to cost a little bit more money in certain circumstances, even though it can only be a temporary measure in some places because it can be reviewed later and removed afterwards. So we will be following this up. I do want to be realistic and say this is by no means a gimmick; this is something we've got to work hard on and we've got to challenge. But you can rest assured that we will challenge it. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

I now put emergency resolution 4 to the vote. The executive council support. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. *That is CARRIED.*

We are on paragraph B13, B14, B15, B16, B17, B18, B19, B20. Section I Accident & Injury Fund, Section J Legal Report, paragraph J1, paragraph J2. I now call emergency resolution 5 Duty Systems: Condemnation of Excessive Hours of Work and Other Terms and Conditions which are Inferior to Those Contained within the Grey Book. To be moved by South Yorkshire. I'm going to give you an extra 30 seconds if you read the title! South Yorkshire. The executive council support.

Emergency resolution 5 – DUTY SYSTEMS: CONDEMNATION OF EXCESSIVE HOURS OF WORK AND OTHER TERMS AND CONDITIONS WHICH ARE INFERIOR TO THOSE CONTAINED WITHIN THE GREY BOOK

Current FBU Policy relating to Day Crewing Plus and Close Proximity Crewing duty systems was agreed at the FBU's 2011 Conference. The Grey Book and the Working Time Regulations are clear

that specific and identified features of contractual working hours can only be varied by a collective agreement.

Conference recognises that the Health and Safety Executive has deemed that Close Proximity Crewing is not compliant with the Working Time Regulations due to the absence of a collective agreement.

Conference notes the outcome of the National Joint Council's Technical Advisory Panel (TAP) that convened on 16 January 2016 to consider Cleveland Fire Brigade's proposed new duty system.

Conference further notes the outcome of the employment tribunal which heard the case Mansell & others v South Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service, which became reportable on 27 January 2016. The tribunal determined that the Close Proximity Crewing duty system introduced by South Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service is not compliant with the Working Time Regulations and found that firefighters had suffered a detriment as a result of its introduction. A settlement on the compensation to be awarded is now being discussed between the respective parties' lawyers.

Conference applauds the officials and members in Cleveland and all other brigades who have fought, and continue to fight, the implementation of duty systems and working practices which are more akin to the working hours' commonplace in the 19th century as opposed to the 21st century.

Conference is angered that Fire and Rescue Services continue to try to implement duty systems that patently are not in accordance with the four principles contained within Section 4, Paragraph 3 of the Grey Book which includes a working week of not more than 42 hours.

In addition Conference is opposed to any duty system which introduces, requires or allows for terms and conditions which are inferior to those in the Grey Book. Examples of these which we have witnessed are:

- Pre-arranged overtime, whether voluntary or mandatory, which is required on a regular and programmed basis because establishment levels are insufficient to ensure that all appliances can be kept on the run.*
- Overtime rates which are at less than time and a half (or double time on public holidays).*

Conference therefore:

- Reaffirms that all Brigade Committees must resist and not agree to terms and conditions which are inferior to those contained within the Grey Book.*
- Reaffirms that all Brigade Committees will resist and not agree to the introduction of any duty system which commits members to work more than 42 hours per week.*
- Reaffirms that all Brigades Committees will resist and not agree to a variation to the default norms within the Working Time Regulations by way of a collective agreement.*
- Requires all Brigade Committees to challenge the introduction of any duty system which does not conform to FBU policy. Where a Fire and Rescue Service cannot be persuaded to withdraw its proposals to introduce a duty system which does not conform, the Brigade Committee shall refer the matter to the TAP. Preferably, this referral will be undertaken jointly with the employer or unilaterally by the Brigade Committee where the employer refuses or prevaricates.*
- Requires all Brigade Committees to take all steps to bring an end to the continued use of such duty systems where they have already been introduced.*
- Requires that the Executive Council and Head Office Officials continue to campaign nationally against such duty systems, by continuing to raise the FBU's concerns and opposition with the appropriate bodies and forums such as the National Joint Council and the Health & Safety Executive in order to stop (a) the introduction of such duty systems and (b) an end to the operation of the duty systems where they have been introduced.*

SOUTH YORKSHIRE

BRO NEIL CARBUTT (South Yorkshire):

President, conference, we in South Yorkshire realised early in 2011 the sheer weight of the task facing our brigade committee in resisting what we believed to be an unlawful duty system called close proximity crewing. It contained inferior terms and conditions than those afforded in the Grey Book, so the system was predicated on the use of volunteers without collective agreement. Those that did volunteer received a 30 per cent pay increase, and a pensionable uplift for doubling their working week. The sums and pensions involved meant that some chose to ignore local and national advice. A real sense of injustice was felt by those who had served communities well and then were forcibly and detrimentally transferred to other stations to accommodate volunteers, because the displacees would not sign away their rights under the Working Time Regulations to be able to stay on their base stations.

The service effectively gave our members a choice: work under inferior terms and conditions to provide a cheaper level of fire cover whilst not resisting the loss of half a station's jobs and working 100 per cent more for 30 per cent more pay. Unsurprisingly, the majority of our members wouldn't sign out of the Working Time Regulations, and they took South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue to an ET. I'm pleased to say they won. *(Applause)*

In summing up, our QC, Mr. Oliver Segal, said that South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue are effectively an emanation of the state. They are a local government employer who are not only admitting to breaking the law, but are knowingly continuing to break the law, and worse still, are actively seeking to promote its spread. We now have the crazy situation in South Yorkshire that our employer knows that the CPC duty system it imposed with the use of volunteers is still the better option for them financially, even after the compensation payments to those displaced are paid. It therefore refuses to seek negotiation to agree alternative crewing arrangements.

In the early stages of this dispute South Yorkshire FBU's brigade committee and officials wrote to the HSE and after initial interest and a letter saying that South Yorkshire were in breach, the HSE refused to enforce, citing wider public interest. They did, however, say that, despite not taking enforcement action, they would bring the overall situation to the attention of the government's FRS adviser, advising them to discuss sustainable arrangements for achieving compliance with the FBU and other stakeholders.

Conference, this is simply not good enough. We must use every avenue available, including legal, to ensure that the HSE do enforce. Every brigade committee must now resist these systems being introduced locally and not bury their heads and refer proposals that are outside the Grey Book to the NJC's technical advisory panel. They must campaign to rid brigades of these duty systems where they have been introduced. Work must be undertaken to quantify the extent of such duty systems, and with that the associated risk to our pension schemes. These should include potential cost implications that pose a risk of worsening benefits to existing scheme members, be it through increased contributions or changes to accrual rate to fund these increased costs. The EC must continue to develop and resource the strategy to assist local officials in their fight against these dangerous and unlawful duty systems.

Conference, to finish, we are a trade union and these duty systems go against all the values that we stand for. They increase the pay for the few at the expense of the many, they cost jobs, and they require hours on a duty system akin to a Victorian era. We shouldn't be allowing or condoning their existence. Conference, support the motion. I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

Does that have a seconder? Please come to the rostrum and second.

BRO KARL WAGER (Cleveland):

Conference, president, we are seconding emergency resolution 5. As my comrade said, these shift systems are of Victorian times; they take us back a hundred years. Let's not forget, conference, these shift systems were fought. Our comrades in 1978 fought to remove such shift systems from the way that we work. Nine weeks I believe they went out on strike for to get us the terms and conditions that we've got today. By entering into these shift systems it's going against those people who have fought for what we have. I as a trade unionist cannot accept that. These shift systems are dangerous; they are outside the Working Time Regulations, outside the Grey Book.

Just for a little bit of background on it, Cleveland last year were asked to take on a 48-hour shift system. So we went to 48 hours and four days off. The senior management came down and spoke to us on stations selling it to us about how good it would be, it would save money, it would save jobs, it would save fire engines. This isn't our members' debt to pay. We as Cleveland stood strong – 70 per cent of our members voted no. So at brigade committee we had a strong mandate from the members to reject outright, regardless of financial recompense. At a time when, as we all know as firefighters, money – we're not all buckled are we? To reject that regardless of the financial recompense, I believe that Cleveland's members should be applauded for standing together regardless of this pressure applied by those who lead us. We stood strong, we stood together, and as a brigade committee we were told not to enter negotiations. This strength and unity, as well as sound advice and support from both regional and national officials (including crucial legal advice) was the reason why we were able to stave the shift system off. It got kicked into the long grass and it was a massive win locally for our union.

Going back to the bad part of the shift systems, we were told about rest periods, so being on a 48-hour shift you would get your rest periods. In fact, today we stand at conference and 31 years ago today was the Bradford fire. I put to you, conference, the first hour of your 48-hour shift is a job like that. Where are our reliefs coming from? We've got the least amount of fire engines we have ever had. We are no longer afforded reliefs. Sometimes we can't even get reliefs to go on training courses, so how do they expect to relieve somebody on a 48-hour shift system? How do they expect to relieve them to allow them rest?

This isn't about firefighters wanting to sit on the station and do nothing; this is about safety and people's safety. Just to sum up, conference, I urge you to support this emergency resolution and stay strong and stay together as local officials in not signing any collective agreement that degrades our national terms and conditions in any way. I support. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

Open for debate. Come to the rostrum, comrade, yes please come. Yes, anyone else? You are coming to the rostrum, comrade, are you? Yes?

BRO TONY SMITH (Hertfordshire):

President, conference, the sense of déjà vu is almost overwhelming. At the risk of getting a reputation for coming to this lectern and saying "I told you so", I told you so. I ought to say, much probably to the surprise of my EC member, I am speaking in support of this, after a bit of local and regional wrestling with the complexities of what's involved in this motion. Six years ago I stood up here and I warned you that day crew plus, LA's, LALA's and all the rest of it would go viral across the UK fire and rescue service. Guess what happened! The reason we wrestled with it is because we almost feel that we're sort of being put upon a bit now because six years ago we struggled for help. We didn't have a national position when we really should have. I think we ought to reflect on that. I'm not coming up here to moan, but I think it's an important point that ought to be made, and that's why I'm here making it.

I take exception to the comment "buried their heads". Certainly in Hertfordshire six years ago when this was inflicted upon us, these 1950s duty systems were inflicted upon us, we didn't bury our heads. We asked for help from wherever we could. I think it's important – and I know I stood up at the lectern and I said this on the officers, but I will say the same thing. Absolutely, let's support this, let's support action against anything that degrades any of our pay and conditions in the UK fire and rescue service. But if we support this resolution, then once we've said, by putting our hands up, that we're going to support this resolution, then we must support this resolution and we must take that action. We must take that action as a group nationally. You've heard the arguments from the two previous speakers. There's strength there, there's legal reasons, reasons under health and safety, Working Time Directive. Those arguments are there, and I do believe, as I believed six years ago, that we can take this on and we should take this one. These duty systems, quite frankly, are outrageous in terms of hours worked and terms and conditions.

So please support this resolution but then let's get the action going sooner rather than later and let's take this on as a group and let's put an end to this. Rather than stopping it happening again anywhere else, let's end it where it's happening in all those brigades that it's been happening in for far too long. Please support the resolution and then let's get together and see this off. *(Applause)*

BRO KEV HUGHES (Merseyside):

Conference, president, this is more of a qualified support for this resolution, and I'll explain that in a minute. First, can we just extend our congratulations to Cleveland and South Yorkshire on their successes. We've never really done very well at TAP, so you've done a really good job there.

We do absolutely fully support the spirit and intent of the resolution and we know what South Yorkshire are trying to achieve here, and absolutely we back that 100 per cent. However, there are some parts of this resolution that will cause us some major problems, and I'm sure it will cause some of you out there some problems as well. I refer to the bullet point that states:

"Conference therefore reaffirms that all brigade committees must resist and not agree to terms and conditions which are inferior to those contained within the Grey Book."

We've got many local agreements, I have to say, some of which aren't as good as the Grey Book, that's true. But they are there because they form a bigger collective which improves firefighter safety. For instance, we've got an agreement on overtime that isn't Grey Book. It's better than flat rate, but it also wraps up into a deal which puts five riders on every appliance, watch managers on every station whether they be one pump or not, and extra fire pumps on the run all the time. So it increases fire cover, increases firefighter safety. That's the sort of thing I'm talking about when I say may give us some major problems.

That said, major problems apart, and as the last speaker said, when we back this resolution – and I'm sure you're all going to back it – we have to go back to our brigades and fight hard on that. Fine, it's a major problem. We're not scared of the fight and we'll go back and do that. But let's all do that and let's stay together. Thanks. *(Applause)*

BRO BEN SELBY (Lincolnshire):

President, conference, in the main in support of this resolution. I think it answers a lot of questions that probably should have been answered about five years ago when we probably should have had a national position on this. But I have a question for South Yorkshire probably to answer in their right of reply. And it's kind of how far we go on the second to last bullet point where it says "requires all brigade committees to take all steps to bring an end to the continued use of duty systems where they have already been introduced". We know how far we can go with that. We can withdraw from those duty systems that are locally agreed. I'm not sure in Lincolnshire that's the right time. I'm certainly not sure I can come here today and put my hand up in support of a resolution without the backing of our brigade committee on that single bullet point. So I just want South Yorkshire to affirm what they are actually saying on that point and answer the question I've asked. Thank you. *(Applause)*

BRO ANDY SCATTERGOOD (West Midlands):

I'm sort of reiterating some of the points that have already been made with regard to the issues that this might create for us. Again, fully support fighting for the Grey Book terms and conditions. Neil's clarified a few points that I wanted clarifying. Duty systems, it's something we haven't had to deal with in the West Midlands. It was something that's been discussed but we managed to bat that away. So we're not in that position. However, when you bat one thing away they come at you for something else and it just goes on and on and on. At some point we have to make a compromise. I don't need to tell conference about the severe cuts that we're under. We know that the management will do everything in their power to keep all of their resources whilst attacking our terms and conditions, and in order to keep parts of it, sometimes you have to compromise on other parts.

I wholeheartedly support the intent of this emergency resolution. West Midlands will be supporting it, but I think it must be noted that in order for us to do this as a collective there will be points where we have to consider our positions as brigade committees in order to preserve the bulk of the terms and conditions that our members enjoy. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

The executive council support. Andy Dark.

ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:

Thank you, president. In giving the executive council support for the emergency resolution I've got to say I think it's recognised by conference, but I think it needs to be said at conference to recognise the superb work that has been done by South Yorkshire in respect of its defence of our policy, its maintenance of that policy against a fire authority and against a fire and rescue service which has been quite frankly quite vicious in the way that they have responded in terms of the attacks on some of those officials that have done that. I think we should recognise that and I want it to be stated. It will be on the report of proceedings accordingly, and quite rightly so too.

Let's face it, it isn't an easy task when you have got a layer, a shallow layer but a layer, of members who, for one reason or another, choose to opt to do these duty systems. It's demoralising for the majority that don't; it's quite demoralising for the officials that are trying to fight against it, but against that, they still fought on and succeeded in making sure that we achieved some tremendous results, and some were touched on. So I do want to congratulate Neil. I do want to congratulate Nicky and that brigade committee for the vigour with which they fought the introduction and the maintenance of this duty system by that fire and rescue service, and the support from the region.

They were so dogged when they went to TAP. When they went to TAP they would not budge an inch. I didn't handle that TAP from a national perspective, John did. John reported back that they would not budge an inch to a fire and rescue service that was putting every kind of pressure upon them. But having succeeded in getting the result that we wanted from TAP, which did say that it was not a recognised duty system and there was no collective agreement that it could be introduced, South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service continued with the introduction of that system.

I think Neil explained, absolutely dogged with the HSE, an HSE which quite frankly has not come up to the mark, has not come up to our expectations. Absolutely dogged in going to the employment tribunal, in the knowledge that when we took an issue to a previous employment tribunal, bizarrely we didn't get the result. That could have made some officials think "why bother?" But I've got to say, our officials did take it to the ET. The briefing they did to the lawyers, and to Oliver Segal, the QC that represented us there, was absolutely superb.

I think you probably all have read the outcome of that ET. It didn't just score the point, it didn't just get recognition that our members had received unlawful detriment (and the compensation for that is currently being sorted out), they got far better than that. The HSE letter, as a result of the work done (to an extent of head office – I give all the credit to South Yorkshire) was very clear, in for the first time getting the HSE to say that CPC duty system, day crewing plus in many other people's language, broke the Working Time Regulations in the absence of a collective agreement. First time they said it. It wasn't written in the language we'd want; it didn't go as far as we'd want. I think it's been said, they wouldn't go so far as to enforce, but they did say: we will not go so far as to enforce yet. I think a number of you have seen this and commented upon it. They also said: But part of that reasoning we are not going to enforce is because the alternative, the 2-2-4, is not compliant with the Working Time Regulations either. That was hugely damaging. Wrong, but hugely damaging.

In taking the issue to the employment tribunal, our members, as a result of the actions of South Yorkshire and the doggedness I mentioned earlier, got far more than simply detriment. They got a judge to say that on every level management were all but wilful in terms of what they were doing, and actually got the judge to tackle the decision by the HSE to deem our 2-2-4 against the Working Time Regulations. He put that to bed as a judge, saying he did not understand what the HSE was going on about. That is tremendous!

I've got to say, we've obviously followed that up with the HSE. Those discussions are not what we'd want them to be. I'm really pleased that South Yorkshire, having told us that they were going to put an emergency resolution in, didn't actually criticise the HSE in the resolution. Not because we don't want the HSE criticised, but what we don't really want is a piece of paper floating around that says the HSE has told us they're going to be toothless on this. Our job at head office is to make them tackle the question of day crewing plus and take a firmer line. Those discussions are still ongoing. I think they're beginning to get the message. It will be there within the report of proceedings, but it's in the judgment anyway.

A slight flaw that we do have, which interestingly the HSE didn't pick up on, is what the ET did say – which is essentially the judge – is that he couldn't see at this moment in time that there was a health and safety issue, an actual safety issue with regard to 96-hour working. It didn't go quite as far as we wanted. We put that to the HSE and they eventually cottoned on to it and said: where does the HSE stand that if we do get either our members killed at an incident when they're attending an incident in their 90th hour, or their 95th hour on duty, or if a member of the public dies as a consequence of our crews turning up in their 90th or 95th hour of duty and either our lawyers or the lawyers of the family of the member of the public who died tackle the issue or address the issue and point to the fact that these people had been on duty for 90 hours/95 hours and that was a contributory factor? Where does the HSE stand? They weren't too impressed with the question. We've left them with it.

I just want to finish with this. I don't want to spend too long on this. We've got other business, I know. Those discussions do continue with the HSE. I've got to say that what South Yorkshire have done has assisted greatly. Cleveland did with equal determination, against an equally vicious fire and rescue service, an equally vicious chief, went to the TAP, would not give an inch, went to the members, resolved with the members to make sure they stood firm. The resolution is an extremely good one because what it does do is ensure that head office continues to work hard and continues to assist brigade committees.

There were some comments made in relation to whatever happened five or six years ago. I don't quite agree with those, but that isn't necessary for now. What I will say is this. I think what we've seen in South Yorkshire, what we've seen in Cleveland, what we've seen in other brigades as well is that there's been a determined effort to challenge the introduction of CPC, to refuse to sign anything which looks like a collective agreement that even acknowledges CPC, that makes sure that we protect our Grey Book conditions. This executive council is not giving qualified support to this resolution. It's a good resolution. It reflects the good and hard work that has been done by South Yorkshire, Cleveland and many other brigade officials round the country. Conference, I don't suppose for one minute it is not going to pass. Let's hope it's unanimous. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

South Yorkshire right of reply.

BRO NEIL CARBUTT (South Yorkshire):

Thank you for the right to reply, president. Conference, I think Cleveland touched on it. Cleveland said this is not our debt to pay. Effectively, what we are being asked to undertake in South Yorkshire is that our members' terms and conditions are inferior to those of the Grey Book, to provide the cheapest option for fire cover at a similar level to what was going on before. We joined this job because we are caring people, because we have a certain affinity and a gravity to the work that we do. But where do you draw the line? Am I going to be working for £2.14 an hour for every hour that I do above 48 hours?

In terms of answering the question about bullet point "requires all brigade committees to take steps to bring an end to the continued use of such duty systems where they have already been introduced", I think we realise the gravity of that statement; I think the executive council will mirror that. It's going to be difficult. I know full well it's going to be difficult. It's been difficult in South Yorkshire, it will be difficult in West Midlands, it will be difficult in Merseyside, it will be difficult in Hertfordshire, it will be difficult all over the country because we are being squeezed by austerity and our terms and conditions are being eroded. But at what point do we stand up and fight? We in South Yorkshire have done it, Cleveland have done it, and we're asking for a bit of solidarity. I move. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

I now put emergency resolution 5 to the vote. The executive council support. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. *That is CARRIED.*

We are on paragraph J3, J4. Section A Pay and Conditions, paragraph A1, paragraph A2, paragraph A3. I now call resolution 1 Protecting Grey Book Pay Rates – Retaining Fees to be moved by the national retained committee and supported by the executive council.

Resolution 1 – PROTECTING GREY BOOK PAY RATES – RETAINING FEES

This Conference demands that all Brigade Officials adhere to the minimum standards as laid out in the Grey Book when dealing with retaining fee proposals with management. Under no circumstances should retaining fees below the Grey Book minimum be negotiated or agreed by FBU Officials. This does not preclude negotiations in the reduction of available hours or of banded hours of availability, providing that the minimum Grey Book retaining fees are maintained.

NATIONAL RETAINED COMMITTEE

BRO SEAMUS McMAHON (NRC):

President, conference, it is less than a handful of years since we were last at conference to move a similar resolution to this. The resolution was fully supported then, but we still find ourselves having to address the issue of retaining fees being agreed that are in some cases way below the minimum agreed rates currently in the Grey Book. For the avoidance of doubt, a fire authority may reduce a retaining fee by no more than 25 per cent. It's not mandatory for them to do so, the implication being that this would be an exception and not the rule. It seems the ambiguity arises from the amount of cover that retained firefighters (or, as is often the case, wholetime firefighters providing retained cover) provide. There is no written minimum amount of cover that a retained firefighter is required to give in order to receive the reduced rate of retaining fees. Services could, and often do, recruit to cover specific shortfalls and cover for specific areas depending on the need.

We have no issue with this. We also have no issue with our members being required to be on call for shorter durations of time during the working week. These are things that, as a union, we aspire to achieve. We do not and must not, however, trade these advances at the expense of our members' current conditions relating to pay. Retained firefighters have seen their pay consistently reduced over the last ten years as a direct result of the advancement in preventive fire safety work carried out by our members. Our retained members have embraced this work, despite the knowledge that they were directly contributing to a reduction in the numbers of calls they attend.

Do not allow your fire and rescue service to abuse our members by attempting to justify cuts to retaining fees based on targeted or specific core hours of cover. Changes like this will lead to an overall reduction in the retaining fees paid globally in your brigades and regions. Such changes will do nothing to encourage retention, and most likely exacerbate this. In region 2 this would never happen. Believe me, I know.

This union holds the Grey Book as a minimum standard for our conditions of service. Do not allow local negotiation to remove this minimum standard for our retained members. In doing so it is such a small step to remove it for us all. Support this resolution. I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

Thank you. Do I have a seconder for the resolution? *Formally* Formally seconded. That's open for debate. Please come to the rostrum.

BRO CHRIS TAPP (Derbyshire):

President, conference, just firstly I want to make a couple of points on this resolution really. The intent is all good and I've got no issue with that. I understand it's been put similarly previously and I agree with the intent, but it does come, like the last resolution we were talking about, with its difficulties. I sort of feel like I'm urged to come up here and explain that before we go away and say "yes, let's carry it out" when the reality may be a little different. But as comrades from Merseyside said, we'll have that fight, we've no problem with that fight. But I've got to be honest with conference and say whether it's achievable or not is yet to be decided.

Again in the previous resolution we also heard about compromise and what you have to do to survive almost at times, to maintain firefighter safety, appliances being available with the correct number of crew on them, and the training, etc. So I'm not going to say it wasn't my fault because I wasn't brigade secretary when the local agreement went through in Derbyshire, but I know it gets quoted a lot at different meetings: it's happening in Derbyshire, sort of thing. So I just want to set the record straight and explain. It doesn't matter under whose tenure it was, the fact is that we are here now and we want to try to carry out this resolution that the NRC have put forward.

Just a bit on the wording, it says that it “demands” that we adhere to these things, which again gives us quite a strong position to be in with very little ability to negotiate and compromise. It appears like it’s all or nothing. We do have things within Derbyshire which are on a pro-rata basis and stuff like this which, whether you agree or disagree, I’m sure you will all have a view. I admit that that is the case in Derbyshire for a number of reasons. From our perspective, as brigade secretary I’ve already, on reading this resolution and assuming that support was going to be there, pre-empted it that we will be coming back to put this to our management and I’ve started the discussion within our committee. We will endeavour to carry out the resolution as best we can, but it will need support from our retained duty system firefighters ultimately. They need to be able to back us up on this and stand strong and say: we are up for it. Ultimately, carrying it out without them is going to lose us members. We don’t want to do that at these times. We could lose RDS firefighters in Derbyshire.

So it comes with its problems. I’m just putting that to conference and saying I’m happy to go back, to try to fulfil the resolution to the best and to the intent that the NRC have put it forward, but – and I have to be honest and say it’s a but – to be able to achieve that in any sort of timescale I think will be difficult. But we’re ready for it, we’ll do what we can, and we will work with the resolution. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

Anybody else want to come on that debate? No? Andy Dark.

ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:

Thank you, president. It is an important resolution. I think, as was suggested when the resolution was being moved, the issue probably has escaped us a little bit in some places already. We know that. I think the clear issue that is being raised by the NRC is: what’s happened has happened and do go back and reverse. I’ve got to thank Derbyshire for the comments that they made. I thank them on behalf of the executive council.

The bottom line is this: that the movement towards changing the payments for retained members (as though you need to be told) is nothing about other than trying to get the fire service on the cheap at a time when we’ve still got Ken Knight virtually sitting in the Home Office now, proposing that the service should go, as far as possible, retained. Not only do they want to extend the retained as far as possible, but they want to pay less for it.

We’re quite clear in terms of our policy with regard to the current balance of wholetime crews, wholetime crewing and retained crewing. But I think we have to be clear. If their agenda is for more retained stations, well let them pay for it, let them pay the people that are working that duty system. That’s what they deserve, our members deserve and our future members deserve.

I’ve got to say, we are aware that the national agreement has been breached in some fire and rescue services. We know that. We suspect, wonder or perhaps have been told (who knows?) that there may have been agreements on that basis. That is the past. We can try to fix it, and people should try to fix it. But this is about going forward. They have raised it at national level. They have raised it on more than one occasion as part of bargaining, national pay bargaining: would we accept a review and a change to the payments made to retained members on the basis of new entrants, not existing staff, with no detriment to existing staff? They no sooner raised it, we queried it hard, said that we doubted very much that we could pursue that or would pursue that, and they dropped it as quickly as they raised it, because the employers frankly at times just do not have a joined up agenda amongst themselves.

I’ve got to congratulate some brigade committees, those who, knowing that they probably wouldn’t get the answer that they wanted or in many cases the answer that their members wanted, brought the issue to the executive council and said: this is the proposal; we know it is against the Grey Book; we believe it would be against conference policy or outside of conference policy; what do you, the executive council, think? We’ve got to congratulate them because they didn’t get the answer they wanted. What they did was act within the democracy of the union and brought it to the executive council.

All of those arguments and points that have been raised, we get those; the pressures that you’re under; the fact that for some existing members this can be attractive. I will disagree to an extent with what the NRC said. Actually, for many this could be attractive in terms of retention. But the whole thing isn’t so much designed to, but it is tailored

towards ensuring that the biggest crisis facing fire and rescue services at this moment in time and for more than a decade is one of retention. That's where the damage is going to be done. It's bad enough now that we have got fire engines called on-duty fire engines, as far as the public is concerned available for calls, that are basically museum pieces because of the lack of availability of RDS crews because, frankly, of the poor pay that they receive now, and the demands made of retained firefighters in terms of their personal lives in terms of availability, in terms of: you can't drink when you're off duty in case you get the call.

The executive council understand why the resolution has been brought. The executive council didn't actually say a strict, and once and forever no to such changes being considered. What we said quite clearly, and I'm sure conference will agree with us, was if a fire and rescue service wants to change it, if a number of fire and rescue services want to change the arrangements there is a mechanism and it's been there virtually since the end of the Second World War. It's called the NJC. They bring it to us, they make the case, they try to negotiate it, they appeal to us, they make changes which we believe could be acceptable to our conference and to our members. That's the way you negotiate changes to the NJC. You do it through the NJC. They shouldn't be surprised if our people say that a contract is a contract is a contract. You can't change a contract unless you're going to force a change. If you're going to force a change it means that you've got to sack the workforce that won't accept the new contracts. Woe betide any chief or groups of chiefs that try to sack all their retained staff, because some of them just might not come back.

So in terms of the resolution, it's a good resolution. We understand the problems with it, we understand the problems you're going to have with your chiefs when you're going to (for some of you) go back to your chiefs and say: we've got to re-look at that thing that you brought in. For others of you, it makes it a little bit easier because you're just saying no. But don't just say no. Say: if you want to make change, go down to London, raise it at the Fire Services Management Committee, raise it with the national employers, get it raised at the NJC and then we'll discuss it as an executive council and if we think there's something worthy of taking back, where there's a bit of something for something, we'll bring it back to you. This union will decide, not some chief officer that's trying to get things on the cheap. I will say this, if it comes down to a stark choice between appliance availability and our members' terms and conditions (on a personal level; I'm not speaking on behalf of the executive council because I don't know how they individually or collectively feel) we fight for both, we fight for both. We fight for jobs, we fight for appliances and we fight for pay. But actually, when it comes down to it, it's our members' families, it's our members themselves that we fight for hardest. We make no apology for that.

They are not getting the service on the cheap. We can resist them. They've got mechanisms. They should use them. It's a good resolution. Please support. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

I'm sorry, comrade there's no right of reply; nobody has spoken in opposition to it. OK? I now put resolution 1 to the vote. The executive council support. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. *That is CARRIED.*

I now call resolution 8 with the amendment from Merseyside. The executive council oppose. Resolution 8 is Increased Rate for Unsociable Hours to be moved by Nottinghamshire. As I said, the executive council oppose both the resolution and the amendment from Merseyside. Nottinghamshire.

Resolution 8 – AN INCREASED RATE FOR UNSOCIABLE HOURS

It is clear from the new contract offered to Junior Doctors that the Government recognises that our fellow public sector workers will work certain hours of the week that are deemed to be unsociable working hours, and therefore deserving of an enhanced rate of pay.

We believe it is time for the firefighters who regularly work through these hours to be given their due reward and paid an enhanced rate when working at these times.

Conference instructs the Executive Council to urgently raise this issue with the employers.

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

AMENDMENT

Final paragraph delete all after ‘conference instructs the Executive Council to’ and insert ‘make unsociable working hours and an enhanced rate of pay for those hours part of any future pay negotiations.’

MERSEYSIDE

BRO JOHN MUGGLETON (Nottinghamshire):

President, conference, I move resolution 8 for an increased rate of pay for unsociable hours and accept the amendment made by Merseyside.

In recent years FBU members have had either a 0 per cent or 1 per cent pay increase. This, when put against inflation, has left our brothers and sisters in a worse financial position. Conference, you will be aware of the ongoing dispute between the Tory government and our fellow public sector workers in the NHS: the junior doctors. It is apparent in that dispute that the government are willing to offer pay agreements when asking them to work unsociable hours. This is the only resolution at conference 2016 where an increased rate for unsociable hours is even mentioned. This will be your only opportunity to discuss and debate whether the executive council will be able to make unsociable hours at an enhanced rate of pay part of any future negotiations.

We ask the executive council to take forward the argument for an increased rate of pay for unsociable hours when discussions with the national employers take place. President, conference, I move resolution 8. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

Does that have a seconder, please? Come to the rostrum. Are you going to move your amendment as well? Thanks very much.

BRO KEV HUGHES (Merseyside):

Conference, president, I'm moving the amendment to resolution 8, and also seconding resolution 8. Conference, John's already given you the more than adequate reasons why we should be pushing for this so I won't take up too much of your time, but this is just simply another avenue for us to pursue better pay for our members. We're a little bit confused at the EC's opposition on this.

Many brigades are involved now in blue light collaboration, EMR trials, police work, etc. The staff and the people that we're working with – the police, the ambulance, the paramedics – they all get better rates of pay for unsociable hours and we believe we should. Our members have been asking about this for 20-plus years. When I joined the job we asked that question and we were told: that's all tied up in the pay formula. That pay formula disappeared years ago and our pay's gone worse and worse and worse. We're not even standing still anywhere. That's where we're coming from. We need to get better pay for our members. They deserve it for the job that they do and this would assist that. I second. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

Does the Merseyside amendment have a seconder? *Formally* Formally. Thank you very much for moving the amendment with your seconding as well. That's open for debate. OK. The executive council oppose. General secretary to give the opposition, please.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Conference, I understand completely why this issue is debated on fire stations, in control rooms and so on. As Kevin just said, it has been for a long time. However, John in moving, I think, touched on what the real issue is here. The real issue is that our members have been suffering from the effects of Tory-led austerity policies that mean that we have not had decent pay rises and that pay has been falling behind. The real issue is the question of pay itself, not necessarily the structure of that pay in the view of the executive council.

The issue that's raised is the question of enhanced rates for unsociable hours, shift premiums, different ways in which that might be approached. I have to say yes, it has been discussed before at this conference and traditionally we have approached it by trying to seek as much equality in terms of the pay rates that our members receive across

the board. I think we would have to have a real discussion as to whether shift premium in some form or another is the best way in which we try to improve our members' pay, or whether there are other ways in which we try to do it.

For example, if those enhanced rates of pay are paid simply to people who work shifts, then the truth is we have members who do not work shifts. We have members who do not work shifts for a variety of reasons. We have members who, through personal circumstances for example, ask to be removed from shift work for a time or permanently. We have members who, for personal reasons, ask for variations in terms of flexible working and so on, as they are entitled to do.

The approach that is suggested by the Nottinghamshire resolution would mean that people in those circumstances would immediately lose those enhanced rates of pay when the change that has led them to seek those permissions from their employers may be beyond their control through personal circumstances, child care or whatever. That is simply one example of the sort of problems that might arise.

The issue in reality is pay. The executive council get that completely. The president has just said that tomorrow we will be having a major debate around the whole discussion at the NJC. You've discussed it for two years at least now. What is going on in terms of pay? What is going on in terms of the future of our industry? How do we try to protect both? How do we protect our profession and at the same time make the case for professional pay that our members deserve? It is a very difficult situation.

Kevin mentioned others in the public sector. The truth is that squeeze on pay is happening all across the public sector. Nobody is being exempted from that. In fact, what has been a relatively privileged section of workers, junior doctors, are now at the sharp end, as has just been mentioned. There is no easy answer to this. I think what we need to think about is twofold. First of all, are we in a position to launch a major, wide-scale attack on the pay policies of the government? I suspect that this union would be fully behind such a campaign. Those issues are discussed at the TUC. The question of how you get a campaign, how you get that unity across the board is very difficult, as we saw in relation to the pensions campaign. That's one approach. The other approach is the one that you have already discussed. That is that we go to our employers and we make the case that we will discuss tomorrow – this is what we can do; this is how we think we can do it. Let's bear in mind that that is all tied in with the question of the appropriate mechanism for pay and conditions reflecting in those discussions.

So the executive council is not trying to fob people off on this issue. We accept that there are issues. I think there are some fundamental discussions to be had on whether this is the right approach or not. I don't think that this is the time to resolve that. We believe that this should be part of a wider discussion on pay strategy. I would still, at this stage, ask Nottinghamshire to remit the resolution to the executive council. We will not dismiss it; we will consider it. We will, by the way if you allow us the time to do that, look at what does exist in other places. People have given examples of the ambulance service, the police. Let's look at what the positions are in those, let's look at what the impact of having those enhanced payments for shift work has on other people working within those sectors, and let's make a balanced assessment of whether that is the appropriate way to pursue the question of pay. But simply to pass it, in our view, is a mistake. I would urge Nottinghamshire to remit the resolution to the executive council.

There is a pay working group that the executive council has. Those discussions are regularly taking place with our employers. Into that we can feed whatever we want at any point. So we are not dismissing the issues that have been raised by Nottinghamshire; we do ask them to remit to us. Otherwise, conference, we urge you not to support this resolution. Thanks very much. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

Nottinghamshire right of reply.

BRO JOHN MUGGLETON (Nottinghamshire):

President, conference, thank you, Merseyside, for your support, and thank you, general secretary, for your words. The members of Nottinghamshire believe that the issue around pay is current and will be there for some time while a Tory government is in power. With the agreed amendment from Merseyside we are simply asking the executive council to make the argument of our members working unsociable hours in conversations around pay with the national employers. Conference, on the request of the EC, Nottinghamshire remit. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

I now call resolution 9 with the amendment from Shropshire. The executive council oppose the Shropshire amendment but support the resolution from Northern Ireland. Northern Ireland please come to the rostrum.

Resolution 9 – PAY

This Conference is of the opinion that the pay increases received over the last 10 years, when offset against inflation increases over the same period, has left FBU Members in a worse financial position and, as such, has worsened their living standards.

Conference therefore instructs the Executive Council to initiate consultation with Members with a recommendation for industrial action, up to and including strike action, if negotiations following the conclusion of the workstream evaluations fail to deliver an acceptable offer on pay.

NORTHERN IRELAND

AMENDMENT

In second line of second paragraph, delete “with a recommendation for” replace with “to consider”

SHROPSHIRE

BRO MARK McCARTEN (NIFB):

President, conference – second conference, first time speaking. (*Applause*) I'm moving resolution 9 and I'm opposing the amendment from Shropshire as we feel it weakens the resolution.

Following the financial crisis of 2008 and the collapse of the world economies, the European and UK economies, the public sector in the UK including firefighters helped the country get back on its feet. We accepted low or no pay rises, and when we did accept a 1 per cent pay rise it just seemed to coincide with an increase in either our pension contributions or our national insurance contributions. Our take home pay has barely risen at all. In real terms firefighters are now £5,000 a year worse off than we were in 2008. Firefighters are now paid less than the UK median wage. I will say that again. Firefighters are now paid less than the UK median wage. Our slogan “We rescue people, not banks” has become synonymous with ourselves, but unfortunately some of our own members may need rescue from the financial situations they are finding themselves in, and this is only going to increase over the coming time. Our members are suffering. We need to get a fair wage for the job we do. Our role as firefighters is expanding. We've have USAR, we go to floods, we go to the marauding terrorists threat, we are moving towards medical (some brigades are already doing that). Our control establishment has been slashed. Controls are being merged. There's more stress and yet our wages are falling.

Conference, I ask you to reject the amendment as we feel it weakens the motion. Please support the resolution. I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT:

Do we have a seconder for resolution 9? *Formally* Can I ask Shropshire to move their amendment please?

BRO MATT LAMB (Shropshire):

President, conference, the intention wasn't to weaken the resolution at all; we support the resolution. We were trying to be helpful. We are supportive of the sentiment. But we do think it commits us to a position before we need to do that. The resolution makes a recommendation which is conditional on future events and that is the conclusion of the workstream evaluations. So it commits us to a position before we know the outcome of those. We can fairly well guess what the outcome of those will be, but I don't think it's necessary for us to commit to a recommendation at this time.

The amendment, in my opinion, does not preclude the EC from making a recommendation when the time comes to initiate a consultation with members, and this will be when all the facts are known. I don't quite understand the EC's opposition to our amendment. We are prepared to listen to the debate before deciding on the appropriateness of our amendment but I move the amendment. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT:

That's open for debate. No debate. I'll ask the general secretary to give the support, and the opposition to the amendment.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

President, conference, again I suppose you have the privilege, conference, of being the conferences who sit through probably the worst period of austerity in modern history, the worst attacks on our service in the entire history of the UK fire and rescue service, the longest period of pay cuts in post-war history. It's pretty bleak all round if you think about those aspects of it. Mark, I think, put it exactly right that we are being asked to pay, as we have said politically, working people including our members, including firefighters, are being asked to pay for the failure in the world economy after 2007/2008.

We need to have those debates with our members. We need to remind people when we hear that there is no money, that austerity is necessary, etc. Austerity is about a drive to shift resources from us to them, from labour to capital, from working people to the bosses. What is happening to our pay and what has happened to our pensions is part and parcel of that attack. It is important it is put in that context. We are affected and our members are affected, but millions of people across the public sector and in the private sector are affected as well.

I was talking to the president earlier. I don't know about the audience, but I suspect there's only one person in the hall today (and possibly two people in the hall altogether) who were on strike in 1977 (and it wasn't me, by the way). I have to say I think some of the features that we saw in the early 1970s are beginning to re-emerge in the fire and rescue service in terms of falling pay. When you hear the stories of how far our members commute to work, when you hear the stories of our members having to camp out on fire stations because they are commuting so long they are effectively spending four days at work because they can't afford to live where they work. The idea that society can't afford to employ firefighters and pay them enough to live in the areas where they work really raises questions about that society.

It is a very serious issue. Again, I think there are two aspects to this. One is what is the whole of our movement going to do, because there's a very real issue, I think. Osborne has said that he intends public sector pay restraint to continue until at least 2019, possibly easing up in the year of the general election. The question is: are we prepared to sit there and take it until 2019 or 2020? I don't think we can be prepared to sit there and take that, because our members will be in a much worse position by then if that's what we do. I think every time that issue comes up at the TUC or STUC or anywhere else, we need to be absolutely clear that this union is prepared for a determined fight, just as we've said to Frances on the question of the Trade Union Bill, and to support unions who end up in trouble because of that bill. We have to take the same approach in relation to pay. But at the same time, we have to have a twin strategy. The other strategy is what we are doing within the fire and rescue service. That is the issue that we will be discussing tomorrow.

I suppose I will finish on this point. I take Matt's point. I don't think anyone needs to fall out about any of this. We had some concerns about the timing of the Northern Ireland resolution and so on, at a time when we're discussing with our employers and we're trying to negotiate with our employers. On balance, we came out and decided we should recommend support for the Northern Ireland resolution unamended. The truth is there are no easy wins here. Hopefully, nobody has ever said that the employers are queuing up and as soon as we sign some agreements on the work we might do, there is some huge pay rise that they've got in their back pockets and they're just going to sign the cheque and hand it over. That's not going to happen either. The truth is all their budgets are being squeezed as well. So we've got to make the case elsewhere.

So I think we have to have a very detailed, thorough discussion with our members all through the coming period about all the threats we're facing: the threats to our service, the threats to jobs, the changes in our service, the discussion we're having, what's gone on in the public sector, what's gone on in our industry as well. But I think Matt did make an important point and that is about the question of how serious the question of strike action is. I'm sure nobody coming here to vote for a resolution that mentions strike action does so in a light-hearted manner. But we've been through it. Many of us have been through it many times, and many of you have been through it lots and lots of times. I'm looking at our comrades from Merseyside in particular perhaps! We know that striking is serious, and we

don't make threats like this lightly. So if we're going to pass this then it is a question of going back and having those detailed discussions, and telling our members we've got these different routes that we're exploring, nobody wants a strike, we've got a strategy that can allow the employers to make a pay rise but if not, then we will seriously have to prepare for that sort of struggle that we've done before. It's in that context, comrades, that we urge and recommend support for resolution 9 from Northern Ireland. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

I now put the amendment to the vote. The EC oppose. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. *That FALLS.* I now put resolution 9 to the vote. The EC support. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. *That is CARRIED.*

I now call resolution 10 with the amendment from Merseyside. The executive council give qualified support to the resolution and oppose the Merseyside amendment. Resolution 10 to be moved by Northern Ireland – Watch Commander “B”.

Resolution 10 – WATCH COMMANDER “B”

Conference notes the decision made by Conference 2009 in respect of Resolution 5 on Pay (as moved by Shropshire, amended by Strathclyde) and Conference 2010 in respect of Resolution 4 on pay (as moved by Northern Ireland).

Conference re-affirms its decision that the “A” pay scale should be removed and personnel on the “A” pay scale should be re-designated to the “B” pay scale.

Conference notes the lack of progress on this matter and insists the Executive Council seeks to progress this as a matter of urgency and as a minimum a report to Conference 2017 is required.

NORTHERN IRELAND

AMENDMENT

Final paragraph, final line: delete ‘to Conference 2017 is required.’ insert ‘on progress is circulated to all officials within 3 months.’

MERSEYSIDE

BRO PHIL MILLER (NIFB):

President, conference, first time as a delegate and first time speaking. *(Applause)* Conference, region 2 move resolution 10 Watch Commander “B” and do not accept the amendment from Merseyside as we feel it weakens the resolution. We would call upon conference to reaffirm previous decisions relating to this issue. Specifically, conference 2009 where it was debated and passed as resolution 5 regarding pay and moved by Shropshire, and again in 2010 as resolution 4 on pay moved by Northern Ireland, also passed.

We would once again call upon conference to endorse and actively pursue the total removal of the A scale of pay and affirm that all personnel on this scale be redesignated to the B pay scale. Conference, it can only ever create difficulties when you have two pay agreements for one role and yet one role map for that position. To differentiate between two workers of the same rank, same role, same duties will always result in dissent amongst those workers and become a powerful tool for brigades and corporate management team to divide the workforce. Given that the difference in salary between a crew manager and a scale A watch manager is a mere 74p an hour, given that the role of watch manager (whether A or B) carries the same responsibilities, and significantly more responsibility than that of a crew manager, given that brigades throughout the UK have rigorous, thorough and sometimes draconian processes for crew managers to demonstrate the necessary skills to become a watch manager, it could be argued that a 74p increase in pay, combined with the disparity in pay with watch managers on the B scale, is purely a means for employers to receive maximum productivity for minimum expenditure. It is, to say the least, insulting.

Conference, we pride ourselves on our equality and diversity ethos and our stance against inequality to our members. The resolution to remove the A scale of pay for watch manager is an opportunity to benefit and universally acknowledge the work of operational wholetime and retained personnel, controls personnel and day duties

personnel alike. To remove the A scale of pay is an opportunity to right an inequality, to right an unjust pay structure, and an opportunity to right a wrong. Conference, please support. I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

Does the resolution have a seconder. Yes, come to the rostrum please. South Yorkshire to second. Do you want to speak in the debate? Come to the rostrum.

SIS NICKY BROWN (South Yorkshire):

I am seconding resolution 10 from Northern Ireland. President, conference, South Yorkshire is one of those brigades where there are still A and B pay scales. This is only for the role of watch manager, however. For the roles of station manager and above the A pay scale disappeared some time ago, more or less unnoticed. The original resolution in 2009 moved by Shropshire stated that the A pay scale has been used by employers as a divisive tool to unsettle our members. That is certainly the case in South Yorkshire. The situation at present is that all non-operational watch manager roles such as community fire safety, technical fire safety, training school, headquarters staff are watch manager B roles. So are watch managers on two-pump stations, and those with one pump plus a special appliance. This leaves only the watch managers on one-pump wholetime 2-2-4 stations and retained as the second-class citizens.

I specifically say 2-2-4 stations because, as South Yorkshire management have introduced the CPC crewing systems on to four one-pump stations they've used the offer of watch manager B roles to bribe volunteers to go against union policy and volunteer to work on these stations.

In 2013 negotiations were undertaken to introduce a self-rostering duty system. The introduction of watch manager B's across the board was one of the stipulations for a collective agreement. This was also included in a signed agreement to end a local trade dispute at the time. At the eleventh hour South Yorkshire management reneged on the agreement, denied that they had agreed to pay watch manager B, and then joint secretaries tried to split the watch manager B pay increase between the four watch managers on each station, giving them a quarter each. Not surprisingly, the talks fell through.

We are now in the middle of another trade dispute following the imposition of a change of leave and availability system where the workload for watch managers on stations was increased but still there was a refusal of any pay upgrade. The reason for this was that our deputy chief officer wants to save the offer of watch manager B pay, or the family silver as he likes to call it, to once again attempt to negotiate a contractual change to self-rostering, which is purely with the aim of reducing the establishment posts on each station by two. Just another cost-cutting exercise.

But unfortunately, we also have the situation where some watch managers on two-pump stations think that they are superior to their counterparts on one-pump stations. Some argue that they've got a larger workload, despite the fact that they have two crew managers under them, whereas often on a one-pump station the watch manager manages on his own. They seem oblivious to the fact that across the county second pumps are fast disappearing anyway, and that a uniform watch manager pay scale across the board would be the best way to protect their salaries.

So yes, the A pay scale is divisive. It is constantly being used by management against us and it should be removed. Please support the resolution. I second. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

Can I have Merseyside to move their amendment, please? The executive council oppose.

BRO KEV HUGHES (Merseyside):

Conference, president, I'm going to try not to be flippant here, but you can clearly see what we're trying to achieve here. We've noted that the EC opposition is on unachievable timescales. This resolution first came to conference in 2009. That is a bit of an unachievable timescale! However, I know I'm sounding flippant and I don't meant to; it's a serious issue and we fully support the resolution. We further note that the EC will oppose the resolution if our amendment stands, and for that reason we withdraw the amendment. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

Thank you, Merseyside. The debate is open and we've had somebody waiting patiently for that. Thank you. Come on, Simon.

BRO SIMON AMOS (ONC):

Thank you, president, conference, some qualified support for the resolution really. Again, it seems like an item for the NJC because it seems a little bit Northern Ireland-centric to a degree. But I understand why they've raised it: they want support from conference, they want support from the EC. What I say, though, it is not just confined to watch commanders. We've got station manager and group managers As and Bs out there. If we're going to get rid of the A role for watch managers, let's do it across all ranks and get station manager Bs and group manager Bs. It's going to cost the employers, that's the difficulty. We know what the employers are like in the current financial climate. I do not want it to be a race to the bottom and they remove the B grade and it's watch manager A, station manager A, group manager A across the board, which is what I'm afraid may happen. Support the motion, please. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

Anybody else want to come in on this debate. As I said, the executive council give qualified support. Can I ask the AGS to give that qualification, please.

ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:

Thank you, president. It is that, as before, the executive council do understand the principle of a watch manager as a watch manager, but we do have to recognise that the national union did make an agreement, we made an agreement, that set up the current rank or role structure. That's why the qualification from the executive council is on the basis of achievability. It isn't simply that we've made an agreement some 10 years/12 years ago now; it's what the employers' agenda is. I'm sure it's been reported to conference that it has been raised on a number of occasions by the employers (not pursued by the employers) that what they want is to do away with the role-based pay structure and simply have a spinal points system. Basically, each fire and rescue service can choose where it starts and finishes on that spinal system. I've got to say that is something which they will try to trade and have tried to trade when we've raised the issue and similar issues in the past.

We're being quite clear with you. We're not saying we're not going to raise it. We are not going to say that we believe in what you're saying and then just ignore it. We're not going to long grass it, but we are being frank with you. It's about achievability. We accept many, if not all, of the arguments that have been put. I've got to say that certainly the contribution made by Nicky in terms of where the weighting is going in terms of departments, you've heard what the general secretary said on behalf of the executive council in respect of premium payments and so on. I think we do need to be clear with the employers. We do expect more weighting to go towards those that are working shifts and not go the other way. I think that's something that we can raise. But we would need to get some data on that, not just from South Yorkshire, to see what the picture is across the country.

The qualification is achievability and there's no point in us saying otherwise. We had a choice between giving qualified support and asking for it to be remitted. We do support the previous conference position, we do support the resolution. That's why the option was that we go towards giving qualified support rather than asking you to remit it. We are pleased, in particular, that Merseyside have withdrawn their amendment. It would have given us difficulties. The truth is the report that you would get in a short space of time could be as short as you are getting here. Anyway, we will raise it, we give you that assurance, but that's the qualification.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thank you. With that qualification I will put resolution 10 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. *That is CARRIED.*

Can I just draw your attention conference to an EU fringe meeting in Imperial Suite 3, which is downstairs, at half past five this evening. Also, I'm going to knock you off now, because I'm such a great guy! Conference is adjourned until tomorrow.

Conference adjourned

MORNING SESSION

THE PRESIDENT:

Conference, come to order. I now call upon the chair of standing orders, Steve Shelton.

THE CHAIR OF STANDING ORDERS (Bro Steve Shelton):

Thank you, president. President, conference, good morning conference. Can you please turn to your programmes of business page 7. Resolution 18 from Northumberland has been withdrawn, amendment Merseyside falls.

Delegate changes: North Wales: delete Arwel Roberts, insert Shane Price. Humberside: delete Rob Vaux; insert Dave Collingwood. Lincolnshire: delete Bob Machin; insert Dan Taylor. Thank you, president.

THE PRESIDENT:

Is the standing orders report agreed? *AGREED*

Comrades, just before we get into the very, very serious business of conference today (and I know it's going to be a busy day), just to save comments from the rostrum, I'd personally like to congratulate the people of Sunderland for their great escape of last night! In fact, I'd like to congratulate anybody who's escaped from Sunderland! (*Laughter, applause*). Is that agreed? *AGREED*. You can do anything you want today, conference. That was a joke, by the way.

Right, we are on the serious business of conference now. I now call the executive council policy statement European Union Referendum – Vote to Remain. That's moved by the executive council, and also emergency resolution 7 European Union Referendum in the same debate. If the executive council policy statement carries, the emergency resolution from London falls. General secretary.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

President, conference, this is an extremely important debate. It's taking place the length and breadth of the country and it's taking place across our movement as well. It is a very important decision which members will be taking part in on 23 June in the vote on the EU referendum. It has big implications for the economy, for Britain's role in the world; it has big implications for working people, it has implications for firefighters and that's why the executive council believes it's important that his union takes a position.

It does say "Vote to Remain" and it's possibly the most critical Vote to Remain document you'll find anywhere in this movement. The starting point for the executive council is this: it's not our referendum. This referendum is taking place because of wrangling in the Tory party. It's the result of right wing pressure within the Conservative Party, and the threat from Ukip to the Conservative Party. This agenda has been set by these groups. Inevitably, the result is that the agenda has largely focused on migration. I will come back to that later. The outcome is likely to lead to the possibility of a change in prime minister from one Old Etonian to another Old Etonian, because the most immediate gainer from Brexit is likely to be that great friend of firefighters, Boris Johnson. This is the man who forced through the worst cuts in the history of the UK fire service anywhere and who refused to meet this union for eight years in his time as the mayor of London. People think that risk is worthwhile. Our employment rights, in our view, will come under threat from such a shift, and we believe that is not worthwhile.

So far, therefore, the debate has really been a feud between two groups among the elite in the political class in this country about the best way to exploit workers – some businesses saying stay in, some businesses saying get out. In our view, the Labour movement in the UK and across Europe should not line up with either of those factions. Both of them represent the interests of big business, of the banks, the corporations and billionaires. Both of them, by the way, want to attack workers' employment rights, pensions, public services and wages. That's why I personally was so outraged by the joint article by the former general secretary of the TUC, Brendan Barber, in *The Guardian* the other week – signing an article with David Cameron. What an utter disgrace, I have to say! That's why, after consulting with the president, I wrote a response to the TUC on that issue and wrote a response in *The Guardian* saying why we do not line up with the Tories on any of these issues. FBU officials, trade unionists, should not be jointly campaigning with the official campaigns in any degree, with Tory politicians, on any of these issues – people who, on all other issues are attacking us, attacking our service, and attacking our movement. We need to support

an independent Labour movement approach to these issues. We need to look at it from the point of view of working people here and indeed across Europe.

But we can't stand aside from this debate. The outcome – remain or leave – will be very different. There are consequences for working people. It's a matter of direct interest to FBU members and their friends and families. It's one where members will have an individual voice, an individual vote. We make recommendations, but we also make clear to people: this is their choice; but they need to think about certain issues.

The debate is part of a wider one across the political spectrum on this issue. After careful consideration, after discussions, after asking for research to be done, the executive council concluded we should take a position. We need to address what is in the interests of workers here and elsewhere. We believe there are good reasons to vote to remain in the EU, and good reasons to reject the arguments of the leavers, the so-called Brexiters. We need to be honest with members about the EU.

Let's be clear, the EU was not created as some high-minded international system of solidarity at all; it was not created with workers in mind. It was, and still remains, a bosses' club. We do not defend the status quo in the EU. It does support neo-liberal policies. Look at Greece. This union built and developed international solidarity with workers and with firefighters in Greece. We know first-hand what austerity has done to our comrades there. We cannot and do not prettify the EU at all. It is a capitalist club.

But, by the way conference, so too is UK plc, so too is the British state. The history of the past 35 years, if you look at it, is we have seen a succession of British governments who have pushed firmly, at home in the UK, and in Europe and on the world stage, neo-liberal policies across the board about privatisation, about attacks on workers, about attacks on regulation and so on. The EU has indeed mostly been about promoting business. But it has also been forced to make concessions on workers' rights. Sometimes that's simply about having a level playing field between different competing corporations. But those measures nevertheless have produced real, tangible gains that workers benefit from. Those points need to be considered seriously.

Those in the unions who support exit dismiss this, but they have nothing to say about what happens next. Who gains? What will the government do in the aftermath of an exit? What will happen to EU-based law? What will happen to workers' protections? On all of these issues we hear not a jot from those arguing for exit. They are dismissed as secondary, but they are not secondary to the real lives of working people.

The EU is by far the UK's biggest trading partner. There is, in our view assessing all the evidence, a real threat to jobs. This is the comment, by the way, from a leading advocate (not many economists do support it but one who does), Patrick Minford, professor of economics at Cardiff University. He supports Brexit. He wrote an article in *The Sun*. So he is not trying to hide his arguments; this is an argument aimed at workers. He says:

"Over time, if we left the EU it seems likely that we would most likely eliminate manufacturing, leaving mainly industries such as design, marketing and high tech. But this shouldn't scare us."

I tell you what, for those unions who work in manufacturing, it does scare them. That's why the unions who represent workers in manufacturing, thinking about the real threat to their members' jobs, or even the risk of a threat to their members' jobs, have concluded that they must recommend that their members should vote to remain. We don't work in manufacturing, but we're part of a wider working class movement. We have to take account of these concerns.

The EU law provides a floor on which our own collective agreements are built. That includes protections like paid holidays, family friendly rights, consultation on redundancies, and health and safety laws – an essential argument within the industry that we work in. Our Grey Book currently has these written into it, with explicit reference to the Working Time Directive, an EU piece of legislation. Retained firefighters have won rights gained under part-time workers' regulations – EU legislation. The FBU and other unions benefit from European law, defending our right to organise and take legal cases on behalf of our members. In our own union in the past two years we have won legal cases based upon EU law that have a direct impact on the working lives of our members. We've won cases on TUPE in relation to the Isle of Wight control.

The biggest debate at conference yesterday, comrades, was about the South Yorkshire resolution in relation to attempts by bosses in our industry (these are real things happening in the real world here and now) to force people to work longer, to introduce these outrageous shifts. We've been debating it at this conference for years. We've won a case based upon EU law. And people say it doesn't really matter if we leave, because we'll deal with the risk afterwards. This is a very real and present danger to conditions of service and things that we might need to defend in our industry here and now. People need to answer these questions if they're going to argue the opposite case.

The FBU has built strong links to firefighter unions across the EU. We've done it through the European TUC, through EPSU, and through the firefighters' network that we have helped to build. We've been leading that work for many years, all related to EU discussions. The idea that leaving will not have an impact on those discussions, to be honest, is fanciful.

The TUC and the bulk of the British labour movement have raised warnings about the threat to jobs and to workers' rights. The reality is that the bulk of unions are supporting a remain position, some more keenly, others more critically. We're probably suggesting we adopt the more critical end of that spectrum. Only three unions support a campaign to leave. Most of the Labour Party, including Jeremy Corbyn, including John McDonnell, the leaders of the left in the Labour Party, are supporting a remain position. A vote to remain should not be taken as endorsement of the current EU, but recognition of this: that currently in Britain and across Europe our forces, the forces of working people, the forces of the Labour movement, are not in a position to replace it with something better. That's the stark reality, comrades and that's where we start from. So we make a cold, realistic assessment of the balance of forces now, today, in terms of a referendum that is coming up next month, and what will happen after the referendum next month – not what might happen five or 10 years down the line, but what will happen in this debate today. It is based also on the assessment that to leave now would be a disaster, in our view, for workers in Britain and workers elsewhere. There is no agreement among those arguing for Brexit about how the UK would function in relation to Europe after 23 June, if there was a vote to leave.

But there is no doubt in my mind that leaving would give an enormous boost to those on the right of British politics, to the right and the Tory party, to the right elsewhere. It will be Johnson and Gove and Farage on the up if there is a vote to leave.

You've seen the press coverage about how much it will cost and clearly there are arguments to be had about that. Listen to the answer of Arron Banks, the former Ukip businessman, who said: "Yes, there may be costs, but it's a price worth paying." This from a prize tax dodger. Let's not take any advice off them. If the UK votes to leave there will, in our view, be immediate pressure to scrap some of those protections. There will be immediate pressure to get the UK economy ready for the world economy and the competition that comes with that. It will be a very real step down in the race to the bottom. Let's not forget that a central demand of those who pushed this, those who got it on the agenda, is precisely to scrap the worker protections that I've referred to. The idea that this will not be on the agenda is again fanciful, comrades.

We come to the question of immigration. It was inevitable that if you have a political agenda that is set by Ukip and is set by the right wing of the Tory party and Little Englanders, and it always was inevitable that we were going to have little to gain out of this debate because it was going to end up focused on the question of immigrants and migrant workers, and are there too many immigrants in the country, and what a mess they've made of our economy and so on. Unfortunately and tragically that is precisely what is happening in the tabloids every single day of this debate, and on the news every single day of this debate.

Most of you will have seen a document that was circulated to all officials in relation to this debate recently, in the past few days, advocating a leave position. We do have to take that up because it's been raised now in the forum of the Fire Brigades Union. In that document there is a reference to migrant workers. The reference refers to an explosion of cheap labour undercutting wages. I have to say, comrades, when I read those words I was taken aback. They are not arguments, by the way. I was staggered that those sorts of assertions without evidence are made within this union in a document circulated for your consideration at conference. But it's been made and I urge those who've made it to come to the rostrum and make the case, and make the arguments, and provide the evidence if that is their view.

In our view it is dangerous, incorrect and divisive. Let's be clear where I stand, where this EC stands and, I hope, where conference stands. We live in a system where the decisions, by and large, are made on the basis of the demands of profit, where the economy has always gone up and down, where sometimes workers can get pay rises and sometimes wages are squeezed, where sometimes we get full employment and other times we have mass unemployment. By the way, it all happens regardless of whether there are migrants in the country or not! *(Applause)*

We have an economic recession. It was sparked by the banks, not by migrants. There are housing shortages in the UK. They are caused by the failures of the market, not by migrants. We have stretched public services in the UK. They are caused by the austerity policies of this government, not by migrants. We have low wages in this economy. They are caused by rip-off bosses, not by migrants. Our answer to all that is solidarity, not the division that is promoted by that sort of argument. I urge conference to reject those arguments in this debate here today. *(Applause)*

Brexit will make workers' solidarity harder to achieve and that's just one example of it. We are told that there is an alternative view; it is the left wing case for exit. I have to say, there is no such offer on the referendum on 23 June. It's not on the ballot paper. A left wing exit is not a possibility in the referendum next month. This is the question about what happens next. Who will be strengthened? The most likely outcome, as I say, is a Johnson leadership. In fact, that's precisely why he is leading the leave campaign, to position himself to become prime minister. That will shift the whole debate in the UK to the right, not just now, but for the next two, three, five years. The central political debate in Britain is not about workers' rights, it's not about austerity or public services, it is about migration and whether there are too many immigrants in the country. That is what is likely to happen in the aftermath of that debate. So Labour is supporting Remain. The unions, by and large, are supporting Remain. Labour will not benefit from leaving. Corbyn knows this, as he explained in his speech.

I will close on these points. The executive council concluded on balance that workers in the UK, including FBU members, should be urged to vote to remain in the EU in the referendum on 23 June. The workers' movement in the UK and elsewhere should have no trust, no confidence, no illusions in the current politicians who lead EU institutions, nor indeed in those EU institutions themselves. That's not what we're asking people to vote for. We're asking people to vote not to leave, but based on a realistic assessment of workers' interests, and firefighters' interests in particular. We should stay in and we should continue our fight here and with our brothers and sisters across Europe. We support the vote to remain, to defend our conditions, to defend workers' rights, and to build solidarity here and across Europe. I move, comrades. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

I call Northern Ireland to second.

BRO MARK McCARTEN (NIFB):

President, conference, we second the executive council policy statement on the EU. Matt has spoken really eloquently there on why we need this debate, why we need a position, and why we should stay in the EU. Conference, Brexit campaigners tell us that we can come outside the EU and still have trade deals similar to other countries such as Switzerland and Norway. But they don't tell you the details of these arrangements. Norway, for example, pays billions of pounds annually for the privilege of trading with the EU but has no political power and no say in what goes at the EU. They have incorporated about three-quarters of the EU legislation, and they have to abide by EU trade rules. For this privilege they pay roughly £106 per year per person. We in the UK pay £128 per year per person. I know which position I would rather be in.

Conference, forgive me if I get a bit parochial here, but I live in the only region in the UK that has a land border with another country in the EU, in other words the Republic of Ireland. If we leave the EU the border will have to be re-established. Our local politicians in Northern Ireland have already said so. Customs posts will be put up. Currently, both countries lie outside the Schengen area. If we leave the EU the probability is the Republic of Ireland will have to enter the Schengen area. If they do enter the Schengen area, not only will we have customs posts, we will have full border controls. The Schengen area means free movement of people. If we are outside and they are inside that, it has massive implications for Northern Ireland.

Workers who work on one side of the border and live on the other will have to cross a border daily to go to work. It has massive implications on our whole peace process. The 1998 Belfast agreement is based on the fact that both countries are in the European Union. From a personal point of view, I do not want to go back to the bad old days in Northern Ireland with anything like what went on in the 70s and 80s and 90s. We cannot go back to those days.

The Department of Enterprise in Northern Ireland got the Oxford Economics Consultancy to do a report on the effects of the economy in Northern Ireland of a Brexit. They came up with nine different scenarios. The best case scenario was that it would break even, that it would be cost neutral and would have no effect on the Northern Ireland economy. All other eight scenarios there was a detrimental effect. The economy in Northern Ireland (which is part of the UK) will more than likely be detrimentally affected by a Brexit.

Because of our geographical position we are tied to the EU more than any other region in the UK. We have a massive agricultural industry. They rely on subsidies from the EU. If we leave I cannot see a Tory government funding the agricultural industry the way the EU does. This does not only affect Northern Ireland, but it affects many areas round the UK where agriculture is a major industry.

Conference, region 2 supports the EC position and the policy statement. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

I now call London to move emergency resolution 7. The executive council oppose.

Emergency resolution 7 – EUROPEAN UNION REFERENDUM

Conference believes that the European Union is no friend of workers. It is an institution wedded to neoliberalism, austerity and cuts. Across the continent, this has caused mass unemployment, a collapse in living standards, an increase in poverty, the evisceration of public services and the growth of the far-Right.

The EU promotes privatisation over public ownership and cuts over investment. This means that principal objectives of trade unions, such as full employment and nationalisation of key utilities and services, are often unachievable because of EU law.

The EU is highly undemocratic. Laws are decided by unelected EU commissioners, over whom we have no control.

In Greece, the people voted decisively against austerity in a national referendum – but the EU establishment ignored their democratic wishes and forced it on them anyway.

Conference recognises that the present Tory government is also wedded to neoliberalism, austerity and cuts. However, we have the ability, through the ballot box, to remove the Tories and elect a better government, whereas there is no mechanism by which we may remove the unelected EU commission.

Conference does not accept that only through the EU can we guarantee workers' rights. Most of the rights we enjoy in the workplace today were delivered through the UK parliament after campaigns by trade unions. And, in some areas, existing UK legislation on workers' rights is superior to that of the EU.

Conference is deeply concerned at the secret negotiations currently taking place between the United States and EU over the proposed Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) deal. This deal would further open up public services (including the NHS) to the privateers, and pose a serious threat to workers' rights and the environment.

In noting that the Tory government, the CBI, the IMF, the banking industry and big corporations (none of which care anything for worker's rights) are fighting to stay in the EU, Conference believes that a Right-led 'remain' vote would pose a significant threat to workers.

Conference believes, therefore, that the interests of UK workers would be better served by leaving the European Union.

To this end, Conference instructs the Executive Council to actively campaign on behalf of the Fire Brigades Union for a 'leave' vote in the EU referendum on 23 June. This will include recommending to members that they vote to leave.

Irrespective of the referendum and its outcome, Conference calls on the Executive Council to continue to support efforts to build solidarity and unity between European workers now and in the future.

LONDON

BRO PAUL EMBERY (London):

President, conference, the EU is a pro-capitalist, pro-austerity, pro-privatisation institution. You just heard that from Matt himself. It's an institution that has caused immense suffering throughout Europe because of its love for the politics and economics of austerity. That in turn has led to mass unemployment, a collapse in living standards, the decimation of public services, a dramatic increase in poverty, and the rise of far right groups.

Conference, the EU is an explicitly anti-socialist organisation, and it makes so many of the demands that trade unions make impossible. We cannot renationalise railways because of EU law. We cannot take the steel industry back into public ownership because of EU law. We cannot nationalise Royal Mail or the energy companies because of EU competition law. The restrictions on investment in industry and public services means that we cannot achieve full employment, means that we cannot boost manufacturing in the way that we need to do because of strict EU rules on government spending.

I think the idea that the EU (which some people in the trade union movement seem to have) is some sort of progressive, benevolent institution is completely misplaced. The EU is a big business project, in the words of our own general secretary, two years ago or whenever it was, a big business project for bankers and corporations. That is undeniable. EU laws are designed to let market forces rip. It beggars belief that any socialist would want anything to do with it. Huge chunks of once-public industry are under the control of privateers. The EU peddles zero hours contracts, the EU has smashed up collective bargaining arrangements in countries that required a bail out. I don't even think the general secretary mentioned TTIP. I will stand corrected if he did. What a glaring missed opportunity! What a glaring omission. TTIP, the biggest threat to our public services in living memory, secretly being negotiated between the United States and EU leaders. It could see the flogging off of our public services, including the National Health Service. It could see a race to the bottom on workers' rights. We've never seen anything like it before in terms of a threat to public services. It did not even merit a mention in the general secretary's speech and merited a mere passing reference in the EC policy statement. That is a massive issue and it deserves attention.

Matt talks about a right-led exit and the dangers of the political right leading the charge for an exit. What he doesn't tell you, but you should know, is it's the political right wing who are leading the charge for a Remain vote. When you've got David Cameron, George Osborne, and the Tory government, and the CBI, and the IMF, and the banking industry, and the multinationals, and the big corporations, and the US government, and NATO all fighting desperately to remain in the EU – and yes, there are one or two mavericks like Boris Johnson who no doubt is doing it for his own reasons and Michael Gove on the Leave side – but when you've got those powers and the forces of capital all fighting desperately to stay in the EU, what does that tell us? Does it tell us that they are doing it because they believe in workers' rights? Of course it doesn't! They're doing it because they understand exactly what the general secretary once said: that it is a big business project that is there to serve their interests and that their interests would be undermined if they were to leave.

Again, an omission from the general secretary, he hardly touched on the issue of democracy. The EU does not care a jot about democracy. We have laws which we have to abide by generated by unelected EU commissioners

over whom we have no control, who have got no democratic mandate, and who we cannot remove, regardless of whether or not we agree with the laws that they are imposing. Conference, democracy is at the heart of trade unionism; it goes to the core of what we do. When we have people with no mandate making laws which we have to obey, then I think we should have a position on that. I don't think we should be blasé about the abandonment of democracy, which was a principle that previous generations of trade unionists fought and died for. I think that's a very important issue.

What Matt's argument pretty much amounted to on workers' rights (and I will come to some of that stuff in a second) is this: because the EU has delivered one or two concessions for ordinary workers, effectively the argument is that the EC prefer a good dictator over a bad parliament. That's what it boils down to. OK, the EU is undemocratic; OK they make laws which we have to abide by, but at the moment we think the guys in charge are a bit better than the Tory government in Britain, therefore we're going to go with them. I think that's an affront to anybody who truly believes in democracy, comrades.

I'm glad that Matt did touch on one issue, which was Greece. When that economy collapsed in Greece the answer of the EU was to impose more crippling austerity – huge deprivation and impoverishment in Greece, millions unemployed, public services smashed up after the financial crisis. The answer of the EU was to say: there you go, more crippling austerity. When the Greeks said no and elected a left wing government, Syriza, and held a national referendum where they decisively voted against austerity, the EU, far from being cowed and saying: OK, we respect that, they said how dare you, and they ground the noses of the Greeks into the dust. This is what the EU is about. They've imposed similar crushing austerity in Ireland and Portugal and other countries that needed a bail out. And to avoid further bail outs they are now talking about closer economic union, closer political union, which in the end is going to mean more power to the bankers and the bureaucrats and even less power for ordinary people and for elected governments.

On the issue of workers' rights, let's be absolutely clear about that. Most rights that we enjoy in the workplace today have come about as a result of campaigns by trade unions in Britain and delivered through the UK parliament – the minimum wage, trade union recognition, health and safety law, the Equal Pay Act – all of this came about not through the EU but through the UK parliament. Even today, most workplace law falls outside of the remit of the EU. In some cases actually, UK legislation on workers' rights is better, even under a Tory government, than the EU. Two examples are maternity leave where UK legislation is better; parental leave, UK legislation is better. Even under a Tory government.

I do think there's a lot of myth-making about workers' rights. Is that my time, president?

THE PRESIDENT:

Yes. I have given you a little bit more time. Will you wind up now.

BRO PAUL EMBERY (London):

OK, I will wind up president. I appreciate that. I will wind up. I think there's a lot of myth-making about workers' rights. This idea that the workers' rights we've got are going to somehow evaporate on 24 June if we vote for an exit. Workers' rights are enshrined in legislation and in employers' contracts. I've no doubt that some Tories will try to come for them. I don't doubt they would. But the idea that they are just going to be able to dismantle the whole thing overnight is a complete nonsense. There would be huge resistance legally, politically and industrially if they were to do that.

I will just close on this, president. The EU referendum, which is not our referendum (I think Matt is right), gives us a chance to kick away at least one of the pillars of austerity that makes workers in Britain suffer at the hands of those imposing it, one of them. It would not be a land of milk and honey the following day if we voted for an exit. No-one is seriously claiming that it is. Yes, we would face a UK government in the form of the Tories who would be attacking us still. But there is a difference and Matt cannot ignore it. The difference is we can kick out the Tories and elect a better government, preferably a radical Labour government, whereas we can never kick out the EU Commission and elect a better one. That is completely outside of our control. Conference, we should follow the lead of those socialists and trade unionists Tony Benn and Bob Crow who understood that the EU was not an institution in the

interests of working people. We should be anti-austerity, pro-worker, pro-democracy. Vote to leave the EU. Support London's resolution. I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks for that. Conference, before I bring the seconder in, there are some people who have never been to the rostrum before at conference. A number of people have spoken for the first time. There is a light system. I don't know whether that's been explained to delegates or not. There is a light system and you will be given a minute's notice to vacate the stage by an amber light. The vice-president will give you an amber light and that means that you're coming to within a minute of your speaker's time. I would ask you all to adhere to speakers' times, the speakers' times that you've agreed, because basically we get more people to the rostrum and we get a fuller debate that way.

Could I have a seconder for the London resolution, please? *Formally* Formally seconded. Please feel free to debate. Conference. Come to the rostrum. Point of order, yes?

BRO ROY HUMPHREYS (Suffolk):

Conference, the point of order would be, Mr President, I don't believe we discussed speakers' times yesterday. We started off at the start of conference, we mentioned Matt would get 20 minutes and delegations were not given a time. So that would be my point of order.

THE PRESIDENT:

You were, you did, and you agreed speakers' times yesterday.

BRO ROY HUMPHREYS (Suffolk):

I don't believe we did. (*Laughter, applause*)

THE PRESIDENT:

I know we did.

BRO ROY HUMPHREYS (Suffolk):

Oh no we didn't!

THE PRESIDENT:

Guess who wins this one! Will you take your seat?

BRO ROY HUMPHREYS (Suffolk):

Point taken! (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT:

Speakers please. I will take four to this side, four to that side and then we will work it out as it goes.

BRO RUSSELL KING (Tyne & Wear):

Conference, president, it's kind of refreshing to have this grown-up debate, listening to what Matt said and what Paul said. It takes away all the scaremongering tactics that we've heard on the BBC from the likes of Boris Johnson and Farage using the absolutely horrendous racist arguments, blaming everything on the migrants.

As Paul said, we all know the EU (was going to say the EC there, sorry!) is absolutely full of the neo-liberals. But you've got to remember, conference, since 1979 every single government that we've had has been led by the neo-liberal direction. In fact, I think it was '79 when Thatcher sent Neil Hamilton down (who, by the way, is now standing for Ukip and he's one of the leading Brexit campaigners). He was pushing at that time for the removal of the so-called red tape. Paul calls it that but either way it's workers' rights. It is red tape to the Brexit lot. We should be standing on every street corner and shouting our victories in the EU about the red tape and about the workers' rights that we've won such as the holiday pay, parental leave, protection on unfair dismissal, and women's rights.

It's suggested that there's 3.5 million jobs been created from the EU. I come from the North East, Newcastle: 160,000 jobs have been created because of the EU. One of the biggest employers in the North East is Nissan, and it absolutely terrifies me when the owners of Nissan come out and make a statement to say that if Britain leaves the EU, they are going to seriously think about their place of work. If Nissan closes in the North East it will decimate Tyne & Wear, it will decimate it.

For every pound that we put in – like Northern Ireland I'm being very parochial here – in the North East we get three times back; it is that simple. I'm going to end on this. The EC borders are vast; they are massive. The Tory borders stop at Watford. If we vote for a Brexit, anywhere north of Watford will be decimated. I support the EC policy. Thank you. *(Applause)*

BRO BARRIE DAVIES (Mid & West Wales):

Conference, president, I am speaking in support of the EC policy statement. Conference, I come to the rostrum today on the basis that being part of the EU has benefited Wales greatly. Wales gets more from the EU than it currently puts in and rightly so. There are communities in Wales which are considered to be among the most deprived areas in the whole of Europe. These areas are mostly within the South Wales valleys, following the destruction of our coal mining industry at the hands of Thatcher's despicable Tory government of the day. With the exception of Cornwall, Wales is one of the only areas of the UK considered deprived enough to attract European Objective 1 funding. What does this mean? Simply put, it means that the citizens of Wales each received £70 more from the EU budget than they pay in every year – equivalent to a £120m surplus. What does this money pay for? £28m to regenerate Valleys town centres, hundreds of millions of pounds to part-fund a vital road network linking the South Wales valleys, £100m for a new university at Swansea, £2.8m to renovate the Welsh Language Centre in North Wales, £25m to help 15,000 youngsters back into work, £83m to help create 94,000 apprenticeships, and the list goes on. If the UK were to vote to leave the EU do you honestly believe that this Tory government will continue to provide this kind of funding for Wales? I think not.

Funding aside, the Centre for Economic Business Research reports that 191,332 jobs in Wales are currently linked to the single market. A Leave vote would potentially put every one of these jobs at risk. Conference, I think we are all aware of the workers' rights and protection for vulnerable people that has come about as the direct result of our membership of the EU.

Turning to migration, some people believe that migrant workers detract from our economy and that a Leave vote would stem the tide. Around 2.5 million migrants live and work in the UK, but about 2.2 million UK citizens live and work in the EU. The fact is that EU migrants put far more into the public purse than they take out. EU migration contributes about £60bn to the UK economy. A large portion of that directly benefits Wales.

When you look at the politicians who are advocating a Leave vote, that should tell you all you need to know. Conference, the day I throw my hat in with self-serving parasites such as Michael Gove, Boris Johnson, Priti Patel, and Farage's mini hordes of Ukip fascists will be the day I turn my toes in! *(Applause)* Wales will go back to the Dark Ages if we vote to leave. Support the EC policy statement, vote to remain in the EU. Tidy! *(Applause)*

BRO ALEX PSAILA (South Wales):

Thanks, Barr, that's half of my speech gone! Conference, president, I'll touch a little bit more on the Welsh perspective with regard to the EU. Obviously, as Barrie has explained, we've got loads of jobs come into Wales through EU. Jobs Growth Wales is a WAG funded programme backed by the EU. For example, we're getting 8,000 young people supported so far through that project. Not being part of the EU would cost Wales dearly, and workers: 150,000 Welsh jobs rely directly upon EU funding. These jobs would be at risk. Major companies such as Airbus and Ford, which are in Wales, have already sounded the alarm. They would lose key Welsh jobs if we left the EU.

We've already touched on EU laws and protection such as sickness and holiday rights which cover full-, part-time and agency workers, and maternity and parental leave. Mums now have protection against being sacked from falling pregnant, time off for ante natal appointments. This is all thanks to EU legislation. Health and safety, which plays a massive role in our job on a day to day basis, has come from EU. The EU laws protect us, the working people, and we need to remain in the EU.

Again, Barrie touched on the EU migrants. In contrast to what many people believe, migrants just can't turn up to the UK and start claiming benefits. In order for them to be eligible for social income support, housing benefit and social security benefits such as maternity leave and unemployment benefits, they need to be in employment in the UK. Likewise, only those citizens who are employed in the UK are fully entitled to treatment on the NHS, although exemptions are made for emergency treatments. It is simply not the case that citizens from other countries have unrestricted access to the UK.

Finally, and more importantly for me (sorry if I get emotional on this) a young man left Greece many years ago following the Second World War. A full 35 years before Greece joined the EU. You could call him and his colleagues the original EU migrants. He left to give his young family a better life. And following days on a boat he landed in a leafy little suburb called Wales. They all worked hard and contributed socially. Eventually, his wife and young son followed him. They all lived in the UK until they all passed away. The reason this is so poignant to me is that my gramp, my hero, one of the first of his generation to do what they did, coming over from the EU to the UK. They're not all bad people. They do a lot for the UK socially. I will finish up. Support the EC policy statement. On the back of that, if my gramp hadn't done what he did, I wouldn't be here today. Thank you. *(Applause)*

BRO DAVE BURN (Cumbria):

President, conference, I'm speaking neither in support nor opposition to the EC policy statement, and I'm speaking neither in support nor opposition to London's resolution. It's just something that I think needs to be thrown into the mix for consideration. Paul touched on it. To be frank, I was a little bit disappointed that the general secretary didn't touch on it. It's the thing about TTIP. I don't know how much people know about it. I don't want to insult anybody's intelligence over it either. TTIP is the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, and it is a secretive deal that is being brokered between the US and EU which basically makes all public services fair game for takeover. You really need to think about that, because that includes the NHS and all other public entities, OK, obviously including the fire service. Now, a leaked document that was shared on social media (which, coincidentally, is the best source of unbiased information – depending on which side of the fence you sit) says that there is no guaranteed representative from Britain that's going to be taking part in discussions between Washington and Brussels. They will meet yearly to discuss and review all state-run services with a view to end all forms of state intervention in competition with the private sector. That basically means what I said before: everything's fair game for corporations to take over. That's the reason why President Obama stuck his nose in when he came over to visit the UK. I thought why is he getting involved; what's it got to do with him? He is part of brokering that deal.

We really do have to think about that. Listening to the arguments as a trade unionist, absolutely I agree with everything that everybody said here passionately. As trade unionists we have to protect workers' rights. We have to do everything that we can to do that. But we also have to consider what remaining in the EU might do to us as well. Under TTIP it's going to destroy our country through privatisation. So it's a stark choice. We need to protect our public services. We will lose organisations like the NHS if we stay in. It's already been broken down and destroyed.

Like I say, I'm not supporting or rejecting any of these. I just think it's important that you give it due consideration. Have a think about that when making your vote. *(Applause)*

SIS LOUISE CONNELL (NWC):

President, conference, the national women's committee would like to acknowledge that the EU is not a perfect establishment. However, the EU has ensured protection for women in the workplace. It has tackled gender discrimination; it has fought against inequality; it has enhanced our pregnancy and maternity rights and has helped prevent harassment. It has also stopped the race to the bottom. The national women's committee will be advising members to stay in and support the EC statement. Please support. *(Applause)*

BRO PAUL DAWSON (Durham):

President, conference, I'm speaking in opposition to emergency resolution 7. The reason for this opposition is because the North East would be disproportionately affected than the south of England, for example. The reason that it would be affected if we left the EU single market is it supports jobs. Nissan and Hitachi have already said that they're in the UK because we are part of the EU single market. Half of the North East exports to the EU, which supports an estimated 160,000 jobs. The UK universities accessed £1bn of funding in 2013, which goes

on sciences. The North East is a centre of science and technical innovation and therefore would be hit hard, falling behind on world class research. Over decades we have received billions on projects such as the Hartlepool growth hub, the Teesside advanced manufacturing park, the Consett business park and many more.

Over the next five years the North East will get £726m in EU funds. If we trade outside the EU, you only have to look at the likes of China and India, whose workers have the worst working conditions in the world. Would we need to compete on the backs of the working people's terms and conditions? Think carefully, conference. *(Applause)*

BRO MATT LAMB (Shropshire):

President, conference, we are supporting the EC statement. But in supporting I'm going to agree with Paul on the TTIP issue and the cursory mention in the statement. TTIP will be a pernicious invasion of our public services and we must do more to campaign against it. It does appear at the moment to be teetering on the verge of defeat, but we shouldn't be resting until it is completely defeated. Having said that, if you think that leaving the EU would be a simple solution to TTIP you would be mistaken, because the same people, the financiers etc, who are the architects of TTIP and who are manipulating the EU for their own ends will do exactly the same for the UK.

We've known about the referendum for long enough. There was an EC policy statement at conference 2015 and a resolution to conference in 2014. If we have been looking at it for that length of time you can bet the same architects of TTIP have been looking at Brexit. How difficult will it have been for them over the last two years to draft a trade agreement for the UK to replace EU for Britain or UK, and end up with the "BrusTIP" or a "UsopTIP"? I can almost guarantee it's already written.

Then the implementation of "UsopTIP". Contrary to Obama's suggestion that we would be back of the queue, I suspect that this Tory government – similar to the way they've rushed through the Trade Union Act – will be able to rush through a "UsopTIP" in record time, whilst at the same time systematically eroding our workers' rights.

The EU has many flaws, the greatest of which is that it has been manipulated by our natural opponents: the wealthy, the right wing, bankers, capitalists, financiers, globals and multinational companies. These opponents aren't going to go away if we leave the EU. Yes, you can argue that we can hold the MPs that kow-tow to these people's interests and deselect them at the ballot box. I doubt that's going to happen, and it still won't remove those people that are manipulating them. We're always in a struggle, we always have been and that struggle is going to be harder if we are outside the EU. Support the EC statement. *(Applause)*

BRO BEN SELBY (Lincolnshire):

President, conference, there is a third position. West Yorkshire attempted to bring it and although it's not here, its sentiments still remain. We've had these discussions at branch meetings, brigade committees and our regional meetings. Each time it's debated it's caused quite a divide between those that wish to remain and those that wish to leave. I'm asking is it really an issue that we wish to push that division on, or should we allow our members simply to decide on their own wishes? By having a hard and fast union position like the EC policy statement, and London's emergency resolution, it may appear that we're instructing our members on how we wish them to vote in the referendum. Most members, like most of the British public, have already made up their minds. Therefore, why push?

I'm firmly behind remaining personally, but if we were to do a straw poll in Lincolnshire I believe it would be approximately a 75 per cent Leave vote. Lincolnshire, like some other brigades, were going to abstain from the EC policy statement before London's resolution was permitted. That position has now changed. We are intending to vote against the policy statement and the resolution on the grounds that both are divisive and potentially will damage our membership. Arguments such as those put forward making reference to personalities of politicians have no place in this debate. I certainly don't want to support Cameron or the likes of Iain Duncan Smith – a man that opposed the minimum wage, the introduction of the bedroom tax, and backed cuts to child tax credits but on the other hand has the gall to say the EU has increased inequality and hurt the poor.

The EC and Matt are damned if they do and damned if they don't. I for one have challenged them to have a position on matters, but today I'm saying they shouldn't have one! We have no issue with Matt or any other officials sharing their views on this upcoming referendum. However, we are wholly against this union having a position on the issue.

I respectfully ask both the EC and London to withdraw their respective resolutions. *(Applause)* That's with the unity of this union in mind. If they don't, Lincolnshire (and I urge others to do so) will be voting against both. Thank you. *(Applause)*

BRO DAVE WILLIAMS (West Yorkshire):

President, conference, before anybody else asks, I'm not turning into a clone of my predecessor; it's a rugby league shirt, not a rugby union one. So we've cleared that up. President, I'm here basically to reaffirm West Yorkshire's position. We welcome the intervention by London's challenge to standing orders yesterday. I think without it this conference would have been a worse place to be this week. *(Applause)*

The policy statement that was introduced or announced in March if I remember, within hours we had a well-informed member phoning up head office saying why is this our position; why have we been told to vote this way? When I managed to pull him off the ceiling and calm him down a bit I told him that the brigade committee hadn't even taken a position yet, let alone that it's going to be your position. So this was the immediate reaction for our members in West Yorkshire. Again, the brigade committee are not opposed to the arguments put in the statement. What the brigade committee are opposed to is the statement being produced. In that respect we will be opposing the EC statement, but unfortunately for London as well, we will be opposing London's emergency motion. It is divisive. The EC never took a position on the Scottish independence vote, for good reason. This is another good reason not to take a position.

Both sides, Remain and Brexit, have used scare tactics and they're going to continue to do that for the next four weeks. There's no doubt about it. About 150 years ago, if I remember from history lessons, everybody thought the earth was flat. About 149 years ago Christopher Columbus actually discovered that it is round, and the world kept revolving and nobody fell off. So both sides need to pack it in with these scare tactics.

Many delegates approached me yesterday and said it was a shame that our paper never got on to the agenda for today and said that they would have voted for neutrality, and said that they would be abstaining. What I would say to those delegates is: oppose both. *(Applause)*

BRO PAT CARBERRY (LGBT):

Conference, president, it certainly is a contentious issue. I think we need to be honest with ourselves though. Whatever we decide here today, is it likely to have a significant impact on how our members are going to vote? I think the majority of our members will already have made up their minds regardless of what we decide here today. However, what we do decide here today is going to have an effect on the reputation of our union and where our politics are coming from: the Labour Party and they have a clear position on Europe; the TUC has a clear position on Europe. I can't say that it significantly damaged the reputation of those two organisations. My fear is the emphasis and the focus on the decision making around Europe, focusing on the issue of migration. With this comes aspects which are quite unpleasant: the racism, the nationalism, those things which aren't the best aspects of society.

I note that it's been mentioned that the EU has been responsible for a growth in the far right. I find it hard to reconcile myself to this comment because far right politics is not that supportive of being part of a collective such as the EU. Far right politics is about nationalism; it's about putting up borders; it's about being exclusive; it's about racial identity. My fear is which side of the fence are we going to be seen to stand on when migration is being seen as such a focal point on how people are going to vote on this issue? I ask you to think carefully before you vote because it is the reputation of the FBU that will be decided here today. Thank you, conference. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

Conference, I have three more speakers and they will be the final speakers before I ask for rights to reply. Come on then. I have four more speakers and they will be the final four. Sorry! That will be it, conference, after that.

BRO ANDY SCATTERGOOD (West Midlands):

Conference, president, I'm not going to over the ground that's been debated already. We know this issue is divisive. Our brigade committee met about this. We've come here with a sort of mandate from the brigade committee, but as always we're here to listen to the debate. We are going to be supporting the EC policy statement; we will be

opposing London, but I think it's important that we need to understand what it is we're actually voting for. I think it's important that this union makes a decision and I think it's important that we need to get off the fence on it, and we need to fall down on one side or the other. That is what we do need to do today.

Just one point I really want to raise, which I don't think has been looked at, is it is important not to confuse Europe and the EU. The two are very different. The EU is slowly eroding the individual identities of the countries within Europe. The EU is essentially just a tool for big business and corporations to push their capitalist agenda. We are proud of our internationalisation as a union. By removing ourselves from the EU, that doesn't mean that our internationalisation stops at those borders. There is an opportunity to break free from the undemocratic bureaucracy that is Europe. It is important that we understand that if we vote to remain, what we are voting to remain in. For me, it's becoming a lose/lose.

I've listened to the debates, I've talked to people whose opinions I respect a lot over this conference and before that. I'm urging conference to support the EC and Remain and to reject London. Thank you. *(Applause)*

BRO GORDON McQUADE (Scotland):

President, conference, as you all know, Scotland has a bit of experience when it comes to referendums. In 2013 my old legacy brigade, Central Scotland, came to this conference, brought a resolution asking for the FBU to remain neutral. That resolution passed unopposed. The Scottish referendum was one of the most divisive issues I can ever remember. We've got families, friends, workplaces, fire stations, communities split, still don't speak to each other. Fire stations don't speak; people who were friends for years no longer speak, all because of a referendum.

We took a neutral position, as conference passed, and we did not attempt to tell our members how to vote in that referendum. Had we taken a position we believe we would have had slaughter up the road. That's not a joke, that sort of thing happened.

Fast forward to the present, we're here again with a mandate to remain neutral. That is Scotland's position. We don't think we should be attempting to tell our members how they should vote in this referendum, just like conference passed three years ago. The neutral position failed yesterday in the vote, so we are left in a position where we have got two resolutions calling for either the EC one to stay, or the London resolution which calls for the EC to begin a Leave campaign and urge our members to vote Leave. Direct opposite resolutions. We in region 1 are not telling our members how to vote in this referendum. We do not have a mandate to vote for or against Stay, or vote for or against Leave. So therefore, in the absence of a neutral position region 1 will abstain on both resolutions if they go to the vote. We believe this best represents our mandate, and we will comfortably sit in front of branches and meetings and easily justify that position, as we did before.

I would urge caution to other people. Do not allow your personal politics (we could have easily done that two years ago) to be one of the reasons you vote today. I can guarantee you your members will call upon you in fire stations to come and fully justify it. That's fine if you can, but they will. Half of them will ask you to come along, half of them will agree with what you said. That's just where the polls are roughly sitting just now.

To recap, it's great we're having this debate here at conference on this issue. The region 1 position is clear: we have a mandate to remain neutral, the same position as the FBU conference passed three years ago in the Scottish referendum. So therefore with only two positions – either vote Remain or Leave – we will abstain. Thank you. *(Applause)*

BRO GUY HERRINGTON (Cornwall):

President, conference – first time at conference, first time speaking. *(Applause)* Cornwall supports the Remain vote. Cornwall is the poorest region in England, as eloquently put by our comrade from Wales. It is less wealthy than areas of Poland, Lithuania and Hungary. Average wages in Cornwall stand at approximately £15,000 per year. The high cost of living, lack of affordable homes, second home ownership, high cost of living, contribute to the lower spending power than most of the rest of Europe. Public sector austerity has further impacted on opportunities for business, and cuts to services have worsened many people's lives. This deprivation has been recognised by Europe, and as a result over 600 million euros has been provided to improve the lives of the half a million people

that currently live in Cornwall. The European Regional Development Programme, European Social Fund, European Agricultural Fund for Regional Development, and the European Fisheries Fund have all contributed to that total amount.

So far, that money has enabled improvements in infrastructure, including superfast broadband and mobile technology, A30 and A38 arterial route improvements, the creation and continued development of Falmouth University, and the extended campuses of Plymouth and Exeter Universities, providing excellent education facilities for both people that live in Cornwall and the wider world. An innovation hub which is designed to help create opportunities within the technology sector is something which is vastly missing within Cornwall. Most of those rely on that superfast broadband connectivity to work. As a direct result of this investment which enables growth, 20,000 jobs so far have been created.

Closer to home, Cornwall FBU has had the provision of £64,000 of EU money for our learning fund. This has provided support for brigade officials like myself, branch officials, to train for their roles within the FBU, and also many other members have had personal development opportunities with this money.

There is an argument that Westminster may continue to fund Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly growth programme with the money saved by not paying the membership to the EU, but there's no guarantee of that commitment and history has shown a lack of recognition for the plight of Cornwall in the past. Cornwall supports the Remain vote. *(Applause)*

BRO HAMISH DAYA (Wiltshire):

President, thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak. I am speaking in support of the EC policy statement, son of an immigrant, first time speaking at conference. *(Applause)* This morning I wanted to get up on this topic and I clicked on a YouTube video which was a conversation between Owen Jones and Yanis Varoufakis. One of those annoying ads popped up, one of those ones where you have to watch the first 30 seconds before you can skip. It was called "Save our NHS" and it had me intrigued. It told me about the £350m we send per week to the European Union, and how that money could buy a new hospital every week or month or so. As I said, it was entitled "Save our NHS" and it was produced by the Vote Leave campaign. I found it quite insidious. Do they honestly expect me to believe that if we Brexited the likes of Gove and Johnson would suddenly start spending all that cash on our public services? As I said, I'm proudly the son of an immigrant and the NHS is a topic I feel emotionally involved in. My immigrant dad worked for the NHS for 40 years, serving the community and saving lives in the Great Barr area of Birmingham where he practised. Yet that "Save our NHS" video ends with a statement "Take back control of our borders". How insidious does that message sound to me!

Yanis Varoufakis, the former Greek finance minister, has more reason to despise the EU than many of us. But even he believes the UK must stay in the European Union because he says we cannot really leave. We cannot disentangle ourselves from the single market and therefore magically regain our sovereignty. There is very little, if any, evidence that we can escape TTIP or similar trade deals outside the EU. As an aside I would urge FBU members to Google his DM25 movement – that is Democracy in Europe Movement by 2025 – and sign his petition to bring more transparency to the European Commission.

Finally, we in the South West are indebted to European migrants, from the Polish airmen who served at our air bases in Wiltshire during the Second World War to the many workers who now staff our hospitals, work on our farms, fill our factory floors with the many small businesses that are springing up. When we are doing our 72Ds around my fireground in Trowbridge I'm always told (because I ask) that these new businesses could not have started without migrant labour from the EU. Please support the EC policy statement. Thank you. *(Applause)*

BRO MARTIN HARDING (Cambridgeshire):

President, conference, I'm proud to be a member of an outstanding and forward-thinking union. To be honest, I'm not too fussed what piece of rock you were born on, or what piece of rock you stand on now. The important bit is how we treat each other. We have a big decision to make as a country in June. I'm not here to talk about in or out. I think there's a more important question and a more important point to cover. As a country we've made difficult decisions before: on what countries to invade and what countries to go to war with. Whatever decisions have been taken, the indisputable criticism of the campaign that was run was that there was no long-term plan. What do we

do when we've finished bombing them and finished stamping all over them? I think that's the more important point for us as a union. Whether in or out of the EU, come 24 June what are we going to do to continue to protect and represent our members and our communities?

The debate is important, but as a forward-thinking union I think we need to engage in the discussion that establishes what strategy we have, whatever the outcome. I'm surprised that as a union we haven't got on that earlier. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

Conference, because I've taken all the speakers who indicated that they wanted to speak we could run just into tea break. Will you agree to suspend your standing orders and carry on with this debate until its conclusion? Is that agreed? *AGREED*

Thank you. I call the general secretary for right of reply.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Thank you, president. Thanks, conference, for all those contributions. I think it was Andy who said in a way it's a lose/lose position. I have to say, that's probably a pretty fair assessment of it and that's why we don't think it's our referendum. It's not our question, it's not our timing, we're not leading those campaigns. Nevertheless, the EC does believe (taking up the points of the comrades who said we shouldn't take a position) that we do need to take a position. We need to take a position because we are a national trade union. We are part of a wider movement. We are affiliated to the TUC and other trade union bodies. We are affiliated to the Labour Party. We will be asked questions in the media and it is absolutely right that we have an answer to those questions. But also internally, in terms of our own members, in terms of the industrial points that we raise in our statement, if our fears are proved to be correct, if there were to be a Leave vote and there then were to be an attack on some of those employment rights that we refer to, our members might justifiably say further down the line: why the hell didn't you warn us that this might happen? That's about taking responsibility. Yes, we accept these are difficult issues, but that's about taking responsibility in your role as leaders of this union.

In terms of some of the points that Paul raised and asked questions about or criticised the EC position on. I'll try to be as quick as I can. On austerity yes, the EU has neo-liberalism built into its structures in its current form. But so does the UK. In any history of neo-liberalism, by the way, you will find two key world figures stand out: Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher. In terms of the history of where those ideas came from, how they became institutionalised across the world, Reagan and Thatcher played the key roles in the political victory, if you like, of neo-liberalism.

Austerity, I think the anti-EU tone of some of this stuff completely lets off the hook the role of the British state, the British government who have driven austerity and driven privatisation far further than anyone else in the EU has. It's the British government which has driven that agenda and has gone far, far beyond what is required under EU legislation.

Paul mentioned the question of public ownership of rail. Interestingly, there is a report which was commissioned a couple of years ago, while Bob Crow was still alive. Bob was a personal friend of mine. It was by the four unions involved in rail: the RMT, TSSA, ASLEF and Unite and this is what it says in relation to EU directives on public ownership:

"Despite arguments made at the time of UK rail privatisation European legislation does not dictate that railways must be fully privatised. There is no requirement under EU legislation for railway infrastructure to be in private ownership. Nor is there any bar on train services being operated by a government-owned enterprise. The UK went far beyond the requirements of EU law when it [i.e. the UK government] privatised its railways whereas other EU countries chose a different route and were prepared to fight it legally."

Two of those unions are in favour of leaving, two are not. But clearly it's more complicated than it at first seems.

On the question of steel, Paul raised the question of steel. Yes, there are restrictions on state aid, but the thing that people need to think about is if we were outside the EU exactly the same problems would arise in terms of trade relations. In terms of access, for example, to European markets, the European countries that would remain within the EU would have exactly the same approach towards any steel provider which subsidised its own steel production. So the idea that leaving solves that problem again is illusory.

Paul said that some within the trade union movement argue that the EU was based on progressive ideas. Hopefully he's not saying that I've said that, I certainly haven't. The EC policy statement doesn't say that. He mentioned attacks on collective bargaining. I have to say, the biggest attacks on collective bargaining we've got are from this government here; it's got nothing to do with the EU; it's about the Trade Union Bill that's come from the Tories in Westminster.

We were asked about TTIP. It is an important point. I did omit to mention it. The truth is that outside of the EU we believe those sort of trade deals will be far worse, because the people driving that agenda are exactly the right wing of the Tories and the right wing policies, which is why Reagan and Thatcher played such a key role, as I have said. Actually, (I think it was Matt who made the point) it is a European-wide campaign which is putting TTIP and the people pushing TTIP on to the back foot. We have every possibility of defeating TTIP through our work across Europe with our brothers and sisters in trade unions elsewhere in the EU. So we're not ignoring it; it is a key campaign.

On the question of democracy, nobody is trying to spread delusions of democracy in the EU. There are many undemocratic practices and structures. That doesn't mean, by the way, you can't make democratic demands. Varoufakis was mentioned. I don't agree with all his analysis of this, but Varoufakis has raised some very realistic demands which could be raised in terms of democratic demands against EU institutions. We should discuss those issues. By the way, I do believe that the danger is idealising democracy here. We don't elect the House of Lords, we don't elect the monarchy. We have our own version of the Commission, by the way. It's called the senior civil service. They're the people who draft legislation that they present to government to pass in the UK itself. Nobody elects them. They come from exactly the same backgrounds as the people who are doing us in politically. So that exists here. Nobody elects the secret state that interferes and spies on trade unionists and so on. There is no democratic accountability there either.

In terms of Greece, again, this union, this executive council initiated solidarity precisely on the question of Greece, raised the question of Greece here at this conference and in the pages of our paper. But the idea that interference in the activities or the programme of left wing governments is solely related to the EU again ignores the entire history of the international working class movement. Every single time there has been a left wing government elected anywhere, forces both within that society and forces outside that society have attempted to undermine and destroy them. That's the lesson all across Latin America, that's the lesson of Chile in 1973 when a left wing government was ultimately overthrown in a US-backed coup that had nothing to do with the European Union. Those forces will always attempt that. We face exactly those type of threats if we do elect a Corbyn government, and we have to start preparing for what we would do in those circumstances.

I have to say, in terms of the London position, there is nothing explained about what happens next. Paul didn't take up the challenge that I threw down, which is to address the question of migration. They've put it in a document that we have had an explosion of cheap labour. It's not been withdrawn. If it's withdrawn I would welcome that. It's not been withdrawn. Although not in the resolution it is clearly one of the motivating reasons why the resolution is on the order paper, and it needs to be answered in terms of this question. One thing I find most bizarre about emergency resolution 7 is there is no reference whatsoever to the fire and rescue service, the industry that we actually work in, where our members will be asking questions, will be seeking advice. "OK, I may not want to hear Matt Wrack spouting his views on left wing politics or whatever, but I do want to know what does it mean for me as a firefighter?" That's what I expect you as a union to say to me. None of that is there.

Just in finishing, the problem with the approach of emergency resolution 7 is that it blames the EU, and in my view it lets the Tories off the hook. Last night at the fringe meeting we had comrade Alberto Durango speaking, who organises migrant workers in London. I think he summed it up quite well. I apologise for the language. He said: "We have to fight the bastards in Europe and we have to fight the bastards in Britain as well!" (Applause)

If I can just finish on a quote from someone else. Actually, that is correct, but our main enemy on many of these things is at home. On austerity our main enemy is not in Europe; our main enemy is here at home. On privatisation our main enemy is here at home. On trade union rights our main enemy is here at home. We don't have any illusions on the EU. They're not on our side, neither is our own government unfortunately. We have to rely on building our own forces, working class forces, trade unionists, the Labour movement, here and across Europe. Support the EC policy statement. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

London right of reply.

BRO PAUL EMBERY (London):

President, conference, just a few points I will come back on. I know Matt wants to draw the debate on to the territory of immigration and the suggestion that London are a bunch of right wingers who hate all immigrants, which is actually not what was said in the document. It is disappointing that Matt is taking a comment out of context when that section made very, very clear that as trade unionists we should oppose attacks on immigrants and that we should defend immigrants when they are under attack, and that immigrants are not personally to blame for the fact that public services are under pressure and that wages are being undercut, etc. We were very clear in that document and we can all take comments out of context and present them as something that they were never intended to be.

Let's leave some of the emotive stuff aside and concentrate on some of the facts. I was particularly pleased to hear Andy from West Midlands made a very valid point when he said the EU is not Europe. I think there is a tendency among some people to conflate the two, to talk about leaving Europe. Obviously, it's impossible to leave Europe; we're part of that continent. Europe is a continent which has so much to offer us and we should embrace it. The EU on the other hand is a political institution of which only half of Europe's countries are member states. It's important that we do separate the two.

I disagree profoundly with the EC policy statement where it talks about building worker solidarity within the EU. We do not need to be inside the EU to build worker solidarity; we do not need to be part of a rampantly neo-liberal, pro-austerity, anti-democratic institution to develop work solidarity. When we build links with firefighters across the world, when we build links in Palestine, we don't need to do that through a neo-liberal undemocratic institution; we do it by building links ourselves. There's absolutely no reason why we can't continue to do that outside of the EU.

People talk as if the EU ties the hands of the Conservative government in some areas, which of course it does. But I think what people are missing is that the EU laws, directives and treaties – which entrench neo-liberalism, entrench austerity and entrench anti-democracy – don't just tie the hands of the Tories in the short term, it would in the long term tie the hands of any Labour government too. That's the problem. If we don't get a Leave vote we would be locked into this anti-democratic, pro-austerity institution for another generation. Anyone who thinks that even under Corbyn we're going to get another referendum in this country any time soon can think again because the vast majority of the Parliamentary Labour Party didn't even want this referendum in the first place. So this is the only chance we're going to get to kick away one of those pillars of austerity.

In terms of what happens next, when workers overthrow undemocratic institutions or government – I don't know why Matt keeps labouring this point – there is no road map. Of course people can't get a crystal ball and say: this is what exactly is going to happen in six months' time. But I dare say that has not stopped Matt from endorsing revolutions and insurgencies by workers in every other part of the world. Throughout history, I wonder when there was the Arab Spring, or when the Soviet Union was overthrown, whether Matt would have gone round to those workers saying: I'm not sure you should do this, boys and girls, because you don't know what comes next; better the devil you know! *(Applause)* Of course he wouldn't have done. Of course it is unpredictable when you overthrow undemocratic regimes, but that does not mean that it's wrong.

I won't go on again about the issue of workers' rights. I will come back on Matt's point about the RMT actually. There was an important word that he used when he was invoking that document in his support. He said that EU law does not prevent the rail network being *fully* nationalised. That is absolutely true; I don't challenge that. EU law does

not prevent full renationalisation. What EU law says is that no member state can have a monopoly of ownership; it cannot be fully nationalised. That's the point. It can be part-nationalised; it cannot be fully nationalised. That is an important point, and it's why Mick Cash, the general secretary of the RMT, a few weeks ago said it would be crazy for the RMT as a union to support a Remain vote in the European Union referendum when EU law specifically prevents us from fully nationalising the rail network. That is a very, very important point. It should not be lost on people.

I think ultimately, conference, it's about what the EU is defined by. People say we get this: the Working Time Directive, we get a bit of this and we get a bit of that in terms of workers' rights. It's about what it's defined by. Is it defined by its protection of workers, by its passionate defence of workers, by its commitment to social justice and economic justice and socialism? Of course it isn't. No-one seriously believes that. It's defined by its rampant neo-liberalism, its austerity politics, its privatisation agenda. That's what defines it. Just as the same thing defines the Tory party. No-one in this hall would seriously argue that we should affiliate to the Tory party because it's giving us something called a living wage, therefore it must have some kind of commitment to workers. People would say: maybe it has, but what is it defined by, what is its real *modus operandi*? We should take the same view of the EU.

Matt made the point again, and it needs to be knocked back every single time. Matt says rightly yes, Thatcher and Reagan pursued neo-liberalism and they were the architects of it. Yes, the current Tory government pursues neo-liberalism and is attacking workers, so in that respect it's not different from the EU. But there is a difference. I said it when I was moving the resolution and I will say it again. We can kick out the Tories at the ballot box and elect a better government that doesn't attack workers. We can never kick out the unelected, undemocratic, pro-austerity EU Commission. That's a question that Matt hasn't answered because there is no answer to it. We cannot do that, whereas we do have the ability to kick out the Tories.

So for us, conference, (and I can see it's on a knife edge) it's about democracy, it's about self-government; it's about challenging the politics of austerity at one of its cornerstones; it's about defeating that if we can, and then it's about what Matt said and I do agree with him, identifying where the enemy is, the enemy at home, and throwing everything then into a battle to kick out the Tories at the ballot box and to elect a proper, radical Labour government. We can deliver anti-austerity politics and real social change outside the EU, if we deliver that in terms of a Labour government. We will never deliver it within the EU because the EU will block us at every opportunity from doing it. Please support London's resolution. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT:

Conference, I think it's important that I say this. I've listened very, very carefully to the debate and I've heard what a number of delegates have said from the rostrum. I never do usually take abstentions but I will take abstentions in the vote that you've about to take, just so that you're clear. I have heard a couple of comrades who said that they intend to abstain. I will take abstentions.

I now put the executive council policy statement to the vote. If the executive council policy statement carries the emergency resolution from London falls. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. Abstentions. *That CARRIES.*

Thank you. Can I just say, conference, I commend you, all of you, for the way you carried out that debate. I expect that that type of debate, and the fullness and frankness of delegates to conference, is the way forward. I do applaud the way that you dealt with that on a very contentious subject. Please take a tea break until half past 11. Thank you.

Break for tea

THE PRESIDENT:

Come to order. I now call upon Steve Shelton to give a brief standing orders report. Steve.

THE CHAIR OF STANDING ORDERS (Bro Steve Shelton):

Thank you, president. I will be brief, conference. Please turn to your programme of business page 10 resolution 22 amendment 2 Merseyside has been withdrawn. Thank you, president.

THE PRESIDENT:

Is the standing orders report agreed? *AGREED*

Thank you very much, conference. Can I ask delegates to turn to page 5 of the programme of business, please. Paragraph A5 Grey Book amendments. I now call resolution 6 Flexible Working to be moved by Merseyside. The executive council give qualified support. Merseyside.

Resolution 6 – FLEXIBLE WORKING

Conference notes the content of circular NJC/01/15 dealing with amendments to the Scheme of Conditions of Service (Grey Book) arising from legislative change.

The Employment Rights Act 1996 (ERA) has been amended by the Children and Families Act 2014. The new law dispenses with the statutory procedure for consideration of flexible working requests, replacing it with a duty on employers to deal with requests in a 'reasonable' manner.

The amended legislation does not give employees the right to work flexibly. Instead it provides a right to 'request' flexible working. If the Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) rejects the request it must be for one of eight business reasons and an explanation of these reasons, including how they apply to the application, must be given to the employee.

These business reasons include amongst others:

- ***Additional costs***
- ***Planned structural change***
- ***Inability to recruit new staff***
- ***Inability to reorganise work among existing staff***

Conference notes that in reality and due to the cuts agenda adopted by the Government that any FRS would be able to refuse a request for flexible working by utilising one of the above business reasons.

Conference further notes that due to the fact that nationally the majority of childcare is still undertaken by women (Labour Market Statistics) that this is an issue that disproportionately affects women and that whilst concerns over recruitment of women into the FRS have, and are, being addressed the inability to have flexible working arrangements agreed with some FRSs moves the problem towards that of retention of women within the FRS.

Due to many FRSs changing current Duty Shift Systems to those that solely suit the employer's business case the employees work life balance needs become secondary. Therefore Conference instructs the Executive Council to undertake immediate discussion through the National Joint Council to pursue a flexible working agreement that reflects the unique work life balance issues that arise due to FRS personnel having to provide 24/7 emergency response cover. An Executive Council report is also to be produced after investigation of the potential scale of this problem, this report is to be provided to Conference 2017.

MERSEYSIDE

BRO MARK ROWE (Merseyside):

President, conference, there is no doubt that over recent years successive governments have sought to turn our workplaces into employer-friendly/employee-hostile workplaces. If this is not a deliberate attempt by those governments, then it is most certainly a consequence of their actions. One of the issues that our members may face at some point in their careers is the need to work flexibly. We often associate flexible working with child care, but now our members are having to work until they are 60 years old and parents are living longer, but sometimes living longer in poorer health and there will be more requests for flexible working for elderly parent care. With most couples both having to work just to make ends meet, flexible working requests are on the increase, and not just from those couples but from parents seeking to support their children by submitting flexible working requests to look after grandchildren as well.

This is an issue that affects both men and women, but predominantly women, as nationally the majority of child care is still undertaken by women. The legislation relating to flexible working contained within the Children and Families Act 2004 is weak, and probably, to be realistic about it, it's purposely designed that way. It is employer-friendly and acts as a barrier to the granting of flexible working requests. It actually provides within the legislation eight ready-made excuses for the employer contained within the business reasons for refusal of those requests.

For many women in the UK fire and rescue service the inability to have flexible working arrangements agreed moves the problem from recruitment of women within the fire and rescue service to retention of women within the fire and rescue service.

Conference, we do not generally have fire and rescue services who agree to the flexible working requests that our members submit. This is because the legislation that the employers need rely on is not focused on our profession; it is not focused on 24/7 emergency response cover. There is sometimes little option for our members requiring flexible working patterns other than to transfer on to a day-related shift pattern so that they can vary their start and finish times. However, if they wish to stay operational and on shift our members are presented with the option of working a shortened shift with the subsequent loss of pay, or dropping a whole shift entirely. Conference, that's simply not acceptable.

Fire and rescue services are becoming hostile workplaces for those with child care, dependants or elderly parent responsibilities. This resolution calls for the body of work to be undertaken to ascertain the scale of this problem for our members. Whilst the right to work flexibly has never enshrined in UK law, we should seek to agree through the NJC a flexible working policy that reflects the unique work/life balance issues that arise from our members having to provide a 24/7 emergency response cover. Conference, please support. I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

Thank you, Merseyside. Does that have a seconder? Please come to the rostrum. Thank you.

BRO KARL WAGER (Cleveland):

Conference, I apologise I haven't got anything planned for this because it just sort of came to me as my comrade spoke. As the father of a disabled child, this is exactly what I'm going through at the minute. I'm sorry if I get a little bit twitchy on it. Because of the way that our duty system is designed we get grey days, they are called and I'm sure other people have the same thing, where you're called in on your rota days. So you're phoned 40 minutes before the start of the shift to let us know if we're required or not. My son's autistic and he relies heavily on routine. So I have to tell him exactly what we're doing week to week. January this year what happened was I was on a night shift, a grey night. I got the phone call at 6.30 after telling my son all day that daddy's going to work tonight and he'll be going to nursery in the morning with Nana. So 6.30 came and I got the phone call from work to say you're stood down. Fantastic, I thought, a night off! As I went downstairs to see my little boy's face, "Daddy, why are you not going to work, why are you not in uniform?" "No, son, tonight dad's not going to work." I seen him and he just could not grasp why I wasn't going to work. This went on all night. At 4 o'clock in the morning I had to get up, put my uniform on and "go to work", just so he could have some sleep.

I'm going through this problem with my fire and rescue service and I'm being knocked back by watch manager, station manager, group manager, and beyond. They were just ignoring what my son goes through. If we don't stand

and support this we are letting down our members who have real problems. I'm not asking to be given special treatment to have a day off here and there; this is serious to my family and serious to my son. Please support. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

That's open for debate, conference. Anybody want to come to the rostrum? No? The executive council are giving qualified support. I ask the AGS to give the qualification please.

ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:

Yes, president. I think Mark touched on one of our qualifications. Looking at the resolution and the way that it reads it could be taken that the resolution was saying that there was or has been a legal right to insist upon, demand and get flexible working. That never has been there. So it's a qualification on that basis. I think it's acknowledged by Merseyside. It's just the way that it could read. We needed and wanted to make that qualification.

The second qualification is that essentially the resolution is calling upon the executive council to take action now and start to progress these issues from now, but then also asks for a report to conference on scoping the scale of the problem. There could be a contradiction in that. We can report to conference the scale of the problem. What we do want to do is what I think the resolution essentially is asking for which is to start progressing the issues and report to conference the outcomes of progressing those issues.

As always, in qualifying a resolution it can appear as though the executive council is simply finding problems in terms of why it can't be progressed quickly. I've got to say, the executive council is absolutely clear, these are issues that do need to be addressed. It is a question of being family-friendly. It is also a question of making sure that we address the root cause of why fire and rescue services don't do it. It is disrespectful to our members and to their needs. I think what Karl just said then was extremely important on that point.

There are a number of means by which we can look at delivering the resolution. In terms of reports scoping the problem, using the resources that we've got in terms of brigade and regional officials, the fairness at work committee as well in terms of producing that report. We do have the vehicles within the NJC; we've got the inclusive fire and rescue service work which John undertakes in particular on behalf of the executive council. We support the resolution; we have those qualifications. Thank you, president.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thank you for that qualification. I now put resolution 6 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. *That is CARRIED.*

I now call resolution 7 Reduction in the Working Week to be moved by Nottinghamshire. The executive council oppose.

Resolution 7 – REDUCTION IN THE WORKING WEEK

Conference instructs the Executive Council to explore a reduction in the working week of firefighters from the current 42 hours. Conference agreed Resolution 7 'Working Hours' in 2009 and the Executive Council was asked to report back to a future Conference.

Firefighters work a basic week of 42 hours, well in excess of the national average for full-time employees. The Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) reported that in 2013 over 90% of full-time employees worked less than 42 hours per week. The median figure was 37.5 hours and the average was 38 hours.

Conference instructs the Executive Council to raise the matter at the next meeting of the NJC and to open discussions on ways to reduce the working hours of firefighters without impacting on the current compressed working shift system.

Conference instructs the Executive Council to report back to Conference 2017.

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

BRO JOHN MUGGLETON (Nottinghamshire):

I move resolution 7 Reduction in the Working Week. It is my understanding that a union should campaign for a reduced working week. A shorter working week can protect jobs and also increase the hourly rate of pay. In Nottinghamshire we have negotiated a 2-2-4 system that is run on annualised hours with no reduction in night time fire cover. Within the system Nottinghamshire get 36 days annual leave, two concessionary days and the scope to take a further seven days off duty.

In 2009 conference heard resolution 7 with amendments by Humberside and West Midlands. This was carried with the expectation that “a subcommittee of the executive council should be established and report with recommendations circulated to all brigade/sectional committees before conference 2010”.

In support of that resolution in 2009 I withdraw resolution 7 Reduction in the Working Week and urge the executive council to explore and produce a report of the benefit for annualised hours with an emphasis on a reduced working week. Conference, Nottinghamshire withdraw this resolution. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT:

General secretary.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Conference, I thank Nottinghamshire first of all for raising the issue. It is an entirely valid point to raise. But I do welcome John's withdrawal from the rostrum there because it is a difficult and complicated issue that we're grappling with. Clearly we should be aiming to reduce the working week and nobody would disagree with that. We have existing policy to seek to do that. However, given the issues that we're currently grappling with – and I'm asking conference to think strategically about this – what is the period when we're doing this? What is the financial climate that we're operating in? I suppose one question would be: how would the other side react, for example, in certain circumstances? What would chief officers do in the event of a shorter working week?

You know, we used to have provisions in the Grey Book that provided for what was called constant crewing, for example, which meant that on shift stations we had the same level of crewing on a night shift as we had on the day shift. That no longer exists. One of the trends that we have seen is that we have new models of fire cover very clearly based upon altering the level of cover and therefore the level of staffing between different hours of the day. The relevance of that to this debate is that you could potentially design duty systems based on a shorter working week which could lead to job losses rather than the creation of jobs which is traditionally what unions argue for in relation to a shorter working week.

I think the other complication is what is going on in the real world at the present time. I'm sure John is aware of this, the problems that we have in terms of the direct attack on duty systems. We had a lengthy debate on that yesterday in relation to day crewing plus, LA LA type systems where we have employers up and down the country not wanting to reduce the working week but actually wanting to significantly increase the working week.

So it is difficult. The executive council does have a shift working group who have looked at those issues, who have done some of the work around the South Yorkshire ET that was reported yesterday. We will take away the points that you've raised and we will give consideration to existing policy, the pressures that we're under, the demands that are raised and what we might come back and recommend to a future conference. So thanks to John, thanks to Nottinghamshire for that contribution and for withdrawing that. We will take the issue away and give it further detailed consideration.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thank you, general secretary. We are now on paragraph A6, A7, A8, A9. Section D paragraph D1, D2, D3, D4, D5. I now call resolution 21 National Standards for Marauding Terrorist Firearm Attacks for Training, Equipment and Procedures for all Firefighters to be moved by Tyne & Wear. The executive council support.

Resolution 21 – NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR MARAUDING TERRORIST FIREARMS ATTACK (MTFA) FOR TRAINING, EQUIPMENT AND PROCEDURES FOR ALL FIREFIGHTERS

Conference notes that people living within the British Isles are at a greater risk of terrorism in all its brutal forms like the atrocities that we witnessed in Paris. It is accepted that early recognition could come directly from first responders attending what appeared to be a more routine incident prior to a full MTFA incident being declared. With this in mind, Conference instructs the Executive Council to campaign for an appropriate mechanism of support for Fire and Rescue Authorities including funding from DCLG which would allow Fire and Rescue Services to provide a minimum national standard of training, equipment and procedures for all operational personnel who have the likelihood to attend one of these incidents.

TYNE & WEAR

BRO BRIAN HARRIS (Tyne & Wear):

President, conference, we are all well aware of recent atrocities in Paris and Brussels and the UK has dealt with terrorism for many years. With respect to work already being carried out by officials on pay and terms and conditions for MTFA, we would ask conference that greater pressure be applied to this very important issue. All personnel should be afforded the appropriate insurances when attending this type of incident and all personnel should have a minimum standard of training and awareness as early recognition may come from crews attending these incidents from what appears to be a more routine incident. At present stadiums and shopping centres are receiving this training already and funding has been afforded to them.

This is not a contractual obligation, and this resolution does not request any contractual change. We ask conference to raise this issue as a matter of urgency regarding a minimum standard of training, awareness and protection of our members who become involved in terrorist incidents. Please support. I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

Do we have a seconder? Yes, come to the rostrum please.

BRO ALEX PSAILA (South Wales):

I won't cry this time! I come up to second resolution 21 in support of Tyne & Wear. We are still in dispute, and I want to thank the EC from South Wales. MTFA became quite a personal thing for us and my branch stood strong and told management no, we are not doing it. They pushed us, they tried to put money on us. What we said to them – we never said no, we're not doing it at all, what we said was give us training, give us equipment, give us safe systems of work, we'll have a few quid as well for all of us (because obviously that's what we want), but we're not doing it on a whim. The EC member for Wales stood strong, and I do want to thank him. Ely branch in South Wales to a man and woman stood strong. That's the first time in my 25 year career that as a branch everybody agreed on the same thing. I'm sure you all know what that means. So I want to support resolution 21. Please support as well. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

That's open for debate, conference. Come to the rostrum, please. Anybody else? Come to the rostrum please. Only two speakers? Thank you.

BRO GARY KEARY (GMC):

President, conference, I am speaking in opposition to resolution 21 Tyne & Wear. Comrades, the issue of MTFA response has brought about a long and arduous battle in GMC. We currently have three branches where members provide and train for an MTFA response. It has absolutely been the view of the FBU in GMC since the inception of MTFA that this is a voluntary undertaking. We believe this view to be supported across the UK, inclusive of both the employee and employer sides of the NJC.

There has been considerable correspondence between the union and the brigade exchanged over the last three years, and a dispute of corporate nature was registered on 3 July 2013. This dispute remains live. However, GMFRS have rejected the union's request for external assistance repeatedly over the last three years. In recent months over 60 of our members involved in MTFA have individually written to the brigade informing them that

their participation in all aspects of MTFA response is voluntary. Our DCFO has now responded to most of these members. He rejects outright their understanding and informs our members that they are contractually bound to continue this undertaking. He rejects our members' concerns that they may have difficulties gaining pension benefits should the need arise and informed me personally that other brigades who clearly understand the possible pension implications, thus provide additional insurance, are simply wasting their money.

In a response sent by the DCFO to a member at Heywood fire station he stated:

"You are employed by GMFRA. I am aware that some may try to confuse people with specious allusions to national employers or the national joint council. Similarly, the fact that the discussions are being held between the FBU and NJC which were programmed to report last autumn again are specious as to whether this activity is contractual or not. Your contract is with GMFRA. When it was first proposed to introduce an MTFA capability it was explained that participating in the training etc and becoming MTFA operative was voluntary, but that obviously once voluntarily agreeing to do so, the time and investment in you does lead to the position where it is cemented as contractual."

Despite being repeatedly informed that GMFRS are out of kilter with the rest of the UK, management arrogantly believe they are right whilst everybody else is wrong. We in GMC are well aware of the important work being carried out nationally in the development of the workstreams. It is the case that one of these workstreams is centred upon MTFA. Whilst we fully understand why Tyne & Wear would wish to see a structure put in place which would secure additional funding and ensure minimum standards of training, equipment and procedures are set, we believe these elements should be achieved through the workstream, which would look to broaden the firefighter role map in exchange for appropriate increase in pay. Unfortunately, there is no mention of this workstream within this resolution. It is feared that passing this resolution before the workstream report will undermine the NJC-approved work and will further cement MTFA response as contractual within our employers' minds. Conference, do not bolster the arrogant, single-minded attitudes of right wing management machines. GMC opposes. *(Applause)*

BRO ANDY SCATTERGOOD (West Midlands):

President, conference, just briefly on MTFA, we've had MTFA for a number of years in the West Midlands. We are supporting this resolution today, but I want to make it clear, and I want to make it clear to the executive council, that they need to get a grip on this because it's not going forward, if anything it's going backwards. In the West Midlands we've had the funding dramatically decreased on MTFA. That has now, in my opinion, put our members at even more risk than they were at before. Members are choosing to do this. It's not mandatory for them to do so, but they are particularly choosing the technical rescue stations where it's become if you don't do it maybe you can't be part of technical rescue. So it's being used with bully tactics in order to bring this in. It's been withdrawn from stations which were resisting it, but due to funding cuts now, the issue with training and issue with equipment is going backwards. I urge the executive council to re-address this issue, take this to our employers and deal with it as best they can. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

Assistant general secretary.

ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:

In terms of the resolution, the executive council supports the resolution without qualification. I suppose it touches on what Andy raises from West Midlands. In terms of the workstream work which is still ongoing, I will be frank. It is of such a nature that we haven't rushed and won't rush towards finding an agreement. I'll tell you for why. Although these Chatham House Rules arrangements with regard to the workstreams, and it's Chatham House on the basis of ensuring that both sides can speak freely, I've got no hesitation at all in telling you what the FBU stance and view and activity in the workstream has been.

The key issue is a recurrent theme, one which we thought we had bottomed out, but there are some problems with that. I suppose the issue comes down to this: is this about special teams dealing with limited rescue at MTFA events, or is this about that being perhaps a side element of the wider issue of mass casualty recovery at events of MTFA? We are very clear what the government at Westminster at least means by it, and in terms of discussions

that we've had with the Welsh minister and with the Scottish minister the same. We haven't had, so far as I know, as a national union, discussions with the Northern Ireland department and certainly not the minister at national level. There will have been discussions locally.

The one thing we can say is this. We are absolutely clear at meetings with the Home Office, when they started the discussion (they got in first) that fire service activity that they want is for our members to involve themselves in mass casualty recovery. We have been quite clear at all times that that involves actually every member of every fire and rescue service. A safe assumption is that such incidents could involve three hundred casualties. That number will require four of our members carrying each casualty a great distance. That requires a huge amount of people. Not six people on a special truck, not eight people on two special trucks. It will require probably hundreds of our people. The reason they came to us in the fire and rescue service is because, to use the phrase, we've got the boots on the ground. We've got the dedication, we've got the discipline, we've got the training. We do rescue, that's what we do; that's our job. However much the response times might have increased over the years, compared to the ambulance we still have relatively good attendance times, certainly with a large number of crew. That is something that the ambulance service is struggling with and continues to struggle with. That's why they came to us, that's why they came to the FBU, because they need our agreement.

I've got to say that the problem we're coming up against is that fire and rescue services are concentrating on small teams. We had a meeting of what we have called the FBU members MTFA practitioners. We had representatives from virtually every brigade where there is a team; we had at least one representative (in the main it was one) from each of those teams. Over that session, which was quite a detailed session, extremely informative, extremely successful, we got an awful lot of information and we were able to impart an awful lot of information in terms of exactly where the executive council is, where conference is on the issue, and in turn finding out exactly what is happening on the ground and how it varies between fire and rescue services and what the common themes are.

The common themes aren't good ones. The common themes are what you know and what we knew already but we wanted it from closer to the front. That was that no-one out there, none of members, have been told that the fire and rescue service wants them to be able to turn out every appliance from every workplace to carry out mass casualty recovery, subject to a national agreement. No training, no preparation, no information and no intelligence on that matter being imparted at all. That's a really substantial issue.

So we've been in no rush, because the moment we formally say yes, you can have it (and I don't want to encroach on the discussion which is going to take place over the workstreams in general) there will be an expectation and a requirement of our people. So at the workstream level we won't be doing that.

What the resolution calls for is everything that we support, everything which comes out of our position over the years at conference, reinforced by the information that we received at that meeting called by us of our members who are on these teams. That is that the differences of equipment, the paucity of the training given to those teams, the lack of exercises other than as PR events is woefully inadequate.

I've got to say, we met recently with Theresa May. I think Matt said earlier in the week that it was a successful discussion; it gave us some degree of hope that perhaps we were going to get a bit more of a hearing than we had with DCLG. It's a relative term, but certainly better than we had with DCLG. A key issue which again we raised but they keenly engaged with was the question of MTFA. The one thing the government has got to address once and for all is to tell the chief officers where they need to be, that this is about mass casualty recovery, not small teams that will turn up and not be able to do the job that is required of them. There is a whole range of aspects, the safety issues and so on and so forth, making sure we've got the operational policy, the operational tactics right. We're working on those now, we're looking at those now, we're addressing those now to make sure they're in place.

But the key element (and this is why I wanted to touch on the point) is what the resolution is seeking to address. On that basis I need to address what GMC are saying. The chief that you've got in GMC parades as one thing and in fact is another. He is an old-fashioned bully. He's lying to our workforce. The reason that we encouraged members to put those letters in across the UK that we are doing it on a voluntary basis and at some time, guv'nor, I might pull out of it (and clearly we need to get some more letters in just to remind him) was on the basis of legal advice.

The legal advice was so long as you keep telling them, it doesn't matter what they say, it is voluntary, it's known to be voluntary and you've got to keep reminding them that that is the status of it and that you, the member, the employee, have not changed your mind.

So I understand what GMC are saying. We need to reinvigorate that clearly with regard to GMC. We will be addressing that, I assure you, through the workstream and the appropriate ways at the NJC. But I've got to say to GMC, I do want you and all delegates to support this resolution. Because if the AGS is wrong, if the legal advice is wrong, the bottom line that our members do require is what the resolution calls for. That is that if it is in, voluntary, enforced, imposed or (as it will be possibly, depending upon the debate later on in this conference) agreed it will need to have what this resolution calls for. So I understand what GMC are saying, but I would ask you on the basis of what the resolution is calling for to support.

In finalising, because I want to respond to the debate, what Andy said about it's becoming less resourced is that it seems to be going backward. Frankly, that is one of our fears. That's why we are clear that we want to discuss with all governments. The ministers in Wales and Scotland got deselected in the last round of elections last week. We are going to get new ones. Let's hope we get better dialogue with them on this issue than we had with the previous ones. But let's be clear, that's another reason why we will not rush into something which has the real potential (unless we get it right) to put our people in a position of danger. The only way to ensure the training and equipment and so on which does require funding is to make sure the resources are there, to make sure our people aren't left out on a limb or, worse, dying. That is happening in West Midlands, and we will be using that example and the others that came out of the MTFA practitioners seminar to say to the government that it needs to be robust because we are not signing up for some PR piece of paper that the Home Office can wave around, or any other government department can wave around, that the fire service is there and ready when actually it's not there and ready or prepared at all.

Conference, I do ask all delegations to support the resolution but understand the reasons why there is reluctance. But I think they are issues that need to be addressed in a different way and not by opposing the resolution. Thank you, president. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

Tyne & Wear right of reply? No? Right of reply waived. I now put resolution 21 to the vote. The executive council support. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. *That is CARRIED.*

I'm on paragraph D6, paragraph D7, D8, D9, D10, D11, D12, D13, D14, D15, D16, D17. I'm now on Section G, G1, G2, G3. I now call resolution 32 with the amendment from Merseyside. The executive council give qualified support, and support the Merseyside amendment. Resolution 32 to be moved by B&EMM.

Resolution 32 – FBU EQUALITY EDUCATION

It is vitally important that our Union continues to be fully aware of the different issues that our minority Members still face in Fire and Rescue Service workplaces. Past decisions on equality structures and representation may give the impression that the challenges faced by minority Members are no longer a priority for our Union.

In order for all FBU Representatives to have an understanding and empathy with the issues faced by minority Members it is important that there is the appropriate level of knowledge on equality issues. Representatives and Officials with very little experience of discriminatory and unfair treatment of minority Members are at a disadvantage when representing them.

This Conference demands that the Executive Council:

- ***Ensures that all FBU Representatives and Officials are given the appropriate knowledge and skills to fully represent our minority Members***
- ***That an equality and diversity course is added to the 2017 FBU Education programme***
- ***That the course is organised by the appropriate National Officer and the National FAW Committee***

This Conference believes that this will be an important step in ensuring our Officials recognise unfair practices, appreciate and value cultural differences in the fight against the discriminatory behaviour that still exists in our workplaces and communities.

B&EMM NATIONAL COMMITTEE

AMENDMENT

First bullet point, second line: delete 'our minority' insert 'all our'

MERSEYSIDE

BRO ROD BARRETT (B&EMM):

President, conference, we are accepting Merseyside's amendment. Black and ethnic minority members still face discrimination and unfairness in the UK fire and rescue services, despite years of equality, education and other initiatives aimed at eliminating these behaviours. Our union had a proud history of being at the forefront of the fight for equality and an inclusive fire service free from discrimination, bullying and harassment. For many, including ourselves, some of these issues have not been a priority for the fire service in recent times, and this needs to change.

It is vital that the representatives of our members, reps and officials are fully able to identify equality issues and have empathy with the exclusive challenges sometimes faced by our minority members. Without these attributes and knowledge we leave ourselves at a disadvantage when dealing with matters to the detriment of all our members. We welcome the inclusion of current education and equality within union education programme. We believe that the course should be included in our education every year and that all reps and officials must be encouraged to attend. The fairness at work committee should have a role in organising the course to ensure that it is compliant with our issues in the fire service. We fully support Merseyside's amendment as this will benefit all our members. Please support this motion. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

Can we have a seconder, please? Merseyside to second. Second and will you move your amendment as well? Thank you very much.

BRO MARK ROWE (Merseyside):

President, conference, we are seconding resolution FBU Equality Education and moving our amendment at the same time. Conference, firstly we'd like to thank B&EMM for bringing this resolution forward because sometimes when we're looking at the resolutions on the agenda we think: of course, how did we miss that? This is one of those resolutions. The employers have a legal responsibility to deliver equality and diversity training in some form, but if we're honest about it, the training delivered by many fire and rescue services falls woefully short of what is actually required. It's normally a 10-question tick box exercise on a computer. Many employers already strapped for cash are also putting equality and diversity training to the bottom of their to-do lists. We can't leave E&D training to the employers. Equality and diversity education is vital as it affects all aspects of our lives and work for a number of reasons.

We live in an increasingly diverse society and need to be able to respond appropriately and sensitively to this diversity. We need to equip our members and officials to be able adequately to understand and represent this diversity around gender, race and ethnicity, disability, religion, sexuality and age. Understanding, and the successful implementation of equality and diversity in all aspects of our work ensures that all our members not only feel valued, motivated and treated fairly, but actually are valued, motivated and treated fairly.

We have an equality and human rights legal framework covering employment practices and service delivery, and we need to ensure that we fully understand and work within this for the benefit of all our members and therefore avoid any form of discrimination. Clearly those FBU members within the equality sections would be best placed to assist with constructing the equality and diversity course and the course content. So they should be consulted and utilised.

Disgracefully, like many things since 2010, equality and diversity has become less important to the government. We cannot allow them to push backwards our hard fought for gains in equality and diversity legislation. To resist these

attacks we need to educate our members fully as to the nature of those attacks as well. David Cameron has not only overseen massive funding and staff cuts at the Equality and Human Rights Commission, whose role it is to enforce the Equality Act 2010 and make sure that people get their rights, he has also publicly belittled these equality gains as bureaucratic nonsense and tick box stuff. Conference, Cameron calls it bureaucracy, we call it protection from discrimination. Conference, please support the resolution. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

Does the Merseyside amendment have a seconder? *Formally* Formally seconded. That's open for debate. Can I ask Sean Starbuck to give the qualification on the resolution, please.

BRO SEAN STARBUCK (National officer):

Thanks, president. The EC support with the qualification and support Merseyside's amendment. Before I get into the qualification can I just cover a couple of points about this? It's pretty clear that we don't leave equality and diversity training to the employers. We do quite a lot of equality and diversity training. For the last few years we've sent out questionnaires to people asking them what training you want, what's on your priority list. I've got to say, I'm quite disappointed we don't get that many responses. So we're left to second-guess in some areas. I think we do OK second-guessing. It helps us to plan for education. What I will say is when we send out the questionnaire next year, please put on what you want, because that does help us to plan for the future.

The last response we had outlined a need for introductory fairness at work courses, ADAE courses, pension courses, and these are all on the programme. The fairness at work course, we've got one scheduled for July. A circular went out last week asking for expressions of interest for people to come along. So Rod will expect to see you there!

Fairness at work is key on all our courses. Everybody gets input on fairness at work and equality. Part of our education is signposting people to other areas if they want specialist help on issues as well. In addition to this as a union we've been running union learning courses on equality and diversity for quite some time. More than 1,200 people have gone through our equality and diversity training on union learning. So we are doing it. But yes, we can do more and we plan to do more.

The qualification is a simple one really and it's the third bullet point. We can't have a course organised by a committee; it just doesn't work. But what we will do, we will work with the fairness at work committee and we will make sure that we get this course on the programme for next year.

THE PRESIDENT:

I now put the amendment by Merseyside to the vote. The executive council support. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. *That is CARRIED.*

I now put resolution 32 as amended to the vote. The executive council qualification has been given. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. *That is CARRIED.*

On paragraph G4, G5, G6, G7, G8. Yes, come to the rostrum please.

SIS CAROLINE STURGESS (Lancashire):

President, conference, speaking on behalf of the women's school, paragraph G8. First time delegate, first time speaker. *(Applause)* Conference, please do not under-estimate the influence of the women's school and the good work that comes from it, from policy changes and improvements in working conditions for all FBU members, through to the support and confidence given to our women members.

Approximately 15 months ago I was in a different place and I certainly wouldn't be standing here today talking to you. I was the victim of a severe bullying and harassment case, and I was on the brink of leaving my career. Whilst my officials attempted to support me, there was no woman's rep to turn to, and I was in complete despair. I didn't know that much about the national women's committee, and for years I tried to distance myself for fear of segregation or being different and not being one of the lads. It was actually my husband (after we picked up the

magazine *Siren*) that told me to go to women's school – and he knew even less about the women's committee than I did – to resolve some of my problems and gain some support and solace.

I attended women's school and I can honestly say it saved my career. I was shocked to hear that many of the delegates had experienced the issues that I had. Whilst this is shocking, it gave me a safe place to talk and to rebuild my confidence. I'm proud to say that Lancashire and the rest of this room here fully supported resolution 32 FBU Equality Education. Women's school has given me the confidence and skills, and knowledge, to undertake not one branch position but three.

Conference, please support your women to engage in the national women's committee and attend women's school. I would also ask the EC to support the school because this year it was over-subscribed. Resolution 35 Rebuilding and Developing Sectional Interest in the FBU was passed in yesterday's conference. The national women's committee can offer that support. Conference asked for investment and growth, and I look around the room amongst my peers today and the EC and I notice I am in a minority. If it wasn't for women's school I wouldn't be negotiating better terms and fairer conditions, fighting for the rights of our members on equality, I wouldn't be developing trade union education opportunities for our members, and I would not have been here today addressing conference. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

Thank you. On paragraph G9, G10, G11. Yes, come to the rostrum please. On G11?

BRO GARY KEARY (GMC):

President, conference, speaking on paragraph G11 union learning fund. Comrades, it is important that we continue to support the union learning fund. The FBU is doing amazing work in leading the delivery of union learning throughout the trade union movement. It may not always be clear to see the link between the union learning and the daily work we do in protecting our members, but I can assure you it is there.

After attending a dyslexia awareness course last year, I became able to offer a dyslexia quick scan facility to our members and their families. Recently, I utilised this facility to scan a member who was finding himself falling into ever deeper problems relating to his employment. The results of this scan showed our member had significant dyslexic tendencies. This result was then used to persuade the brigade to pay for a full dyslexia assessment for our member. The results of these tests and the understanding I had gained through this dyslexia course not only assisted in ensuring this retained member was not dismissed from the brigade, but has led to this member being offered a wholetime firefighter's post with full dyslexia support.

Comrades, support the ULF and FBU learning centre. These bring benefits for members, out of trade members, family and friends. Please engage with the union learning school at Wortley Hall this October. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

We are on Section C, paragraph C1. I now call resolution 12 OICs Driving Fire Appliances to Incidents on Blue Lights to be moved by Durham. The executive council support.

Resolution 12 – OICs DRIVING FIRE APPLIANCES TO INCIDENTS ON BLUE LIGHTS

This Conference condemns the unsafe practice adopted by some Fire and Rescue Services in the UK which allows Watch and Crew Managers to drive fire appliances to incidents on blue lights whilst being Officer in Charge of that appliance.

Driving fire appliances to incidents on blue lights whilst in charge is not included in a Watch or Crew Managers role map.

This practice allows Fire and Rescue Services to reduce numbers on stations ultimately cutting front line posts and puts our Members in situations where there is not enough resources to deal with incidents safely.

Conference agrees that this dangerous practice has the potential to cause serious injury or worse to our Members and members of the public because of wrong decisions which may be made due to the complexity of carrying out two separate roles simultaneously.

Therefore this Conference instructs the Executive Council to;

- ***Send out a Fire Brigades Union circular to all Members explaining the dangers involved in adopting this practice.***
- ***Commission the Fire Brigades Union Health and Safety Committee to draft a Safety Critical notice which can be used by Brigade Committees to challenge this practice where it is happening.***
- ***Raise this issue at the National Joint Council with a view to stopping this unsafe and dangerous way of working.***

This work to be completed by the end of January 2017.

DURHAM

BRO PAUL DAWSON (Durham):

Conference, president, the issue of dual role OIC drivers appears to be more prevalent on RDS stations where personnel feel an obligation to dual role in order to maintain appliance availability, and to maintain the rest of the crew on the call so that they can improve their earning potential. This resolution would save our members from themselves; it could also save brigades from themselves, many of whom may deny that the practice of OIC drivers runs any real risk. However, this practice clearly places the OIC under greater pressure whilst mobile to an incident and hampers him or her during initial attendance, which is the most crucial phase of an incident.

The OIC would clearly be disadvantaged when carrying out an initial DRA, and the crew would likely be tempted with self-deployment in order to cover the shortcomings of the situation. There are clear solutions such as, firstly, improved driver succession planning, detachments, and standby. We are fortunate that we have a very good working relationship and safety culture with our management due to recent improvements. However, not every brigade is as fortunate. If this problem has the recognition by taking the simple steps laid out in the resolution, it would assist in solving the problem and maintaining consistency in each brigade. Please support. I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

Do we have a seconder please? Come to the rostrum please, Cleveland.

BRO BRIAN GIBSON (Cleveland):

President, conference, we are seconding resolution 12. Conference, please support this resolution as this practice is unsafe and extremely dangerous. The incident commander of an appliance, TRV, SFU, whatever the fire and rescue service want to call it that particular week, must, according to his or her role, en route pre-plan for the incident mobilised to, often interacting with the mobile data transmitter, and ensure the safe passage of the vehicle and crew to any incident. En route he or she may perform a dynamic risk assessment and at the same time collect relevant information with regard to the incident attending. En route the incident commander may deliver an assistance message or declare a tactical mode. Conference, all of this cannot be done whilst behind the wheel of a rapidly moving fire appliance. Paul has just said earlier it's not the role map of the crew manager to do this and it's certainly not on the role map of a firefighter to perform any of these duties. It's dangerous and it's got to stop. Please support. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

That's open for debate. Please come to the rostrum. Anybody else wish to debate this? No?

BRO TONY SMITH (Hertfordshire):

Conference, president, this came about in Hertfordshire a number of years ago. It was brought to our attention and it was around the RDS that this practice had started. We saw this off. We issued a safety critical notice. I just wanted conference to know and the EC to know that we've done that work. Obviously we'll share it with you if this goes through. I hope it does because, as you've heard, it is a serious matter. It is actually a no brainer for us. We

issued the notice and within 24 hours our brigade stopped the practice. A significant win, one of a few. Just to let you know that work has been done in Hertfordshire and we are more than happy to share it. Thank you, conference. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

National officer, Sean Starbuck.

BRO SEAN STARBUCK (National officer):

EC support, but it's worth saying a couple of things on it. You're quite right, it's not in the role map of an officer to drive. We obviously agree that the incident commander has got other things on his or her mind when they are being driven to an incident. If we expect them to do more then we are putting that at risk. We all know of incidents where that has happened.

We looked at this as part of the health and safety committee already. We will draft a circular, we will get the safety critical notice. We might be pinching it from elsewhere now, but we will get it. That's where you come in. We can issue it, but you've got to police it locally. So yes, we'll do it from our end if you will do it from your end and police it as well.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thank you for that. I now resolution 12 to the vote. The executive council support. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. *That is CARRIED.*

Adjourn for lunch – dinner. Adjourn for dinner!

Break for lunch

AFTERNOON SESSION

THE PRESIDENT:

Take your seats, finish up your conversations. Thank you very much. I now call upon the chair of standing orders to give the standing orders report. Steve.

THE CHAIR OF STANDING ORDERS (Bro Steve Shelton):

Thank you, president. Delegate change: Mid & West Wales delete Barrie Davies. Conference, the standing orders committee are asking for your cooperation regarding a prompt return to your seats this afternoon after tea and coffee as we are planning to show the BAFTA award-winning short film *Operator*. It would be much appreciated if you could have a prompt return to your seats this afternoon. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Is that report agreed? *AGREED*

OK, thank you, conference. I now ask you to turn to page 5 of the programme of business. What I will say is this is another very, very important issue for the union. I fully intend that everybody concerned in the debate has the chance to speak, and that everybody concerned in the debate keeps to their allotted times, the times which you did actually agree yesterday.

Paragraph A4 NJC workstreams. General secretary.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

President, conference, if I can just speak to the paragraph. We're coming to an important debate, and it's probably the most important industrial debate of the week, and that's the direction of our industry for the future. I'm sure people have been following it. Some delegates have followed this debate over the past couple of years, others have not. But I would urge people to read paragraph A4 which sets this debate into context. I would repeat one of the points I made earlier, that we are grappling with some very difficult strategic issues. How do we navigate as a union through some extremely challenging times: austerity, fragmentation of our service, and the issue of pay and standards? When I joined the fire service we had a very different set up. We had national bodies in place that protected us on issues like crewing levels, that protected us on issues like response times, that protected us on issues like standards of fire cover. All of those structures have gone. They didn't go under the Tories, they went under the last Labour government in reality. We're now dealing with the consequences of that. We also face the worst cuts in history from a right wing anti-union, anti-public service government.

Just think about some of the context of that: 22 per cent cuts to fire and rescue services over the past five years, 8,000 fewer firefighters, wholetime/retained and control lost since 2010, and our own union membership fallen as a result by about the same percentage, about 15 per cent over the same period. We've had devastating attacks on pensions. In terms of one side of this issue which led to the discussion in paragraph A4 on the workstreams, the 1 per cent pay freeze imposed across the public sector, including ourselves.

We now face other challenges. Again, this is part of the difficult jigsaw we are trying to put together. We face opponents who would seek to end national collective bargaining in the fire and rescue service. We are the only public service which has a UK-wide national joint council. You can see that it inevitably is under threat. The Westminster government, we suspect, would like to get rid of it. The Scottish government may well like to get rid of it. The English Tories in local government would like to get rid of it. Many chief officers would like to get rid of it. HR departments across the country would like to get rid of it. But our policy is to try to defend it. We are doing it today in very difficult circumstances.

You then move on to the question of what's happened and the fire service background to this discussion. We know that official figures show falls of 50 per cent in the number of fires since the turn of the century, false alarms also down. I know that people often raise with me: well, I think they're fiddling this, I think they're fiddling that. I've no doubt there are attempts to do that, but we have spent a great deal of time, including bringing in external

consultants to help us to do it, to analyse what is going on in the fire service, what is going on in relation to emergency calls and so on. The truth is there is downward trend. It has been in place for some considerable time. You are living it. We have firefighters say: we used to be on a busy station; it no longer is a busy station. That may level off; we don't know as yet. At the same time we've pointed out our members doing more work in relation to floods, and again we've led the way on some of the debates around that.

It is in that context that this discussion began, where we said to our employers: let's look at what we're doing, let's look at the role map, what's agreed and what's not. We set out the five workstreams which are set out in that paragraph and those discussions have been underway.

I think one of the most key areas of that and possibly the most controversial is about emergency medical response. We have agreed those trials that you're aware of, which are referred to in a number of the resolutions we will be discussing later. I do want to thank John McGhee who has led on that work for us in terms of liaising with the employers nationally, but also assisting in that in terms of individual fire and rescue services. I know there are issues and we will discuss those in the debate, no doubt. There are issues that had to be addressed about mobilising, legal liability and so on. We understand that there are problems and concerns on the ground. Our task, and what I think the debate is going to be about, is addressing some of those concerns. That's the background to a fairly detailed paragraph in the annual report that I think provides the background to this afternoon's discussion, president.

THE PRESIDENT:

OK, thank you very much. OK, I now call emergency resolution 2 moved by the executive council, resolution 2 moved by London, resolution 3 moved by Cleveland, resolution 4 moved by Cleveland and resolution 5 moved by Merseyside with amendments from London and Shropshire in the same debate. If the executive council's emergency resolution carries, resolution 4 from Cleveland and resolution 5 from Merseyside fall. Resolution 2 from London and resolution 3 from Cleveland can carry with the executive council emergency resolution. If the executive council emergency resolution falls, resolution 2, resolution 3, resolution 4 and resolution 5 can carry. OK?

I'm now calling emergency resolution 2 to be moved by the general secretary.

Emergency resolution 2 – NJC NEGOTIATIONS ON FUTURE WORK OF FIREFIGHTERS AND FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES

Conference notes the continuing discussion at the National Joint Council (NJC) in relation to the five work-streams previously identified and reported to Conference 2015 and endorsed by that Conference.

Conference notes the further work undertaken since then. This has included NJC approved trials of new and wider areas of work including emergency medical response.

Conference notes that the trials were discussed in detail at the meeting of the NJC on 10 February 2016. That meeting identified the need to discuss further:

- ***The changing of government departments in England and the impact that has had on progressing funding issues.***
- ***The need for a formal evaluation of the trials and whether the technical author of that report would require further information/data.***
- ***Any impact or implications of the above or other considerations on the duration of the trials.***

Following this meeting further local trials commenced with the agreement of the NJC bringing the total number of Fire and Rescue Services involved to 27 by April 2016.

Conference further notes:

- ***That work is currently being undertaken by the NJC to agree the best way to assess the impact of these trials, including an assessment of the data, problems identified, funding issues, operational procedure and related matters.***
- ***That the development of any such work requires long term funding solutions so as to support***

the training, staffing and operational demands which would arise as well as addressing the pay and conditions issues which the FBU has set out to the fire service employers.

- *That it is in the interests of all concerned, especially those FBU members who have undertaken such trials, to accurately and thoroughly assess the evidence produced during the trials. This would strengthen any case which would be made to government/s regarding future funding.*
- *That concerns have been expressed regarding the implications of these trials for emergency fire controls and the FBU members working within them, including, on occasion, a failure to adequately consult with FBU representatives.*

Conference is dismayed at the lack of engagement by the ministers and government departments responsible for fire in the discussions around the potential extension of the role of the fire and rescue service including medical response. Conference maintains its view that the extension of the Fire and Rescue Service role offers a potential significant improvement to public safety. However Conference also recognises that Fire and Rescue Services have suffered unprecedented cuts which increasingly jeopardise the service at local level as well as national resilience. Such cuts threaten to undermine this important area of discussion.

Against this background Conference resolves to authorise the Executive Council to continue negotiations, including the possible extension of the NJC work-stream trials. In any such negotiations, the Executive Council should continue to raise the concerns of FBU members regarding pay, conditions and staffing levels. Any agreement regarding a possible extension of the trials should include resolution of the issues relating to consultation and negotiation on behalf of FBU members in emergency fire controls.

Once NJC trials have been evaluated, the results will be issued to members through FBU structures to allow full discussion before any further decisions are made. Any such decisions will involve full consultation with all members.

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Thanks, president. Conference, there have been a number of important developments around these issues since January which we are asking conference to take account of as we discuss our priorities and further work in relation to the five workstreams that are under discussion at the National Joint Council, and particularly around the issue of emergency medical response and the related work.

In February the NJC met in the light of the transfer of fire in England to the Home Office. That's an issue that has implications for the whole of the union and the whole of the UK. The stance that we took on the transfer was that we were fairly relaxed about it in principle. We have previously sat under the Home Office as the fire service, but the context is different. The context is that we have a Westminster government trying to force through their Policing and Crime Bill, and trying to force through the takeover of our service by police and crime commissioners. That's the area of concern that we have. But equally, this shift of one government department to another, bearing in mind that we had already agreed that our strategy includes approaching government ministers about future funding arrangements, clearly complicated matters in February.

By the beginning of this year the employers and the FBU, working through the National Joint Council, had approved 20 EMR trials in 20 different fire and rescue services. A number of those trials didn't begin until this year, even though they were approved earlier. Since then a further 10 trials have been approved by ourselves and the employers. We now have 30 trials in place.

We are aware that there are a number of other brigades where emergency medical response work is going on, which were not part of the trials but where we may have an interest. It is now the case that in almost every fire and rescue service, with the exception of Northern Ireland, there's some sort of discussion or trial or response arrangements underway in one form or another. These developments are very important. The trials are ongoing. Most will continue until June when we need to address the question of how we evaluate them.

We are clear that if the role of our service expands it will need funding. Expansion of our role isn't new, by the way, as I'm sure you're aware. We've pioneered and supported the expansion of the role of firefighters throughout our history. We argued for and pioneered the role of taking on an inspection role in the 1960s. It wasn't popular with all our members then. Firefighters didn't always respond to road traffic accidents or collisions. This union argued that we should. It's now bread and butter work on fire stations up and down the country. This union supported and promoted the type of preventative activity that is now part and parcel of everyday work in the fire and rescue service. So our service and profession have always developed, and we have often led that way. It's about taking a strategic approach to this, rather than simply a short-term one.

But the question of funding clearly comes into this. The AGS mentioned earlier we recently met Theresa May and we put these arguments very forcefully. I have to say, she did listen. We have not had any response but she did at least listen to what we had to say. We made clear that this discussion about where our service might go is being led by the much-maligned National Joint Council. It is not by governments. Chief officers might have an agenda, but this is being led by the National Joint Council – us and our employers through discussion and dialogue.

We explained the need for funding. We need to do that all across the UK. Let's be clear, that is not going to be easy. Making a case in this period for additional funding for one bit of public services is not going to be easy with any government minister in the current climate. That will need a detailed, professional report. That's the process that we're in at the present time: finding out who can do that, who can analyse the sort of data that we will be getting back from those trials across the country, and how do we present that in the most powerful way to make the case to government, but also to other politicians, that this is some value that the fire and rescue service could add to local communities. So we need to make our case, including to our opponents who are in government, about the outstanding work that firefighters already do, but that firefighters might be able to take on, depending upon those discussions.

The National Joint Council meets again on 2 June, and the stance taken by this union today will affect the future of that work and probably the future of the fire and rescue service itself. That's why the emergency resolution talks about giving licence to the executive council to continue those negotiations, and to potentially explore the potential of an extension to those trials when we meet with our employers.

I am aware that some people are concerned about what that extension might mean. We are not going to sign up to some open-ended extension to these trials that mean effectively our role maps gets changed by default. We are very clear that the biggest bargaining tool we have in these negotiations is the fact that we have no contractual obligation to undertake emergency medical response. We will not be giving that up lightly. We are also aware that there are practical issues that need to be addressed. There are issues around mobilisation, there are issues around the practicalities of EMR: PPE, training, procedures, all of those issues and those need to be fed in. There are issues around what is the model that we would prefer. We need to know all those problems and many of you and your members will have experienced. We also need to know about the successes, where there have been successful interventions. Initial reports suggest that firefighters may have had an impact in some 2,000 incidents in terms of emergency medical response where lives may have been saved as a result. But we need to address that and explore that in some detail.

Conference, the executive council believes it is right to carry on these trials. We believe progress can be made. You will have the final say on that. We're not even at the stage of negotiating on role maps. In our view, it's premature to withdraw from this process. We need to get on with the detailed negotiations, a detailed assessment of the evidence and on that basis, conference, I move the emergency resolution. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

Humberside to second.

BRO DAVE COLLINGWOOD (Humberside):

Firstly, I'd like to clarify the position of Humberside. We're kind of in a fortunate position. We've currently got a number of trials running. One is actually as a trial within the NJC. We've got a falls team that currently includes ten wholetime operational personnel and that is separately funded by the CCG. So in our eyes that's 10 jobs that we probably wouldn't have saved before. There's potential interest for a further three teams, so possibly 40 posts

altogether. These teams respond to falls and EMR incidents in a bespoke vehicle and that doesn't affect fire cover. I know some brigades have got issues with that, but we're quite lucky in that respect.

In addition to that, we've got further EMR teams that are funded by EMAS and YAS, so again fully funded and responding separately in vehicles that don't affect fire cover. These vehicles are only crewed when fire cover is available at RDS stations.

The activity that it produces accounts for about 62 per cent of service activity within Humberside at the moment, which is obviously quite significant. Some of the RDS stations that are involved are looking at an increase from two calls a month to 52 calls a month. So you can see straight away that makes a massive difference to those stations and the viability going forward. It's made a big difference to recruitment and retention within the RDS scheme. From our point of view it's been a success.

Matt talked about individual successes in terms of patient outcomes. I've got lists and lists of the number of times our responders have gone out and performed what they call a ROSC (return of spontaneous circulation). So yes, they are making a massive impact on that. So it's not just about stopping the clock. Actually, in the Yorkshire brigades (I won't include you, Dave, don't worry!) the Yorkshire Ambulance Service have changed the way they respond so it is not just about the times; it's more about patient outcomes and what we do when we get there. We're collecting the data on that to prove that for the NJC also.

It is clear that there are number of schemes and trials running throughout the service and some are good and some are bad, we know that. Some are funded, some aren't (ours is, good) and some compromise fire cover and some don't. It's about getting all that information together. So it's important that we gather it all. If we are going to stop the trials now we're not going to get that information, are we? Let's get the right decision on pay, pensions, liability, training, equipment, call handling, all the rest of it. I think that's it. I think I've run out of space. I second the resolution. Please support. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

I now call London to move resolution 2 NJC Workstreams. The executive council oppose.

Resolution 2 – NATIONAL JOINT COUNCIL WORKSTREAMS

Conference notes that discussions exploring the viability of the Fire and Rescue Service workforce taking on additional work remain ongoing within a number of National Joint Council workstreams.

The Executive Council has previously committed to seeking improvements in pay in return for any agreement to extend the responsibilities, skills and competencies of FBU Members.

Conference reaffirms that the demand for appropriate remuneration for additional work remains a core part of the Union's negotiating strategy in these discussions.

Further, Conference instructs the Executive Council:

- ***not to ratify any proposed agreement on new responsibilities in the absence of associated pay improvements.***
- ***to undertake the fullest consultation with Members on any proposed new responsibilities and associated pay framework resulting from the workstream discussions.***

LONDON

BRO PAUL EMBERY (London):

President, conference, I think there is clearly some good work going on in the workstreams. I think from London we broadly welcome it, broadly support it. We know that things that were once unpalatable to us we now have to embrace in some respects at least, if we are going to give ourselves the best possible chance of defending the service against cuts. We have to do that because of the austerity, and the cuts mean that we are fighting this constant rearguard action at the moment. Within that, we know that we have won some battles and we've sustained some serious losses as well.

I think we appreciate that ideological purity on this is not an option if we're serious about defending the service. I think our members see the logic of that and they recognise the brutal reality of where we are, which is why they broadly support what's going on within those workstreams. But when we had the discussion with members, to be perfectly blunt about it, it's the same question that comes up time and time again: what are the employers going to give us? That's the truth of it. What are the employers conceding? Is there any extra pay for us? Those are not unreasonable questions. Our members are not prepared to let the employers have something for nothing. Yes, defending jobs, yes defending the service is key, but for us that must not be the beginning and the end of the negotiations. We should not be conducting negotiations on this on territory that is too narrow.

We were glad, at the outset of the discussions in the circulars etc that went out from the executive council and statements from the general secretary, that said that pay was very much part of those negotiations and part of the package that we were going to be putting on the table. We certainly hope that nothing has changed on that point. Some of this stuff, as we know, the employers have been pushing for years. Were they to get it, I think it would represent a huge concession on our part. We've won court cases on some of the stuff that is now included within these workstreams and which we might end up doing. So we should not lose sight of the fact that within those negotiations we are giving serious ground potentially to the employers, and we should not undersell ourselves within those negotiations.

We had a bit of a debate this morning about austerity and the impact on people. We're going to have further debates about pay at some point during this conference. We know the real financial challenges that austerity is presenting to our members at the moment, and the difficulties that they're going through in terms of struggling to make ends meet. This is what our resolution is designed to do. We need to use every bargaining chip at our disposal to make sure that we can address the issue of pay. We have not properly been able to address it through normal collective bargaining over pay negotiations, but this gives us, if you like, another bite at the cherry to be able to do that. Our members don't want to hear, at the end of the negotiations over the workstreams, over EMR and other stuff that's going on, the executive council coming back and saying: we've had the negotiations; we've got some funding from the government for some of this stuff but really there's no new money in terms of any associated pay framework. They don't want the employers to be able to have their cake and eat it on this. It does need to be a quid pro quo as far as our members are concerned.

They also don't want (and I was glad that Matt covered it when he was moving the resolution) to hear that there is going to be some unending period of trials. We do not want the introduction of EMR, for example, by instalments almost, where we have trials and it ends up coming in through the back door because the trial never really ends. So we do need to be looking at putting a very clear cut-off point on those trials. In the discussions that we have had I don't think anything within six months is unreasonable. I think anything beyond six months would be unreasonable. I think that's ample time to be able to carry out the trials and assess the data.

I don't think there's an awful lot necessarily between us, even though the EC is opposing London's resolution. Certainly on the face of it there doesn't seem to be an awful lot of difference between the EC and London. It is simply that these workstreams do give us, in the additional work that we may take on, an extra bargaining chip and we call on the executive council to use that, because we may not get another one any time soon. So we need to use it to its maximum. That's what the resolution is designed to do. Please support London's resolution. I move.
(Applause)

THE PRESIDENT:

Do we have a seconder for London's resolution? *Formally* Formally seconded, thank you. I call resolution 3 Emergency Medical Response – Financial Recompense to be moved by Cleveland. The executive council oppose.

Resolution 3 – EMERGENCY MEDICAL RESPONSE – FINANCIAL RECOMPENSE

This Conference insists that any future financial recompense that is negotiated and agreed by the Members of the Fire Brigades Union, in return for Emergency Medical Response work, must be backdated to the start of any individual trial periods where said trial periods are currently in place.

CLEVELAND

BRO KARL WAGER (Cleveland):

President, conference, the reason Cleveland brought this resolution to conference is because there is a genuine concern and doubt by our members that money will ever come our way for carrying out the most serious and massive addition to their role and responsibilities. Conference, we understand the EC's arguments that there is no position on what the work may be worth and that across the UK different fire and rescue services have been working for different amounts of time in offering the emergency medical response.

Conference, our members should get paid for this work and ideally it should be backdated so they are not working for nothing. But in light of the above reasons that the EC have set out we would like to withdraw. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

I now call resolution 4 Emergency Medical Response from Cleveland. It was like a relay that, wasn't it? The executive council oppose.

Resolution 4 – EMERGENCY MEDICAL RESPONSE

This Conference insists that all FBU Members absolutely cease all Emergency Medical Response Trials that are currently in place, on 30th June 2016, and that following any consequent evaluation of said trials that the Executive Council fully consult all Members via FBU Branch Structures in order that no future Emergency Medical Response work will be carried out until democratic agreement with Fire Brigades Union Members, via Branch Structures, is gained.

CLEVELAND

BRO BRIAN GIBSON (Cleveland):

Conference, president, comrades, the reason this resolution has come to conference is due to a viewpoint of our members of a perceived lack of clarity in direction with regard to how the trial will end and its subsequent evaluation. Yes, the majority of members in Cleveland, I believe, are genuinely behind the introduction of emergency medical response, and they accept that it will indeed in the future form part of our role. Furthermore, in the long term it will hopefully save, and ultimately create, jobs and provide funding for our fire service. However, according to our members, what is not clear is how this is going to be achieved holistically after the trial ends, if it ends. Let's be clear, conference, this is a trial and this resolution is asking you to end that trial on 30 June as per the EC's own policy statement on this very subject to conference in 2015.

This needs to happen so that members can clearly see that they will not be tied to an open-ended trial that could meander on and on and that could eventually put our union into a position where it cannot practically or morally back out of the trial and members end up doing the role for no improvements at all.

Conference, it's not the fault of our members that some fire and rescue services have not had the nous to get their proverbials in gear and take part in the trial. In fact, it's the opposite. It's clear that some members have looked at the bigger picture and accepted that they should take part. They have sat, waiting for fire and rescue managers to sort out the finer detail, big and small, literally for months on end. That said, there are still 30 trials taking place. Surely, conference, there are enough taking part to produce qualitative and quantitative data for the evaluation purposes. The trial should end when it was planned to end and then evaluate it properly, taking into account our members' concerns around issues such as robust and suitably sufficient training, suitable and sufficient PPE, suitable and sufficient medical equipment, the type and nature of the EMR calls we are attending, the operational imperative to do something at the scene, control issues, dealing with complex issues such as "do not resuscitate" notices on patients who've arrested at the scene, and most importantly essential mental help and well-being support for our members. The list is not exhaustive.

Conference, when our EC have reached a position in the workstream negotiations with the evaluation of the EMR trial in hand where they feel a suitable agreement has been achieved, then that position should be consulted on through the branch structures and democratically agreed by the members. Conference, I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

Does resolution 4 have a seconder? Please come to the rostrum, Dave.

BRO DAVE WILLIAMS (West Yorkshire):

President, conference, we are supporting Cleveland and opposing the EC. I'd just like to say that we welcome this debate being in open session compared to previously where we've had closed sessions. I think it's important our members know what we are discussing regarding their future.

I'd just like to take a point about what's been said. We've had three speakers each say that we need this because jobs are at risk and it will protect jobs. It won't. Tell me one of the 27 brigades that are running a trial now that haven't lost a job in the last six months, or will not lose a firefighter's job in the next four years and I'll stand corrected!

Conference, in West Yorkshire, I told you last year that if we continued with this trial we would end up providing scab labour, and it's only through the grace of God and the strength of UNISON and YAS that it never happened in December. UNISON and YAS, who represent 90 per cent of ambulance workers, took an indicative ballot on strike over pay, and it's because of their collective strength that they never went on strike and we never had to cross their picket lines and do their jobs. Scandalous! I can't believe we're even up here talking about it, to be honest.

Furthermore, at this conference yesterday Frances O'Grady said we need to do something about zero hour contracts, yet that's exactly what we're doing. We are providing ambulance services with zero hour professional, semi-professional, keen and enthusiastic amateurs (call them what you like) medical responders. In December 2015 the current UK vacancy for paramedics was at 12 per cent. Their managers are keeping their figures low on the backs of our members doing it. We wouldn't do it in the brigade; we wouldn't allow it to happen. We've got a policy on working pre-arranged overtime to keep numbers down. So why are we doing it in another public sector service? The government are pitting us against each other and we're absolutely swallowing it.

Our national employers must be laughing their heads off. We set a very clear guideline and deadline of 30 June last year, and we've capitulated at the first opportunity. Can we trust our executive to deal with this? Can we just say: here you are, we'll believe you, you say it's not going to be open-ended. Didn't we do that with our pension dispute? Then the week after, when we lost the early day motion vote in parliament but won the argument, we were all expecting to go out on strike over Christmas? Did it happen? No, we had a strike in January and that was it. I cannot hand over and just say: OK, we'll take what you say; it's not going to be open-ended. Put a date on it, it doesn't really matter anyway; we just change our mind.

The other thing is it's scaremongering to say that if we stop these trials our pay formula and pay discussions will be put at risk. Tell me, in 2002 when we went on strike for a 40 per cent pay rise, how many trials were we doing? None, we were doing none. We had done the work first. We acknowledged that we were worth £30,000; we wanted that 40 per cent and we went out on strike. We didn't say: let's have a trial for a while and we'll see where we can go with it.

West Yorkshire have only been doing it since March. This is where the emergency motion talks about extension of the NJC workstreams. Let's not kid ourselves here, comrades. These trials are not ending; these are not ending, because the parameters are constantly changing. We started it in March. Already our managers, YAS, have changed what they want to do. They want to send our responders with a 19 minute delay on to amber calls. We are exposing our members to a risk for 19 minutes before they get backup. Again, we wouldn't advocate that, we wouldn't advocate second appliance times 19 minutes. If our joint secretary is listening I hope he's paying cognisance of it. We would not expose our members to that risk. You just could not script it. The parameters are changing all the time. They will constantly ask for a change of the trial, and it will go on and on and on.

The final paragraph in the EC's resolution: "Once NJC trials have been evaluated the results will be issued to members" blah, blah, blah. OK, so we don't know when the trials are going to end, we don't know when the evaluation is going to start, and we don't know when the evaluation is going to end, we don't know what consultation period we're going to have with our members. We will still be talking about these trials at conference next year, I can guarantee it.

Two seconds, chair, and I'm finished. I'll finish by using a term that I hadn't come across since the illegal war in Iraq, that's called "mission creep" I will give you the definition of what it says about mission creep. It's a gradual shift in

objectives during the course of a campaign, often resulting in an unplanned long-term commitment. Comrades, take ownership of this trial now, support Cleveland's motion, prevent mission creep. I second. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

I now call resolution 5 Emergency Medical Response to be moved by Merseyside and the amendments to be moved by London and Shropshire. The executive council oppose resolution 5 and both amendments. Merseyside.

Resolution 5 – EMERGENCY MEDICAL RESPONSE

Conference applauds the pragmatism shown by FBU Members currently involved in Emergency Medical Response (EMR) trials. It is clear that participation in EMR trials in certain Fire and Rescue Services is unpopular with many FBU Members. Conference commends those Members strength of purpose and unity in abiding by the Conference 2015 decision to undertake EMR trials despite those Members having their own personal reservations. The circular NJC/13/15 'Pay, Terms and Conditions Workstreams: Emergency Medical Response Workstream Trials' informs that the trial period will conclude by the end of June 2016 and that approved trials will be reviewed between April and the end of June 2016 to assess progress.

Conference notes that the key aims of the current EMR trials are to:

- *Secure additional funds for the Fire and Rescue Service*
- *Protect the Fire and Rescue Service from further financial attacks by the Government*
- *Prevent further station closures and job losses*

This review period is therefore crucial when measuring whether the key aims of the trial have been secured and also as to the decision whether EMR will be permanently included as part of the Fire and Rescue Service Role Maps. If following the review the decision taken is that EMR will be permanently included as part of the Fire and Rescue Service Role Maps, Conference instructs the Executive Council to have achieved, during the review period, an agreed National Joint Council (NJC) Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Ambulance Service unions and take the appropriate measures to ensure that all Brigade Committees adhere to the stipulations contained within. Where Brigade Committees and individual Members are found to be undertaking EMR outside of the agreed MoU, Conference instructs the Executive Council to take immediate steps to rectify the situation.

The NJC MoU must be specific in addressing:

- *An NJC agreed training provision*
- *Welfare support*
- *Capability issues resulting from EMR*
- *Core Pay and/or Additional Responsibility Allowance payments*
- *Disclosure and Barring Service checks*
- *A voluntary aspect to undertaking EMR duties, which should be incorporated into any alteration to Fire and Rescue Service Role Maps*

Conference instructs the Executive Council to produce a full report addressing the above to be circulated to All Members within one month of the conclusion of the trial period, 30th June 2016.

MERSEYSIDE

AMENDMENT 1

In second paragraph, add a fourth bullet point: 'Secure pay improvements for FBU members'.

LONDON

AMENDMENT 2

In fourth paragraph, add the following bullet points:

- *Mobilising procedure*
- *Fire Cover Provisions*

SHROPSHIRE

BRO MARK ROWE (Merseyside):

Thanks, president. Conference, we are accepting the amendments from London and Shropshire. Conference, 12 months ago it was agreed that EMR trials would be undertaken and that the trials would conclude on 30 June 2016. To that end these approved trials would be reviewed between April and the end of June 2016 to assess progress. This resolution is specific to the EMR workstream, not all the NJC workstreams. The whole point, we believe, of the EMR trials was to seek eventually to agree a national memorandum of understanding that all fire and rescue services would abide by – a lot like the national standards we agreed for MTFA this morning and that the AGS spoke on so eloquently. This was due to the fact that many fire and rescue services were already undertaking some form of emergency medical response.

What we actually now have are 30 trials and 30 different trials, with some fire and rescue services only going to very specific red 1 calls – heart attack/death only; and others going to a range of red 1 and red 2 calls. Some fire and rescue services are refusing to transport casualties in fire engines while others are transporting casualties to hospital using fire engines. Yet others have designated fire ambulances. Enhanced data barring checks (EDBS), the old criminal record checks, are being applied differently as well in different fire and rescue services. This is a requirement that's been set by ambulance services before they agree to local EMR trials. So if you're taking part in the trial, in some brigades you must be checked. Remember, taking part in the trial is not voluntary.

So this is not a resolution seeking to end EMR, conference. This is a resolution seeking, through our experiences to date, to assist in the formulation of a national EMR memorandum of understanding. Comrades, if you do not have semi-decent industrial relations in your brigades and have not been able to achieve a no-sacking agreement despite what these EDBS checks reveal – through our experience there's been a whole range of convictions not declared by our members prior to employment – you may be inadvertently getting members sacked by participating in an EMR trial.

No brigade committee has right of veto on the trials, and proposals from the employer to take part in any EMR trial are signed off at the NJC with or without brigade committee agreement. The resolution notes the key aims of the current trial are firstly to secure additional funds for the fire and rescue service. Conference, we've got to be realistic. This aim, we believe, has failed. The Tories, after we commenced the EMR trials, announced even deeper cuts to the fire and rescue service. The second aim: to protect the fire and rescue service from further financial attacks by government. Again, conference, we've got to be realistic about this. We've got to measure that against the aims that we set ourselves. Conference, we've seen, since the start of the EMR trials, an even more vicious financial attack that has left many fire and rescue services struggling to provide fire cover, let alone emergency medical response. The third aim was to prevent further station closures and job losses. The government's financial announcement takes us up to 2020. Conference, is there a single UK fire and rescue service that can say they are not having to make further job cuts, or to consider more station closures?

Finally on the aims of the trial, conference, we're seeking to secure pay improvements for FBU members. But, conference, it is the case that we've been informed that our pay rises up to 2020 have been capped at 1 per cent per year. Is it realistic to believe the government, who have now missed practically every financial target that they've set themselves, will discuss a pay offer above 1 per cent with the FBU because we are undertaking an EMR capability? I would ask you to think carefully on that. I think I know the answer to that already.

Conference, we undertook the trial, we set ourselves a review period and we set ourselves a conclusion date. That date is 30 June 2016. Conference, what we're saying is it's time to draw breath, collate the information we have and time to agree a national MoU. If the trials are to begin again they should do so with us all working to the same MoU, not all off doing something different because that's what got us into this position in the first place.

The resolution sets clear aims that must be achieved within the national MoU, and identifies how we should address fire and rescue services that are found to be undertaking EMR trials outside of any nationally agreed MoU. The areas that need to be specifically addressed are contained within our resolution so I'm not going to go into them.

Conference, we understand the issues associated with EMR and how it affects different brigades, and that is why the national MoU must have specific mention of the voluntary aspect. We don't mean by voluntary individual

members utilising individual opt out. Rather, what we mean is that brigade committees are given the ability to decide whether EMR is something which should be utilised within their brigades. Conference, you can bet your life that those of you who are not already involved in an EMR trial soon will be, as any extension to the trial will see your chief fire officer seeking to get you involved also. The resolution simply outlines the requirements that should be included in a national emergency medical response memorandum of understanding. The resolution seeks to take stock of the information we have collated to date, use it and strengthen our position going forward. I urge you to support. I move. (Applause)

THE PRESIDENT:

Do we have a seconder for that resolution? *Formally* Formally seconded. Could I have London to move their amendment, please? *Formally* Formally moved. Do we have a seconder for the London amendment? *Formally* Formally seconded. Can I ask Shropshire to come and move their amendment, please? *Formally* Formally moved. Do we have a seconder for the Shropshire amendment? *Formally* Formally seconded. That's open for debate, conference. Would you indicate from your seats who wants to come up and speak and I'll acknowledge you. Yes, please, yes, please, yes, please. Anyone else? Yes, please.

BRO GARY KEARY (GMC):

President, conference, I am speaking in opposition to the EC's emergency resolution. Comrades, in September last year the UK's largest EMR trial started in Greater Manchester. This trial involved all 56 of the brigade's appliances being available 24/7 to respond to red 1 cardiac arrest calls at the behest of North West Ambulance Service. This trial was initiated with the endorsement of the NJC joint secretaries following 12 months of talks. The memorandum of understanding, which was developed and widely considered as best practice, came about due to the absolute unity between the Fire Brigades Union and NNAS UNISON. Earlier this year I was invited, as the GMC FBU representative, to attend the LGA conference in Bristol to deliver a joint presentation with GMFRS management on the development of our EMR memorandum of understanding. At a late stage, however, this presentation was pulled due to the brigade's reluctance to recognise the significance of the NJC's involvement in bringing about this trial. Comrades, I'm sure you would agree that is a worrying development. Additionally, a further element contained within GMFRS's application to the NJC joint secretaries detailed that crews would attend concern for welfare calls on behalf of Greater Manchester Police. This has recently gone live at three stations. Since the beginning of this work the union has received a significant amount of negative feedback from our members involved, including some serious concerns about the possible risks posed to firefighters undertaking this work. Given this, the union respectfully requested a suspension of this work until these concerns had been considered and assurances could be gained that adequate safeguards were in place. This request for a temporary suspension was rejected.

It is the case that our EMR pilot, which has now run continuously for eight months, has been successful. It will be no surprise to comrades in this room that firefighters have embraced this new challenge and delivered emphatically. The EC resolution asks for a possible extension of trials to give more time for the gathering of information and data in order to fully evaluate these trials. I am sure the Greater Manchester model will already be able to provide much information and data to allow a report to be compiled. I can be absolutely clear: this concept works. There are people in Manchester today who, as a result of firefighters' intervention, are living proof. You can be assured that chief fire officers, along with local and national politicians, know of this success too.

The only issue that remains unknown is whether our members will be receiving additional fair pay for providing this service. Despite these trials and firefighters providing additional services our brigade was still hit with a £14.6m cut by central government, a loss of a further 285 jobs.

We in GMC are not surprised by the lack of engagement by ministers and government departments around the extension of the role of the fire and rescue services. Why should they bother? They are currently already receiving this free from many of our brigades. The only way to make these people sit up and listen is to end the pilot on 30 June. There is no appetite to continue aimlessly a pilot which increasingly threatens to offer no reward. Extension of these pilots will only serve to further embed this non-role map work and give brigades the confidence to create the illusion that this work should continue to be carried out with little or no recompense, or even venture down the avenue of custom and practice.

Conference, passing this resolution today will deliver a blow to officials in the UK who, on a daily basis are engaged in battle against --

THE PRESIDENT:

Keep the lights, comrade.

BRO GARY KEARY (GMC):

One more second – management teams who want everything in return for nothing. Do not weaken our industrial position and do not allow our members' goodwill to be further exploited. GMC opposes. Thank you. *(Applause)*

BRO PAUL DAWSON (Durham):

President, conference, we are supporting Cleveland's resolution 4. I serve on a station that has been part of the EMR trial which began within the allotted time and will achieve the six month timeframe on 30 June. The overall feeling amongst members is that it's a very worthwhile provision. However, there is also a pessimism that after the six month period the FBU will be too weak to stop the trial. We don't feel that the trial has kicked up any surprises, and the belief amongst members is that there is already enough data out there from the EMR trials that have happened so far, co-responding that's gone on outside conference approval, and also the ambulance incident records as well.

The worry is that managers around the country are trying to hijack the trials for their own needs. If there isn't enough data there, there must be some idea when there is enough data. When is that? Our members have been prepared and kept their side of the bargain, and shouldn't be strung along. Please support resolution 4. *(Applause)*

BRO ANDY SCATTERGOOD (West Midlands):

President, conference, I'll be speaking in support of the EC emergency resolution. I can only talk on experience within the West Midlands with regard to the NJC workstreams where the focus has been on medical response, wider work trials specifically responding to falls. This does affect fire cover. We are responding in our brigade response vehicles which, if it doesn't make any make any sense to you, are vans. This ties the crews up for a significant period of time whilst they are responding.

I understand the rationale of conference 2015, that we agreed to allow trial workstreams to take place to try to secure funding for fire and rescue services and better pay for our members. The trial that has been implemented within the West Midlands has proved at times to be controversial with our members, especially when the initial idea was put forward. I don't think many of our members would have actively chosen to respond to people falling in their own homes. The argument that was commonly used against this was that it's not the job of a firefighter. Having said that, the majority of our members have seen that carrying out this type of work is beneficial, not just for the vulnerable who we respond to, but to the future role of a firefighter. Our members have stepped up and performed excellently, as they always do.

The service that we now deliver is better than the one that these people were receiving before. The attacks on social care and the complete disinterest from the Tory government to this section of society has meant that we are the only ones now best placed to deal with these people and to help them when they need it. However, it hasn't come without any issues, issues regarding mobilisation and equipment and training. We are all aware of the budget cuts that we are being forced to deal with over the last six years. Being able to carry out this type of work within the West Midlands has meant that some of the burden has been relieved, as a small but significant financial revenue is projected to be raised from it. Is this right? Is this what we should be doing? I have my own personal, strong views on it. But the reality is that without bringing in this revenue the cuts and the attacks on our members in the West Midlands in regard to jobs and conditions could have been a lot worse.

I'm being told I'm out of time. I will skip to the bottom. We as a union need to get on top of this and we know that. As brigade officials we will do everything we can. But it must be stated that as we do this there is no proper facility for us as officials to report these issues to the NJC. Support and guidance needs to be increased for those officials involved in any trial.

It must also be noted that if any brigade does veer away from the terms set out in the workstreams, if any brigade uses or abuses our members, or unnecessarily puts the public at risk, then the joint secretaries should immediately offer full assistance to the brigade officials of that brigade and use the full weight of their power at the NJC level to do what is necessary to stop these bad practices. Conference, I urge you to support the EC resolution. Thank you. *(Applause)*

BRO CAMERON MATTHEWS (Cambridgeshire):

Conference, president, I am speaking in support of both the EC emergency resolution 2 and also London's resolution 2 as well, because I think that's important. First of all, just to touch on what a couple of comrades have said already, I'm hoping that the general secretary, or whoever responds, provides some assurances around the dates of the end of the trial. Whilst I do concede that for negotiation strategy it may be appropriate that it is extended, but it shouldn't be extended too far.

The reason I want to speak on London's resolution is because I think it is absolutely crucial that we do have a proper discussion on pay, and pay must form part of these negotiations. It is fundamental. We all know how much our pay has fallen back over the last six, seven, eight years and our members are absolutely desperate to have their quality of life improved. So we must have that as part of these negotiations. That cannot be slipped.

What do I think the trials are important? Locally, we haven't even started them yet. I think that's indicative of why we shouldn't be having local brigades arrange EMR. With ours they are only going to start on 16 May. What's happened is there has been a whole range of discussions; it has changed constantly as we have gone along, and quite frankly I think what our local trial will show is that the lack of resources in Cambridgeshire will not be able to deliver everything that they are expecting they will be able to. Also, we have seen things like training drop off which was promised; we've seen other bits and pieces like appropriate PPE drop off. So I think it will be a good example of why we have to have national negotiations and a national arrangement if we are going to do EMR moving into the future.

I suppose lastly I just want to touch on our region, again to support what I've just said. In our region we tried to get a regional approach to these trials. Of the six fire chiefs in region 9 they couldn't agree between them what type of model would be run, whether that be training, whether that be how they are going to respond in vehicles or on fire engines. So again, that reinforces the necessity for the NJC and it reinforces why we have to have these trials go for a good period, to get a good amount of data and have a national agreement about how it will be done once it is in permanently.

So I urge you to support both the emergency resolution and London's resolution 2. *(Applause)*

SIS AMELIA DIALLO (CSNC):

President, conference, I've just got a quick general comment on emergency medical response incidents and the fact that in one way or another the work impacts on control. That impact varies from control to control, depending on the type of trials. Some carry out the mobilising, some don't, and they are informed later on in the incident. So the workload varies. We would ask that whatever the outcome of this debate any future report from the trials looks into the impact on control and takes it into consideration. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

Just before rights of reply, is there anybody else wishes to contribute to this debate? Two people. Yes, comrade and yes, comrade. Carry on, please.

BRO RUSSELL KING (Tyne & Wear):

President, conference, we were sent down here with an open mandate to listen to the debate. There were worries around the possible extension and the openness of that. We know it wasn't going to be an open-ended extension, but at the minute that's not good enough for Tyne & Wear to make a decision. If you cannot give a physical time on it, we're likely to support Cleveland. Thank you. *(Applause)*

BRO LEE BELSTEN (Surrey):

President, conference, just to let you know I'm a little bit nervous because I'm a first time speaker. *(Applause)* I'm up here speaking in the support of the emergency resolution by the executive council. In Surrey we took on the trial when it was agreed at conference last year. We were one of the first ones to go on to the trial. We're not quite there yet, and that's the whole point that we need to support this resolution, because we've still got a lot of data to find out. We are only just about to implement red 2 calls and we don't know what they're like yet. We've taken on red 1, we've got some reasonable data from that. One of the other things that has come from the trial is the mobilising system and how we are mobilised – whether that is wholetime, retained crews or the flexi duty officers as well. So there's a whole load of data still to come from that. If we let this one fall and we support Cleveland's resolution to cease this on 30 June, then I believe that we won't have anything to go with and we'll have nothing to bargain for later on when it comes down to recompense and all the other benefits that go with that. I would ask that conference supports the emergency resolution by the executive council. Thanks. *(Applause)*

BRO CHRIS TAPP (Derbyshire):

President, conference, I just want to make a very quick point on pay. There's a lot of talk about pay on this, but there's a crucial difference in how we are going about it. I think a couple of resolutions talk about it, some don't. Is it going to be within our role maps, which again gets talked about? Or is it going to be additional responsibilities allowance? I think there is a crucial difference here. We're either tying our members into it, so chief fire officers across the country have then got carte blanche rule over saying yes, you're doing it full stop because it's here in the role map, or actually it's an additional responsibility allowance so therefore it's still voluntary. I appreciate if it was on that basis not everyone would get it. There are issues around pensionable pay and all those things. But I suppose I want to say to the executive council and the general secretary: I would like to not take it for granted that it's automatically that we're aiming to get this in the role map full stop. I know there's a lot of members in Derbyshire saying I don't want to do it full stop; regardless of pay I don't want to do it; I didn't join to do it. I appreciate the developing role of a firefighter, but I think that's a valid point that we should not take it for granted that our members, for pay, regardless of the amount, will want to attend medical incidents. I would like Matt to just give us some assurance that we're not going on that basis and we will get consultation on how this might be remunerated.

Just one other thing, and hopefully other people would like this clarification, if the president could just clarify what carries with what and what can and can't do again. I would much appreciate that. I don't know if anyone else but I certainly would. Thank you. *(Applause)*

BRO CRAIG DRINKALD (ONC):

President, conference, I wasn't planning on coming to speak on anything other than the resolution that I spoke on yesterday, but from listening to the arguments I just felt I needed to tell you about a couple of conversations that I had last week. Neither of them was confidential so I feel comfortable I can tell you about them. The first one was with a group manager in Cumbria. We don't do EMR currently in Cumbria and he was talking about the trial. When I informed him that the trial finished at the end of June he gave me a little wink and said that something might be happening about that, which makes me think that we can be strung along by the employers for as long as they want. The second was with the chief fire and rescue adviser, Mr Holland, who came up and had the pleasure of talking to the managers in Cumbria last week. We spoke about EMR. I think we should be doing it and I said that to him. But when I asked him outright whether or not there would be funding for the fire service, whether or not it would protect our future, he categorically said to me that he didn't think there would be any funding coming forward for us. I think we're being strung along by the employers, I think we need to put a line in the ground and say to them: if you want us to do it, you know it works, you've seen the trials and we want to get the right funding for it for us and our members. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

OK, I'm going to ask the general secretary to move the executive council's opposition to the resolutions, and also give us right of reply in one contribution. So good luck with that!

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Comrades, I think it's been a very useful debate, and it is a very difficult issue. I appreciate the tone of the discussions and the concerns that everybody has raised within these discussions. In terms of some of the other

resolutions, on the London resolution the question of the centrality of pay. We have been absolutely clear. Let's make sure everyone is absolutely clear on this. Every single discussion that we have had on these issues with the employers the question of pay is raised. Some of the points that were raised earlier on about is that ARAs, or is that pay, that is an important strategic point that we need to address. I will explain the approach we've taken and what the employers are seeking out of that.

Let's be clear about some of the risks that are involved in these discussions. We're dealing with lots of different agencies and players in this. You have a Westminster government, you have three other devolved governments, you have individual chief officers, you have individual employers, you then have the national fire and rescue service employers – all with slightly different agendas and we're trying to get the best position for our service, for our members, for our pay in that complicated environment. As I said in opening, part of the agenda is that certain people within the fire and rescue service have endlessly said the NJC will never deliver any of this; that's why you're better off scrapping it. Let's remember that in the background we have the Thomas review, which was commissioned by Penny Mordaunt during our pensions dispute. Why? To deliberately undermine this union, to undermine national bargaining and to attack the NJC. It has not been published, but it's sitting there in the wings and you can bet your life what it will say. It will say the NJC is a waste of time, the minister should step in and scrap it. That's one of the possibilities. So we have to play this very carefully.

In terms of whether firefighters take on some of this work or not, again one of the other pressures is we have a government – certainly the Westminster government – which is very keen to push the whole question of volunteering and the whole question of using private agencies. We already have some of that creeping in. We have it in relation to emergency flood response, we have volunteer agencies already in various parts of the country, we have certain community volunteers doing some of the work that we're talking about. I think strategically people will have to consider: is the alternative to firefighters doing some of this work suddenly a massive investment in the ambulance service? Or, is one of the possibilities a massive drive towards further volunteering within this area of service provision? So there are a lot of balances to think about.

In terms of the Cleveland resolution, and on the trial and the lack of clarity around the trial apparently. Let's be clear, it wasn't conference that determined the parameters of that trial. Conference authorised us to go off and negotiate on those issues. The parameters of those trials and the dates for those trials were negotiated with the employers. That's inevitably the way it was, because if we're negotiating, until we know what the other side's position is we can't engage in those negotiations.

I want to be clear in terms of some of the points that are raised in a number of the resolutions, in the Merseyside resolution and the Cleveland resolution. We're absolutely clear, there is no decision is going to be made on the long-term future of these discussions by the executive council. This is a matter for you and this is a matter for our members. People are absolutely right, we won a very important legal case as a result of members in Nottinghamshire taking a ballot, refusing to engage in co-responding. We ended up in the High Court. I gave evidence in that case in the High Court. The employers went to appeal and we won very clearly a ruling in that court case that there is no contractual obligation on any firefighter working under NJC conditions of service to engage in emergency medical response. We'd be utterly irresponsible if we just gave that away without bargaining around it. So that's absolutely central to the whole discussion. The truth is in many cases they are bypassing us. They have already bypassed us with certain non-members throughout the period during which we had that ban in place.

In terms of some of the specifics that were raised in the discussion, Dave mentioned in seconding the Cleveland resolution that we won't protect jobs. Actually, we heard in the opening contributions from Humberside that we may already have protected some jobs in Humberside. So that's not evidence saying that will happen. I did find the reference to the 2002/2003 pay dispute somewhat bizarre, Dave. I do not want to reopen some of the debates around that, but to say that what we did at the time was decide that we were worth £30,000 and launched a campaign for it and that's the way to do it! I have to say I don't agree. If you look at your pay rates now, 14 years down the line you're on £29,345. So we didn't achieve £30,000 through that tactic. The idea that that is what we should do in these circumstances, on top of two governments launching the biggest austerity drive in modern history, I think is not a viable tactic.

But I have to say in that regard, what is the alternative? Me and Dave have had this discussion outside of these forums. What is the alternative? Every single service represented here at conference has experienced cuts. Probably the service who could probably most sit on their laurels is Northern Ireland where the lowest level of cuts have taken place over the past ten years. But Dave, you know very well, we've lost something like 40 per cent of the jobs in West Yorkshire. What I want to know is: if it's not this strategy, what is the strategy to protect jobs, to protect professionalism and to try to improve pay? No-one in the past three years has come here to present an alternative strategy to counter the one that the executive council has recommended and conference has agreed.

Dave also mentioned mission creep. There is no mission creep. The executive council and the national joint secretaries on your behalf have exactly complied with the policies determined by this conference and I take exception to the idea that we're not doing that. It is about protecting our profession, it's about protecting lives, it's about protecting our service, and it's about trying to get a better deal on pay. Those are the essential features of what we are trying to do.

In terms of the Merseyside resolution, Mark outlined the differences in the trials. I accept that. I have to say, I think there are some very good points in the Merseyside resolution. They are exactly the sort of points that we need to be addressing, and we will address them if there is an extension. Let's be clear what we're talking about if we extend these trials. By authorising us to negotiate an extension – and that's what we're talking about; we're not saying let's sign up to an extension here; we're saying authorise us to negotiate a possible extension – that allows us in those discussions to put various demands as a condition for those extensions to those trials. Some of them have already been raised here. We've had dialogue with certain brigade committees around the country. Amelia mentioned the question of control members and the question of mobilisation. That is specifically referred to in our resolution. I will say to conference, in one of our brigades we've got a particular issue around recognition in relation to our control members. That will be put into those discussions prior to any extension of the trials being negotiated. So this is not the executive council saying: let's just sign up to extension to these trials.

Mark did say, by the way, that individual brigade committees should effectively be allowed to opt out of those trials. I have to say, in our view that would undermine national collective bargaining. I know the difficulties, and we've had discussions with the comrades in Merseyside. We know that there are difficulties in a number of brigades around this. I have to say, I thank those brigade committees concerned where there was that particular objection, for cooperating and for assisting, despite those difficulties that you face. I do genuinely thank those members and those brigade committees for assisting in that, despite sometimes your own views, and despite the views of members locally. That is genuinely acknowledged by the executive council. This is about how do we, in difficult circumstances, try to achieve the maximum unity that we can? But we don't agree the idea of effectively a local veto.

However, again, what we can build into any extension is potentially greater protections, taking account of the problems that you need to flag up. Some have already been flagged up. You can flag further issues up through your executive council members so that we say right at the start: we're willing to discuss an extension, however, these are some of the things we want addressing in order to agree that extension. That potentially puts us in a much stronger position.

Coming on to Gary's point, the Greater Manchester trial and there was this bizarre blip at the LGA fire conference when the Greater Manchester management seemed to say no, this is no longer an NJC trial. They weren't saying that to the NJC employers' side joint secretary, by the way. There's a problem for them. If that's the game they want to play, our members are cooperating with an NJC-approved trial, and if Greater Manchester management don't want an NJC-approved trial, then our members will no longer cooperate with it. I think that's the sort of thing we can discuss in relation to any potential extension that we begin to negotiate.

Durham said that the data should already be there. This comes back to the point about who we are dealing with. We face a massive uphill battle to try to get additional funding. You all said it: the cuts are going ahead, they've already agreed budgets to make cuts. The idea that they're just going to say: Theresa May invites Matt Wrack in and says yes, here you are, here's a few billion pounds for EMR work in the fire service. It's not going to happen like that. We have to make a case. We have to go to them. But also we have to make the case locally to politicians. We have to go, for example I think, to the mayor of London, to the other mayors and say: we could provide additional improved public services, but you have to start supporting us and you have to start making the case politically that

this investment needs to be made. That is a huge task and it's not one that can just fall on our shoulders. That is the sort of lobbying engagement that you will need to take part in as well.

In terms of dates, again coming back to what we will negotiate if you agree this. We will approach the employers, if you agree to authorise us to do so, to say we now want to discuss before the next meeting of the National Joint Council the possibility of an extension. We need clear timelines on what that means and that needs to be built into it. We need clear timelines on the problems that we've identified in the first batch of trials, but also we need to be clear about how we will evaluate that data and that information.

Think about the political importance of this, comrades. We've heard from several speakers that this model is delivering a service. It is actually saving lives. Do not underestimate the importance of that. I was speaking to an MP the other day who said if you can save lives why would you not do so? If you can save lives that is a huge value, a huge tribute to the work that your members do. We need to build on that. We should be saying yes, we want to save lives, we want to make our communities safer. We want to do it in a professional way, and we want to do it with professional pay and so on.

On the question of pay Chris asked some valuable questions: are we about to negotiate changes in the role map, or are we going to simply say that we would lift our ban to allow people in some other way to agree to undertake emergency medical response and possibly be paid an ARA? I think that is a matter we will have to discuss. I'll tell you the approach we've taken so far is that this is about pay for all our members, because the employers want this to be about pay. First of all, a lot of the employers don't want it to be about any pay, but those employers who think they may have to pay something just want a narrow group of people doing it and they just want to pay the people who are doing it. Why would we give up that bargaining chip in these discussions? If they want to change our role map then discuss changing our role map and discuss how we might be recompensed for doing that.

Chris, from what he said, seems to have a different point of view on that. That's the approach we've taken so far. I think that for the greater majority of our members that is the better approach. It is about pay, it's about pay structures, it's about the sort of pay we want for the future.

In terms of the comment about what Peter Holland has said about funding, about employers stringing us along, I don't know what the employers have said. I'm friendly with Peter, but I'm not sure to what degree he is any sort of advocate for the fire and rescue service, to be honest. You would hope that someone who gets into that position, having had several jobs and a couple of pensions out of the fire service, would at least try to argue on behalf of firefighters and the fire and rescue service when he has got the ear of the home secretary. I don't see much evidence of that, unfortunately. But that doesn't surprise us because his predecessors were exactly the same – Ken Knight and the others. But the only people who argue this, and the only people who strategically led this, by the way, is us. These discussions were initiated by us at your decision, with the employers. Otherwise the employers would be quite happy to sit back and say: OK, let's meet next year and discuss pay; by the way, it might be 1 per cent or it might not be 1 per cent. They're quite content. Actually, if that's the route we go down, that I think is a further death blow to the NJC, to national bargaining, to decent pay. You've already decided in previous discussions, this is the best strategy.

The other approach, the approach of Cleveland and Merseyside, to present an ultimatum to our employers and when they don't give way we fold our arms and scrap it, that's in our view not a strategy for defending and renewing our service. I don't think it's an approach our members on the ground want in reality. We believe the trials should continue, subject to serious negotiations about what that extension in trials might mean. That's the right approach, that's the strategy to get results. Support the executive council's emergency resolution. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

London right of reply.

BRO PAUL EMBERY (London):

President, conference, just an extremely quick remark, conference. I think London would agree with the vast majority of what Matt says. We're still none the wiser as to why the EC are opposing London's resolution. We think

it's consistent with the case that Matt set out. So it's a little bit intriguing as to why they are opposing it. But we are very clear that we think the two can carry, the two are consistent with each other. I think it is perfectly possible for those who are supporting the EC's resolution to also support London's resolution. We don't think it has to be an either/or. So if you are supporting the EC we would also ask you to support London. Thanks very much. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

Cleveland, do you require a right of reply? Yes.

BRO BRIAN GIBSON (Cleveland):

It's a clarification for the comrade over there about red 1 and red 2 calls. He says he doesn't know what they are. I'll tell you what they are. A red 1 call is an unconscious casualty in a cardiac arrest. On the North East Ambulance Service website red 2 is anything else, anything else, that's all it says. I just thought I'd let you know that.

We fully understand, Matt, that you need time to produce a detailed report on the findings after the trial. We totally get that and it needs to be robust. We also agree what you mentioned that the fire and rescue service have taken too much time over it. But we persuaded our members to get involved over this because of the end date. You mentioned clear time limits. Well, we already had clear time limit from the report from 2015 and that's gone over. What our members will be worried about is will they really believe that we'll stick to the clear timing that we're hoping to put up in the future?

We worked really hard in Cleveland to do this because you'd already done a good job to persuade us not to do it after the High Court trial. When we told them eventually we thought it was going to be voluntary, so we thought great, we've got some people in Cleveland who are really interested in that kind of work. Then we were told it's not voluntary; it's going to become part of your role. Now they might be told (after this if it goes wrong) that there's no end date.

What you've got to ask yourselves, conference, is are you happy to leave this hall on Friday and tell your members that in fact there's currently no end date for this trial? Will your members be happy with that, conference? There's a real worry in Cleveland that we're going to bleed members that no amount of sticking plasters is going to put right. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

Merseyside right of reply.

BRO MARK ROWE (Merseyside):

Thanks, president. Our view is we've got 30 brigades undertaking this trial so we think there's enough data out there. As one of the other comrades said, historically there has been a lot of brigades that have undertaken EMR without the trial. So let's have a look at that data because the concern is that the longer we continue this trial the more difficult we think it's going to be to negotiate a decent pay rise, and we run the risk of giving the chief fire officers the ammunition to hurt us if we don't achieve a pay rise. For instance, if we save 10 lives in a month but do eventually fail in the pay negotiations and have to come off it, that's going to look incredibly bad for us in the press. We're going to be looked at as mercenaries. Our concern is around the longer the trial continues the greater the risk that that could actually hurt us eventually. President, thanks. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

OK, conference, I was asked by the comrade from Derbyshire to give clarification. Clearly, the clarification I gave at the start is not now the case because of the withdrawal of resolution 3. So, to be clear, here is the final clarification. If the executive council's emergency resolution carries, resolution 4 from Cleveland and resolution 5 from Merseyside fall. Resolution 2 from London can carry with the executive council emergency resolution. If the executive council emergency resolution falls, resolution 2, resolution 4 and resolution 5 can carry. I am now going to go to the vote. I will clarify it again. I now put emergency resolution 2 to the vote. If emergency resolution 2 carries resolution 4 and resolution 5 fall. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. *That is CARRIED.*

(A card vote was called)

Stay in your seats. Chair of standing orders.

THE CHAIR OF STANDING ORDERS (Bro Steve Shelton):

Thank you, president. Can all those voting for please stand up. Voting cards, bring them to the front and place in this box, please. Has everybody who wished to vote for placed their card in the box? OK. Daniel Sheldon to the back of the room, please. Thank you. OK. Conference, those wishing to vote against please stand up and bring your cards to the front. Thank you. Conference, is there a brigade out there that hasn't yet voted? This is your last chance. Thank you, Brian, Kev, Dave. Thanks president.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thank you. I'm going to adjourn conference for tea. I can't stress enough how prompt I want you back. I don't want you filtering in here at 4 o'clock. I want you prompt back in a quarter of an hour. You're adjourned for a tea break. Thank you.

(Break for tea)

BRO BRIAN GIBSON (Chief scrutineer):

Conference, as chief scrutineer I am here to announce the result of the card vote for emergency resolution 2 NJC Negotiations on Future Work of Firefighters and Fire and Rescue Services. The result is as follows: for 25,032; against 10,007. Therefore this emergency resolution *CARRIES*.

THE PRESIDENT:

OK, conference, so as you are also aware, resolution 4 and resolution 5 now fall. So I now put resolution 2 from London to the vote. The executive council oppose. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. *That is CARRIED*.

Right, conference, we did agree and you did agree that you would be looking at a film as soon as you came back. I call the general secretary to tell you what that's about and pin back your eyes.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

President, conference, those of you who were around in 2009 when we ran the Part of the Team campaign, will recall that we made a campaign film, and it was based on a call to Lancashire fire control. We were using it to highlight the work of emergency fire controls and how essential that is within the fire and rescue service more widely. That call was taken by an FBU member, Sam Pendlebury, and involved quite a harrowing call. Anyone who listens to the original film will certainly endorse that.

Last year we were contacted by Sian Griffiths. I think she had retired by then. She had been in turn contacted by two young film makers who had come across that story and had listened to that original call that Sam Pendlebury took. They decided to try to make a short film about it using crowd funding. They then approached the union. We thought it was a very valuable initiative and we did sponsor the production of that film, produced by Rebecca Morgan and directed by Carolyn Barkleat. They then went on to arrange the filming with two actors, Kate Dickie (who you may know from *Game of Thrones*) and Vicki McClure (who you may know from *This is England*) who both were very helpful and participated in that. I think we were very proud to get the thing off the ground in the first place, but then you'll be aware that at the BAFTAs in the category for short films the film *Operator* won the BAFTA at this year's awards. So I think we are enormously pleased that we played a role in that. We are enormously proud that actually it relates to the work of someone who has left the fire service but who was an FBU member, and the work that our brothers and sisters in emergency fire controls undertake.

We held a screening of this at the Curzon in Soho recently, with a number of people invited along. For me, hearing the original call, it does set the hairs on the back of your neck standing (if you've got any, that is). It is extremely powerful and extremely moving. It's fantastic that this area of work was celebrated by Rebecca and Caroline in that way. We thought that it would be very useful to show that at this conference. We will be debating other control issues later in the conference agenda, but standing orders agreed we would take a few minutes of your time to watch *Operator* now.

(The film was shown)

THE PRESIDENT:

Thank you, conference. I now call resolution 15 with the amendment from Shropshire. The executive council support. Resolution 15 Fire Safety Duty Systems to be moved by Cumbria and the amendment from Shropshire. Once again, as I say, the executive council support both the resolution and the amendment.

Resolution 15 – FIREFIGHTER SAFETY – DUTY SYSTEMS

Conference is concerned about the growing utilisation of Day Crewing Plus/Close Proximity Crewing or any of its hybrids which results in firefighters working excessive hours. Conference views such shift systems as a risk to firefighter safety, as potentially unlawful and could have a ruinous effect on our pension schemes through the cap and share policy foisted on us by the Tory led coalition.

Conference seeks that the Executive Council continues to resist these dangerous duty systems by all means necessary and continues to provide support for Brigade Officials having to deal with such proposals.

CUMBRIA

AMENDMENT

In second paragraph, delete “and continues to provide support” replace with “including the production of a guidance document”

SHROPSHIRE

BRO DAVE BURN (Cumbria):

Thanks, president, conference. That was pretty powerful stuff that! We are accepting the amendment from Shropshire. This is very similar to the South Yorkshire emergency resolution that got passed yesterday, so I won't take up too much of your time, conference. We know the basics; we've read the resolution. I'm not here to criticise the honourable work that any of the officials have done, or our predecessors, on existing systems that you might deem fall into this category. Those negotiations were carried out in good faith at difficult times and we should applaud our colleagues for doing so.

These hard times are unfortunately still with us and they're only going to get worse. We know this. I stand here concerned that the management of our fire and rescue services are blindly destroying the fabric of our profession by insisting on implementing cuts, and they're doing so by introducing duty systems such as day crewing plus, or close proximity crewing, call it whatever you want. We've been through a similar thing like this and our regional secretary informed our deputy chief fire officer (because they tried to call it something else) that if it walks like a duck, talks like a duck, acts and looks like one, what is it? Our chief found that quite amusing. But it is a duck; it's exactly what it says. So don't be blinded by any sort of hybrid version of what it is.

These types of system we know put firefighters at risk through excessive hours. It means there will be fewer firefighters on the front line. They are potentially unlawful and potentially financially ruinous to the pension scheme through the cap and share element. They may also result in big pension bills to firefighters, following on from the *Cheshire v Norman* ruling. That's something that we can't discount.

Conference, we must put a stop to the implementation of these systems which serve to progress the cuts agenda and are also detrimental to our members. Now is the time to draw that line in the sand. No more. It's time to make that stand before the fire and rescue services are broken beyond repair. To do that we need support and guidance. The amendment also covers getting that guidance in written form from the executive council. Conference, I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

Thank you. Do we have a seconder? Come to the rostrum, please.

BRO KARL WAGER (Cleveland):

President, conference, I'm seconding this one exactly for the same reasons why I seconded our comrades from

South Yorkshire yesterday. However, I did want to add one thing, and I think it's something that we do want to think about. I stand in front of you today, conference, as quite a young man with over 30 years left to do in this profession. What's going to be left for me if we allow these shift systems to come in? Yesterday the president spoke about our union in a hundred years' time. More importantly, what's going to be left for them? Please think about that and support. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

Shropshire to move their amendment, please? Formally moved. Is that seconded? Formally. That's open for debate. No debate. I now put the amendment from Shropshire to the vote. The EC support. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. *That is CARRIED.*

I now put resolution 15 as amended to the vote. The executive council support. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. *That is CARRIED.*

I now call resolution 16 Minimum Safe Crewing, national retained committee. The executive council support.

Resolution 16 – MINIMUM SAFE CREWING

Conference instructs the Executive Council to develop a strategy to oppose and reverse the dangerous trend of Brigades proposing to crew pumps without adequate recognition of the numbers needed to perform the role safely and efficiently. Such practices will put our Members at an unacceptable risk and place them under immense moral pressure to act when intentionally placed at incidents without adequate resources. We refer to previous FBU policy on crewing in support of this resolution.

NATIONAL RETAINED COMMITTEE

BRO SEAMUS McMAHON (NRC):

President, conference, nearly every fire and rescue service in the country which has a retained duty system is struggling to maintain crewing, with many services implementing unsafe and unacceptable crewing arrangements. Most have little or no recruitment for a considerable number of years. In some, recruitment freezes have been in place for many years, despite the fact that the existing workforce has dwindled to the point where it is not uncommon to have more than half the number of pumps off the run. Weekday, daytime and weekend cover is becoming increasingly difficult to maintain, and in an effort to keep pumps on the run shortcuts in safety are being put into place that compromise the safety of our members and the public we are there to protect.

Under-resourced rural stations, in particular, are being duped into engaging and crewing so-called special appliances, or riding with insufficient crews in the belief that they are protecting their own station's vulnerability. This "man and a van" approach to providing fire cover is no more than a cheap trick to boost statistics on attending calls. It is dangerous and needs to be stopped.

The reality is that the only solution to this problem is for recruitment and retention to be addressed comprehensively. The national retained committee believe that many brigades are gambling with public lives and those of our members by under-resourcing RDS stations and making little or no effort to bring their establishments back to full strength. Conference, support this resolution. The NRC give their commitment to work with the EC in developing the strategy called for. I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

Do we have a seconder for that? Yes, come to the rostrum, please, or race each other to the rostrum!

BRO STEVE WALKER (Northumberland):

President, conference, we removed resolution 18 and are speaking in support of resolution 16 from retained. Conference, we in Northumberland fully understand and sympathise with brigades up and down the country suffering from the systematic and underhand tactics of the slashing of crew levels and the introduction of so-called smaller appliances. This is all to deceive councillors into believing that they have a fully staffed appliance to protect their areas. They don't! It is all a case of allowing management to look at fire cover and see green lights on

an availability map. We as brigade officials have fought and argued long and hard to prevent this from gaining any credence and substance. We have tried repeatedly to make all stakeholders, whether it be firefighters, councillors, the public or management, aware of the totally unacceptable and moral dilemma that will (not if) face crews arriving at an incident with crews of three.

For the areas that have been earmarked for these so-called smaller appliances and the implementation of first response, I honestly fear for the safety of crews tasked with dealing with incidents in their area, their town or their village. Now management have attempted to put spin on or justify their reasons for these actions by stating that appliances crewed with three will not be mobilised to incidents such as house fires or RTCs until the next available appliance fully crewed (I don't know what that means these days) from another location or town has booked an attendance at the incident. These smaller appliances staffed with fewer crew will only be mobilised to incidents to a set criteria after the incident has been risk assessed by fire control. This is then putting more stress on our control operators.

Conference, I ask you, how many times have we been mobilised to incidents such as wheelie bin fires that have been ultimately house fires by the time the appliance arrives? I know that I have. If these appliances arrive at an incident with a crew of three in their village or town, and that incident involves someone they know and that person's family or friends are trapped, screaming for help, those firefighters are facing an incredible situation. The moral dilemma is horrendous. Do they risk their own lives in an attempt to save others, ignoring all safe systems of work with a very real risk of that decision ending in disaster, or take a step back (which is what they are expected to do) and wait for the next appliance to arrive? In Northumberland, an area of some 2,000 square miles, that can take 20 to 30 minutes, 20 to 30 minutes with friends and neighbours screaming for you to do something.

Conference, let's stop this from happening. By supporting resolution 16 we ask the EC to stop this horrendous practice becoming the norm. I second. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

Conference, that is open for debate. Come to the rostrum, please. Anybody else want to join in?

BRO RICH WILLIAMS (Staffordshire):

I'm just wondering, because last year Staffordshire brought a resolution very similar to this about crewing levels, crewing less than four, riding threes. What work has been done over the last year at the EC? We are a year on with a new resolution. It's still happening; it's getting worse. Brigades, particularly in our brigade, are still looking at crewing fours on appliances and at particular incidents of can they attend incidents with two people and potentially one person depending on the type of incident it is. Thank you.

BRO SEAN STARBUCK (National officer):

We've got laid down policies on adequate crewing and we've already started through the health and safety committee pulling together policies, looking at a strategy. I think what we're going to do now is send out for information from you, because we really need to know what's happening on the ground. So with that, we're asking for your help on this. We'll put out the survey, you give us exactly what's happening on the ground and then we'll get a strategy put out to you as soon as possible.

THE PRESIDENT:

I now put resolution 16 to the vote. The executive council support. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. *That is CARRIED.*

I now call resolution 17 Staffing Levels in Control Rooms to be moved by London. The executive council support.

Resolution 17 – STAFFING LEVELS IN CONTROL ROOMS

Conference recognises the central role of emergency control staff in the Fire and Rescue Service. Staff in control rooms represent the first line of intervention for members of the public needing assistance. Too often, our control Members are taken for granted by Fire and Rescue Service bosses and politicians.

Conference remains deeply concerned at reductions in staffing levels across control rooms. As well as presenting a danger to the public, staffing shortages lead to excessive workloads, increased stress and fatigue among control Members.

These problems have been exacerbated in some Fire and Rescue Authorities by the introduction of new mobilising systems beset with technical problems and without adequate training having been provided to all staff.

As the foremost organisation representing emergency control staff, the Fire Brigades Union vehemently opposes any attempt to compromise their welfare or professionalism.

To this end, Conference instructs the Executive Council to redouble its efforts in the campaign to oppose reductions in staffing levels in control rooms, and to take every opportunity to highlight the risks that staffing shortages pose to control Members and the public.

LONDON

BRO PAUL EMBERY (London):

President, conference, I suspect it is probably a few years since London brought a resolution on control to conference because for many years we didn't have control members in London. I'm pleased to say that that has changed now and there are a number of control members in London. We've got a good, growing branch. The reason they came over to us is because they are experiencing those significant problems in control that everybody is experiencing at the moment and they thought that the FBU was the best organisation to fight their corner, quite rightly. So it is pleasing to see that there are actually some pretty hard-hitting resolutions on the agenda this year on behalf of our control members. I think it probably shows the fact that some of those issues really are widespread and are a national problem as much as a local problem.

Speaking for London, our control members are under enormous pressure in the London control room. They are suffering from constant staff shortages, they are constantly operating below minimum levels. That in itself has the knock-on effect of creating excessive workloads and the extra stress that comes with that.

I was pleased also to see the CSNC resolution on mobilising systems, because that is something that is relevant to London as well. We've recently seen the introduction of Vision and I know other brigades are going through the experience of having Vision introduced as well, with very similar problems, as I understand it. It was introduced prematurely, there was not the adequate level of high quality training that you would expect for control staff members, and it was dogged with technical faults when it came in. That was six months ago and there are still a number of technical faults. It is still beset with technical faults and has in fact crashed on a number of occasions, the entire system has crashed on a number of occasions and has resulted in the famous Essex situation of control operators having to use pen and paper.

We shouldn't underestimate the real stress that that causes for our members in control when they're trying to operate against that background. It causes stress when control members feel unable to mobilise because they haven't got the right technical equipment, the right level of training and consequently potentially are not able to mobilise appliances to incidents as quickly as they would like. That impacts on people in a serious way in terms of the personal stress it causes to them.

I know it's a cliché, but we do have to remember that these people are the front line. They are the front line as much as firefighters, and what goes on inside our control rooms affects directly what goes on on the incident ground. We should never lose sight of that, and we should treat it seriously when control rooms are running below minimum. We should treat that situation as seriously as we would if three firefighters are turning out on an appliance because in terms of health and safety of our own members and public safety it's got the potential to have the same impact.

The resolution is designed just to make sure that the whole issue of control rooms and the pressures that are being caused at the moment is fixed very firmly on the radar of the executive council. I know it is, but it doesn't hurt to be reminded. It is a pressing and a growing problem. These people are crucial members for us and they deserve our support. Please support London's resolution. I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

Does that have a seconder?

BRO BEN KEILLER (Derbyshire):

President, conference, I'm the temporary chair in Derbyshire. This is my first full conference and my first time speaking. *(Applause)* I'm here to second resolution 17. Comrades, Derbyshire, Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire went live with a new tri-control mobilising system nine months ago called Systel. Lack of training prior to going live, lack of useful training post-going live and the failings in the system's ability to mobilise assets have severely impacted on the stress levels and welfare of our colleagues in command and control. Genuine fears about ability to mobilise an appliance, genuine fears of presenting a danger to the public, and on top of that, we now have one of the control rooms in our tri with only one supervisor and two control phone operators working per night.

Staffing levels of three in command and control are taking stress levels to breaking point. The committee in Derbyshire vehemently opposed compromising the staffing levels of command and control which, in the recent past, have increased sickness levels from fatigue and fears of missing something on a call or making a mistake. We wholeheartedly support the instruction to the EC to redouble its efforts to oppose cuts in staffing levels. Please support resolution 17. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

The resolution is open for debate. Anybody? Come to the rostrum, comrade.

BRO BRENT THORLEY (Wiltshire):

Thank you, conference. Thanks to London for bringing this. This is a huge issue that maybe we've overlooked recently because of our pension dispute and the fact that our control staff had to take a back seat. It happened, but I don't think I would have been happy if that was me. You'll hear a lot of people who, when they speak about this, they talk about safety, they talk about welfare, they talk about pressure, they talk about stress. We see a significant rise in sickness because workloads increase. That leads to greater stress in this very high pressure occupation. The recent merger of Dorset and Wiltshire fire control saw the number of calls double. You bring two brigades together doing similar calls. Then we also saw a reduction in the number of control staff for this combination. Incidentally, or not so incidentally, the respective chief fire officers decided to celebrate this by standing outside the joint control, shaking hands in the sunshine, being photographed by the press, celebrating job losses, worsening conditions and ultimately greater risk to the public and firefighters. I suppose that handshake between them was probably worth a 10 per cent pay rise. We know where their priorities lie, and it's certainly not with the welfare of their staff.

This is alongside working a new mobilising system, a system that is still not fit for purpose, which I am sure we will discuss on the resolution later. The emergency control staff in Dorset and Wiltshire are not guaranteed adequate and uninterrupted breaks and rest periods due to constantly having to be available to answer emergency calls and support their colleagues. There is not the resilience to cope while these people take time out.

Increased sickness levels due to the pressure of these working conditions lead services to cover this sickness with overtime. These same important professional people coming back into work again to cover their friends and colleagues. This also puts an increased financial burden on the service because you're paying people more than twice for this job. As Paul alluded to, training and development also suffer because staff are having to fit this around their primary role of answering emergency calls. They can't dedicate time to train properly.

The workloads and pressure on emergency control operators far exceed what they have to deal with. Their welfare becomes secondary and subsequently puts firefighter and public safety at risk. The correct, safe and proper staffing levels will give the resilience required for staff to do the job properly, ensuring greater safety of the public, firefighters, and most importantly, support the welfare of emergency control staff.

I'm glad we've just seen the film. It is not a one-off occurrence, and the poignant moment at the end is all too common. The South West region has organised the meeting of control staff for the South West. We've also extended that invitation to our comrades in Hampshire because we share a partnership in controls with them. Let us take to that meeting the full and unequivocal support of our control members from this conference. Please support. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

No more debate. I now put resolution 17 to the vote. The executive council support. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. *That is CARRIED.*

I now call resolution 20 with the amendment from London. The executive council support. Resolution 20 to be moved by CSNC. The executive council also support the London amendment.

Resolution 20 – SUPERVISORY LEVELS IN FIRE CONTROLS

Conference notes with concern the increasing tendency by Fire and Rescue Services to downgrade and/or reduce the levels of supervision within Fire Controls.

In many cases Fire and Rescue Services are using restructuring and staffing reviews to reduce the role of the Officer in Charge of Control in cost cutting efforts. This is leading to increased stress and pressure on control Members at all levels. It can also jeopardise the successful outcome of operational incidents.

Fire Control Supervisors are required to undertake an increasing workload in ensuring that staff can work efficiently and effectively within appropriate service procedures for the successful resolution of incidents and day to day issues.

Examples of reduced supervision include:

- ***Staffing reviews which downgrade Watch Manager posts to Crew Manager or reduce numbers of Crew Managers.***
- ***Changes in work routines which place supervisory responsibilities on non-supervisors.***
- ***Use of flexi-duty managers to provide remote supervision.***
- ***Attempts to create work roles outwith the Grey Book terms and conditions.***

Conference calls upon Members, Brigade and Regional Officials to resist such attacks on supervisory levels within Fire Controls, by working within existing agreed Role Maps, by robustly challenging all proposals to reduce levels of supervision and ensuring that the importance of adequate supervision is clearly understood by Fire Services, Fire Authorities and Fire Boards.

CONTROL STAFF NATIONAL COMMITTEE

AMENDMENT

Final paragraph: Delete ‘Officials’ and replace with ‘committees’.

LONDON

SIS AMELIA DIALLO (CSNC):

President, conference, we are accepting the amendment from London. I just need to comment that I’ve not got my usual scripted speech, so I’m as interested to hear what I say as I’m sure you are! Bear with me.

I’d like to start by thanking London for the resolution we’ve just heard on staffing numbers. What this resolution looks into is the more specific areas. Whilst they are attacking our staffing numbers, this includes attacks on our supervisory numbers. They are reducing the number of supervisors on duty, they are pushing work down so work that was previously done by station managers is being expected to be done by watch managers on watch, and likewise, watch manager work down to crew manager, and then firefighter control operators doing work outside of their role map too. They rely on acting up to fill gaps instead of properly experienced and competent staff to take on supervisory roles. Even they tell you that when you’re sat in the control room the manager down the corridor is in charge, so you don’t need to be a supervisor because there’s someone in the building. If they’re not in the control room taking on that role then the person sat in the seat making those decisions in the moment that they’re happening is taking on the supervisor’s role. So we need to address those issues because it causes stress to our members.

With your system, when you’re out at an incident you turn up and you might make up and then you will get additional officer support. We don’t have the benefit of that in the control room. So for the most part, the staff that

are on duty at the start of the shift are those that are on duty for the duration. They don't have lots of people coming in to support them. What that means is actually the supervisor could be in charge of multiple large incidents and the managing of that. That can put a lot of stress on them and jeopardise the outcome of the incident to some extent.

How do we tackle it then? There's one key difference between our role maps and yours at crew manager and watch manager level in the control room. Operationally a crew manager has elements of watch manager 1 to 7 and that covers incident command to some extent. In the control role maps it's watch manager 1 to 6. The element of running the control room is actually watch manager 8, and that only sits in a watch manager control's role map. So that responsibility for the overall management of the control room should never fall solely to a crew manager. Yet all too often we're seeing that crew managers are running in charge and there are no watch managers on duty. So that's one area that you can use to tackle that.

Then, I've spoken about it before, the coroner's letter, the rule 43 with regard to adequate supervision of fire calls. Continue to highlight it with our employers and with your brigades. It's a very important issue. Please support. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

Seconder? Come to the rostrum, please. Can London be ready to move their amendment.

BRO ANDY SCATTERGOOD (West Midlands):

President, conference, I am seconding CSNC resolution 20 Supervisory Levels in Fire Control. Just to bring a bit of personal experience from the West Midlands to this debate, in the West Midlands and Staffordshire we have a shared fire control and the establishment of that control when it combined had 70 personnel. That was two years ago. A recent staffing proposal that management have brought included the decimation on the supervisory levels on a watch. This was a reduction from four on duty to just two. There is no evidence to support this. These proposals were carried out by flexi duty officers who had spent little or no time understanding the unique environment that fire control is. Both brigades are looking at different ways to mobilise, they're looking at different trials, and different ways to deal with austerity. All of these have to be implemented through control.

There's been a large increase in the workloads placed in fire control on top of this in terms of prevention activity as well. None of this is being looked at or considered in relation to the supervisory levels that are needed. We have control members that are coming to work and are unsure of exactly what is required of them as it changes on a daily basis. They look to supervisors for guidance, structure and support in order to help resolve operational incidents. This position places our members in a vulnerable position. Even with the current structure they are understaffed, their workload has been increased, and it's really beginning to take its toll.

A recent statistic showed that the control staff seeking help and assistance through occupational health has doubled since 2012/2013 and only three people over a 12 month period did not go to see occupational health. That's over 50 staff.

The easy option to downgrade the current supervisory levels will have an impact on firefighter safety. Just as firefighters have a structure on the fireground, fire control's day to day activity is their fireground. They need a robust and resilient structure in order to fill their role maps. We must do all we can to support our control staff by resisting these easy option cuts. We need to get out there and we need to talk to our members in control. We need to hear their concerns, and we need to stop the decimation of both supervisory levels and numbers within control. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

London to move your amendment. Formally moved. Thank you, London. Is that seconded? Formally seconded. That's open for debate. No debate. Oh there is, sorry.

BRO BRENT THORLEY (Wiltshire):

Thank you, president. Conference, I didn't realise this was going to come so quick. One thing I missed off, we have the new control system in Dorset and Wiltshire and there has not been one week goes by where our control staff

don't have to work around issues. Facing a screen when they're dealing with a 10-pump or more fire that goes blank and they see a spinning egg timer is not the way we should expect our highly trained staff to have to go about their jobs. It's wrong. Thanks for the opportunity to get up and say that. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

I now put the London amendment to the vote. The executive council support. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. *That is CARRIED.*

I now put resolution 20 as amended to the vote. The executive council support. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. *That is CARRIED.*

Paragraph C2. I now call resolution 13 with the amendment from Shropshire. The executive council support both the resolution and the amendment from Shropshire. Staffordshire to move the resolution, thank you.

Resolution 13 – HEALTH AND SAFETY HANDBOOK

Conference demands that The Fire Brigades Union Health and Safety Handbook is revised, re-issued and brought up to date to provide Fire Brigades Union Representatives current information fit for purpose. This work should be carried out no later than Conference 2017.

STAFFORDSHIRE

AMENDMENT

Delete “revised, re-issued and brought up to date” and replace with “revised and re-issued”

SHROPSHIRE

BRO RICH WILLIAMS (Staffordshire):

Conference, president, it's quite short really, but in terms of the health and safety handbook, it's not been updated for about eight years, since 2008. We believe that now is the time to give it a full revised, updated edition so that our members on station have got an updated version. With the organisational audit that is ongoing we're aware that stations and branches have not got health and safety reps appointed. There are people doing the best they can with what they've got available. We need to make sure that the tools they've got are up to date and adequate for what they are doing until they can get on courses, or until they want to go on courses. So we accept the amendment from Shropshire and thank them for tidying up our resolution. Support the resolution. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

Do we have a seconder? *Formally* Formally seconded. Shropshire to move their amendment. *Formally* Formally moved. Is that seconded? *Formally* Formally seconded. That's open for debate. Sean.

BRO SEAN STARBUCK (National officer):

Thanks, president. Again, we can support this. The EC recently agreed a five-point plan on health and safety. One of the tasks was to look at the organisation and how effective we are on the ground. You can have all the information you want, but if we're not effective on the ground then we're not effective doing health and safety. You might not believe me, Rich, but I'll show you the five-point plan. Part of that is about looking at the handbook, updating it where necessary. On the back of that, when we've updated that, we were planning a health and safety introductory course as well. But we need the book first so we can base the course around that. Thanks for bringing this. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

Thank you. I now put the amendment to the vote. The executive council support. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. *That is CARRIED.*

I now put the resolution as amended to the vote. The executive council support. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. *That is CARRIED.*

Paragraph C3, paragraph C4, paragraph C5. Yes, C4? Got to get in quick.

ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:

President, paragraph C4 East Sussex, just to give you an update on it. You will be aware that it took just over seven years for us to get justice for the families in the court. You will be aware that having won justice, the fire authority and its insurance firm said it was going to appeal when there were no grounds for appeal. It took about four or five months for them to make their decision eventually that they weren't going to appeal. Having then settled that they were responsible, it's taken two years – it was only last month they made the final payments to those who were injured or families of those who were killed. The update is: within the executive council report it says that during 2015 we were trying to get the financial settlement. Those two final settlements were reached within the last month, including one of the members who was injured but also to Lesley Wembridge, the widow of Brian who died at that incident. It's taken over 10 years to get the final bit of cash out of that fire and rescue authority. I think that's an important update. It has now been financially sorted. I think the lawyers are still sorting out their costs, but that's their concern. Ten years for us to get the final settlement. We finally achieved it. Thank you, president. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

Thank you, AGS. We're now on paragraph C5, C6. Yes, come to the rostrum.

BRO GARY KEARY (GMC):

President, conference, comrades. Coroner's inquest into the death of our member, Brother Stephen Hunt, is ongoing. The inquest is now in its sixth week and continuing. Thankfully for all, especially Stephen's family, it seems to be nearing its conclusion. The inquest is complicated with a considerable number of witnesses and a huge amount of evidence but we are confident we have made our case, and our thanks go to our counsel, Martin Seaward, who has been superb, as have Thompsons Solicitors.

The FBU has now provided the coroner with a preliminary report, including a number of recommendations we seek to implement to do everything possible to avoid similar fatalities in the future. I would like to thank also the executive council for providing all the support we have required. Stephen's family and comrades are deeply grateful. Regrettably, due to the ongoing coronial process I am unable to say anything more about the details of the inquest but can assure conference that a full report will be made available as soon as possible. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

Paragraph C7, C8, C9, C10. I now call resolution 33 Gender Specific Ill Mental Health to be moved by the national women's committee. The executive council support.

Resolution 33 – GENDER SPECIFIC ILL MENTAL HEALTH

Conference is disappointed at the lack of support our women Members are receiving in respect of ill mental health in the UK Fire and Rescue Service.

Conference will note last year's resolution on ill mental health which asked for guidance to be produced from the FBU and for our Fire and Rescue Services to be encouraged to support our Members. Many services remain poorly informed with managers ill equipped to identify or deal with issues of ill mental health. Often Members are made to feel that they must suffer in silence, rather than speak up, leaving them isolated and vulnerable. Members feel that they are seen as being weak or troublesome if they admit to having ill mental health or asking for help.

Women in these circumstances are often labelled as dramatic or emotional, rather than being taken seriously and offered the correct support. Women may also experience different symptoms possibly connected to menopause. Ill mental health, when associated with other health needs, can be complex and difficult to diagnose.

Conference therefore ask that the Executive Council includes in the best practice document requested in last year's resolution on ill mental health, gender specific guidance. This information is to be made available to all Fire and Rescue Services to raise awareness and understanding of ill mental health problems including recognising signs and symptoms. This is to ensure our Members

are supported. We ask that this work is started immediately and is integrated into the ongoing work on ill mental health the FBU is currently involved in.

NATIONAL WOMEN'S COMMITTEE

SIS LOUISE CONNELL (NWC):

President, conference, the national women's committee would like to acknowledge and applaud the ongoing work that is being done by the executive council producing a best practice guide to deal with and support our members with mental ill health. The proposed resolution is simply asking that the guidance produced is to recognise the differences between women and men and the specific issues our members may face, as well as the common and shared factors.

To name a few of the specific issues: the effects of post-natal depression, depression associated with symptoms of the menopause, harassment, discrimination and domestic violence, which can all lead to mental ill health. Depression affects one in 10 men and one in four women, although reasons are unclear as to why women suffer in greater numbers. Factors such as poverty, isolation and biological differences are suggested.

As a union we need to ensure that the fire and rescue services are not allowed to bully any of our members with attendance management procedures who are suffering with poor mental health. Mental ill health is often a long-term condition that requires support, not discipline or punitive measures. Please support. I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

Is there a seconder? Come to the rostrum, please.

SIS CAROLINE STURGESS (Lancashire):

President, conference, seconding resolution 33 Gender Specific Mental Health. I've not scripted anything, as you can see, but I would like to take you on the journey that I went through 15 months ago. I had some real issues when I went through some very serious bullying and harassment at work. That led me to be off work for a number of months. Then I returned to work on modified duties, if you will. While I was away I was afforded quite a bit of support, but when I came back it was almost like: come on now, let's cheer up a little bit. That was actually spoken to me by one of our heads of HR. The other one was avoidance, so they walk past you because they don't want to look in your face in case you burst out crying, because actually that's what women tend to do because it's a release mechanism and it's not always because we're highly emotional or going absolutely nuts. So I'd really like to support this resolution because it is one from the heart; it is one that we have experienced in Lancashire, and it is one that I've experienced when I've been talking to our sisters at women's school.

I attended one of the plenary sessions and there must have been 30 delegates that attended one of our sessions on confidence building. I'd just like to say all 30 of these women had experienced some form of discrimination that had made them feel in this way. Lancashire seconds. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

Conference, that's open for debate. Anybody? No? Sean.

BRO SEAN STARBUCK (National officer):

EC are happy to support this. Last year we supported a resolution which was passed at conference asking us to give guidance on mental health issues when dealing with absence management processes. We've already started doing work on that. It is part of this five-point plan I mentioned before. We've already started pulling together quite a lot. We've already sent out two TUC documents on this, both of them superb documents I've got to say. One of them almost does the work for us; it just needs to be a little more fire service specific. We've also been working with union learn for years on mental health, and we've already had 500 members go through our mental health advice course and received a Level 2 qualification. This has been the most popular course that we've run in union learning for some time.

At union learning school, we had a session on mental health. John Halligan from the TUC gave us a session on a mental health toolkit which is absolutely amazing, when he shows you how it works. Basically, you do a mental health update on yourself and it's surprising. It really is a first aid kit that we all need to look at.

Evidence suggests that mental health is one of the biggest causes of absenteeism in the fire service. When you look at the recent survey from Mind, the figures of firefighters who are suffering from mental health stress are absolutely astonishing. It's something that we really need to do.

Using the TUC handbooks, we are developing a course on mental health awareness because it is such a big issue in the fire service that we just can't let this slip past us. Despite what people think, there is still a massive stigma in the fire service on mental health issues. It really is something we just can't sit back and ignore any longer. Unfortunately, some of our employers in the fire service are not really treating it with the sort of seriousness it needs. So that's what we're doing on this.

What we've got to do on this is we've got to include all the evidence and the assurance to the mover of the resolution is that of course we will include everything; we will look at every aspect. This is not one we're kicking into the long grass; this is something that we are dealing with at the moment. I expect to bring something to the June EC as an interim position which we can start to develop and then get something out to members as soon as possible.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thank you, Sean. I now put resolution 33 to the vote. The executive council support. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. *That is CARRIED.*

I now call emergency resolution 1 Dealing with Mental Health in the Fire and Rescue Service to be moved by Greater Manchester. The executive council oppose.

Emergency resolution 1 – DEALING WITH MENTAL HEALTH IN THE FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE

Conference notes the judgement of Coroner Mr John Pollard on 11th February 2016, which stated the suicide of our member Bro. Lee Gaunt was as a result of work related stress brought about by the death of our member Bro. Stephen Hunt. Conference acknowledges the important points Coroner Pollard makes in relation to occupational health deficiencies within GMFRS which the GMC Brigade Committee are working to address.

Conference further recognises the significant increase in cases of mental ill health and suicide affecting Firefighters and Firefighters Control, across the UK. In Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service alone we have sadly witnessed the suicide of five members in the last three years.

Nationally we have seen a number of our members lose their jobs as a result of mental ill health, this includes individuals diagnosed with PTSD as a result of operational duties.

Undoubtedly countless more members will be receiving treatment or regrettably suffering in silence.

In Greater Manchester alone, we are witnessing ever greater numbers of members suffering with severe mental health issues, it is expected that this upward trend is being mirrored across the UK.

Conference acknowledges and applauds the work undertaken and continuing with 'Mind' by the Union nationally and believe the evidence produced by the research conducted thus far underlines the most serious nature of this threat to our members.

Conference instructs the Executive Council to set up a working group, consisting of Brigade, Regional and National Officials. The remit of this 'working group' will be to consider the best ways of evaluating the extent of 'mental health' issues within Fire & Rescue Services, carrying out this evaluation and developing a strategy to educate, support and signpost our members down the appropriate avenues for professional support.

This strategy is to be presented to Conference 2017.

GREATER MANCHESTER

BRO GARY KEARY (GMC):

President, conference, comrades, we can no longer hide from or ignore the epidemic that is mental ill health. On 18 October last year our member, Brother Lee Gaunt, took his own life whilst on duty at Stalybridge fire station. I'm sure you will agree this was an incredibly tragic loss for both Lee's family and the FBU. Lee left behind his wife Caroline and two young sons. Our thoughts continue to be with them. It is the case that Lee developed his illness following his involvement at the incident in Manchester city centre which tragically took the life of our brother Stephen Hunt. Such was the impact of Stephen's death on Lee that for more than two years he struggled to come to terms with the events on that day and consequently battled mental ill health. The inquest into Lee's death took place on 11 February this year. The judgment of coroner Mr John Pollard which followed stated that this suicide was a result of work-related stress. He went on to raise four matters of concern relating to occupational health deficiencies within the brigade, and GMFRS overall management of Lee in the time leading up to his death.

Greater Manchester fire and rescue service carries a heavy burden of firefighter suicides. It is the case that in the last three years we have lost five serving firefighters – a shocking and heartbreaking toll. Questions must be asked as to why we are suffering this loss. Is it merely a coincidence that these tragic events have occurred at the same time that the fire and rescue service faces the onslaught of a vicious and deplorable attack from central government, persistent budget cuts which have seen firefighter numbers in Greater Manchester reduced by more than half in the last 10 years? This, along with attacks on pensions, increased workloads, deterioration of terms and conditions, a real time pay cut, aggressive management policies and a real loss of the feeling of self-worth as a firefighter as a result of these issues. These have, without doubt, increased significantly the pressures and stresses placed upon our members.

Recent research undertaken by the mental health charity Mind has enabled a report on mental health issues in the emergency services to be produced. The content of this report is truly shocking. It evidences a very real problem with mental health within blue light services. It is clear that unsympathetic employers do not recognise when an employee is suffering from issues beyond their control. When it is support they require, this should be provided immediately and compassionately, rather than warnings or threats relating to sickness records or possible disciplinary action, which only add to the problem. Statistics detailed within the report show a massive 61 per cent of firefighters surveyed had experienced a mental health problem such as depression, PTSD, schizophrenia. 57 per cent had contemplated leaving their job due to stress and poor mental health. Appallingly, it reports that 30 per cent of firefighters surveyed have considered taking their own lives, whilst 5 per cent confirm they had actually attempted suicide.

These sickening figures cannot be ignored or swept under the carpet. This is a very real problem. Remarkably, we have seen firefighters dismissed from the fire and rescue service due to their being diagnosed with PTSD as a result of their operational duties. Undoubtedly, countless more will be suffering in silence, fearful of bringing their illness to the attention of their employers.

As brigade officials we deal with the effects of mental ill health on a daily basis. It is the case in just the past few weeks that a situation arose where a member had to be escorted to A&E by his union rep after breaking down during a brigade capability meeting. This member went on to spend 10 days in a secure psychiatric ward, unable to see his family.

This issue should be considered the biggest single problem facing the fire and rescue service and our union at this time. Everything possible must be done to minimise the negative effects of employment on workers' mental health and to support fully those who are suffering.

Comrades, following assurances received by national officer, Sean Starbuck, that work required to meet the objectives set within our resolution will be achieved in good time through the national health and safety committee we have agreed to remit this resolution. GMC are grateful for the invitation to feed into this committee and will be taking full advantage of this invitation. I would ask that all brigades engage appropriately in order to ensure the full extent of this issue be realised. GMC remits. *(Applause)*

BRO SEAN STARBUCK (National officer):

Conference, I'd like to thank Gary for bringing this and also for remitting it. This is a resolution that we didn't want to vote against because we just raised a massive issue of health and safety, and Gary has raised an issue as well. The

reason we asked them to remit it was the bottom paragraph really, because this asked us to set up a working group and we've already got the health and safety group looking at this. So it was just almost mirroring the work they were doing. So with the assurance that we gave him, Gary kindly remitted it. The work will continue and we'll get it out as soon as possible.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thank you, Sean. Thank you, Gary, as well. We are on paragraph C11, paragraph C12. I now call resolution 14 Operational Discretion from Staffordshire. For those of you who may have thought differently, the executive council are now giving qualified support and not opposing this resolution. So the executive council's position is: qualified support.

Resolution 14 – OPERATIONAL DISCRETION

Conference calls on the Executive Council to provide a policy document on "Operational Discretion" the document is to provide an FBU explanation of how and when Operational Discretion is to be used. This is required to provide assistance and clarity to our Members and Brigade Officials. This policy document should be provided to Conference no later than Conference 2017 to ensure that we can provide the best protection for our Members.

STAFFORDSHIRE

BRO RICH WILLIAMS (Staffordshire):

Conference, president, we are grateful for the change to qualified support from the EC. Operational discretion came into play I suppose after national operational guidance last year and still not everybody knows what it is or how to use it. There's masses of opinions about what operational discretion is. We've got managers telling people that operational discretion basically is the Heroism Act and you can basically do what you like – make a decision and the brigade will support you (which we know is not going to happen). What we're asking for in this resolution is a policy document from the EC that gives guidance to our members and support to them if they use operational discretion.

Operational discretion, as we all know, should be used one time only, because it's for unforeseeable events. So you turn up to an incident and something unforeseeable is happening, rather than use it as a catch-all and if you can't dealt with it with what you've got, operational discretion, send a message and you'll be OK. Actually, our incident commanders are at risk of being put under a lot of pressure and taken to court and prosecuted potentially for making these decisions.

I'm still having discussions with individuals just in our brigade who don't understand the policies and procedures that they should be adhering to, and actually operational discretion is then moving away from policies and procedures that we've got in place within the service. So it's a scary thing that we've got people riding trucks who don't know what this means. I'm sure that's the same across the country. We need some guidance, we need the EC to lead on this and put forward some policy.

In terms of losses to the service, people leaving the brigades, we are going to have 37 wholtime firefighters short by the end of this year. With those people leaving, there is a lot of experience and knowledge going out the door, and lots of new JOs coming through the ranks that haven't got the experience that is required and exposure to incidents. So operational discretion will be pushed on them by senior managers to try to get incidents resolved with lesser crews, with riding threes which we discussed prior to this.

Region 7 have produced an agreed policy and we'll share that with all brigades and with the EC, hopefully to work towards this policy that the EC are going to put together. We've got a policy already which I'm happy to send to everybody in the room now that will give you some guidance on what we think is a good way forward, something succinct, easy for members to carry in their tunics so they have got an idea of what we believe operational discretion is. It is for those incidents of unforeseeability, not something we can plan for, and members need to be aware of that. I move this resolution and hope you support it. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

Do we have a seconder? *Formally* Formally seconded. That's open for debate. Yes, please come to the rostrum, yes, please come to the rostrum.

BRO CAMERON MATTHEWS (Cambridgeshire):

President, conference, I thought it was important to share a story from Cambridgeshire to highlight what our comrade has just said there. It is not just firefighters who don't fully understand possibly operational discretion. Only last week we had a discussion with a senior manager about proposed cuts that would foreseeably and likely place firefighters in a position where they would be attending specialist rescue incidents that they weren't trained for. The senior manager's response was: it doesn't matter; we can just use operational discretion. You can imagine the response which we provided him with and we then managed to persuade him that is exactly not what it is used for. What would be useful as a document would be to reinforce that message through all other avenues possible, so it is not just FBU members and firefighters but we also assist managers who are delivering it too. Cheers. *(Applause)*

SIS CAROLINE STURGESS (Lancashire):

President, conference, I've just recently finished in the position of national occupational guidance policy writing and I know for a fact that the incident commander's national occupational guidance that came from CFA and CFRA did not have operational discretion in it. In fact, it had the fire safety maxim and that's the only thing that it stated. So across region 5 we wrote into our region's NOG paper on incident command operational discretion. So if they can't get it right, somebody needs to take the lead and write a policy on operational discretion. Please support this. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

No more debate. I'll ask the AGS to give the qualification, please.

ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:

Yes, president. The qualification, I think, actually is now slightly amended. The qualification was that we do recognise the issue that Staffordshire have raised here. It's one thing for the executive council to have agreed a policy document, a position document with regard to operational discretion, but it's another thing for the national officials (myself in this instance) to put some guidance out to explain how it could be implemented and best implemented. So we fully recognise that. Because it is so important the qualification is that actually you do need it and want it, no doubt before conference 2017. That was the qualification.

I think I need to add a slight one to that. I fully understand what Staffordshire are saying: it might be useful if they circulate their document. I've got to say, in terms of the expertise that has existed within Staffordshire through past and present officials, some of whom have moved to high positions, we acknowledge that and want to involve all officials in looking at the guidance before we publish it, and certainly would want to involve Staffordshire brigade health and safety officials in drafting that document. I don't think at this stage it would be helpful for Staffordshire brigade health and safety officials to issue a document in advance of the executive council's. So that is a qualification. Two documents circulating, hopefully in quick succession, doesn't necessarily make for a good recipe. We can discuss that with Staffordshire officials. It isn't changing our position at all with regard to qualified support. I think it just adds a little bit more of a caveat in terms of that.

I would just say this, in finishing. We have raised the question of operational discretion and the document agreed by the EC with the HSE. We have raised it with the operational guidance group in terms of making sure that those gaps identified, particularly by Lancashire, are filled. What does need to happen is we need to be absolutely clear, not just internally with our officials and with our members, that operational discretion is not a replacement for standard operating procedures; it's simply a stop-gap if they identify something, which frankly they should have identified in the first place. There aren't many incidents that I can think of, if any, (and the same for yourselves probably) that aren't identifiable, are not foreseeable and cannot be envisaged. That said, we are progressing the issue of ensuring that we do have adequate and proper operational discretion policies for policy writers in brigades. We fully recognise and support the aim of the resolution which is to ensure that we give guidance to officials in terms of tackling with management. But we'll have a slightly different agenda, shall we say. That is the qualification.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thank you. Andy? You've had the qualification. I will put resolution 14 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. *That is CARRIED.*

Paragraph C13, paragraph C14. I now call resolution 19 Introduction of New Mobilising Systems to be moved by the CSNC. The executive council support.

Resolution 19 – INTRODUCTION OF NEW MOBILISING SYSTEMS

Conference is outraged at the continuing practice by Fire and Rescue Services of implementing new mobilising systems before full and thorough testing has taken place and therefore placing our Members and the general public at risk.

A number of Services have recently introduced new or upgraded mobilising systems which have not been fit for purpose.

On numerous occasions control Members have had to resort to taking emergency calls using pen and paper, and alerting stations by mobile telephones.

The stress levels for our control Members, along with the obvious dangers to operational firefighters and the public are intolerable.

Conference therefore instructs the Executive Council, following consultation with the Control Staff National Committee, to raise this issue at all relevant forums to highlight the risks and prevent this dangerous and unacceptable practice from being repeated.

Conference further requests that the Executive Council report back to Conference 2017 any progress made in this matter.

CONTROL STAFF NATIONAL COMMITTEE

SIS CAROLINE SAUNDERSON (CSNC):

President, conference, firstly, I'd like to thank London, Wiltshire and Derbyshire for having a sneaky peak at my speech at some point before moving resolution 17!

I am in only one of approximately 20 controls that have implemented new mobilising systems since the collapse of the regional control project in December 2010. Government incentives have forced brigades into mergers and collaborations which have resulted in the accelerated introduction of off-the-shelf technology which we feel is not fully tested and not fit for the purpose of an emergency fire service response.

As a personal example, on 9 April 2015 Northumberland fire control were working below minimum crewing. In fact, had we been crewing a fire appliance we would have been off the run. We had three wild fire incidents classified as pumps of four or over across a vast area of Northumberland, and also other incidents ongoing, one of which caused so many duplicate calls my personal work station mobilising system froze and failed which in turn took out 50 per cent capacity of my control. This is a system that was apparently fully factory tested and deemed acceptable for use. These failures have also occurred numerous times in Tyne & Wear, the adjoining fire service we collaborated with.

As officer in charge that day, I still had to deal with the incident but without the so-called gold standard technology. I know that failures of this nature have caused other fire controls to resort to pen and paper for mobilising decisions.

When issues like these arise it's always when we are at our busiest, so we have got increased stress of not having a mobilising system available. I say increased stress as it is only now, two and a half years after Go Live that we are really understanding the full functionality of the system and that is purely through trial and error. The delays lead to increased times to turn out, meaning incidents are more progressed when a response arrives. We are also fully aware that in these instances we may not be able to fully support our crews on the incident ground, which has an impact on firefighter and crew safety.

When failures occur, faults must be raised, again causing more stress to fire control staff, as common responses to issues were "user error" or "it's not designed for you to do that". As I've said to my brigade management, these new

systems are only working because of the professionalism and persistence of control staff and not because of the supposed state of the art technology.

As a way forward the control staff national committee are in the process of establishing a user group for mobilising systems. Information gathered will be shared and will further enhance what is currently being carried out by the research department at head office on behalf of the EC. We would like to thank everyone, in particular Rhian, for this report which has acknowledged the system problems, morale and stress issues in control. It is our understanding that this report will be shared with brigades and regions after the June EC. But like everything else, the information we share will only ever be as good as the information we receive. Therefore, we are asking again for the support of regions and brigades in encouraging control members to come forward as reps. Please support this resolution. I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

Does that have a seconder? Please come to the rostrum. It's OK, I've got one closer! If you want to speak, comrade, come up.

BRO NEIL CARBUTT (South Yorkshire):

President, conference, quite frankly the introduction of new mobilising systems within South Yorkshire has been an unmitigated disaster. Therefore, we support the resolution. Early in the introduction every con op, including non-affiliated, wrote to our CFO expressing their genuine concerns over the system and highlighting the number of potential failures which included address-matching, ghost mobilisations, telephone faults, glitches, crashes – the list goes on.

Conference, I'm no control operator and until recently I'm ashamed to say that I had little first-hand experience of what our fantastic colleagues do daily. So I thought I'd sit in control, I thought I'd spend a day looking at what they do, day in day out. The very first phone call that I observed was a garage fire in Page Hall in Sheffield. It was about three minutes from Central station. I can only say I watched in horror as a con op typed in the address. The system returned the next nearest road which was in Marne-la-Valleé, three kilometres from Euro Disney! Another example was an urgent fireground phone call to control from Thorne fire station where, because of the way the telephony system works, was put on hold for about seven minutes and redirected because the phone system hunts for available lines. The only available line was to the canteen in Central! So Thorne fire station put an order in for 24 sandwiches and one Twix and the Twix was a good friend of mine!

Conference, I'm being flippant here. We clearly have systems that are not making the grade. They are increasing stress in the workplace, they are damaging the reputation of our fantastic con ops who are actually being blamed for these system faults. The thing has been turned round on to them. For some reason their professionalism seems to be paying the price for these system faults. Quite frankly it's not good enough. It's clearly not fit for purpose, Systel, within South Yorkshire. Please support resolution 19. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

So the system clearly was Mickey Mouse then!

BRO PHIL MILLER (NIFB):

President, conference, we support resolution 19. The mobilising system in Northern Ireland is approaching the end of its life and is actually well past its sell-by date. Region 2 will be reviewing all information being shared regarding the implementation of new mobilising systems and any associated problems with great interest as the project to replace our system is currently underway. Without doubt, at least some of the system providers that have experienced problems will be tendering for our contract, and with the advantage of hindsight this does not instil confidence. It is essential that appropriate testing is carried out before these systems go live to ensure the safety of firefighters and the public we serve. It is vital that we support our control members by ensuring that such systems are implemented smoothly without putting control personnel under intolerable stress levels and endangering lives. Please support the resolution. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

Thank you, comrade. I now put resolution 19 to the vote. The executive council support. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. *That is CARRIED.*

I'm on paragraph C15. OK, conference. I would just like to draw your attention to a really good fringe that's happening at 5.30 downstairs in the Imperial Suite – Corbyn, Labour and Momentum. I think you'll find some really interesting stuff from a real class list of speakers – our very own Matt Wrack will be there speaking. I'd advise you and like you to go if you possibly can make it. Please attend.

Last but by no means least, Will Murphy from our comms team has lost his bag. It's a TUC conference bag, black with "Better Jobs" written on it. He was wondering if I could make an announcement at the end of the session to see if anyone has picked it up. If you have picked it up or you see it lying around, can you please hand it in to standing orders. Thank you very much, conference. You are adjourned until tomorrow morning. Thank you.

Conference adjourned

THE PRESIDENT:

Conference, take your seats. Thank you very much. There will be a standing orders report after your tea break, but as it is now there is nothing to report and I will be cracking on with this business. Can you come to order now. Sort yourselves out now. We are on paragraph C15. We are on Section H, paragraph H1, paragraph H2. John McGhee.

BRO JOHN MCGHEE (National officer):

Thank you, Alan and conference. I won't take up a lot of time and I won't pre-empt any of the debates that are about to take place, but I thought it was important just to say a wee bit about the Inclusive Fire Service Group. In my view, it's been a long time in coming, getting the employers to sit round the table and have serious discussions with us about equality in the fire and rescue service. Any time in the past when we've tried to talk to them, they've simply wanted to talk about the hairstyles that firefighters have and how long it might or might not be. But this time we have got them to take it seriously. We've carried out a survey across the British fire service to look at agreements on discipline and see which members are suffering there, and to see what sort of guidance we can give to improve that.

We will be issuing some guidance on the use of social media. If I can say to you, probably the best advice you can give to your members is "don't use it"! It's quite clear that it's on the increase in terms of disciplinary action.

Let me just quickly say a bit about the survey on grievance and discipline. If we think that the fire and rescue service is now a safe place for everybody to work, then you've got it wrong. It's quite clear that our women by far are having to put in grievances three or four times more regularly than their male counterparts. And it's probably worse if you're a black firefighter in the British fire service, you're probably three or four times more likely to be subject to a level 3 disciplinary procedure. So there are clearly issues that we've got to tackle. Most fire and rescue services are not even recording stats on LGBT members. So they will be given guidance on what they should and should not be monitoring, and why they should be monitoring. Because if we don't measure things we cannot work out what we need to correct. So it's a very important group.

If I can, I want to pay tribute to the three sections who were invited to make a presentation to the Inclusive Fire Service Group. All three did a joint presentation which was a credit to this union, so I want to thank them for that. Thank you, conference. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

I now call resolution 34 Positive Action Days to be moved by the national women's committee. The executive council give qualified support.

Resolution 34 – POSITIVE ACTION DAYS

Conference is concerned about the lack of firefighter recruitment over a sustained period of time. This is due to reductions in establishments and the practice of carrying vacancies when staff retire. There has been very little wholetime recruitment for several years.

Of the few Fire and Rescue Services recruiting, some are branding their positive action days as 'Have a go Days', in a bid to attract people from underrepresented groups.

We feel this is sometimes implemented in a way which demeans or misrepresents the skills and qualities that women and other under-represented groups can bring to the role of a firefighter.

We call on this Conference that the Executive Council, in consultation with the NWC, B&EMM and LGBT committees, create a best practice guidance to assist Fire and Rescue Services with positive action and that this be completed by the end of October 2016.

NATIONAL WOMEN'S COMMITTEE

SIS HELEN TOOLEY (NWC):

President, conference, as we are all aware, there has been a distinct lack of wholetime firefighter recruitment over a sustained period, contributing to the percentage of women in the UK FRS falling. Where services are recruiting,

either to retained or wholetime duty systems, there are even fewer doing anything specific to encourage women to apply. We do acknowledge that some services are taking positive action and doing it very well, and this could be used to inform a best practice guidance that we're asking for.

Positive action is not just about gender but all protected characteristics within the Equality Act, all of which are under-represented in the fire and rescue service. There are provisions within the Equality Act legally to run positive action events to recruit people from under-represented groups and those with protected characteristics. But some fire and rescue services seem to be too scared to brand them as positive action days and are branding them as "have a go" days. The ways these are run and often promoted are really demeaning and misrepresent the skills and qualities that women and other under-represented groups bring to the fire service. This has a negative effect on those of us that are already serving as well.

We believe the qualified support that the EC is offering is due to unrealistic time frames, but we want to make clear this work is not required to be started from scratch. There are good documents and practice already available. We are asking for the best of these to be put together, using the knowledge and experience of the equality sections to produce the best practice document. The Inclusive Fire Service Group that John has just spoken about could also be used to complete this work.

We do not feel that October is unrealistic. However, if the EC still feel it is, then could we ask they provide us with a completion date to ensure it is completed in a timely manner. Thank you. Please support. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

Does that have a seconder? Come to the rostrum, please.

SIS KAREN ADAMS (Dorset):

President, conference, just seconding resolution 34 and just briefly to say with all the mergers that are going on and the job losses that we're experiencing across the services, these positive action days are more important than ever in order to address the under-represented groups. I urge you to support the resolution. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

That's open for debate. Anybody? No. John, do you want to give the qualification, please?

BRO JOHN MCGHEE (National officer):

Yes, conference, I'm not even sure that I need to give the qualification because Helen gave it when she was moving the motion. What I will give you is the commitment from the executive council that we will do our very best to have it done before October.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thank you, John. I now put resolution 34 to the vote. The executive council have given their qualification. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. *That is CARRIED.*

Paragraph H3 All Different All Equal. I now call resolution 40 All Different, All Equal, to be moved by London. The executive council oppose.

Resolution 40 – ALL DIFFERENT, ALL EQUAL

The Fire Brigades Union has a proud tradition of championing fairness at work. Through our long campaigning, we have been instrumental in changing the culture of the Fire and Rescue Service, and forcing politicians and managers to properly address the problems of bullying and harassment. We hold that all FBU Members are entitled to be treated with dignity and respect in the workplace.

However, Conference also recognises that the Union's 'All Different, All Equal' policy has proved to be controversial and problematic.

The policy can often place a heavy workload on local Officials, particularly where investigations are complex. At a time when, more than ever, we are engaged in local battles to defend our jobs and service, this workload is disproportionate and unjustifiable.

The policy compels Regional Committees to deny representation to a Member where no 'arguable defence' exists. Rarely is that straightforward. Yet the consequences of denying representation may be extremely serious, perhaps career-ending. Given also that many Members consider it a basic principle of justice that an individual accused of even the most grievous misconduct is afforded the right to be represented, Regional Committees are placed in a potentially invidious position when being forced to make decisions of such magnitude.

Conference believes the time has come to acknowledge that 'All Different, All Equal' has proved unpopular and divisive, and to affirm our belief in the fundamental principles of the presumption of innocence and the right to a defence.

Conference therefore rescinds 'All Different, All Equal' with immediate effect and, save for where Union rules or policies may otherwise prohibit it, determines that representation henceforth be granted automatically upon request to all accused Members subjected to an employer's disciplinary process.

LONDON

SIS LUCY MASOUD (London):

Conference, there can be no denying that the introduction of All Different All Equal was done for genuine reasons. Unfortunately, since then, All Different All Equal has turned into a millstone around the neck of the FBU, becoming both unworkable and unjust. There are two fundamental problems with All Different All Equal. They are the impracticality of the policy and the unfairness of the policy.

May I address the impracticality first. Conference, in London we carry out All Different All Equal investigations every year and it is evident to us, as I'm sure it is to many of you in here today, that the increase in workload and resources an All Different All Equal investigation takes is simply unworkable. Often, investigations are complex and involve several witnesses. It could only take a region to have one or two All Different All Equal investigations for resources to be completely exhausted.

Conference, this policy as it stands means that any member that is charged with inappropriate or harassing behaviour would almost certainly lead to an All Different All Equal investigation instigated against them. In London we have seen management classifying almost any complaint against a member's behaviour towards another member as inappropriate and harassing, as they know full well that this charge will automatically trigger an All Different All Equal investigation that will suck up union time and money, something that management are only ever too eager to exploit, especially during industrial action.

In essence, conference, what management are doing is taking our own policy and using it against us to hurt us, and it's working. No, conference, I do not believe that our members want us to be spending time and resources enforcing All Different All Equal. I've spoken to members throughout London and they are overwhelmingly against this policy. These members should not be ignored.

Now we come to All Different All Equal and fairness, or should I say the lack of it, within this policy. Conference, there are two fundamental principles of justice: the presumption of innocence and the unconditional right to a defence. These rights are critical, not only in law but also the trade union movement. Yet with the All Different All Equal policy as it is now the FBU has completely abandoned these rights. I challenge the EC to name one other union that has abandoned these rights in the same way that we have. As it stands, this policy states that any member to receive representation must have an arguable defence, and crucially, a bare denial does not constitute an arguable defence.

Therefore, conference, if a member is accused of harassing another member and their defence is simply that they did not do it, that they are completely innocent of the charge, or in fact that the incident never took place, then our

own policy would state that this member may not receive representation because, as mentioned, a bare denial does not constitute an arguable defence.

Recently, we had a such a case in London. A member was accused of a very serious incident but they absolutely 100 per cent denied it. In fact, they said the incident never took place whatsoever. The member turned to his union for support and help but instead what he received was an All Different All Equal investigation against him. Due to his complete denial of the charge he was eventually denied representation. The hearing took place, the member attended without an FBU rep, and was found to have no case to answer.

Conference, this case completely undermined us in the eyes of management, but worse still, made us look terrible in the eyes of firefighters who saw our refusal to represent a completely innocent member. I would add, conference, that during this whole investigation where we deemed the member's behaviour to be so unpalatable, where we deemed the member's behaviour to be so inappropriate that we did not want to give him representation, throughout this whole process we still continued happily to take his union fees.

I would like to now give you an example of what I believe shows the unfairness of All Different All Equal. You could have a situation where you have one firefighter taking part in industrial action and another firefighter who has chosen to cross the picket line. The two firefighters get in an argument and the striking firefighter calls the other firefighter a scab. According to our own policy, if this member is charged by management, then there would have to be an All Different All Equal investigation against the striking member, with the possibility that that member may not receive representation.

Think about that, conference. Our own member taking part in industrial action, being investigated by the union simply for standing up for union values. How is that fair? How is that just?

No doubt there will be some people in this room who will say well, in that situation we know that the member would be given representation because he has done the right thing and we support him. If that is the case, conference, if we can pick and choose who gets representation according to what we deem to be appropriate, then what is the point of having All Different All Equal at all? Surely this makes a mockery of the whole policy, and using precious time and resources simply as a box ticking exercise.

To abandon All Different All Equal does not mean we are abandoning our responsibility to equality, and it doesn't mean that by representing members who are charged with harassment we are endorsing their behaviour. We represent drink drivers. That doesn't mean we endorse their behaviour. We represent thieves. That doesn't mean we endorse their behaviour. To represent all members is no different.

Conference, some years ago an FBU official stood where I am standing now and spoke these words about All Different All Equal. He said: "This policy is bureaucratic in terms of the time that our regional committee has taken up with matters rather than spending time campaigning." He went on to say: "Arguable defence has created huge problems and I do not believe it to be just." He also said: "The current policy on representation is not working." Conference, that FBU official who spoke those very wise words was our general secretary, Matt Wrack.

Finally, our trade union is based on unity and fairness, but we cannot have fairness if certain members are refused representation. The purpose of All Different All Equal is to fight discrimination and support the sections. I can say, standing here today, as a gay black woman that All Different All Equal has done absolutely nothing to protect me, apart from use up union resources and attack the right to representation.

We understand that there are concerns that by withdrawing All Different All Equal we might be left with a situation where the union has no policy on equality. London has listened to those concerns and in light of that we have decided to withdraw this resolution. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

General secretary.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Conference, I have to say I thank the London region and Lucy for withdrawing the resolution. It is clearly a very serious matter. It's a longstanding policy of the union and it's been part and parcel of the improvements that we have achieved in our service and in our workplaces although, I think as John set out earlier, there is still a long way to go. I think it would have been very divisive debate on this last day of what has been a very good conference.

Lucy did highlight one case. We are aware of that case and it does raise some concerns about the case itself and the decisions that were made, and the outcome in the disciplinary process. I think our view is that that is not addressed within the resolution, but it is something that we do need to give some consideration to, as to whether the policy was appropriately applied or not, whether there were errors in any way in the administration of the policy in relation to that particular case, and whether there are lessons to learn. I can assure London and all of conference that we will carry out that review in terms of the specific reference that Lucy made in her speech.

Again, the policy has assisted this union in making great progress. By the way, it's not a policy that is simply about the question of representation; it is a policy that also addresses much wider issues in relation to our commitment to equality and diversity within the fire and rescue service. So the withdrawal is very welcome and we will consider the point that Lucy referred to. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, conference. Look, at the start of conference you agreed a set of standing orders and we will discuss that at more length over the course of the year. But one of the first standing orders that you agreed was that mobile phones would be switched off in here. I'm watching people in this conference hall tapping out mobile phone messages and looking at their mobile phones. Please switch your mobile phones off. I do not want to see people on their mobile phones when people are debating such important issues to this union. Your members don't need that either. So please switch your mobiles off. Have a bit of courtesy to the people who are speaking as well, while they are speaking. Thank you.

Paragraph H4. I now call resolution 31 BME Women Members to be moved by the B&EMM national committee. The executive council support.

Resolution 31 – BME WOMEN MEMBERS

The UK Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) continues to fail to recruit the majority gender in our society – women. Despite historical commitments from politicians and principal management, the number of women in the FRS is still pitifully low. The number of BME women barely registers on the FRS employment statistics and there are currently less than a 100 operational black women. This cannot be acceptable to our Union.

Black women are still the less likely group to even consider a fire service career and of those who are recruited the vast majority do not attempt any career progression. There are less than 20 black women junior or middle managers in the FRS.

This Conference demands that:

- ***Research is carried out at NJC level into the FRS experience of current black women operational staff***
- ***The UK FRS needs a national programme of positive action aimed at and to encourage black women to consider an FRS career***
- ***The Executive Council consult with the B&EMM National Committee the possibility of a reserved seat on the B&EMM National Committee for a BME Woman Member.***

B&EMM NATIONAL COMMITTEE

BRO JOSEPH MENDY (B&EMM):

President, conference, first of all, I would like to apologise for not being up to date with statistics. But then again in my defence all you need to do is just turn your head across the room, and statistics will be in abundance. This will be in conjunction to the motion that I will be moving on BME women members.

We've heard it said everywhere, time and time again, that the fire and rescue service strives to recruit a diverse force that represents the community it serves. Will we live long enough to witness this? How long will it take? We can't mention discrimination because of its non-existence in the fire and rescue services. But still the statistics are embarrassingly shameful for a country that champions democracy, fairness and equality. Despite some progress in the recruitment of BME women into the UK fire and rescue services there is still a gross failure to attract and recruit BME women. There are currently fewer than 100 operational BME women, and the vast majority are support staff in the lowest FRS grades, thus leading them to take up secondary jobs just to try to make ends meet, which leads to them missing their children growing up, missing that precious family life. Single parents feel the impact even more, with their children growing up without a stable parental figure, as a normal family.

Recent lack of recruitment has compounded this inequality and BME women continue to be isolated within the UK FRS as we only have 20 BME women junior and middle managers in the UK fire and rescue services. Again, no hope that the FRS can be seen as a career and that retention and progression can be achieved.

The current NJC Inclusive Fire Service Group is a step forward in reviewing equality and inclusion in the fire and rescue services, but we still need an analysis at NJC level about the lack of BME women in the fire and rescue services and possible reasons why the fire and rescue service is not an attractive career consideration for BME women. We need to demand a positive action strategy for the fire and rescue services aimed at BME women to encourage them to look at fire and rescue services as a career. We also need a structural input from the BME women members that we have already got, as their experiences are vital in the evolution and progression of B&EMM. A journey of 5,000 miles begins with a step. As the saying goes: "Charity begins at home." I urge you to start with an influence from within this union then spread our success nationwide. It is said, and it is true, we carry more weight as a strong body than me shouting from the rooftop, or you giving endless talks about the importance of BME women recruitment, or him complaining to any sympathetic ear that pretends to listen. I move. What about you? Will you support? *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

Does that have a seconder? Come forward, please.

BRO ANDY SCATTERGOOD (West Midlands):

President, conference, I am seconding resolution 31 Women BME members. Conference, we urge you to support this resolution. In the West Midlands it was 26 years ago that the first black female firefighter joined our brigade. Currently that figure stands at four in the whole of the West Midlands fire service for operational firefighters. It's worth remembering as well that the West Midlands is one of the most diverse communities in Britain if not Europe. This is nothing but a disgrace! The value of diversity in our industry should at no point be underestimated. Diversity has a positive impact on our place of work, and addressing this issue is necessary to increase the recruitment of BME women in the fire service. We must increase and retain the recruitment of BME women, and this brings its own benefits because it will increase equality of recruitment and reduce the chances of racial discrimination and sex equality in our branches and in the workplace.

The cuts and austerity agenda means that there is less opportunity to recruit and this has inevitably led to less opportunity to diversify the fire service. We've already heard on other resolutions about the importance of retaining members within the sections and this resolution is just as important. As Joseph said, there are fewer than 20 BME women who are junior or middle management within the UK fire service. It is nothing short of shocking. We need to address this issue immediately. We need to find out why becoming a firefighter is not an attractive career for BME women. Working in the fire service is still an attractive career, despite the attacks, but currently this profession is not appealing to BME women. They are not doing anywhere near enough to recruit them. Let us as officials get out to our members and actively talk to BME women and listen to their experiences. We need to engage with our current members and we must develop a strategy to address this issue.

Conference, the debate about sections is important. Our BME members, and especially as this resolution seeks, must be given the ability to represent themselves. This is vital and must be looked into. Recruitment of women and BME members must be part of a comprehensive strategy with long-term institutional-wide commitment. We must engage with our brigades to commit to the diversity of the fire service at every level. Our BME women deserve our support. Please support this resolution. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

That is open for debate. Anyone, conference? The executive council support. I now put resolution 31 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. *That is CARRIED.*

Paragraph H5. I now call resolution 30 Access and LGBT membership support to be moved by the LGBT national committee. Pat. The executive council support.

Resolution 30 – ACCESSING LGBT MEMBERSHIP SUPPORT

Conference recognises the advances that our LGBT Members and Officials have achieved since their establishment within our Union.

Conference is concerned about reports of LGBT Members, particularly gay, trans and bisexual who identify as male, withdrawing from union activities and events. Conference calls on the Executive Council to initiate a survey aimed at known gay, trans and bisexual Members who identify as male, with the intent to establish and identify obstacles discouraging engagement. The survey should be created in conjunction with the LGBT Committee.

LGBT NATIONAL COMMITTEE

BRO PAT CARBERRY (LGBT):

Good morning, conference, president. The issue that this resolution raises is something which we've become aware of for a couple of years now. Where it first became apparent was the attendance at our LGBT school when we started to look around at who the students were that were attending. We noticed that predominantly the students were lesbian women. There was a distinct lack of attendance of gay men, trans people who identify as male, and bisexual males. Given that our service is still made up of over 90 per cent male, this is a worrying figure and a worrying trend which obviously we had to start to think about addressing.

It is not just about the engagement within our union. This is something we've also noticed at Pride events. At London last year, of the people attending, once again it was up in the 90 per cent female participation with a very small attendance of our male members. Brighton was a similar affair. This is something we need to try to sort out. It hasn't always been this way. School attendance in the past was very balanced. In actual fact it was probably the other way round; the same with the Pride events. The only way to deal with this is to go to the members that we know of and start asking them the questions: why do you feel uncomfortable, why do you feel you can't engage with us any more, why do you feel that you can't be completely out and open when it comes to your work?

Interestingly, John mentioned about the Inclusive Fire Service Group. We did the presentation there around about a month ago. We raised the issue with them as well because it is a problem for them that they have to look at also. They did come back to us and say: what are you doing about it? I was very pleased to be able to say: actually, we've got it down on our agenda for discussion at our annual conference and we intend to do something about that.

Conference, I would urge you to support this motion to assist us in dealing with this issue. Thank you very much. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

Thank you. Do we have a seconder? *Formally* Formally seconded. Speakers please. No? The executive council support. I now put resolution 30 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. *That is CARRIED.*

We are on paragraph H6, paragraph H7. I am now on Section F. Could I now call John McGhee with some good news for you.

BRO JOHN MCGHEE (National officer):

Thank you, Alan. Caroline, this is the big moment you've been waiting on. You have not won the iPad! As you know, we did a prize draw for April for all those that had completed their direct debit mandates. I'm pleased to announce

that the iPad money donated by UIA Insurance has been won by our member Michael Porter from West Sussex. That will be winging its way to him. Thank you very much, conference. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

Just give that to the West Sussex delegates, John. I'm sure it may wind its way to him! OK, paragraph F1. Yes please, two speakers so far. Any more speakers on this? OK, you two and Merseyside.

BRO JAMES LESLIE (Devon & Somerset):

President, conference, this is something I've been asked to bring to the attention of conference. I'm grateful to standing orders for facilitating this by suggesting I talk to this paragraph. I want to bring attention to the government's attempt to ban the Boycott Divestment and Sanctions campaign. In February 2016 the UK government announced aims to tighten rules on public procurement to make clear that procurement boycotts by public authorities are inappropriate. Prime minister Cameron made clear that the changes were designed to counter the growing Boycott Divestment and Sanctions, BDS, movement against Israel's actions in the occupied Palestinian territories. The policy was in fact announced by cabinet minister Matthew Hancock whilst on a diplomatic visit to Israel. In effect, the policy announcement was a blatant attempt to threaten British democracy in order to support a foreign state in serial breach of international law. If public bodies were to be intimidated by this they could be dissuaded from making ethical judgements on other issues the UK government have not supported, for example dealing with arms companies. Jeremy Corbyn commented that this government's ban would have outlawed council action against apartheid in South Africa.

The BDS movement has grown significantly in just over 10 years, despite attempts to undermine it. At an Israel anti-BDS conference held on 28 March Israeli intelligence minister said that Israel should engage in targeted civil eliminations of BDS leaders with the help of Israeli intelligence. The UK ambassador to Israel was at the conference and said nothing in response to this.

When government ministers anywhere make such threats against human rights defenders and members of the public, it's a threat to liberty anywhere. Thank you, conference for your time. I hope you can bring this to the attention of a wider audience. *(Applause)*

BRO MATT LAMB (Shropshire):

President, conference, we had submitted an emergency resolution on the Tories' announcement to convert all schools into academies, the wording of which no longer made any sense when Nicky Morgan announced the U-turn last week. Fortunately, standing orders have kindly assisted us by pointing out that our call to assist teachers' unions in their struggle against academisation relates to the second bullet point in this paragraph. So thank you very much to standing orders, top bananas!

So if there's been a U-turn why are we raising it now? We suspect Nicky Morgan, who is the Tory education secretary, is lying. Her lips were moving but we're convinced she's lying. Academisation is the vehicle by which the Tories are privatising our education system. LEAs are being frozen out and our schools are being hived out to mercenary privateers. Academies have a worse Ofsted record than LEA schools, and LEA schools implement improvements quicker than academies. So it's nothing to do with raising standards. It's an ideological attack, just the same as is happening to us, the NHS, the BBC, everyone in the public sector.

During the referendum debate last week I heard Michael Gove described as an intellectual heavyweight! But whilst he was education secretary his brainwave was for soldiers to become teachers. Instil some discipline, he said. *(Laughter)* Sorry. Absolute nonsense! What else did he do? He removed the curriculum from schools in 2012 and he didn't bother to bring in a replacement until 2014. When the new curriculum did come in it changed the focus, and now it includes lots and lots of useful grammar. SATs tests now ask 11 year olds to know the difference between a preposition and a subordinate clause. I don't even know what they are, let alone be able to identify what they are in a sentence. Perhaps this is where I've been going wrong all these years. Maybe I could have been someone if only I'd known what a subordinate clause was. I could have made it to the top! Maybe not.

Nicky Morgan hasn't been called an intellectual heavyweight. Hardly surprising after seeing her being outfoxed on *BBC Breakfast* by the vicious Bill Turnbull. When he questioned her he asked her: How many failing academies are

there? To which she enacted the increasingly popular Tory Boris affliction of wobbling her lips, emitting a blundering low pitch warble and tried to evade the question by changing the subject.

What our emergency resolution was asking was for the executive council to liaise with the relevant teachers' unions to offer support in their struggle against academisation, and also to provide information to our membership to encourage them to get involved in campaigns against academisation. Conference, their profession, as is ours, is under threat. Their pay, their terms and conditions are being undermined. Class sizes are up to 50 at times, causing an exodus of teachers from the profession. The dismantling of our education system will have a real impact on our children and their future and the future of this country. Therefore, we ask that our request that was in the resolution to liaise with teaching unions to assist in their struggle against academisation can be taken up by the EC. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

Conference, I know what Matt just said and I found it all very amusing, but I think what he meant was “what a door handle!”

BRO MARK ROWE (Merseyside):

President, conference, it would have been remiss of me under paragraph F1 not to place on record the sincere thanks of the Merseyside officials, our membership, delegates to conference and the FBU membership generally who over the last 27 years have supported the public of Merseyside in the pursuit of the truth in relation to the Hillsborough tragedy. This union has backed 100 per cent the Hillsborough Justice Campaign from its outset. This fantastic union has hosted fringe meetings, issued statements, and supported speakers over those long years. The right conclusion has finally been reached. The jury has listened and decided that the weight of evidence against South Yorkshire Police, and in particular David Duckenfield (given the admissions he made in evidence), led to this verdict. This verdict of unlawful killing will now be considered by the director of public prosecutions in respect of criminal prosecutions.

There is so much more that can be said on this point. However, given that there are already ongoing criminal investigations, we wouldn't want to prejudice any further proceedings. We would, however, hope that matters are now dealt with swiftly. As we know, the jury has exonerated Liverpool supporters from being in any way to blame for the disaster. Sadly, the police once again used the coroner's court as a vehicle for reiterating lies in respect of fans' behaviour. They did it at the original inquests, even though the Hillsborough Independent Panel report in 2012 illustrated a web of conspiracy, cover-up and lies on the part of the police. Nevertheless, they attempted at these new inquests once more to influence the jury to the detriment of supporters. Shame on them! The effects of these lies on good, honest supporters should not be underestimated. To the present day, many fans remain traumatised, others have committed suicide or attempted suicide. Too many have carried an unnecessary burden due to the lies perpetrated by those in power. Enough is enough.

We again applaud those fans who acted as rescuers on the day and we say to all those who continue to suffer: live your life with your heads held high; you told the truth. The FBU remains an inspiration and a shining light in the pursuit of all forms of justice. Conference, sincerely, from the bottom of our hearts and from all Merseyside members, we thank you for your support over the years. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

General secretary.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Just very quickly to respond to those three points, conference. I think they all relate to issues actually of justice and democracy, all of which are under attack, including under attack from this government that we face today. The first reference to the attempt by the government to clamp down on local authorities or other civil society organisations from organising boycotts, for example, on political or other grounds is clearly an attempt to clamp down on political debate, discussion and of people taking action in that regard. I think the example of campaigns to boycott apartheid South Africa is a prime example of what would be prevented if they get away with that. So we are opposed to that, and we will oppose that in all the forums that we engage in.

Secondly, on the academisation of schools, and the proposals of forced academisation. Yes, there has been something of a U-turn, but let's not sit on our laurels at all. The Tory government clearly intend to force through as much academisation as possible, which in reality means an attack on local democracy because it means removing those schools from local democratic control and effectively the first step towards full privatisation of our education system. So yes, we have also engaged with campaigners on the battle against academies.

Finally, on Mark's point on Hillsborough. I remember that debate when this union first took up the issue of justice for Hillsborough and the Hillsborough families. I had the pleasure this May Day to speak on a platform with a number of trade union general secretaries and with a speaker from the Justice for Hillsborough Campaign. It was with immense pride that we were singled out in that contribution, praise for this union for the work that we've done. Clearly the focus of this conference is on our industrial issues facing us but we're part of a wider movement; we're part of a wider society. We need to debate those wider issues of justice and politics and other matters here at this conference. It was because Merseyside brought that issue to us all those years ago that this union took the decision, the right decision, to back that campaign. We, along with others, have been vindicated on it, and I think we can be very proud of our role in that work. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

Thank you, conference. I now call emergency resolution 6 The Right to Criticise to be moved by Merseyside. The executive council support.

Emergency resolution 6 – THE RIGHT TO CRITICISE

Conference is appalled at the strategy of some within the Labour Party, the Tories and the right wing press in trying to stir up a false storm of anti-Semitism within the Party.

Conference is disgusted with the antics of John Mann and the right wing in attempting to engender a position where any discourse relating to the atrocities carried out by the Israeli state upon the peoples of Palestine is somehow anti-Semitic.

Conference acknowledges that supporting the desire of Palestinians for legitimate self-determination, human rights and their own state, and condemning Israeli government policies does not make someone anti-Semitic.

Conference recognises the right to be able to criticise states such as Israel for carrying out such atrocities and reaffirms our support for the plight of the Palestinian state.

MERSEYSIDE

BRO MARK ROWE (Merseyside):

President, conference, it's not anti-Semitic to criticise Israel for its crimes, just as it was not anti-South African when we criticised apartheid. In demanding equality and freedom for all the residents of historic Palestine it is the opponents of Israel's actions, not its supporters, who carry the torch of history's noble anti-racist struggles. Some of Israel's defenders, when refusing to acknowledge Israel's crimes, are increasingly seeking to revive the claim that those appalled by Israeli violence are mostly cunningly disguised anti-Semites. This is less an argument than an effort to shut down an argument. Its intended effect is to render criticism of Israel socially unacceptable.

Len McCluskey has covered, far more eloquently than I would be able to, the use of the anti-Semitic accusations within the Labour Party, and the reasons why this argument has surfaced now as yet another attempt to undermine Jeremy Corbyn's leadership. According to yesterday's press those of us on the left are all sexist as well!

Conference, taking aside the attack on Corbyn's claims, although those are significant because they shift the terms of debate rather than asking whether Israel's treatment of the Palestinians is justified, Israel's supporters wish to place that question beyond the scope of legitimate discussion. In order to defend human rights effectively it is important that we are all able to respond to these claims. One of the claims is that lots of countries are awful, you single out Israel's violence because you are anti-Semitic. This often-repeated claim is doubly flawed. Firstly, it's simply untrue that the majority of those appalled by Israel's attacks on Palestinians are zombie-like automatons with

no involvement in politics, or who dramatically arise from their life of slumber every time Israel attacks Palestine. Most are involved in a range of political campaigns. At a recent Stop the War volunteers meeting about Gaza campaigners handed out fliers advertising everything from anti-fracking protests to a socialist film cooperative.

Secondly, Israel is sufficiently unique to justify a particular focus on its crimes. There's no other country today premised on ethno-religious discrimination. In the West Bank every aspect of life, from how much water people can drink to how freely they can move and which courts judge them if they are accused of a crime, is differentially regulated for Jewish settlers and for illegally-occupied Palestinians. In Gaza Palestinians are besieged so that Israelis may live in safety. A large chunk of Gaza's population is made up of internal refugees and their descendants, forced to flee their homes in 1948 to make way for the creation of the Jewish state. Israel privileges one ethnic group while impoverishing and imprisoning another.

History is not without parallels. Apartheid South Africa elicited a special horror from people all over the world, even though many of its neighbours were also brutal regimes, because in South Africa suffering was deliberately perpetrated along racial lines. Corruption, inequality and tyranny are all as appalling as they are widespread. But people find states construed on the basis of racism particularly disturbing. If Israel is singled out it is usually because people hate occupation and discrimination, not because they are anti-Semitic. Moreover, we in the West focus on Israel because our governments are implicated in its crimes. Israel is America's outpost in the Middle East, but the two of them are deeply intertwined in a common project of hostility to those who challenge their shared geopolitical interests. Hence, Israel has received more American aid than any other country since World War Two. Britain supports this and continues to fund its military machine.

Our obligation as citizens to oppose the use of tactics to kill Palestinians combines with Israel's uniqueness as a racially defiant occupying power to explain the anger its violence generates. Israel is exceptional because it proffers a racially defined conception of national sovereignty. Those of us who demand an equal and common right to self-determination for all the inhabitants of the area, regardless of their religion, have learned our lessons from Nelson Mandela, rather than from apartheid. As Mandela knew too well, dismantling the infrastructure of a racially constituted state is no easy task. But justice for the victims dictates that we do so.

Conference, there is a lunatic fringe of people who oppose Israel out of a hatred of the Jewish people, and we condemn them outright for the racists they undoubtedly are. But the state's daily crimes provide a much more common reason for the protests against it. Conference, as this is a debate as much about Jeremy Corbyn's leadership as it is about anti-Semitism, I will leave the final words to Jeremy Corbyn himself who said at a recent rally:

"We stand in solidarity now against the growth of the far right across Europe that are more interested in blaming migrant workers, blaming victims of war who are refugees than facing up to the reality that we are all human beings living on one planet and you solve problems by human rights, humanity and justice and respect, not by blaming minorities. And so we stand absolutely against anti-Semitism in any form."

Conference, please support. I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT:

Do we have a seconder, please? Come to the rostrum.

SIS LUCY MASOUD (London):

Conference, not so long ago the plight of the Palestinians and the atrocities committed by the Israeli government were almost completely ignored by the mainstream media. Thankfully this has changed after the last two years, and I believe this is down to two reasons. Firstly, the bombardment of Gaza in 2014 and, secondly, by the emergence of social media. Unlike the BBC and CNN etc, the Israeli lobby can no longer control social media and they can no longer control the images coming out of the West Bank and Gaza. For the first time the world is finally waking up and seeing Israel for what it is: a racist, oppressive state. Israel is finally losing the public relations war and because of that, they've had to change their tactics. Now we see the pro-Israeli lobby on both sides, left and right, throw accusations of anti-Semitism at anyone who dares challenge Israel's barbaric behaviour. Recently we have seen

such tactics used against members of the Labour Party. Conference, we must fight against such dirty tactics and show solidarity with Palestinians, as well as any politicians who stand up for Palestine.

Recently, I was in the West Bank and one morning myself and some volunteers were doing the school run. The school run in Palestine is very different from the school run in the UK. The school run in Palestine is where you walk children to school, normally between the ages of four and five. You walk them to school to try to get them there safe, because every single day these children will be shot at by the Israeli soldiers, they will be tear gassed by the Israeli soldiers, and they will be physically attacked by the fundamentalist Israeli settlers. On one such school run I was approached by a group of Israeli settlers who proceeded to scream in my face that I was a Nazi, a fascist, and of course an anti-Semite. An anti-Semite, conference, simply for walking children to school.

The allegations thrown at me and my comrades on that day were no different from the baseless and unfounded accusations that are thrown against anyone who dares criticise Israel's behaviour. The FBU must stand up and support the Palestinian state, and I urge you to support this resolution. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

Speakers, conference? No. Matt.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

President, conference, I thank Merseyside for bringing the resolution. It clearly is something that is being debated in the press almost daily at the present time, and we do need to take a position on it. I think Mark was absolutely right that actually the so-called furore about so-called anti-Semitism in the Labour Party (which is the feature of this press debate) is, in reality not at all about anti-Semitism; it is about an attack on the left, and it is about an attempt to undermine Jeremy Corbyn. We have people in the Labour Party now suspended and under investigation for comments that they have made in this regard. It is especially alarming in the context of a society where we have, almost daily, hostile articles in the press and increasingly widespread hostility towards Muslim people in this society.

However, we have to be cautious and careful as a union. We have to be sensitive about the use of language. We cannot engage and we should not engage in the lazy use of terminology. I think in some of those areas problems have been caused. The debate is around the relationship, for example, between anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism and, of course, among people who may describe themselves as Zionists there is a range of views. If anyone has read some of the press reaction to some of this debate you will pick up some of the nuances. There are Jewish people who are very firmly opposed to Zionism; there are other Jewish people who may describe themselves as Zionists but who have clearly come out and opposed the witch-hunt that is going on against people in the Labour Party. There are Jewish people in the Labour Party, for example, who would describe themselves as Zionists but would describe themselves on the left, including in the campaign to elect Jeremy Corbyn. So there are enormous complications around some of these issues.

But that, I think, as the resolution touches on and as Mark explained, should not intimidate anyone from speaking out clearly against oppression and against state violence and against injustice. This union has a long and proud history of standing up for justice on international issues, a long and proud history of standing up for justice and peace in the Middle East and for justice for the Palestinian people.

So while we take note and we advise our members and our activists to be careful in the use of language, we make no apologies about the policies that this union has had. We make no apologies about our long-term commitment to a just settlement for the Palestinian people. Support the resolution. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

I now emergency resolution 6 to the vote. The executive council support. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. *That is CARRIED.*

Paragraph F2 TUC Congress. I now call resolution 24 with the amendment from London. The executive council oppose both the resolution and the amendment. Resolution 24 to be moved by Cambridgeshire.

Resolution 24 WORKING CLASS HISTORY

Conference acknowledges the fundamental importance of education and information distribution within the working class movement. Education is vital to the continuance of the trade union movement's struggle for working class equality, fairness and liberty. It is through the provision of education, formerly withheld from working class people through both economic and class oppression, which has empowered the movement to achieve its many huge successes.

As important as succeeding in securing these achievements for all working people, is ensuring that the origins and history are not forgotten and that the many people who fought so hard to achieve them are not either. This is the history of our people and our class and we should proudly celebrate and remember it. We must also uphold our responsibility to inspire and educate the next generation how many of the liberties we enjoy today were achieved; through struggle, adversity and bravery. This is our history.

Therefore Conference instructs our Executive Council to present at the next TUC National Conference a resolution on behalf of the Fire Brigades Union to initiate a coordinated, UK-wide project to implement a "Working Class History Week". It will be a week of remembrance, education and celebration of the rich and varied history of the working class, its Trade Union movement and its great achievements. A week of TV documentaries, online videos, news articles and more utilising all communication mediums to tell the stories that so often to not achieve the reverence they deserve. It will be a week that shows our unified oppression through the collective sharing of the history of all working class struggle, which continues to this day. The week will align with the current May Day Celebrations and bank holiday.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE

AMENDMENT

In final paragraph, sixth line, delete second 'to' and replace with 'do'.

LONDON

BRO CAMERON MATTHEWS (Cambridgeshire):

President, conference, I would firstly like to start, brothers and sisters, by reading a very small paragraph from our rule book. It is from the foreword. That says:

"To this end the Fire Brigades Union is part of the working class movement and linking itself with international trade union and labour movement has as its ultimate aim the bringing about of a socialist system of society."

Our rule book, brothers and sisters, and our objectives. If we are to agitate and organise, we must first educate. Working people should have a fair share of the fruits of their labour, and there should be fairness, equality and justice for all. It's famously quoted in the book by George Santayana in the 1905 book *Life of Reason* that those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.

Conference, with this in mind who could deny, looking at our current situation in our society and indeed internationally, that working people have had their working conditions and quality of life destroyed and taken back into the past. In our own industry we've got Victorian shift systems, we've had the biggest slump in pay since the 1860s and 1870s, unsecured zero hours contracts, and of course pension erosion. All things that previous generations shed blood, sweat and tears to achieve are being destroyed in front of our eyes. Working people urgently need to organise and mount a defence of these hard-won provisions. But people, especially the younger generation possibly, also need an understanding of what was achieved by those before them in remembrance and for inspiration. That will give them the ability to achieve similar objectives in the future, working together in unity and determination.

This is why we've brought this resolution to conference. If there's one thing the labour movement doesn't do well enough, in my opinion, it is highlight the achievements that working people made over the generations. This country was built in its entirety by working class hands and it's working class people who maintain it. All of those stories that

came before us must be shared. There is an old English proverb that says you don't know where you're going until you know where you've been.

Conference, we believe it's imperative to our aims to launch a mainstream widespread week such as this to bring back the pride that we should have in our class. We see it as of fundamental importance to underpin all of our other objectives. However, as you will be aware, the EC do oppose our resolution and we have been asked to withdraw. However, what we would ask is why, given the current dire situation working people are faced with and the fact that we have only four years (a short amount of time) until the general election to tackle apathy and to turn out voters who, in the majority, are of our class and who don't vote. We need to do something to get those people to the ballot box and support Jeremy Corbyn, who we're going to hear from later.

So if those objectives are agreed by conference, and I'm sure they will also be agreed by the EC, what assurances and support can be provided to ensure that this goal is achieved in the future, or by any other means, so we do not delay the work that urgently needs to be done, so that we can make sure that we have a Labour and left government coming out after the general election in 2020? I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT:

Does that have a seconder? *Formally* Formally seconded. That's open for debate. General secretary.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Conference, the executive council welcome the resolution from Cambridgeshire actually. I think Cameron raised some important things. The foreword to the rule book is one of my favourite bits of writing actually. I encourage everyone to read it every night before you go to bed!

I think it is important that we as a movement discuss, study, learn about our history and where our organisations came from – not in the context of seeing history as some dusty thing about the past that bears no relevance to today, but so we can study the past in order to guide ourselves for the future. So we do believe the ideas that Cameron has raised on behalf of Cambridgeshire are worthy of discussion.

The union does engage in some of those activities. The question of working class history is very much built into our education programme; it is very much a part of our national school. All of you who have been through that process will have seen the way in which we do that. We support the Working Class Movement Library in Salford where, arising out of the personal libraries of two left-wing activists, a fantastic resource has been built for our movement of records of trade unions, pamphlets, histories and so on. We supported the initiatives, for example, around the People's History Museum in Manchester, which again draws together the history of our people, our organisations, the fight for workers' rights and the fight for democracy.

I will take this moment to plug an issue that we're discussing currently. That is our own centenary. In 2018 we will celebrate one hundred years of this union. Assuming we survive, that will be a fantastic achievement. There are huge lessons to learn from the history of this organisation about how firefighters first of all organised a trade union in very, very difficult circumstances, and how firefighters then began to demand rights but then also began to shape the future of their own industry. So I hope that you will play your part in that. It won't be anything if it's simply head office doing that. We rely on yourselves. I think some of you will be aware, we've called a first seminar to start discussing some of those issues next month.

We participate in the celebrations or commemorations of the historic miners' strike. This year is the 40th anniversary of the Grunwick strike, which I remember as a teenager. An absolutely inspiring struggle that was a turning point in the history of our movement, a turning point that forced trade unions to wake up to the issues facing black and minority ethnic, black and Asian workers in our workplaces who had been all too often ignored and not represented by our trade unions. A group of Asian women took on an employer and sparked inspiration across our movement, and people decided which side were they on. Some absolutely outstanding struggles that we should remember.

The concerns we have about the motion are simply about the practicalities in reality. I think if we're going to launch something like this (and it may be of merit) we would need a much wider discussion within the movement. We would

need to get buy-in from people about how we would do it, what the aims of it were, how we would do it, how we would pursue it and so on. It mentions the TUC, for example. The union has two resolutions to the TUC and I think we have to be very careful what those two motions are. I think any motion that comes here that says the motion must be on a particular issue is of concern to the FBU.

So I think what I would ask Cameron to consider is remitting the resolution to the executive council. If you do so, I give you our assurance that it won't be ignored; we will work with you to discuss what we can do to support the ideas that were raised within the resolution and which you raised in moving it.

BRO CAMERON MATTHEWS (Cambridgeshire):

President, conference, we welcome Matt's assurances over the importance of working class history week, and also the importance of remembering our history as a class. I think in the spirit of unity we wouldn't want to force an issue to the vote which might be divisive. So with that in mind, we will continue to pursue this objective but we will remit and withdraw the resolution. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

The resolution is withdrawn so therefore clearly the London amendment falls. Conference, we do have a visitor coming today. Hold on, hold on. Stuart, see standing orders, make sure that an ambulance is called, will you please? Conference, please stay around your seats. We're adjourned temporarily. Conference, don't leave your seats. Feel free to chat among yourselves.

Adjourned

THE PRESIDENT:

Conference, and especially those outside, can you please come back in the room and take your seats? Thank you. I'm just trying to keep you informed, conference. There's very little we can do now. We've sorted out the health of the unfortunate comrade who had a collapse there. We're now waiting for Jeremy Corbyn who is in the building. I think it would be wrong of us to get involved in a major debate while that's happening.

You can talk to each other, but don't be moving around if you can do that. Talk to each other in a very civil manner.

Conference, everybody take your seats, please. Take your seats and come to order. *(Applause)* Thanks, conference. Take your seats, please, and come to order. I'm delighted, above delighted, to welcome Jeremy Corbyn, the elected leader of the Labour Party. Jeremy's election represents for me the best possibility in a generation of putting workers' issues, including firefighters' issues, to the heart of politics. Jeremy has been one of the most consistent supporters of the FBU in politics for decades. He supported us in disputes and on picket lines going back to 1977 when I was unfortunately on a picket line. He's a founder member of the FBU parliamentary group. This union supported his campaign over the summer. He used our fire engine as a speaking platform, and I'm really pleased that you survived that, Jeremy, to be fair!

Jeremy, as you know, won a quarter of a million votes in the leadership election with the support of the unions. Under Jeremy's leadership there's a possibility for developing a new trade union political agenda. He's our friend, he's our comrade. Conference, please give Jeremy your warmest welcome. *(Applause)*

BRO JEREMY CORBYN (Labour Party):

Chair, president, thank you very, very much indeed for welcoming me today, and thanks very much for the privilege of addressing the conference. There are many things that we can discuss together and achieve together, but I'm really pleased that you decided to reaffiliate to the Labour Party. Can I say on behalf of the party, welcome back and I'm delighted you're part of the party and delighted to look forward to FBU resolutions coming up to annual conference and the huge contribution this union has always made, not just on behalf of the industry obviously, but also on behalf of so many international issues over many years. All general secretaries have been great supporters of the party and its international work. So thank you very much, all of you, for that reaffiliation. *(Applause)*

Thanks also to Matt, as general secretary of 11 years, and Andy Dark the assistant, and all the reps in the union, many of whom I've met over many years both in my own constituency and in travelling around the country. I've always made sure that I have the closest possible relationship with this union. It's been great working with Matt and Andy and so many others on all the issues that affect the fire service, but also the way in which you always reach out to other public service unions in exactly the same way.

I also want to thank you for the support you gave to our campaign – and I stress it's "our campaign" – on the leadership of the Labour Party last summer. We decided to go into that campaign because we wanted a different economic strategy (and I will come back to that in a moment) and we wanted our party to be more open, more democratic, where policies come upwards rather than are sent downwards, and that every member's abilities, inspiration, imagination can be brought to bear as we develop the policies of our movement. It's only when everybody is involved in developing the policies of our movement that we become really strong and we can take on and defeat not just the Tories but the ideology behind the Tories, and what they're doing to this country. *(Applause)*

I'm full of admiration for the FBU fire tender, which seems to travel around the country at enormous speed (not!) and wherever it arrives it seems to get there just in time to be the platform for various rallies. I'm really grateful to you for that. I've now been given a cap so I can wear the cap whenever I'm on top of the fire tender again. Is that OK? The most dramatic one was when we had a rally at Camden Town Hall, or the Camden Centre, towards the end of the leadership campaign when it was so full we had five overflow meetings, and we'd run out of rooms to have overflow meetings in and so the fire tender came into its own, and the last overflow of another 500 people assembled around the fire tender and we were able to give that speech there.

The trade unions founded the Labour Party, the Labour Party has maintained its existence because of trade unions, and I have spent my life as a trade unionist. I will die as a trade unionist because I'm proud to be a member of a trade union and proud to call myself a trade unionist. To me it's not an embarrassment that our party has trade union affiliates; it's something I'm very proud of because that is the nature of what the Labour Party has to be about.

In opposition we are obviously taking the fight to the Tories. We have achieved some victories in parliament over the last few months, and achieving those victories will give people confidence. We still have a very long way to go. But take a couple; for example, the Trade Union Bill. It is an anti-trade union bill, it is designed to silence trade unions. We already have some of the most restrictive trade union laws in Europe, and just before the last election they managed to pass into law the very ill-named Trade Union Transparency and Lobbying Bill. It was the very opposite of transparency; it was very anti-trade union and it was very anti any civil society NGO that wanted to make its voice felt in the run up to a general election, but it gave freedom of lobbying to corporations, hedge funds, and all the wealthiest within our society. I want to be heading that Labour government in 2020 that introduces new positive rights at work, positive rights to join a trade union, and repeals the anti-trade union legislation that we've got. It's a very important step forward we're making when we are setting up Workplace 2020 in the near future, which will be a development of our all workplace policies and rights at work. I hope and I'm sure the union will want to take part in that.

I think we have to speak up for the principle of trade unions and what they've achieved within our society. We have won some concessions out the bill: on electronic balloting, on facility times, on check-off, and, to some extent, on union political funds. But to those people that say trade unions are a problem in our society I quite simply say this: where there is a strong trade union you usually get better management; you normally get better pay; you normally have better conditions; you normally have people staying on in that place or that enterprise much longer because they are better run places. Exploitation leads to discrimination; fewer forms of redress; worse working conditions; and often in the private sector, much lower levels of productivity. A strong union like yours, like the FBU, obviously defends workers' rights. But you're also defending the public services that everybody relies on. It's very interesting that whenever issues of public service cuts come up (and I've been at numerous meetings over many years on issues of public spending going back all of my political life) the FBU is a very popular union and the fire service is a very popular service because everyone recognises how important that service is and how much they rely on it.

I just say to those people that seem to think that there's something very clever in escaping and avoiding tax and putting your savings into tax havens around the world. One day your house might catch fire; one day you might

need a public service to save your building, save your property, or even save your life. It's the rest of us who've paid our taxes that have made sure that service is there! Pay your taxes and be moral about it! *(Applause)*

My involvement in the union, because of my great age, goes back to 1977 when I joined picket lines then, and again in 2002/2003 when the coalition government came after your pensions. Fundamentally, our election campaign for the leadership of the party was about the economy and was about economic choices that are made. I think that offering austerity lite in the 2015 election meant there wasn't sufficient choice put before the people of this country on the direction in which they wanted to go. So I was very clear that the first duty I had to do was to try to change the economic policy and direction of the party which is why the first appointment I made was of John McDonnell as shadow chancellor of the exchequer. Because John has an enormous record of working with your union and indeed all the other unions (he was an officer of the FBU group in parliament), he is very clear (and he has put this very clearly so many times) that the austerity we're going through, the rolling back of the state we are now going through in Britain, is a political choice not an economic necessity. That message we have to get across very clearly. *(Applause)*

Your union, your industry and your members have been treated very badly. They have tried to change terms and conditions, steal from the pension scheme, and it's an absolutely outrageous way to treat firefighters. The cuts in the fire service are wrong and unnecessary. We are now seeing, for the first time I can remember, an increase in fire deaths due to the longest response times in 20 years. I'm not blaming any firefighter for that; I'm not blaming anyone in the industry for that. I'm blaming a government that has so under-funded our service that so many fire stations have been closed therefore it's obviously more difficult to deliver the service that's necessary. I think the work of the fire service in making all of our homes and buildings much safer is incredible. I think the responsibility and bravery of the members is absolutely incredible. But they keep on making these choices to close fire stations, and I've been with you in challenging all of those for a very long time.

This government is making the wrong economic choices in cutting vital public services and in not investing sufficiently in what we need to do in this country. We need investment in new rail links, we need a transition towards a carbon-free economy, and crucially (and this is where the virtuous circle of public investment comes round) we need far greater investment in housing to deal with the housing crisis that every one of you faces in some way or the other – either yourselves or your family. In the case of expensive big cities, I talk to firefighters in my own constituency and hardly any of them can afford to live anywhere near the fire stations in London. Many commute very long distances in order to provide the service that we all need. There has to be investment in housing, council housing, with lifetime tenancies, reasonable levels of rent and reasonable security so our children can grow up not with the insecurity of the private rented sector and possibly having to move house every six months, instead knowing they have got a home they can call their own, they can enjoy their childhood and do well at school as a result of it. The lack of investment in housing is something that's so damaging to every working class community and every family in this country. I want to reverse that. I want to invest in housing. That in turn creates jobs down the supply chain. What the Tories are doing is forcing councils to sell off their best properties, allowing the building of speculative luxury homes that are then kept empty as a process of land banking, or sold off-plan, whilst there are more and more people sleeping on the streets, and more and more people living in grossly overcrowded accommodation. It doesn't have to be like that. It could be very different if, instead of worshipping the idea of profit for the few, we embraced the idea of provision for the many and for all. That surely is what a good, caring society is about. *(Applause)*

In our fire service there are many issues that are coming up. I want to thank Lyn Brown, our shadow minister responsible for the fire service. It wasn't her choice, it wasn't my choice, that it be moved to the Home Office. I believe that it's very important that we defend the fire service. In the police and crime commissioner elections I made it very clear to all of our police and crime commissioner candidates that I wanted to be very careful to make sure the fire service wasn't cut in order to put money into the police service, or vice versa. There needs to be more, not less, investment in the fire service, and we've got to keep on the line on that one. You as firefighters put your lives on the line all the time. I pay tribute to those that have died as a result of trying to save lives.

Over the last few months we've had serious flooding within this country. I've met many people working in the fire service who did incredible work in dealing with the floods, in dealing with the security of people in them and saving

lives. I also met many others that volunteered to help and other services that came to the rescue. But two things have to change. One is to ensure there is sufficient provision by the fire service in order to meet the emergencies. They are becoming more frequent because climate change does affect rainfall, does affect flooding and the lack of investment in flood protection is an issue. But we also need as a society to recognise that the work of the fire service is of course saving from fire, is of course preventing fire (that is very well done), but the other side of it we need a statutory obligation on flooding and flood protection in order to ensure that the funding goes with it, and the equipment goes with it, to make sure you're there and able to deal with the next crisis.

I was alarmed at the stretch that had been reached during the floods last year in Cumbria, in Lancashire, and in Yorkshire. Imagine if, at the same time, the same level of flooding as happened in previous years had happened in the Thames Valley and in Somerset as well. Would the services have been able to cope with four or five major floods across the country? You know the answer better than I do. The way we protect our society isn't relying on the good will of volunteers (valuable as that is), the way we protect our society is funding our emergency services to cope with the worst disasters, investing in flood protection, investing in upstream river management in order to protect all our towns and cities. I have always found it very valuable talking to firefighters on the issues surrounding floods and floods protection. I want to use this opportunity to say a huge thank you on behalf of thousands of people around this country for the work your members did in saving life during the floods. *(Applause)*

There are huge issues facing us at the present time. One of those is, of course, how we defend and extend rights at work, how we defend and extend the Working Time Directive that we achieved in this country through the European Union, and how we ensure we protect our anti-discrimination legislation. In dealing with the issue of Europe, I want to put it this way. I've come to the conclusion that we should vote to remain, not because I love the European Union or love all its institutions, but because I want to protect the working condition advances that we have made; I want to oppose the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, which will essentially give investors protection at the expense of the rest of us; and I want to work with trade unions and socialist parties all across Europe as I've been doing ever since I became the leader of this party. I want us to work with people across national borders, particularly those in the private sector where they are often facing the same employer in order to strengthen workers' rights across Europe.

Like you, I'm alarmed at the rise of the far right in this country and across Europe – the rise of the far right, exploiting people who are in a place of great danger, refugees fleeing war and those that are trying to eke out an existence in order to make a contribution to our society. One victory we have managed to achieve in the past couple of weeks is forcing, and indeed shaming, the government into supporting Alf Dubs's amendment to provide a place of safety and sanctuary to 3,000 unaccompanied child refugees currently trying to survive in very dangerous refugee camps all over this continent. We deal with the problem of refugees and refugee flows by a political solution to the problem at source in Libya and Syria. We also deal with the problem by reaching out the hand of humanity to people rather than dealing with them with barbed wire and tear gas. They are human beings, like you and me, trying to survive in a very cruel and very dangerous world. We bring about a safer and better world by promoting human rights, democracy, justice and humanity – not necessarily by going to war and making the situation worse in place after place around the world. *(Applause)*

But we also have to deal with some of the economic issues. This week at Prime Minister's Question Time I asked Cameron several times about the issue of working conditions of companies that cynically exploit workers across Europe, where one enterprise moves wholesale its workforce from one country to another in order to pay them a lower rate of pay, which may be the one that pertains in the first country, in order to lay off people in the second country, thus reducing the living standards and wages of those staff and undermining pay and working conditions. There is a proposal going before the EU Commission, which so far has been blocked by British Tories and the British government, which would end this scandalous practice of exploiting workers by moving them from one place to another.

Likewise, the country by country reporting that we've demanded on tax payments, likewise the demands that we're making on closing down the British-administered tax havens around the world. The point I made at the beginning about people paying taxes in order to get public services applies to every other aspect of it. It's simply not right that the industrial scale of tax evasion continues. Even the Treasury admits that £34 billion a year is uncollected in

tax. That £34 billion would help fund the health service, would help fund our education service, would help fund all of our public services. It's simply not right, the levels of tax evasion that goes on. I'm grateful to those journalists that managed to expose the Panama Papers, and the systematic way that all of our public services are being undermined by these people. I want a government that chases down tax evasion, not dreams up ways to promote tax avoidance. *(Applause)*

We've had elections last week. I want to congratulate Sadiq Khan on being elected mayor of London, Marvin Rees being elected mayor of Bristol, and the many other police and crime commissioners and local authorities that Labour managed either to retain control of, or gain control of in the case of Lancaster. Those councils are in a difficult situation because of the way in which there is systematic under-funding by this central government of their services. But they're also in a position to expose what this government is doing, try to build the houses that we need, and try to ensure that we have the public services that we need.

We also won both parliamentary by-elections in Ogmore and Sheffield Brightside, and I was really pleased to welcome Chris Elmore and Gill Furniss to parliament this week. It was wonderful that Gill's first question was about Hillsborough. I pay tribute to all those that worked so hard for so long in order to bring justice to the Hillsborough families and get the decision that was the right one that finally came out of the inquests. That shows what happens when working class communities come together to demand justice. It's a long hard road but that road must now also include an opening up of an inquiry into what happened at Orgreave, as Gill demanded, and also the question of the Shrewsbury 24 and the systematic blacklisting of trade union activists within the building industry. We're not done yet on this! I want to chase down these levels of injustice and corruption of our justice system that has happened and been exposed by those inquiries. I thank your union for the support that it has given to those families that have been trying to deal with the horror of knowing, in the case of Hillsborough, that their loved ones had died and they were being quite falsely blamed for something that they absolutely did not do. Justice is something that is only won by ordinary people coming together. It's only defended by ordinary people and their trade unions coming together to defend it and expose it when injustice happens. So I think we should all join together and congratulate the Hillsborough families for what they've achieved for all of us. *(Applause)*

When we work together as a society we achieve a great deal. It was the trade unions that founded the Labour Party; it was trade union pressure in the Labour Party that helped to bring about the welfare state, helped to bring about the National Health Service, and helped to bring about the high provision of council housing that was made particularly by the post-war Labour government. It was that pressure that also brought about the Equal Pay Act, that also brought about the Health and Safety at Work Act, that also brought about the Human Rights Act and the Equality Act. The Tories don't understand any of that. What they want to do is roll back the state, what they want to do is roll back the provision of public services and so underfund the National Health Service that instead of being the service of first port of call it becomes a service of last resort, at the same time as there's a burgeoning private medical service.

I absolutely defend the National Health Service, I support the junior doctors in their defence of the National Health Service. But I want to go a stage further, not just in the funding of the National Health Service, but also in the good provision of mental health services all across the country, which is why I wanted to appoint somebody at cabinet level to deal with the mental health issue in this country, to end the stigma, end the trauma, so that people going through a mental health crisis don't do so alone and isolated, but do so with the understanding of the rest of the community. I understand to some extent (because I've not been through it myself and that's why I say "some extent") the trauma that your members face when they've had to pull bodies out of fires, dead children out of homes and so on – all the horrors that go with that and the support that they need. It's those kind of traumas that there has to be a mental health service to deal with, just as much as there has to be a mental health service to deal with those that are going through all kinds of other traumas brought about by the stresses of our society. We can be big enough, strong enough and kind enough as a society to reach out to everybody, not just those that can afford private treatment. That is the principle of our National Health Service.

The Tories next week will produce a Queen's Speech for the new session of parliament. I obviously do not know what the contents of it are going to be. But I do know our position will be to defend the Human Rights Act if it's at risk, to defend the Equality Act if it's at risk, but also to demand sufficient funding for our public services and also to

demand sufficient investment in our economy so that we do have a growing economy, so that young people coming out of college and university can look forward to a decent future for themselves. I'm fed up with being told by many very expert people, apparently, that the next generation is going to be worse off than this one, and the one after that is going to be even worse off than that one. Does that have to be the case? Does that have to be the case at all? Or is it that the political movements that are happening in this country, happening in Europe, happening in the USA are actually challenging an economic story which says that the only way forward is to roll back the state, promote the private sector, promote private enterprise, and promote individual wealth at the expense of collective good? Our movement is about the collective good, is about reaching out to everybody.

Our party has changed quite a lot. Our party is now bigger in membership and activity than it's ever been, particularly bigger amongst young members of the party. These are exciting times. We can bring about real change for the benefit of everybody in our society and show that those who founded our movement, with all their bravery and intelligence, one hundred years ago, are not forgotten. We learn those lessons to go forward into the 21st century, the century of high technology where we're able to ensure that wealth that's created is properly shared and doesn't just become a vehicle for increasing inequality and increasing wealth within our society. That's what our movement is about. That's what our party is about. I'm delighted that we're able to work together to achieve the policies we need for the future, to bring about the future that will actually benefit all those that are suffering at the present time.

Thank you very much for inviting me here today. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

I realise, conference, that we have a tendency to take people over their times and I realise the busy schedule that Jeremy has. But I'd like a response from our general secretary and I think there's a presentation for Jeremy as well.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Jeremy, I think on behalf of our conference I would like to echo Alan's words of welcome and thank you for your attendance here today and for the words that you've brought to our delegates here in Blackpool. It's been a long break since we had a speaker from the Labour Party at our conference, and even longer since we had a leader of the Labour Party here to address us.

I think it is worth just reflecting on some of those experiences of where we went and how we came back. You're well aware, and our delegates are well aware, of the disappointment and anger that this union felt in 2002 and 2003 where it wasn't simply a disagreement between us and a Labour government, but a real feeling of being let down by people within the party that we had helped to fund and campaigned for over many, many decades. During those years when we were disaffiliated, two MPs stood out in parliament on a whole host of fire service issues. Yourself, Jeremy Corbyn, and John McDonnell to whom you've referred. In that dispute in 2002/2003 we challenged over the regionalisation of our emergency fire controls, we fought over the issue of proper funding for floods and other activities, we challenged the cuts. You've mentioned your first appearance on one of our picket lines in 1977. I was at school at the time. I don't know about in the audience, but we certainly have two veterans of 1977 on the platform in Kevin Brown and our president, Alan McLean. I'm sure that they also thank you for that.

The FBU has continued that struggle in parliament. The FBU's parliamentary group, in which you and John have played an absolutely crucial role, has been key to us pursuing our issues politically, even during the period in which we were disaffiliated from the Labour Party. But also, as you've referred to (and I think this is not lost on our members), you have stood by us in difficult times, when we've been on picket lines and when we've had difficult fights to make. Our members don't forget those things.

When the leadership campaign came up, I have to say on our executive council it was a no-brainer, it was obvious that regardless of whether we were in or out of the Labour Party we were going to support Jeremy Corbyn for that leadership campaign. We saw an inspiring movement last summer that many people in the hall will have participated in, engaged in and attended meetings. We saw not the machine politics, which I think has alienated many people from mainstream politics in British society over the past couple of decades, we saw ordinary people coming out to meetings which we're told people don't do any more; people don't go to political meetings. We saw thousands and

thousands of people turning out to hear a different message, and an inspiring message that engaged with working people, that trade unionists, the young people, with people who wanted to see peace rather than war. That's a message that very much ties in with the traditions of our union.

This union is very pleased that you've given a very clear anti-cuts, anti-austerity message. We want to work with you on that. We discussed late last year, and we discussed it ourselves, the debate in the union about the possibility of reaffiliating and we came into this hall late last year and decided to reaffiliate to the Labour Party. The FBU is coming into the Labour Party to argue for our policies, to bring firefighters' issues into the Labour Party, to defend the fire and rescue service, to defend firefighters, to work with you on trade union rights, and to seek change in favour of the majority. We want to fight for socialist policies within the Labour Party.

I think, as you say, there is lots and lots to do. I, on behalf of this union, want to call for unity around that campaign in the Labour Party. Jeremy Corbyn, you have a huge mandate from our movement, from our party, for your leadership of the Labour Party and we in the Fire Brigades Union pledge our support in that campaign.

I know Alan's going to make a little presentation in a moment but with the help of a good friend of mine, Linda Smith, who's one of our retired members but who's from Blackpool – we're in Blackpool, so a couple of sticks of Blackpool rock as a personal gift. No, it doesn't say "kiss me quick"! It does say "The Boss" and "Someone Special"! (*Applause*)

I just want to finish with a little story from last night, possibly a bit too late last night. I was talking to our Cumbria delegates out in the lobby there and they told me absolutely incredible stories of the work that firefighters undertook in those floods, horrifying stories actually that we need to make more of. It's about people who were rescued, and lives were saved in absolutely extraordinary circumstances. One thing that angered them, and I think angered our members across the country, was the failure by the prime minister to acknowledge that role of firefighters in those very terrible conditions. Even chief fire officers eventually began to wake up to the fact that there seemed to be a conscious effort to ignore the role of firefighters in those floods. You went into Cumbria, and you then went to York, and it was noted by our members in those two areas and nationally. It was very much appreciated. I want to thank you on behalf of our members on the ground, our delegates here for that solidarity that you gave then. We want to work with you to achieve the changes that you've set out, to campaign, to challenge and ultimately defeat this government, and to bring in a government that will fight on behalf of working people. On that, we're very proud to stand side by side with you. Thank you for attending conference today. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT:

Conference, those of you who know Matt know full well that the gifts that he gives usually aren't bought by him and are invariably stingy. We do have what I consider to be a better gift for you, Jeremy, but it's from me and the rest of the members. It comes with a qualification. You're welcome to the gift. It's a bronze firefighter. It comes with a qualification and that qualification is that in four years' time you send me a picture of that on a mantelpiece in 10 Downing Street. (*Applause*)

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

We're going to be a bit cheeky, because I know people do this all over the country, that is selfies with Jeremy. So we're going to do an EC selfie with Jeremy and then a conference selfie. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT:

Take your seats, please conference. If you can come to order, as Jeremy's leaving I'm just looking now at the programme of business. We've made some quite decent progress this morning. I'm envisaging conference ending around one o'clock today. That's my guesstimate, but I do want to see everybody still here. My guesstimate is around one o'clock for those of you who are planning transport. I don't see it really going much past that. But with that, I'm going to give you 20 minutes' tea break from now.

Break for tea

THE PRESIDENT:

Pete Goulden, can you take that bell and ring it somewhere in the corridor to get the stragglers in, please? Thanks very much. Nobody rush out – it isn't a fire or a card vote! OK, conference, come to order. I now call resolution – sorry, chair of standing orders to give the final standing orders report. Sorry about that, Steve.

THE CHAIR OF STANDING ORDERS (Bro Steve Shelton):

Thank you, president. The standing orders committee have agreed to a request for a bucket collection from Scotland to support the campaign for PPE for Palestinian firefighters. Region 1 has secured 120 sets of PPE, 20 BA sets, and two sets of hydraulic cutting equipment from the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service. This equipment is now waiting to be delivered from Scotland to Palestine. They are now only a few hundred pounds away from having enough money to pay the transport costs to get the lifesaving equipment to our Palestinian comrades. Conference, please give generously at the end of conference today. One of the stewards will have the bucket there. Please put in what you can. Thank you.

Conference, on behalf of the standing orders committee I would firstly like to thank Jan Ross, Kate Cassidy, Anna Zych, Lynne Wallis, Rhian Jones, Bob Birchall, William Murphy and Paul Hampton, our head office staff for their efforts this week. Thank you very much. *(Applause)*

Thanks also to our conference stewards for their hard work and support this week. Great job, thank you very much. Especially this morning, thank you. *(Applause)*

Thanks to Steve Cole and the Mascol team for their hard work and efforts in setting up our conference. Thank you very much Steve and the lads. *(Applause)*

A very special thank you from the standing orders committee to Alison and all the team and staff at the Imperial Hotel for their help and assistance this week. Thank you very much. *(Applause)*

Personally, conference, I would like to thank all members of the standing orders committee for their hard work and efforts, not just this week but at all the standing orders committee meetings up to now this year. *(Applause)*

Thanks to West Midlands, it won't be too long before I see my standing orders comrades again! Joking apart though, conference, may I take this opportunity to ask you for your assistance in submitting business for future conferences? Please, please plan appropriately. Don't be afraid or feel embarrassed to ask someone for assistance. Please proof read your submissions before pressing the Send button. That would be greatly appreciated. We do try to get as much business on the order paper as possible. I know some people comment about the Thought Police but we do try to get on as much as we can. We can only deal with what's laid in front of us. Please take that on board.

Conference, it's been emotional. May I wish you all a safe journey home once conference is over. President, that concludes my final report for this conference. Conference, thank you and thank you, president. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

Is the final standing orders report agreed? *AGREED*

Thank you very much, and thank you Steve. OK, I now call resolution 26 The Trade Union Bill to be moved by Merseyside. The executive council oppose. Merseyside.

Resolution 26 – THE TRADE UNION BILL

Conference applauds the Trade Union Congress composite resolution C18 'The Trade Union Bill and building a campaign to stop government attacks' moved by Unite at TUC 2015, seconded by CWU and supported amongst others by the FBU.

That resolution emphatically rejected the introduction of the Trade Union Bill. The resolution stated that:

‘This proposed law must be seen as a malicious attempt by the Government to constrain democratic industrial and political opposition to its austerity programme. The Bill is an uncompromising and unnecessary assault on the rights and freedoms of British workers and is politically motivated, the work of a vindictive Tory Party using the levers of Government for its own political ends, seeking to outlaw legitimate protest, stifle free speech and choke off the resources of political opponents.’

Conference fully endorses and supports that statement and also the strategy contained within the resolution to develop a comprehensive strategy through the TUC which includes the following:

- 1. Giving maximum possible political and industrial support and finance to trade unions that may find themselves outside of the law this programme should include calls on other workers and campaigners not in unions to join our action and not merely the calling of token protests and should set out to build a mass movement with the clear aim of defeating these attacks***
- 2. A programme of ongoing action***
- 3. Preparation for supporting workers taking joint/co-ordinated industrial action***
- 4. The development of a Workers’ Charter setting out agreed aims on key issues, to be pursued by unions as part of a co-ordinated approach to collective bargaining***
- 5. Organising committees, based on local unions, trades councils and existing anti-austerity campaigns to co-ordinate local activity, with meetings, days of action and rallies in every region across the UK***
- 6. A co-ordinated national day of action across the UK and a further programme of ongoing action***
- 7. Action to defend any union attacked under anti-union laws.***

Conference recognises the inordinate amount of work already undertaken by Executive Council Members, National Officials and Regional Officials and therefore instructs the Executive Council to convene an organising committee consisting of one Brigade Official per Region to be selected by Regional Committee delegates at their next Regional Committee meeting. This organising committee, once convened, will meet quarterly to report their Regions progress on all seven points contained within the TUC strategy. The Executive Council will appoint a Chair for this Committee who will report progress to the Executive Council.

MERSEYSIDE

BRO MARK ROWE (Merseyside):

Thanks, president. conference, this is primarily a resolution about organising resistance, organising the continued fight back and building for the future of our union and the trade union movement generally. To do this we have to be realistic when we look at our successes, our failures, where we can improve and how we can improve. I think I speak for a majority of the room when I say that possibly the most successful period of the strike action during the pensions dispute (and in the view of our members as well in particular) was when we joined with the other unions for the day of action. That involvement, that joined up approach and action is what our members were crying out for. It’s what a lot of our members still want.

We should never underestimate our members’ determination to fight, to resist. We passed an incredibly important resolution on pay yesterday, so the issue of organisation and building the resistance may become a very pressing issue soon.

Conference, the trade union movement is six years into Tory rule. Six years of undisguised outright attacks on unions. Whilst we’ve had some successes, if we are really honest with ourselves we’re still organising. Six years in and we’re still organising. We need a sharper focus. Now should be our time.

One thing that we can thank the Tories for is for the birthing of a whole new generation of activists. The FBU is hugely respected in the movement. Our organisation and campaigning is second to none. We’re tenacious, we never give in and we never go away. We have so much to offer other trade unions through our experiences. We all have good links with other unions locally. It’s the next step that we feel we need to push, the linking together of a range of local activists with drive and passion. The TUC composite resolution calls for the setting up of organising

committees. The FBU supported that resolution. However, nine months later we believe nothing much has happened. Conference, we can't put austerity in the FBU above our resistance planning for the future, or we may well end up with a nice big healthy bank balance, but nobody left to defend it and nothing left to defend.

The resolution calls for regional committees to pick just one person – one person per region, conference – and after discussion on those committees from within the brigades to sit on the organising committee. That is the organising committee, remember, that the FBU supported at the TUC. If the organising committees are not being set up by the TUC (which, as I say, we believe they are not) then we need to take the lead and give the resolution from the TUC direction again. We think this is what our members want. They want us to join with other unions to organise that resistance and to organise the next wave of activists. We've got huge battles ahead. The Trade Union Bill has now passed through its parliamentary stages, receiving royal assent on Wednesday 4 May. Ironically, the 90th anniversary of the 1926 General Strike. They have dumped or been forced to dump some of the bill, but the bill was full of loss leaders anyway.

The Act still demands the appointment of picket supervisors who must make themselves known to police and employers and carry a letter of authorisation. Breaches of any of the restrictions will in future attract criminal charges.

On ballots, ancillary workers associated with important public services are no longer captured by the double threshold but private sector workers involved in public services could still be caught by the net. The wording on the ballot paper is slightly less prescriptive, but still extremely vulnerable to injunction.

Even when these new hurdles to strikes are navigated successfully, proposals to bus in agency workers, often vulnerable people coerced into taking positions under the new universal credit rules, still lurk in the background. But the flagship aspect and the main purpose of the Act remains in place. The imposition of a 50 per cent turnout – and an additional 40 per cent support for workers in health, education, fire, transport and border security – makes it nearly impossible for those workers currently leading the resistance against privatisation and cuts to take industrial action.

Conference, it's our kids and their kids who will suffer if the power of trade unions to organise, to represent and to defend living standards is choked off by this anti-working class Act. We must continue to organise, we must redouble our efforts, we must continue to bring our next generation of activists forward and the FBU most certainly has a crucial role to play.

We don't think that the regional committees selecting just one person per region, 13 people in total, to sit on an organising committee, meeting to report progress quarterly is too much to ask for. It is an organising committee that we voted for at the TUC. We're not asking for the EC to do the work; we're not asking for regional officials to do the work. Better organisation and communication at a grass roots level will make this union much stronger and better positioned to meet all the future challenges the trade union movement will undoubtedly face!

We understand the EC position and would ask Matt to assure us that this work will be done using the existing structures. If he can give that, we will remit. I move, awaiting that assurance. Thanks. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

Does that have a seconder? *Formally* Formally seconded. Debate? No. Matt.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

President, conference, I thank Merseyside for bringing this resolution. It is an absolutely essential debate for us to have. It's a debate that we need to continue, at national level, at the TUC, in your trades councils, in your workplaces if we're going to build resistance to this legislation.

Just in terms of the quoted TUC policy, I think, reading through it, points 1, 5 and 7 at least were written by ourselves. They originated in an FBU resolution to the TUC conference. So we have no qualms about fully supporting the aims set out in that resolution that Mark has called for: monitoring and seeking progress.

There is an ongoing debate in the TUC following the concessions that have been made by the Tories. We do welcome those concessions. We were able to demonstrate in the House of Commons and particularly in the House of Lords that there was no logic at all to many of the proposals that the Tories were bringing in that draft legislation. As a result of that, and as a result of the scale of the rebellion and the pressure that they were feeling all across the board, concessions were made.

However, what I would caution against, and I'm sure this conference would caution against, complacency. Some have suggested that actually we won so many concessions there's not much left. I think Mark's adequately set out that's complete nonsense. The bulk of that legislation remains in place and is now coming into law. It remains an attack on us politically, industrially and financially, with a whole raft of measures by which trade unions can be caught up by the certification officer and end up in court. Particularly, it's about stopping unions, stopping workers organising to take industrial action to defend themselves, to defend their jobs, pay, conditions and public services. That's what still remains in this Act.

So yes, we need to make sure that that TUC policy is fully endorsed. It is our wording on point 5 that Mark referred to about organising committees. We specifically wrote that because if we're going to build a campaign to defeat this legislation, then it's going to have to be done all across the movement; it can't be done simply at FBU head office; it can't be done at the TUC general council (although we will raise those points there). It needs to be done in every branch, in every trades council, in every regional TUC. And we need to go out from this conference and start trying to organise those committees ourselves on the ground.

This movement has defeated anti-union legislation, by the way. In 1971 and 1972 the Industrial Relations Act that was brought in was defeated by mass action of workers taking strike action that began to spread in protest at the jailing of the Pentonville Five dockers. That's the sort of movement that may be necessary again. They are not bringing in this legislation for it to sit there on the shelves. They're bringing in this legislation in order to use it against unions. At some point a group of workers, or a particular union, or a particular dispute will fall foul of that legislation, and this movement, including us, will have to decide what we do to support them or not. If we allow them to go down, then that will be a defeat not just for whoever it is on the front line; it will be a defeat for the entire movement.

It's a very serious challenge that we face. It can't be resolved (and I know Mark's not suggesting this) simply by passing resolutions. We have to convince our members and members of other unions in other industries and other workplaces to be prepared ultimately to take action to back people up who fall foul of this legislation. That's the challenge that is set out in that TUC resolution. We should use this opportunity to re-commit ourselves to taking those debates out to our members.

In terms of the specific request for clarification that Mark has asked for, absolutely the only concern that we have with the resolution is about the establishment of another further committee that's in the final paragraph. We have no problem at all with the rest of the resolution, and we're very pleased that that issue is here before us. So I can, Mark, give you that clarification and urge you to therefore remit the resolution. Thanks, conference. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

Merseyside.

BRO MARK ROWE (Merseyside):

Thanks, Matt. That's the assurance that we requested. So Merseyside will remit. Thanks.

THE PRESIDENT:

I now call resolution 25 Unite the Resistance Affiliation to be moved by Essex. The executive council support.

Resolution 25 – UNITE THE RESISTANCE AFFILIATION

Conference notes that the Tories continue with their ideological austerity agenda.

If the Government is not resisted and beaten we face years of continued attacks on our pay and conditions and a continued assault on our public services.

At the forefront of the Tory agenda is the Trade Union Bill, an attempt to further weaken trade unions' ability to organise and to strike.

The Bill represents the most determined attack on the FBU and other trade unions for a generation, and the trade union movement must be prepared to take on and defy these new laws.

The TUC has policy to consider "generalised strikes" against the bill and to defend unions that find themselves "outside the law".

Jeremy Corbyn has argued that a Labour government will repeal the bill and bring in new legislation to defend workers' rights.

The FBU alongside other unions in the Trade Union Co-ordinating Group, and campaigns such as Unite the Resistance, the National Shop Stewards Network and the People's Assembly are at the forefront of opposition to the bill, continuing our attempts to defeat anti-trade union legislation.

To further assist in our aims to oppose austerity and the anti-trade union legislation, Conference instructs that the FBU affiliates to Unite the Resistance.

ESSEX

BRO GARY CRITCH (Essex):

President, conference, most of my work has been done for me this morning with what we've just been talking about, I think. One of the biggest threats we face as trade unionists is the TU Bill. Unite the Resistance have campaigned tirelessly against this bill and continue to do so. A consequence of the bill is that we face the very real prospect of our members potentially having to take action deemed to be outside of the law. Unite the Resistance are all about how we best do that as a trade union movement, how it can be coordinated and how it can be carried out collectively.

Locally in Essex once again we find ourselves in the middle of a long drawn-out trade dispute. We have connected locally with Unite the Resistance and we received nothing but support and solidarity from them.

While I'm up here, it would be remiss of me not to take this opportunity on behalf of the entire membership of Essex to thank all of our brothers and sisters up and down the country who offered us messages of solidarity and made contributions to our hardship fund when we took 30 days of strike action last year, 2015. Thank you, comrades. *(Applause)*

Again, ironically he's not here, our regional campaigner for Unite the Resistance, Michael Bradley, but I'd like to give a big shout out to him. He has been unwavering in his support for the Fire Brigades Union, both locally and nationally, and it would be nice to reciprocate that solidarity and now affiliate to this movement. So conference, please support this resolution. I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

Does that have a seconder? *Formally* Formally seconded. That's open for debate. The executive council support. I put resolution 25 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. *That is CARRIED.*

Paragraph F3, F4, F5. I now call resolution 29 Abortion Rights to be moved by the national women's committee. The executive council support.

Resolution 29 – ABORTION RIGHTS

Conference notes that abortion is still not legally available to all women in the UK on request. Any woman taking this difficult and emotional decision must still receive the consent of two doctors in order to proceed. Conference notes that the British Medical Association supports removing the requirement for two doctors' signatures to approve the procedure.

Conference believes that the Abortion Rights Act 1967 needs updating to give women the right to make this decision as with any medical procedure.

We therefore call upon the Executive Council to:

- i) Work with trade unions and other interested organisations to campaign for change in the law, giving women the ‘right to choose’***
- ii) Actively lobby all political parties to raise access concerns and ensure that future progressive changes in the existing 1967 Act are fully enforced***
- iii) Support raising of public awareness, change the culture of stigma and discrimination***
- iv) Campaign for the implementation of abortion provision up to the legal limit***
- v) Promote affiliation and active participation in local Abortion Rights groups across the UK and campaign for activities to mark the 50th anniversary of the passing of the 1967 Abortion Act.***

NATIONAL WOMEN’S COMMITTEE

SIS HELEN TOOLEY (NWC):

President, conference, it is important to note that this resolution is about the right to choose. Abortion is still not legally available to all women in the UK on request. So we want to ensure that women have that right to choose. We want to defend and extend women’s rights, choice and access to free, safe and legal abortion. We should be allowing women to make their own decisions about their own bodies, without legal barriers, obstruction or delays.

Research has shown that safe and legal abortion has far less negative psychological effects than the denial of choice and access to abortion, which can have serious consequences not only for the woman, but also the resultant child and other family members. Evidence shows the psychological and social consequences of refused abortion are far more serious than those of actually having an abortion. Very few women suffer prolonged emotional distress following an abortion. However, distress is triggered by the circumstances around abortion, especially when it is illegal, dangerous or degrading.

There has been a rise in the UK of anti-abortion protests outside clinics in line with the rise of far right politics. In some cases these clinics have had to close, leaving less availability of safe and legal choices. At least half of all UK clinics have regular demonstrations outside of them. These vulnerable women, who have already had to make a difficult and emotional decision, are left frightened and threatened. There are many reasons a woman may decide to have an abortion and every woman deserves the right to have that choice.

Currently a woman needs consent of two doctors to proceed with an abortion. However, the British Medical Association supports removing this requirement, making access easier. We also believe the Abortion Rights Act of 1967 needs updating to give women the right to make this decision, as they can with any other medical procedure. Please remember this resolution is about allowing the women the right to choose and make decision about their own bodies. Please support. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

Do we have a seconder? Please come to the rostrum and second.

SIS AMY KEENAN (London):

It’s my first time speaking. *(Applause)* Thank you. As a female in the London Fire Brigade, if I become pregnant I am to come off the run straight away and go on to light duties. Obviously, quite rightly. But I’m also then to subject my body to months of nausea, cramps, morning sickness and bloating. This is affecting me emotionally and physically. My fitness will become massively compromised, not to mention the amount of training I’m going to miss out on as well. What if I didn’t want to have the baby and the facilities weren’t available to me? I respect that there are people that are trying and can’t conceive, but that doesn’t justify forcing a woman to have a baby against her will, regardless of the circumstances of how it happened.

I would like to take this opportunity also to thank all the women who fought for my rights as a young woman today, as a career-driven woman living in the 21st century. Without all these rights won by the women who fought for me, I wouldn’t even be in the brigade or even standing here today.

This is a subject I've been reading a lot about, particularly from America where planned parenthood has become massively cut. The presidential candidate, Donald Trump, has even been quoted as saying that if a woman seeks an abortion she should be punished. When asked, however, what about the man that gets her pregnant, he had nothing to say. This is a massive equality issue that is too often overlooked. It is not only the woman's responsibility and this is something that we all need to remind ourselves of.

Before I close, there's something else I have read recently that I would like to share. In the state of Texas there is only one abortion clinic. However, there are several gun shops where you can buy and take home a gun that very same day. What if we were to reverse the roles? What if a person wanting to buy a gun would be subjected to: see a therapist, be referred to a second therapist, have a 48-hour waiting period to think it over, overnight stay, taking time off work, travel hundreds of miles away from all your friends and family, be bombarded by people showing you pictures of people that have been affected by gun wounds and even killed and fatalities, hurl countless abuse and of course see one last therapist assessing their mental ability if they are ready to buy a gun or not? Please support the women's resolution. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

That's open for debate. Anybody wish to debate that? No. The executive council support. I now put resolution 29 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. *That is CARRIED.*

I'm on paragraph F6, F7, F8, F9, F10, F11. I now call resolution 28 West Yorkshire with the amendment from London. The executive council support the resolution and the amendment from London. Can I ask Northumberland to make their way to the rostrum who wish to second this, please? West Yorkshire.

Resolution 28 – LABOUR COUNCILLORS

As the FBU now affiliates to the national Labour Party in England and Wales, this Conference instructs the Executive Council to engage with the Labour Party leadership (at the earliest opportunity) to insist that they instruct its councillors and MPs to highlight the cuts to the fire service at every opportunity. Conference notes that councillors are publically celebrating the opening of new stations which represent amalgamations, cuts and extended working hours of our Members.

WEST YORKSHIRE

AMENDMENT

In first line, delete 'national' and 'in England and Wales'.

LONDON

BRO PAUL DRINKWATER (West Yorkshire):

Morning, conference. President, conference, just before I get into this I want to make it clear that I'm proud that this union reaffiliated to the Labour Party and is using its influence within the party. I'm also proud that the party is moving back to a more socialist agenda. In our first conversation with the Labour chair of our fire authority we were told that the fire authority do not like to be political. I thought this was an interesting statement, even for a politician! This was in fact an improvement on the previous Labour chair who flatly refused to have any engagement whatsoever with the union. So having a more open Labour chair we thought we'd ask for our shopping list. So we asked for the renewal of a joint consultative committee made up of fire authority members, management and the FBU to resolve disputes. This was a constitutional right taken away from us in the past.

Although we were assured this would happen, over 12 months has passed and we still have no joint consultative committee. We have no right of appeal over employee dismissals to our Labour-controlled fire authority, we have no token non-voting seat on the fire authority to give their members an opportunity to ask us questions – all things we have asked for, all things (I am sure you would agree) are reasonable to ask of our Labour politicians.

We invited all our fire authority members to come and meet us in Leeds Civic Hall. You would imagine that the Labour councillors would be comfortable meeting with a trade union, particularly because of the fact that they all have to be members of a trade union. One Labour councillor and one Tory councillor turned up. It's shocking, even

though the chair of our fire authority is an ex-full-time organiser of another union. During our strikes this Labour authority, among other things, sanctioned the use of police officers driving strike-breaking fire engines, and the employment of a strike-breaking force of semi-trained reservist firefighters. This strike-breaking backup is still being trained and paid for by the Labour-controlled fire authority.

It was interesting that Frances O'Grady specifically mentioned that in the TU Bill there is provision for employers to use agency workers to break strikes. Clearly the TUC and the national Labour Party have campaigned against this, and yet our own Labour councillors are happy to sanction a seemingly permanent provision for strike breaking in West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service. Of course, we haven't given up, and we're still trying to get the message across that we're on the same side. We're building closer relationships with some Labour fire authority members. I continue to stress we all want the best possible fire service for the public and the best possible conditions for our members.

When my local two fire stations closed they were replaced with a new superstation situated somewhere in the middle. I'm a member of the Labour Party branch in which this new station was built. In fact, I was previously the secretary of that branch. So on the opening day of the new station I organised a small protest outside to highlight the simple fact that, although this was a beautiful new facility, the fire cover it offered was half that of the previous stations – a loss of 24 jobs, 24 jobs that my community desperately needed; protection that my community desperately needs; resilience that we need to stay safe at work. I made this point to the press and to the TV. Seeing my non-fire authority member local councillors as well as the fire authority councillors at the opening ceremony and having previously asked them to highlight the fact that this new station represented a huge cut in fire cover and safety to our community, I hoped to see statements from them in the press or TV interviews supporting this view. I'm sure you'll not be surprised to hear that this was not the case. However, it seemed to provide them with an excellent photo opportunity.

To her credit, our fire authority chair has finally started to make press statements saying further cuts will be dangerous. She may feel like this resolution is a personal attack. It is not. It is an attack on any Labour councillor or MP who does not have the strength to use every opportunity to highlight the devastating Tory cuts to our service. It is an attack on any Labour politician who sanctions actions overtly intended to break a strike. It is an attack on any Labour authority that thinks that doubling working hours and working a duty system outside the Working Time Directive represents the Labour Party values.

I appreciate the fact that this is an absolutely terrible time to be a Labour councillor. Simply being the agent of Tory cuts must be absolutely heartbreaking. So why are our councillors not using every opportunity to highlight the fact that these are not Labour cuts in the media? As Jeremy Corbyn said to us: it's our job, it's the Labour Party's job to expose the Tories. I don't expect miracles, but I do expect support for our union's efforts to highlight that the closure of any fire station represents an increase in risk in our communities, a risk which is now being highlighted by the increasing fire deaths and injuries in West Yorkshire and around the country.

As a trade unionist, socialist and Labour Party activist, I expect more, our fellow Labour Party members expect more, our Fire Brigades Union members expect more. Conference, we need to keep up the pressure on our Labour Party representatives, both locally and nationally, to highlight the devastating cuts to our service at every single opportunity. I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

Northumberland to second.

BRO GUY TIFFIN (Northumberland):

President, conference, speaking in support of this motion. We fully support the need to highlight cuts in the fire service from all Labour politicians. However, we also need Labour-led authorities to stand up for the fire service and stop doing the Tories' dirty work for them. Speaking as a Labour Party member, I do this with a heavy heart. Northumberland FBU have, for a long time, been supportive of the Labour Party nationally and particularly locally, campaigning for many Labour councillors and MPs at election times. We have, for many years, been in favour of the FBU re-affiliating to the Labour Party. As West Yorkshire, we were extremely pleased when we did.

However, I will give you an example of the difficulties we face in Northumberland. We had, for a long time, an ultimately unsuccessful battle with the New Labour administration in 2008. They went ahead with two PFI stations similar to West Yorkshire, closing four wholetime stations, losing 28 jobs, and the deputy chief told me at the meeting that those 28 jobs would ultimately pay for the PFI on those stations – approximately £170,000 a month for the next 25 years! Absolutely ridiculous!

In 2009 we successfully went to our local Labour groups and had these charlatans thrown out and instead got pure grass roots Labour councillors elected. Unfortunately, after the collapse of the Labour vote at the elections due to Gordon Brown's national policies, we lost a lot of these councillors. In the 2013 elections there was a recovery and we got a lot of Labour seats back. With the help of the FBU we were rebuilding alliances again as traditional Labour philosophy still existed, backed up by strong socialist MPs such as Ian Lavery, Dave Anderson, Ronnie Campbell, etc. But now we have a situation where those Labour councillors have failed to consult us on drastic cuts to our fragile service in our county. We are, as was shown in the *Daily Mirror* (and I'm led to believe it's right), the worst-hit fire service in the country. When I joined the fire service we had 270 wholetime firefighters in Northumberland. We've now got 108. Even with my maths, it's well over 50 per cent gone.

This Labour-led council have, for the last six years, overseen these 30 per cent reductions in wholetime personnel. We're now currently in the process of removing two retained crews and reducing jobs in control. They argue that they have no choice, and all this is down to the Tory government, with greatly reduced budgets to the county council to run local services. We know this is true to a large extent, which we have acknowledged. But we were not prepared for the Labour response. Whatever the rights and wrongs of this, what is an utter disgrace is the way the FBU, our members and the public, were totally ignored by Northumberland County Council. We presented a 10,000-name petition which members, activists spent weeks and weeks and weeks trawling the local towns, sporting events etc to get the signatures. We were then told, because there was a number of them who were signed by non-residents of Northumberland, that this was basically irrelevant to the county council and they would ignore it. 10,000 names on a petition!

We then presented a highly detailed response document, using our health and safety experts, with over 30 health and safety and welfare questions. Again, they were ignored. When I raised this with the leader of the fire authority he said he had his own expert, he was called the chief fire officer, so why did he need to listen to our experts? We even read the final decision of the closure of the two retained stations in the local Sunday paper a week before the issues went to scrutiny, and two weeks before it went to cabinet to make a final decision!

This is not how officials or members of the FBU should be treated by so-called friendly councillors. Today's fire service is not the sanctuary of the Labour Party it once was, with ex-firefighters even standing for Ukip in Northumberland at recent elections. This ex-firefighter is making as much trouble for the FBU, using the cuts that the Labour authority is making, to make our lives extremely difficult.

Our rank and file say that hope and trust in Jeremy Corbyn is being compromised by Labour councils. At the 2013 conference Northumberland put a resolution forward on educating and campaigning to attract members to a more socialist form of society as our rule book reaffirms. What we need, comrades, is the EC to engage with the leadership of the Labour Party as well as highlighting cuts, and to instruct all Labour politicians at every level that this is not acceptable, and reaffiliation must mean something to our members. I have to say, I've had a number of members in Northumberland, a traditional Labour heartland, question reaffiliation when this is what our council is doing to our fire service and our union.

THE PRESIDENT:

Can you wind up, comrade. You're on a red light. You've gone over time considerably.

BRO GUY TIFFIN (Northumberland):

We must educate our members regarding their political options and we have the influence to influence Labour groups. I second. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT:

Conference, that's open for debate. Sorry, no it's not. London to move their amendment. *Formally* Formally moved, thank you, London. Is that amendment seconded? *Formally* Formally seconded, thank you very much. Conference, that's open for debate. General secretary.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

President, I know we're approaching the end of conference but it's a hugely important issue that's been raised in this resolution. It goes to the heart of a lot of the issues we are discussing. We are generally still a local authority service and therefore the decisions of councillors has a huge impact on our service, the fire stations, the fire engines that we're able to provide, and the terms, pay and conditions of our members, and the number of firefighters in the service. Clearly, we have to address the issues that are in the resolution.

We've made our position clear over a number of years. This conference has expressed its clear view that we don't accept the need for austerity, we don't accept the need for any cuts in the fire and rescue service or elsewhere, and that that's what we will be fighting for in the TUC, the STUC, the Labour Party and anywhere else.

The resolution says that we should engage with the Labour Party leadership at the earliest opportunity on this issue. I can say that actually we're one step ahead of the decision of conference, because we have raised this issue directly with Jeremy at a recent meeting. I'll come on to that in a minute. The truth is, if you speak to councillors on a whole range of issues, many will say actually local government services in many parts of the country are on the verge of collapse. There are whole swathes of local government where what were formerly core services are not being provided to any adequate degree, and another four years of cuts is going to make the position untenable. At some point people are going to either have to accept that local government services are going to just disappear, or we're going to have to organise a fight to resist it. That's the key issue that I think is addressed in the resolution.

What we said to Jeremy was this. We are a trade union, our job is protecting our service but also terms and conditions of our members. When the cuts come in, they are coming in in terms of cutting jobs, altering duty systems, attacking terms and conditions – all things that we are going to oppose, whether it's a Tory council, a Lib Dem council, anyone else, or a Labour council. Jeremy said he completely understands that position.

But the problem we've got, of course, is that at the current time we still have live disputes with two Labour authorities. We have one in South Yorkshire and we have one in the West Midlands – Labour-controlled authorities attacking our members' terms and conditions. For us, the fact that we've affiliated to the Labour Party makes no difference whatsoever. Our job is to protect the service and to protect our members. I think that councillors need to wake up to some of these debates.

I know it's difficult. There's a whole raft of difficulties, as there are on every front if we're going to try to take on Tory austerity. But I think we need to start to raise in the movement, in the trade union movement, with our own members, with communities and within the Labour Party the need for a proper strategy about how we challenge Tory-imposed cuts to public services including our own. I'm not about making martyrs out of individual councillors, but imagine the strength that could be achieved if we had a united campaign of communities – i.e. the people who rely on those services, the workers who deliver those services organised through their trade unions, and the local councillors standing up together and saying across the board: actually, you are destroying our public services, you are destroying our communities and enough is enough, we are not having it! I think the challenge we have is how we get from where we are today, with the frustrations that Paul and Guy expressed and others express in terms of their dealings with local Labour-controlled fire authorities, to where we need to be which is with a united movement fighting back against those cuts.

I will just finish on this point. They say there aren't resources. People have mentioned the Panama Papers. One thing the Panama Papers exposed is the lie when they say there aren't the resources to give to fire services or other public services. There's plenty of resources in this society, comrades. It's simply in the wrong hands, and we have a government determined to protect and keep it in the wrong hands, rather than standing up for the majority. Our challenge is to challenge that position. The question of local authority strategies and what we do within that is a crucial strand of that strategy of fighting back. I urge you to support the resolution. We will get on with it, and I urge you to do so at local level as well. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

I now put the amendment to the vote. The executive council support. The amendment from London. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. *That is CARRIED.*

I now put resolution 28 as amended to the vote. The EC support. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. *That is CARRIED.*

Paragraph F12, F13. Come up, come up.

BRO STEPHEN THOMSON (Scotland):

President, conference, I am speaking to paragraph F13 International Solidarity. Before I just get into what I want to talk about I just want to thank standing orders for agreeing to the bucket collection. What I want to do is give you an update on the campaign that has been running in region 1 to try to raise some PPE for our Palestinian firefighter comrades.

Some of you will remember last year here at conference that Jim Malone, who's our retired official from Scotland, made a video which is on the delegation he had taken to Palestine. During that delegation what they witnessed there was the horrendous lack of PPE that our comrades have. They go into fires with no fire kit, no gloves, no boots. They going into fires holding their breath. That was the reason we decided to run the campaign in Scotland to try to raise some PPE. As Steve Shelton said, we secured 120 sets of PPE, 20 BA sets and two sets of cutting equipment. Currently, all that equipment is in a container waiting to go out to Palestine. We need just a little bit more money, a few hundred pounds, to get that equipment delivered. I would ask you, at close of conference, to be very generous. If every person in the room gave a couple of quid that would be enough to get that equipment out there and support our comrades. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

Thank you, Steve. Can I now call the general secretary who will deal with the solidarity with Canada issue. Thank you.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Thanks, president, conference. I'm sure many of you have been following the news about the devastating wildfires in the state of Alberta over the past few days. I think it's appropriate that this conference sends our solidarity to our brothers and sisters on the front line of dealing with that appalling disaster. The first, which began on 1 May, has spread over more than 600 square miles, devastating homes and communities. I think we need to applaud our brothers and sisters in Canada, whose efforts have included the evacuation of the entire population, 80,000 people, without loss of life, and also including the saving of 90 per cent of the structures of the city of Fort McMurray.

I think we need to send, and the executive council will send, a letter of greetings to our comrades, our brothers and sisters in the IAFF, the trade union that organises firefighters in Canada and the United States, and which has played a vital role in supporting its members on the ground during these difficult days of these appalling fires. We send our congratulations to IAFF Fort McMurray local 2494, which is part of the Alberta Firefighters' Association of the IAFF whose members have been on the front line of this disaster and who have rendered outstanding service to their communities during these terrible events. Their actions will be remembered in the annals of our proud industry.

The executive council will consider also a donation to the IAFF's disaster relief fund which has been set up in response to this particular incident. I am sure conference will join me in sending our solidarity and best wishes to our brothers and sisters in Alberta dealing with those fires. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

I now call resolution 27 with the amendment from Shropshire. The executive council support both the resolution and the amendment. Devon & Somerset.

Resolution 27 – CONDEMN HYPOCRITICAL PROPAGANDA

Conference condemns the hypocrisy of UK, US and other politicians, who condemn countries refusing to submit to US-NATO hegemony (e.g. Russia, China, Cuba, Venezuela) whilst ignoring,

condoning and supporting ‘friendly’ states (e.g. themselves, Israel, Saudi Arabia, and others) that blatantly abuse human rights, inflict and incite violence and even acts of terrorism, whether state or individual.

Conference believes such propaganda is deliberate, and, as always, used by ruling classes as a means to further imperial aims, secure wealth for profiteers, and control domestic populations. However, for working people these also bring wars, poverty, and restrictions of real freedoms, through devastation, divisions, and despair, so must be opposed if we are to avoid conflicts both now and in the future.

DEVON & SOMERSET

AMENDMENT

At end of resolution, add new paragraph:

“Therefore Conference instructs the Executive Council to ensure that such issues are highlighted in the Firefighter magazine to inform and educate our members on international issues and how they affect working people.”

SHROPSHIRE

BRO JAMES LESLIE (Devon & Somerset):

President, conference, we welcome the amendment from Shropshire. Conference, the American senator Hiram Johnson said during World War One that the first casualty when war comes is truth. Senator Johnson died on 6 August 1945, the very day America dropped its first atomic bomb on Hiroshima – one of the most violent acts of propaganda that the world has seen, opening the ensuing Cold War.

The FBU has a proud history of challenging the propaganda of those who demand we all be silent while they wage economic, political and military wars. This is not a new phenomenon. Almost 60 years ago the FBU was the first in the UK to march against the hydrogen bomb. Meanwhile, the flames of a new Cold War are being fanned and all the factors are already in place such as economic crises, intensified resource and energy competition, regional [inaudible] and empire seeking, the growth of xenophobia and prejudice towards refugees, and proxy wars.

Finally, but most importantly, the people willing to engulf the world in chaos in order to keep control or make profits through their bloody wars are firmly at the helm of the West. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the neo-cons and USA took over in the 1990s in what General Wesley Clark has called a “politi-coup”. They brought forth a project for a new American century, a project built on notions of permanent war, regime change and neo-liberalism, permitting US intervention anywhere and opposition nowhere. However, in order for these 21st century wars to be promoted the public have to be fed a constant stream of propaganda. The real message is: don’t question; don’t discuss. But, conference, the FBU must continue to be the ones that will expose and oppose propaganda by the ruling classes. For working people the world over, this propaganda unchecked means war, poverty, restrictions of liberty, divisions and despair. Conference, I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

Is that seconded? Come to the rostrum and second.

BRO HAMISH DAYA (Wiltshire):

President, conference, I am seconding resolution 27 and welcoming the amendment from Shropshire. Conference, we in the Fire Brigades Union know all about misinformation in the media. We’ve experienced it ourselves. We remember the day of strike action of February 2015 that brought Parliament Square in Westminster to a standstill when thousands of us spontaneously demonstrated under the consenting eyes of the Met Police. I remember seeing no coverage of it in the BBC or the mainstream press. How does a healthy democracy allow us to win a debate in the Commons and yet lose the vote due to the three-line whip system? Furthermore, how does a healthy democracy allow a government minister to go unchallenged by the Establishment, even after it has been proved that she misled parliament? All of this received next to no coverage in the mainstream media. We in the FBU know that misinformation in the press is there to serve the interests of those who run the country. It does not produce an informed public.

The American linguist and philosopher Noam Chomsky describes the “propaganda model”, the end goal of which is to manufacture consent and make us all complicit consumers. The last thing that the people in power want, he asserts, is that democracy is actually allowed to change anything.

Here is another example of the contradictions found in the mainstream media coverage. In March the press in Bahrain reported that defence secretary Michael Fallon had attended an arms fair in Qatar, en route to which he paid a visit to Crown Prince Mohammed of Saudi Arabia. To be fair, the *Independent* did pick up on this. It is not my purpose to list the wrongs committed by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. It will strike many of you as ironic, to say the least, that Fallon and the Crown Prince (according to the Gulf News Agencies) discussed “the fight against terrorism and extremism”. You may be aware that there is strong evidence that Saudi Arabia’s bombing of Yemen is causing hundreds of civilian casualties, using weaponry that we have sold them. But, to quote Chomsky, “Everyone’s worried about stopping terrorism. Well, there’s really an easy way. Stop the participating in it.”

How interesting that, having visited Saudi and Qatar, Fallon should wade into the smear campaign against Sadiq Khan and accuse him of being a lackey who speaks alongside extremists. This is all shrugged off as part of the rough and tumble of a robust democracy and a free press. We note that the anti-Khan smear campaign did receive plenty of coverage on State TV, aka the BBC.

We do live in a free country and we do have a free press, relatively speaking. But debate is confined to very tight parameters. Within those parameters the debate can be rigorous, but if you step outside those parameters you’re labelled an extremist or, worse, a socialist. This creates the illusion that there is no alternative and the end result is that ordinary people feel powerless to change anything.

Conference, we recognise and praise the good work of the *Firefighter* magazine, and the research and policy department of our union to provide counterpoint to hypocritical propaganda in the media. So we welcome the amendment from Shropshire. Comrades, to be a trade unionist is to believe in true democracy and true democracy depends on truly free information. Please support the resolution. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

Comrades, can I be clear that the executive council supports this resolution with the amendment from Shropshire. So as amended from Shropshire. Shropshire to move the amendment. *Formally* Formally moved. Is that seconded? *Formally* Formally seconded. That’s open for debate. OK. I now put the amendment from Shropshire to the vote. The executive council support. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. *That is CARRIED.*

I now put resolution 27 as amended to the vote. The EC support. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. *That is CARRIED.*

Paragraph F14 Affiliations. I now call resolution 23 Protecting Workers’ Rights – Defending the Human Rights Act, LGBT national committee. The executive council support.

Resolution 23 – PROTECTING WORKERS RIGHTS, DEFENDING THE HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

Conference deplores this Tory Governments plans to repeal the Human Rights Act. The Act has been a cornerstone in providing protection of the rights and safety of workers. It has also set the benchmark for the promotion of LGBT equality both for existing and new member states joining the European Union.

Conference calls on the Executive Council to work with the TUC and its affiliate trades unions to campaign against the Government’s attacks on the Human Rights Act.

LGBT NATIONAL COMMITTEE

BRO PAT CARBERY (LGBT):

President, conference, the voice is going a little bit so I’m going to try to keep this brief. What was quite useful this morning was the resolution received the endorsement of Jeremy, who has been quite clear that the Human Rights Act will also form part of what he’s committed to defending. The reason why it’s passionate for us LGBT people

is in the 1990s, on gays in the armed forces, it was the European courts that finally made that decision that it was an unjust application of abuse towards LGBTs to deny them employment opportunities in our armed forces. We'd exhausted the legal process through all of the British courts and if we didn't have that avenue to progress through to Europe then that ban would be likely to be still in place. It was a tipping point in terms of LGBT rights, because it was the first major victory that we had in achieving equality. Subsequent to that, we had a whole raft of really progressive laws introduced that brought about equal rights.

One of the things I would recommend to you, to see what the argument is really all about, is a little six-minute sketch that Patrick Stewart has done. If you do a Google search, just type in "Patrick Stewart human rights" and it comes up with this very to the point kind of sketch where he plays the prime minister, and it's very much along the lines of "What have the Romans ever done for us?" I'd urge you all to have a look at that.

The Human Rights Act, what's it all about? It brings us the right to a fair trial, freedom from torture, freedom from discrimination, freedom from degrading treatment, freedom of expression and association, a right to privacy, a right to enjoy family life. These are all trade union values, these are all things that we stand for. So, conference, I'm not going to waste your time any more. I think we all know how we're going to vote on this one. Please support the motion. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

Is that seconded? *Formally* Formally seconded. That's open for debate. The executive council support. I now put resolution 23 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. *That is CARRIED.*

We are on paragraph F15, F16. Section E, E1, E2, E3, E4, E5, E6, E7, E8, E9.

BRO STEVE HOWLEY (North Yorkshire):

Conference, president, first I'd like to thank the EC and all the members at head office that got involved in our campaign to stop the Tory PCC in North Yorkshire. Unfortunately we were unsuccessful, so here we are. Comrades, this conference needs to be aware of the serious threat that Tory PCCs pose to our fire and rescue service. Throughout our campaign it became abundantly clear that our Tory PCC, if successful, intends to takeover North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service. She's got a plan in place to do that by 1 April next year. So time is not on our side.

We've seen, through her comments, that there are serious threats to our members' terms and conditions. She's already rumoured crazy ideas around firefighters being out issuing ASBOs, firefighters issuing speeding tickets and other roles that PCSOs currently do. Firefighters will be used to cover up the shortfalls that she's made within North Yorkshire Police. She's got a history of cutting, she's got a history of failure, and she is no good for the fire service. She is also one of Cameron's prospects. She comes heavily supported by Theresa May, and she is going to be the first PCC in the country to take over the fire service and have it as a model for all other Tory PCCs to then use and continue.

So this is a real serious fight. Unfortunately, we've not had chance to have this debate at this conference. But we need to be mindful of the threats and the attacks that are coming to us as a service. We in North Yorkshire know what these threats and attacks mean to us. We are preparing for a battle, we are preparing for a fight. I would urge this conference and the EC to develop a plan, to develop a strategy nationally. We need to increase the campaign that we've already committed to on a national basis, we need to increase the campaigns on local levels, and we need to fight hard and we need to fight strong to stop these Tory PCCs taking over the running of our service.

For someone who comes from a Tory fire authority with no friends in there, it's absolutely bizarre that I find myself standing here trying to defend the fire authority's role. But it's something that we've got to maintain because there's no friend in the PCC. The only thing that we're going to see is worsened terms and conditions, worse pay, and it's a direct attack on this union. It's a direct attack trying to neutralise NJC bargaining on terms and conditions. We were speaking about EMR yesterday. EMR isn't really a concern in North Yorkshire because the biggest concern is all the other stuff that is going to come across when this Tory PCC comes to take over. Unfortunately, we've not got much opportunity to stop it because if the government want it, the government will drive it through. That's what's going

to happen. We need to now start to develop and build the fight so the public are aware of what this means to their service so we can get behind it and try to prevent it from happening.

I urge the EC to develop a strategy with haste in order to support us in North Yorkshire and to support all you out there with Tory PCCs, because once it comes to North Yorkshire it's coming to a brigade near you very fast. Thanks, conference. *(Applause)*

BRO DAVE BURN (Cumbria):

President, conference, just echoing exactly what our comrade just said there. I took a call yesterday from our local radio wanting a comment about our Tory PCC up in Cumbria announcing that he was taking over governance of the command function of the fire service, and also attempting to share all the other (he called it backroom staff) support staff functions as well. It wasn't a bolt out of the blue because we knew he was an elected Tory. He's only been in post for a week and he's already come out and said: this is what I'm doing. I haven't seen the detail, but he said: this is what I'm going to do, I'm going to take over governance of that. So I would like to reiterate the request to the executive council that we really do get moving on this. This is a very serious issue. It's happening in North Yorkshire, it's happening in Cumbria. It's coming to a fire service near you soon. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

President, conference, it is unfortunate that we haven't had more time to discuss this. This is an absolutely central issue, the question of the Policing and Crime Bill and the possibility of PCC takeovers of the fire and rescue service. We gave evidence at the bill committee, You may have seen that evidence. We are critical of the amount of time allotted to discuss fire service issues within consideration of that bill. But on the panel that we sat on, which was the fire service panel, actually in relation to one point in particular there was unanimity. That was opposition to hostile takeovers, because that would be allowed within the proposals as they currently stand. We were pleased that alongside our opposition on a range of issues, on that particular issue others (advisers, local authority councillors and so on) agreed with us that there should be provision to prevent the hostile takeover. That is, if other stakeholders, including the fire authority, don't support the takeover there should be mechanisms to prevent that takeover taking place. That will now pass to the House of Lords and we will engage in that detailed work in that process as well.

But I think one thing that we need to take back from this conference is making sure that our members on the ground are aware of the issues that we face, and the threat that this proposal entails. It does, as Steve explained, include a very serious threat to the future pay, terms and conditions of our members; it could be part of further undermining the National Joint Council and the national bargaining arrangements we have; it further undermines the whole question of neutrality that we've fought so hard for over many decades in terms of the role that firefighters undertake; and it's bizarre. Some of the proposals are bizarre, including the ones that Steve referred to about ASBOs and so on. If you talk to certain senior police officers they acknowledge very clearly that firefighters can get to areas, can get into communities that police officers can't. Why? Because we're not the police. When we knock on the door and say: we want to give you some advice, they let us in without hesitation. This is going to put that at risk. So there's a public safety problem with this, and there's a pay, terms and conditions problem with this, and there's a threat to our future bargaining arrangements with this. That campaign and that strategy will need to be put in place. We are going to have to continue with our fight against the legislation itself, but I'm quite sure that if they get this through, as they are likely to, then they're not going to have it just sitting on the statute book. They're doing it in order to force through those takeovers at local level. You will know in those local areas where that's the biggest threat. We're going to need to then have that strategy in place. We're going to need our members to engage with local communities to say: we don't want this takeover in our fire and rescue service. We need to launch those campaigns. So it's going to be a key element of the coming year's campaigning. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thank you, Matt. We're on paragraph E10, E11, E12, E13. I now resolution 22 Northumberland with the amendment from London. Resolution 22 Flooding – a Statutory Duty. The executive council support and the executive council support the London amendment.

Resolution 22 – FLOODING – A STATUTORY DUTY

Conference notes the devastating effect the floods in December 2015 in many areas of the UK and the vital role that fire service personnel carried out in all affected parts of the country both carrying out rescues and post incident mitigation. With all fire services in the UK now under immense pressure to cut budgets they cannot be expected to continue to resource training, equipment and responding without receiving the funding required to carry out this role.

Conference instructs the Executive Council to raise the issue of funding in the British Fire Service for flooding with all employers and Governments in the UK.

Conference notes with concern the extent and severity of floods experienced at the end of 2015 and start of 2016 across different regions of the UK. It is alarming that whilst Government Ministers claim these are once in a lifetime episodes, it is apparent that this is not the case and FBU Members are responding on greater regularity to severe incidents of flooding despite the fire service having no statutory duty to do so within England.

Whilst we note there is a continuing FBU campaign that has been running for some time calling for the statutory duty to be given to the Fire and Rescue Service, we call on the Executive Council to examine what else as part of this campaign we can do and to reinvigorate the campaign in light of our concerns based on the severity and regularity of such incidents and the drain on finances and resources these incidents have on hard pressed fire service budgets.

NORTHUMBERLAND

AMENDMENT

In first sentence, insert 'of' between 'effect' and 'the'.

In second paragraph, delete 'British'.

In third paragraph, after 'England' insert 'or Wales'.

LONDON

BRO GUY TIFFIN (Northumberland):

President, conference, comrades, in moving this resolution and accepting London's amendment all we are asking for is a simple reaffirmation of the FBU national policy. I'm not going to go over the cuts in Northumberland because I've just been through them not too long ago. However, Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service continue to fund and maintain three swift water rescue teams. The money spent on these swift water rescue teams could have gone a long way, and would have undoubtedly saved the retained stations that are about to close if we had statutory funding for the fire service, if we had the funding to keep our teams going. It has to be said, the SWRT teams in Northumberland have, over the last few years, proved invaluable for the residents of Northumberland, particularly over the last winter, and as well we sent teams down to York and Cumbria.

This government's strategies for flood defences have been withdrawn or underfunded, and in some cases have moved the problem to other areas not previously hit. It is an utter disgrace that fire authorities in England and Wales have not been given a statutory duty and the relevant funding to carry out these duties. As time goes by, we've also seen the situation where equipment has either been repaired numerous times or not replaced. Flooding incidents, as we now know, are not the once in a lifetime event that they were supposed to be, and continue to put an immense strain on all fire authorities, which cannot be sustained given the continued attacks and funding reductions of this current government.

We simply call upon the EC to do everything in their power to reinvigorate the campaign for a statutory response to flooding rather than a dilution of decision-making leading to poor safety standards and risk assessments with unclear guidance in the Fire and Rescue Services Act and the Civil Contingencies Act. We need to continue to raise this with our political friends and those who continue to attack us, as well as exploring every possible avenue to bring this issue to a head. What we require is funding to carry out this work, so that the money we currently receive can be used to maintain fire cover and protect members' jobs.

In 2007 the Fire Brigades Union produced the detailed document “Lessons of the 2007 floods”. It is clear that this has not been taken on board by the fire and rescue services, and government alike. Please support the resolution. I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

Thank you, Northumberland. Does that have a seconder? Are you coming up to second, comrade? Can I have London, if they are coming to move their amendment, to be ready to do that?

BRO BEN JONES (Cumbria):

Conference, we all saw the devastating footage on the TV from Storm Desmond on 5 December 2015, but what we did not see was the tireless work carried out by FBU members over that period. In the months before Storm Desmond hit, the UK Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service were already in the process of examining the need for water rescue capability within the county. It was mooted that we had too many swift water technicians and were even questioning the need for boat operators and boats. This is despite the previous floods in 2005 at Cockermouth and Carlisle in 2009. On top of this, they published the IRMP in September 2015 which called for the closure of five retained stations, citing that there was a reduced risk in these areas. These are the very areas that flooded during Storm Desmond.

Matt referred to this before. Media reporting in the days and weeks after this catastrophic disaster named a number of agencies as being primarily involved in the emergency response and rescues. They mentioned the RAF, the army, the mountain rescue, the coastguard, the police, the Environment Agency, the RSPCA, WRVS, Salvation Army, local councils, highways, other volunteer rescue organisations. But there was one glaring omission – which was the fire service.

In fact, there was a total of 14 other fire and rescue services that attended Cumbria over the following days. One of them was Northumberland. To give a snapshot of that night does not really do it justice. Cumbria was cut off. Roads became impassable, bridges collapsed, cities and towns and villages were under water. The fire service did respond, despite the media and council not reporting that fact. It was our members that went above and beyond. Some managers worked 72 hours non-stop, trapped in flooded areas. Recall to duty was initiated for the first time ever. Appliances and crews were mobilised to incidents with no support, backup equipment, PPE and, in some cases no training, no safe systems of work, nothing.

My particular experience mirrors what happened across the county. My crew had to beg, borrow and steal dry suits and water safety equipment from a neighbouring station. Only four suits for four of us, and none of them fit very well. We were mobilised to a person trapped in a car in rising flood water 35 miles away. That is how desperate the situation was. Operational discretion was in full swing there, by the way.

Crews were mobilised to incidents miles away and coming across other incidents en route. Hundreds of incidents went unreported, hundreds of rescues went unreported. Ironically, on that night all five retained station which were up for closure were out responding to floods. Afterwards, it came as no surprise that the fire service was omitted from all media reports and that the council was reluctant to show their appreciation due to the embarrassing decision to put forward these five retained stations for closure.

The frustration felt by members in Cumbria at the lack of recognition during and after Storm Desmond is still felt now. We are not the primary agency responsible for flooding, but that night we were the only agency with the capability and professionalism to deal with this incident. After a deafening silence of over two months the county council finally withdrew the proposal to close these five retained stations in February. The lack of resources during Storm Desmond directly influenced that decision. If this was a statutory duty then these closures would not have formed part of the IRMP. It would make it harder falsely to reduce risks in areas and stations would not be up for closure on an annual basis.

Please give us the training, please give us the resources. Give us the equipment, give us the responsibility. Make it a statutory duty. I second. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

Can I have London to move their amendment, please? *Formally* Formally moved. Is that seconded? *Formally* It's open for debate, Brian! For those of you who don't know, I've just seen a ginger lad jumping up and down in the back for the last 10 minutes to get in here. Go on, Brian.

BRO BRIAN GIBSON (Cleveland):

Conference, president, I'm speaking in support of resolution 22 Flooding – a Statutory Duty. Conference, we agree with what both delegates have said and we won't go over that again. But we wanted to comment. The resolution asks what more we can do as a union. I tell you what more we can do. If we want flooding as a statutory duty we are going to have to fight for it.

Cleveland had an emergency resolution ruled out by standing orders on Friday. The resolution simply asked for flooding to be a statutory duty but in order to get that the tactic was to introduce a national overtime ban to fight for this. As we all know too well, comrades, we never get anything without fighting for it. Surprisingly, our standing orders committee ruled that the floods in Kew, Putney and Richmond on 13 and 14 February this year were not of an emergency nature. Please support the resolution. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT:

That is still open for debate? Are you coming to the rostrum, Linda? All right, just passing through. OK. The EC support. I now put the amendment from London to the vote. The executive council support. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. *That is CARRIED.*

I now put the resolution as amended to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. *That is CARRIED.*

Paragraph E14, EU Parliamentary Group, paragraph E15, E16. It now falls upon you to endorse the executive council report. Is that agreed? *AGREED.*

Thank you. Lastly, certainly from me, a vote of thanks. In doing that I would like to give you a list of officials whose last conference it is. Brian Gibson (so I suppose that was your swansong, Brian. Thank you), Graham Wilkinson, Richard Walker, Ian McGill, Simon Yaffa, Kevin Brown (whose birthday it is; he's celebrating his 78th birthday today), Sheldon Fenning, Alan Coates, Julian Jenkins, Marcus Giles (these are just kids!) Foff Bishop (I'm going to miss you, Foff), Dave Gale, Dave Williams. I'd also like to make a special mention to recently retired Sue Offland from the CSNC who would love to have been here but isn't. She retired due to ill health. I'd like to give her a special mention in despatches.

I think it falls upon me now to give my thanks. I would like to thank very much the stewards and the work that they have done to aid standing orders in the smooth running of conference, and also the hotel staff who I feel have bent over backwards for us as a union and made us more than welcome in this hotel. I'd like to particularly thank Alison, the manageress who has daily patched me up and ice packed my knee and generally looked after me. If it wasn't for her and the vice-president I wouldn't be here today.

I'd like to thank the EC this week for putting up with me because for somebody who's been in as much pain as me this week hasn't really been at his nicest. I'd really like to thank standing orders as well. I thank them for the sterling work that they've done, but it's the sterling work that they do all year round, especially the chair, Steve Shelton. He puts his heart and soul into delivering this conference, and making sure that everything's laid on for you and conference runs at its smoothest.

I'd also like to thank my right-hand man (or he sees me as his right-hand man) Stewart Kinnon, for all the work he has done on behalf of me and the vice-president. He continually goes above and beyond to help us and this union, and I'm indebted to him, as is the vice-president this week.

I would give my personal thanks to the vice-president as well for a number of issues this week. He and the general secretary have made their way to my room at close of play every night. They have felt free to open my fridge, use my

toilet, and then left to go and do other things. But I have seen them this week and it's been endearing and engaging. I'd like to thank Ian for everything he's done for me to help me through this week.

Lastly, conference, it's about you. Conference is about the delegates who have come here. The way you've handled the debates this week, the way you've handled yourselves this week, and carried yourselves, and the way you've endeared yourselves to the national press today makes me very proud to be your president, makes me proud to preside over conference. The head office staff (I will thank them next week) – what a great team of people to have round conference as well. But as I say, it's about you and it's about the way we go forward.

You made some very big decisions this week, huge decisions. It's about us making sure that this union lives up to those decisions. Also, I'll put you on warning for next year, you're going to have some huge, massive decisions to make to guarantee the future of this union. You need to come here and you need to be up to it. You need to be coming here and you need not to be parochial but to be thinking of the big picture. I know you're up to it, I know you can do that.

Thank you very much. Have a safe journey home. Conference is closed. (*Applause*)

Conference closed



Established 1 October 1918

**OFFICERS AND OFFICIALS OF THE
FIRE BRIGADES UNION
ALONG WITH
LIST OF DELEGATES**

MAY 2016

OFFICERS AND OFFICIALS OF THE FIRE BRIGADES UNION

PRESIDENT – Alan McLean

VICE-PRESIDENT – Ian Murray

NATIONAL TREASURER – Andy Noble

GENERAL SECRETARY – Matt Wrack

ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY – Andy Dark

NATIONAL OFFICER – Dave Green

NATIONAL OFFICER – John McGhee

NATIONAL OFFICER – Sean Starbuck

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL MEMBERS

REGION 1	Chris McGlone
REGION 2	Jim Quinn
REGION 3	Andy Noble
REGION 4	Ian Murray
REGION 5	Kevin Brown
REGION 6	Phil Coates
REGION 7	Barry Downey
REGION 8	Grant Mayos
REGION 9	Jamie Wyatt
REGION 10	Ian Leahair
REGION 11	Danni Armstrong
REGION 12	Vacant
REGION 13	Tam McFarlane

REGIONAL SECRETARIES

REGION 1	Stephen Thomson
REGION 2	Stephen Boyd
REGION 3	Peter Wilcox
REGION 4	Peter Smith
REGION 5	Les Skarratts
REGION 6	Karl McKee
REGION 7	Pete Goulden
REGION 8	Cerith Griffiths
REGION 9	Riccardo La Torre
REGION 10	Paul Embery
REGION 11	Richard Jones
REGION 12	James Wolfenden
REGION 13	Trevor French
B&EMM	Micky Nicholas
CSNC	Lynda Rowen-O'Neil
LGBT	Pat Carberry
ONC	Simon Amos
NRC	Peter Preston
NWC	Samantha Rye

REGIONAL CHAIRS

REGION 1	Gordon McQuade
REGION 2	Dermot Rooney
REGION 3	Dave Howe
REGION 4	Richard Walker
REGION 5	Ian McGill
REGION 6	Marc Redford
REGION 7	Richard Williams
REGION 8	Alex Psaila
REGION 9	Brian Hooper
REGION 10	Gareth Beeton
REGION 11	Mark Simmons
REGION 12	Vacant
REGION 13	Kevin Herniman
B&EMM	Otis Graham
CSNC	Vacant
LGBT	Yannick Dubois
ONC	Mick Higgins
NRC	John Catherwood
NWC	Sarah Gartland

REGIONAL TREASURERS

REGION 1	Denise Christie
REGION 2	David Nichol
REGION 3	Tony Curry
REGION 4	Graham Wilkinson
REGION 5	Steve Shelton
REGION 6	Chris Hides
REGION 7	Sasha Hitchins
REGION 8	Arwel Roberts
REGION 9	Del Godfrey-Shaw
REGION 10	Lucy Masoud
REGION 11	Vacant
REGION 12	Paul Watts
REGION 13	Val Hampshire

LIST OF DELEGATES

REGION 1	Scotland	Dave Hart Tam Mitchell Ian Bryden Phil McDonald Brian Cameron Gary Lennie Denise Christie Stephen Thomson Gordon McQuade
REGION 2	NIFB	Rod O'Hare Mark McCarten Phil Miller David Nicol
REGION 3	Cleveland	Karl Wager Brian Gibson
	Durham	Jim Bittlestone Paul Dawson
	Northumberland	Guy Tiffin Steve Walker
	Tyne & Wear	Brian Harris Russell King
REGION 4	Humberside	Rob Vaux Richard Walker
	North Yorkshire	Simon Wall Steve Howley
	South Yorkshire	Nicola Brown Neil Carbutt
	West Yorkshire	Dave Williams Matty Herrin Jim Davies
REGION 5	Cheshire	Stuart Hammond Andrew Fox-Hewitt
	Cumbria	Graeme Higgins Dave Burn
	GMC	Simon Hickman Gary Keary Simon Yaffa
	Isle of Man	
	Lancashire	Kevin Wilkie Caroline Sturgess
	Merseyside	Mark Rowe Kevin Hughes

LIST OF DELEGATES

REGION 6

Derbyshire	Ben Keiller Chris Tapp
Leicestershire	Gavin Lynch Graham Vaux
Lincolnshire	Ben Selby Daniel Taylor
Northamptonshire	Mark Jones Sheldon Fenning
Nottinghamshire	Richard Jones Steve Bull

REGION 7

Hereford & Worcester	Stephen Gould Julian Jenkins
Staffordshire	Rich Williams Mark Tattum
Shropshire	Matt Lamb Stephen Morris
Warwickshire	Marcus Giles Wayne Vaughan
West Midlands	Neil Johnson Steve Price-Hunt Andrew Scattergood
Mid & West Wales	Barrie Davies Jeremy Oliver
North Wales	Shane Price Sandra Williams
South Wales	Alex Psaila Steve Saunders Ian Buckley

REGION 9

Bedfordshire	Jason Hollamby Mark Woodworth
Cambridgeshire	Martin Harding Cameron Matthews
Essex	Gary Critch Kieran Davies
Hertfordshire	Daren Scotchford Tony Smith
Norfolk	Peter Greeves Kevin Game
Suffolk	Roy Humphreys Phil Johnston

LIST OF DELEGATES

REGION 10

London

Greg Ashman
Lucy Masoud
Daniel Giblin
Jason Hunter
Jonathan Lambe
Patrick Mageean
Anthony Richmond
Timothy Roedel
David Waterman
David Young

REGION 11

Kent

Thomas Richardson

Surrey

Rob Sherwood

East Sussex

Asif Aziz

West Sussex

Lee Belsten

Mark Brown

Simon Herbert

Mick Chambers

Francis Bishop

REGION 12

Berkshire

Stephen Collins

Buckinghamshire

Tregear Thomas

Hampshire

Joanne Foot

Greg O'Neill

Isle of Wight

Gary Jackson

Nigel McMullen

Spence Cave

Oxfordshire

Pete Mawhood

Mark Ames

Josie Fullerton

REGION 13

Avon

Steve McGreavy

Cornwall

Chris Taylor

Dorset

Guy Herrington

Jon Castleden

Devon & Somerset

Karen Adams

David Gale

Scott Young

Gloucestershire

James Leslie

David Huggins

Scott Turner

Wiltshire

Brent Thorley

Tony Littler

LIST OF DELEGATES

B&EMM

B&EMM

Joseph Mendy
Rod Barrett

CSNC

CSNC

Ameila Diallo
Caroline Saunderson

LGBT

LGBT

Yannick Dubois
Pat Carberry

NRC

NRC

Andrew Stubbings
Seamus McMahon

NWC

NWC

Louise Connell
Helen Tooley

ONC

ONC

John Denvir
Craig Drinkald



Established 1 October 1918

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Bradley House
68 Coombe Road
Kingston upon Thames
Surrey KT2 7AE
twitter: @fbunational
website: www.fbu.org.uk