

Report of Proceedings 2015

88th conference
12-15 May 2015



Fire Brigades Union

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Report of Proceedings

Conference 2015

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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 2015'.
This is also available on the fbu website www.fbu.org.uk



88th

Conference

Blackpool 2015

12-15 May

MORNING SESSION

THE PRESIDENT:

Conference, come to order, come to order. Thank you very much. I'll call upon Steve Shelton, chair of standing orders committee, to give the standing orders report.

THE CHAIR OF STANDING ORDERS (Bro Steve Shelton):

Thank you, 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, 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.

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 any 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 area.

I now bring to your attention the provision of meals. Breakfast for those staying in the Imperial Hotel will be from 7 am in the Palm Court, which is situated directly opposite this room from the corridor behind you. Breakfast for those staying at the Hilton and Carlton hotels will have been explained in your hotel welcome packs. Lunch for all is at 12.45 pm, and evening meal for all is from 6.30 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 comfort break.

The list of scrutineers has been circulated; the list of the final appeals committee has been circulated and I now put these 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 the changes. We rely on the regional officials to exercise some influence on this procedure.

Can you please turn to your delegates' list. Region 1 Scotland: delete Marty Cooper; insert Gordon McQuade. Region 4 South Yorkshire: delete Neil Carbutt; insert Nicola Brown. Region 7 West Midlands: delete Mick McKay; insert Andrew Scattergood. Region 13 Avon: delete Gary Spindler; insert Kevin Herniman. Still with Region 13 Cornwall: delete Richard Simpson; insert John Castledon. B&EMM: delete Dalton Powell; insert Micky Nicholas. CSNC: delete Richard Stevens; insert Linda Rowan-O'Neill. LGBT: delete Lorraine Lowe; insert Pat Carberry. NWC: delete Diane Critchlow; insert Helen Tooley. ONC: delete Chris McGlone; insert Martin Pottinger.

Stall facilities. The standing orders committee have agreed stall facilities for the following organisations at conference: Bookmarks, Unite Against Fascism, Lifelong Learning, Shrewsbury 24, Venezuela Solidarity Campaign, BHSF, UIA Insurance, UIB, Wortley Hall, Morning Star,

the People's Assembly, and Friends of the Durham Miners' Gala. The stalls will be situated in and around the hotel reception area. Please will you visit them and spend some time with the people that have come to our conference.

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 along the corridor and through the door on your left which is clearly marked.

Fringe meetings have been agreed for the following organisations: tonight at 5.30 downstairs in Imperial Suite 3 will be the Unite Against Fascism fringe meeting; tomorrow night at 5.30 downstairs in Imperial Suite 3 again will be the Blacklist Support Group fringe meeting. Conference, please make every effort to attend and support these important events.

Closed sessions. May I remind conference, and particularly visitors, that the stewards will be carefully checking credentials before the start of the closed session in order to admit only into the hall delegates, officials, members, solicitors, FBU staff, tutors and our visitors. Other visitors and the media will be excluded after the conclusion of the business I have detailed.

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 Firefighter Fitness and Pensions, executive council; emergency resolution 2 Technical Advisory Panel Outcome 18th February 2015, South Yorkshire; emergency resolution 3 The General Election and the Challenges Facing the FBU and the Trade Union Movement, executive council; emergency resolution 4 Firefighter Pensions in the Aftermath of the General Election, executive council; emergency resolution 5 Compulsory Redundancies following General Election, Leicestershire.

Could you now turn to your programme of business, page 1. I will run through this a little bit slower than previous stuff that I've done. Page 1 after para K4 to the end of the page Closed Session. Proposed Alterations to the Rules of the Union from the executive council amendment 1 West Yorkshire has been withdrawn, amendment 5 East Sussex has been withdrawn, amendment 7 East Sussex has been withdrawn. Page 2 from resolution 46 up to and including resolution 44 Closed Session. Executive council policy statement, Canvassing and Conduct During Elections, amendment 1 London has been withdrawn. Resolution 48 London has been withdrawn. Page 3 after para G15 up to and including resolution 50 Closed Session. Page 4 after para D10 Hands Off Our Pensions Campaign insert emergency resolution 1 Firefighter Fitness and Pensions, executive council. After emergency resolution 1 insert emergency resolution 4 Firefighter Pensions in the Aftermath of the General Election, executive council. After Section A National Joint Council insert emergency resolution 5 Compulsory Redundancies following General Election, Leicestershire. Page 5 resolution 1 has been remitted. After para A7 insert emergency resolution 2 Technical Advisory Panel Outcome 18th February 2015, South Yorkshire. Resolution 3 has been withdrawn. Page 6 resolution 24 Tyne and Wear has been withdrawn with the right to speak. Resolution 25 Humberside has been withdrawn to second executive council policy statement Firefighters and Response to Medical Incidents. Page 7 after para B24 Facing the Future, Report of the Knight Review, insert emergency resolution 3 The General Election and the Challenges Facing the FBU and the Trade Union Movement, executive council. Pages 8 and 9 there is no change. Page 10 resolution 58 has been withdrawn. Page 11 resolution 40 amendment 2 Humberside has been withdrawn. Those are all the changes so far in the programme of business, conference. Thank you.

The standing orders committee wish to bring to conference's attention an emergency proposed alteration to the rules of the union from the executive council. Head office has recently been made aware of a judgment of a recent employment appeals tribunal on a costs application by members of GMB. This issue has only recently come to the attention of head office via Thompsons. The case was run by Thompsons on behalf of the GMB Northern Region. The case revolves around the payment of employment tribunal fees. An initial application to an employment tribunal costs up to £1,200 and must be paid by the applicant. The case revolves around the fact that the initial fee was paid by the GMB and not the applicant. The respondents lost the initial case but argued that they were not liable to repay the fees incurred by the applicant as they were not in fact paid by them but by the GMB. The judge in the case, *Goldwater and Others v. Sellafield Ltd.*, decided that:

“The appellants have paid no fees at all in this case and that the maximum order that can be made is therefore nil.”

The employment appeals tribunal looked at the GMB rules where it states that members will not, provided they follow the rules, have to pay any legal costs. A similar FBU case would be in a stronger position than the GMB case because members are required to sign agreements regarding fees, introduced in 2013. However, fire and rescue authorities could point to the current rule 25(iii)(b) which says:

“For the avoidance of doubt, those persons granted legal assistance are liable for legal costs but are protected against having to pay those costs by such means provided or approved by the General Secretary on behalf of the union as he/she may determine.”

If the rule says “Members are protected against having to pay costs which include fees” then it must follow that it will be argued by an employing authority that members therefore don't pay the fees, meaning they can't be recovered, and the costs will fall to the union.

So Thompsons have strongly advised an emergency alteration to the proposed new rules of the union at this year's conference which you

should have in front of you now (it's been handed out whilst I've been doing my report). Therefore the standing orders committee agrees to the emergency alteration from the executive council, acting in the best interests of the union both financially and legally.

Speakers' times. Executive council policy statement The Future of the Fire and Rescue Services, general secretary 20 minutes. Executive council policy statement All Different All Equal Review, national officer John McGhee 20 minutes. Executive council policy statement Canvassing and Conduct During Elections, general secretary 10 minutes. Executive council policy statement Health and Safety, Internal Arrangements, general secretary 10 minutes. Executive council policy statement Firefighters and Response to Medical Incidents, general secretary 25 minutes. Executive council policy statement Membership, Recruitment and Organising, general secretary 20 minutes. Executive council policy statement Europe and International Solidarity, general secretary 15 minutes.

Can I now go on to the voting on a challenge to the chair of conference? May I draw conference's attention to Standing Order 15. The number of delegates to conference is 139. Therefore, the number of delegates voting to carry a challenge is 93. 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 on Thursday morning first thing. Completed nomination forms must be placed in the ballot box at the rear of the hall by 11 am. Steve Shelton is eligible for re-election.

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

THE PRESIDENT:

Any speakers? Hold on, there's an applaud!

Could the scrutineers and tellers please report to Dave Green at the back of the hall now, please? That would be handy for us. I will take you to Section L which is Obituary and I would ask you to stand, conference, for a minute's silence.

(Conference stood in memory of those who had died)

Thank you.

THE VICE-PRESIDENT:

Conference, I would now like to invite FBU president, Alan McLean, to address conference.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thank you. We come here this week on the back of something which occurred last week, and something that I like to think none of us predicted or prepared for to the degree. The hideous and heinous result of last week certainly threw me. I had a presidential address written a couple of weeks ago that reflected the opinion polls! I'll never ever look at an opinion poll again, as long as I live! I cast my vote the same as you all did and got back and looked at the exit poll. To be honest with you, I thought that would be a complete nonsense, but compulsive television viewing ensued and in the early hours of Friday morning we got ultimately our worst nightmare as a trade union, and the movement got its worst nightmare as a trade union. We got a heartless bunch of people with axes to grind against us, with axes to grind against our organisation, with personal axes to grind, the most hideous group of people with the most disgraceful policies yet to happen. And here we are, the first conference in that government. I believe that the prison officers are also meeting today, but we're the conference that makes the news.

I think it's right and proper to say that this union, in my opinion, has always been at its best when it's had to think things through – not when it's had to react, not when it's done silly and strange things in a reactionary manner, but had the chance to think through exactly what the ramifications are for us. The executive council have put together an emergency resolution for you this week. To be honest with you, the executive council still haven't and you still haven't taken in the ramifications of this.

I firmly believe that we can overcome the problems that we have, but what we are going to have to ask for, and what we are actually going to have to do is to deal in manners that we've never dealt with before. We have to be really clever; we have to be foxy; we have to make sure that we're prepared for the onslaught. And the onslaught is coming. There are no two ways about it. We have been a thorn in their side. There isn't a Falklands on the horizon; there isn't a miners' union on the horizon. We have put our head above the parapet, and by the way, pensions isn't finished, in case anybody thinks it is. Pensions is very, very far from finished in the union. But we have to be clever. We have to make certain that we're prepared.

These people are going to attack check-off; these people are going to come and they are going to try and strike at our very heart. You have to be prepared for that. We have to go away from conference, we have to make sure that we have mechanisms in place to have our members' bank details to make sure that we don't suffer financial losses; to make sure that we engage with the members. That's what we do, what's what we do best.

This year is a rule change conference, and you could be forgiven if you came here and you landed here from Mars for thinking that it was all about four meetings for health and safety. It's much more important than that. We're fundamentally changing the rules of this union, which have taken decades to put together, decades to amass. Basically, they weren't fit for purpose, so the executive council embarked on a plan to change the rules of the union. We've got to change the rules of the union; we've got to change the way we adapt to the situation which is before us.

I don't rightly think that Labour is dead and buried, but Labour has to change. Labour has to make sure that the 4.5 million or 5 million working class people who went over to UKIP are challenged, that they have an alternative. They have to make sure that they are a viable opposition. There's nothing worse for me in the last parliament than continually seeing high profile Labour politicians doing exactly what they shouldn't. They were the opposition and they didn't oppose as far as I'm concerned. They didn't oppose well enough, and they didn't get the message across. That was reflected, in my opinion, in the vote across the country.

In my old region – to be honest with you, I'm a Londoner now; I want nothing to do with them – Labour increased its majority in a number of constituencies. I think it did that because the people believe in those individuals. You're going to have a debate this week; you'll talk about Labour Party affiliation. It's how we deal with the Labour Party that's very, very important. My position is certainly I'm not a member of the Labour Party. I'm going to join though; I'm going to join and try to influence it. It's the first time I've ever declared that to conference. Anything I declare at conference always happens, so I will join. By the way, you will have full health and safety meetings next year, by hook or by crook. That's a promise as well! *Applause*

So therefore, you don't need to stick it in the rules, do you?

Pensions, as I said, is not by any means done and dusted. We're under attack. As I've said, this union has flourished when we've been under attack. I remember the Ken Cameron years and the most hideous of individuals in Margaret Thatcher and what she did to trade unions.

I want to also say, we've got an executive council emergency resolution which talks about the attacks that we're under. One of the most hideous ones as far as I'm concerned is the Thomas report, and the application of the Thomas report. You as conference will have to be awake to that. We as an executive council will have to lead on that, and lead the executive council will. I promise you that, conference. You need to back the executive council in everything that we do. You need to challenge the executive council if we're getting it wrong. You need to make sure that you voice is heard in this entire debate. We are the professional voice of firefighters. We always have been. We need to exert and to be able to exert that influence.

I'm not right certain as to who the new fire minister is, although Barry Downey seems to have a handle on it, but it's not Penny Mordaunt any more. I think she's more than had enough of you, she's more than had enough of us! But big players in government, big names in government, will be Brandon Lewis. Brandon Lewis will have a big influence. I kind of hoped against hope that we didn't get those leaflets out in his constituency on behalf of the Fire Brigades Union but it seems like we did. So no good news there, once again!

But there is good news on the horizon. We do fight. We fight at every juncture on our members' behalf, and our members realise that and our members know that. None more so than in Buckinghamshire. I was very proud to be part of a rally in Buckinghamshire this last year, and very proud to see the turnout of the Fire Brigades Union in support of Ricky Matthews. That is not finished. *Applause*

The members showed their mettle and the chief fire officers, the councillors in Buckinghamshire are listening to us. I feel that an announcement on the two sacked members in Buckinghamshire is imminent. I feel that it's imminent and that you'll hear a little bit about it this week. I feel that the executive council will share with me in telling you that that we're going to win that. We'll have won that before the day is out, I'd like to think. We'll have two members who've been sacked who should be reinstated, reinstated. That's down to the work of officials in Buckinghamshire, that's down to the work of officials at head office, that's down to the good work of John McGhee, and that's down to the work of you, the Fire Brigades Union in winning that in Buckinghamshire. And you'll hear about that today. And if it doesn't happen, by the way, I'll vacate the chair and leave the room! It will happen. *Applause*

Also, I heard yesterday another bit of good news. Cheshire – two members sacked. Two members reinstated. *Applause*

So we fight, we fight on, we fight hard, we fight with the movement, we influence the movement. We don't do it on our own, but if we have to, by God we have to! We've always risen to the occasion. I reckon that this conference, I reckon that this union is a lot more intelligent than the one that I joined in the 70s and 80s. I reckon that you've all moved on, you've all evolved. I don't think that these people that have been elected are as

heinous as the ones that have happened in the past. I think we can overcome. But we need to be clever, and you need to be on your game. You need to be on your game, you need to be doing it. It's going to be very, very hard for the next five years, maybe even longer. But I'm certain that we as a union, united, motivated, will overcome. I thank you very much for listening to my address. Thank you, conference. *Applause*

On to business, conference. For your information, it's my intention to take the executive council policy statements at the following times. You might want to write this down. Executive council policy statement The Future of the Fire and Rescue Service with seven amendments from Scotland, this will be taken at the beginning of the session on Tuesday afternoon, this afternoon. The executive council policy statement All Different All Equal Review, with the three amendments from Scotland, 10 amendments from London, one amendment from Shropshire, and one amendment from B&EMM, this will be taken at the beginning of the session on Thursday afternoon. The executive council policy statement Canvassing and Conduct During Elections with amendment from London, with resolution 44 Canvassing, Derbyshire, this will be taken after the rules debate. The executive council policy statement Health and Safety – Internal Arrangements, with amendments from Scotland, Shropshire, London, Devon and Somerset and resolution 47 Brigade Safety Representatives from Shropshire, this will be taken on Thursday afternoon after tea. The executive council policy statement Firefighters and Response to Medical Incidents, with amendments from Northamptonshire, two amendments from Shropshire, amendment from London, with resolution 26 Co-Responding, Dorset, this will be taken at the beginning of Thursday morning session. The executive council policy statement Membership, Recruitment and Organising with amendments from London, with resolution 50 FBU Young Members, West Midlands, this will be taken at the beginning of Wednesday afternoon session. The executive council policy statement Europe and International Solidarity, with ten amendments from London will be taken at the beginning of Wednesday morning session.

For the information of conference, all policy statements will be amended to reflect any changes to the rules passed by this conference. I would ask for your indulgence in that.

I now present Section K Financial Accounts to be moved by our national treasurer, Dave Limer.

BRO DAVE LIMER (national treasurer):
Thank you, president. Conference, good morning. I'll be moving the statement of accounts for both the year end 2013 and 2014 together, K1 to K4. Before I do this, can I first thank all officials here today for your support over the past two years in addressing some very difficult financial issues facing the FBU. It's always difficult when you're trying to make savings. What's made this even more difficult is we're making savings during a national dispute, the pensions dispute, and we're experiencing a big decline in our income. So we've had to prioritise our spending and make some very difficult decisions.

The financial report to special conference in 2012 highlighted a £1.8 million deficit in the general fund. It suggested three possible options going forward. We chose, quite rightly, to address the general fund deficit and that's not been easy. Conference, my aim and hopefully your aim for the FBU has not changed. Collectively we need to ensure that the FBU is financially viable so we remain an independent trade union.

Given the level of the problem identified in 2012 we've had to make some difficult decisions – not easy decisions, not always popular decisions, but necessary. Despite the fact we have been and still are in a national dispute for most of that period, Conference, I can report that we've managed to reduce our expenditure in both 2013 and 2014.

Moving to expenditure, conference, recapping, in 2011 we were spending more than our income and that couldn't continue. Expenditure in 2013 decreased overall by £221,000. The main points I'd like to highlight to you about the 2013 expenditure are: salaries, national insurance contributions have reduced by £88,000; trade union leave payments have reduced by £100,000; communication costs fell by £132,000; and professional fees we paid reduced by £35,000.

Some areas of our expenditure in 2013 have actually risen. Most of those are due to the national dispute. They were hotel costs. Despite the fact that we've managed to reduce our overnight costs, the overall hotel expenditure rose by £42,000.

Ballot expenses rose by £147,000 and that was directly due to three national ballots we held in 2013. Printing and stationery rose by £224,000 – again, this was additional costs associated with the pension dispute.

Moving to the 2014 expenditure, overall this decreased again by £390,000. This equates to a reduction in total expenditure of 3% in one year. Conference, the main points I'd like to highlight to you from expenditure in 2014 are: we saw a further reduction of £164,000 (18%) on trade union leave; we saw £103,000 reduction in ballot expenses decreasing to £70,000; we saw a £334,000 reduction in printing and stationery. This was due to us saving a considerable amount of money by reducing production costs for pension campaign literature. Conference, meeting costs fell by £166,000 as there was no conference in 2014. Areas showing an increase in expenditure last year: we saw a 20% increase – that's £117,000 – in communication costs. This was mainly due to campaign costs. We saw a 496% increase in goods for resale, presentation and campaigning. Effectively, this was campaign material, merchandise and strike material.

Turning now to our three funds, we have the general fund, accident and injury fund, and political fund. Our income is split as follows: general fund 84% of our income; accident and injury fund 13.6% of our income; political fund 2.4% of our income. The split as outlined there has been fairly constant over the past five years.

Turning to the general fund, looking at the general fund for the end of 2012, it was showing a small surplus of £27,000 – a big improvement on the £1.8 million deficit shown for the year end 2011. In 2013 the general fund was showing a surplus carried forward of £293,000. In 2014 the general fund detailed a surplus carrying forward of £246,000. The improvement in the general fund has been brought about by a reduction in the expenditure which I’ve already highlighted. Another area which has helped is regional budgeting. We’ve moved from a quarterly imprest top-up system to an annual budgeting system. We looked at past expenditure levels in every area, and with the help of regional treasurers we set an annual budget for each area of expenditure. This has meant some significant changes to the way we operate financially. The aim of budgeting is to try to produce an annual underspend and build up a financial reserve equivalent to nine months of income. This will ensure stability, security for the FBU in the future.

Accident and injury fund. In 2013 the accident and injury fund continued to show a healthy surplus, increasing from £4.8 million in the previous year to just over £5 million for the year end 2013. It increased once again in 2013 to £5.2 million. The reason for the increase was we paid out fewer benefits in both years.

Turning to the political fund, the political fund for the year end 2013 showed a small reduction from the previous year from £1.2 million to £1.1 million, and again for the year end 2014 this reduced to £804,000. The reason for the reduction, conference, is we spent money on national adverts to support our campaign against the cuts to the fire service. In addition to this, money has also been spent supporting the Ring of Fire UK tour, which was highlighting the devastating cuts this coalition has made on the fire and rescue service.

Turning to our income now, in 2013 our total income through contributions was £11,207,049. In 2014 this decreased by 4% to £10,808,895, mainly due to membership numbers which fell by 5%. Whilst we can control our spending, the reduction in our income is mostly out of our control. This is of particular concern as contributions account for a majority of our income. This is the sixth consecutive year contributions have decreased. It clearly shows the pressure and attacks we face locally with the cuts to the service. Given the result of the general election last week, our income through contributions is likely to come under more pressure. We will need to monitor, project and plan around possible further reductions in our income. The 1% pay increase we got last year actually meant membership contributions increased and helped soften the fall in our overall income.

In 2014 our income from investments increased from £38,000 to £47,000. Commissions we received in 2014 increased from £7,000 to £13,000. Overall, the cash held by the union at the end of 2014 increased by £446,000 to £4.3 million.

Conference, to conclude, our finances are heading in the right direction. Difficult decisions have been made and will continue to be made to ensure we live within our financial means. We need to continue carefully to control and monitor our expenditure. There are certain things financially that we are unable to control: the decline in income (as I have already mentioned) is largely as a result of cuts by this government; and the pension liability known as the FRS17 is due mainly to market conditions which have not been favourable since 2008. Should this improve in the future, then the pension deficit should also reduce.

Conference, I’d like once again to thank you all for your help over the last two years. I’m proud to be a member of the FBU. So let’s continue to work together to ensure the union’s financial future. I move. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

Any speakers? No. Hearing that from Dave, I think it’s imperative that conference hears the financial news. I think it’s also imperative that we prepare to be a lean mean fighting machine. It is not for the fattest person in the room to say that, but the truth is we need to cut our cloth accordingly. We need to learn to be able to do that. There will be changes that will need to happen in this union. The cold hard financial fact is that we’re possibly facing the loss of members in this union, in fact we’re certainly facing the loss of members in this union, and everything that that brings. That decreases our revenue. I thank Dave from the chair for his candour, but I want you to know that the executive council are awake to that and we’ll have to deal with the finances and the financial situation of this union going forward.

CONFERENCE WENT INTO CLOSED SESSION

THE PRESIDENT:

OK, conference is no longer in closed session, comrades. Because I really beasted you this morning, I’m going to soon be breaking for lunch – actually I’m going to be breaking for dinner, Sean, not for lunch! But just for the information of delegates, this afternoon’s session will start with emergency resolution 3 followed by the executive council policy statement The Future of the Fire Service. Break for dinner.

Break for lunch

AFTERNOON SESSION

THE PRESIDENT:

Conference come to order, please. Take your seats, come to order, thank you. OK, conference, I now call upon Steve Shelton, chair of standing orders to give the standing orders report. Steve.

THE CHAIR OF STANDING ORDERS (Bro Steve Shelton):

Thank you, president. Conference, can you please turn to your programmes of business. Page 2, resolution 45 has been withdrawn. Page 3, resolution 4 has been withdrawn. Page 10, executive council policy statement All Different All Equal Review amendment 3 has been withdrawn to support amendment 10. Please turn to your delegates’ list. Region 12 Buckinghamshire delete Damon Robertson; Region 12 Hampshire delete Gary Jackson; Region 11 Kent delete Tim Green. Thank you, president.

THE PRESIDENT:

Anybody wish to speak? Is the standing orders report agreed? *AGREED*

OK, thank you very much. Steve, just before you go, Steve Shelton is chair of standing orders and he says nothing ever surprises him, so it’s my job to sometimes do that to the chair of standing orders. Standing orders, they’re like Marmite – you either love them or you hate them. I particularly like them because they keep me right. Steve’s a very knowledgeable man on absolutely everything. He’s here with the vice-chair of standing orders Stewart Kinnon. I think they do a remarkable job at conference. But as they say, nothing surprises them. I hope this does, because we’ve got 25 years in the Fire Brigades Union, and they always insisted that nothing and nobody would ever take them by surprise. I’d just like you, conference, to recognise two great stalwarts of conference and two great individuals, Steve and my mate Stewart. Thank you very much. *Applause*

THE CHAIR OF STANDING ORDERS (Bro Steve Shelton):

Thank you, president and thank you, conference. I’m lost for words. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

OK, conference, I’m now going to call emergency resolution 3 moved by the executive council followed by the executive council policy statement The Future of the Fire and Rescue Service. Can delegates turn to page 7 of their programme of business, please. OK. General secretary.

Emergency resolution 3 – THE GENERAL ELECTION AND THE CHALLENGES FACING THE FBU AND THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT
Conference notes the outcome of the 2015 General Election. The election of a Conservative government will mean a further onslaught on public services, workers’ living standards and trade union rights.

Conference reaffirms our position that cuts and austerity are not an economic necessity. Rather, they reflect the neoliberal political programme designed to resolve the economic problems, which followed the crisis of 2007/08, at the expense of workers. This is being imposed through savage cuts to public expenditure and public services. It ultimately means a sustained attack on workers’ living standards by various means.

These include: wage freezes and other restrictions in the public and private sector; the attack on the pension rights of millions of working people; the privatisation of public services; and the attacks on welfare rights.

Under this Conservative government, firefighters can expect further attacks on our service and on our profession.

- They have already made it clear they will:***
- Impose further austerity cuts similar to those faced over the last five years, which have already detrimentally affected public and firefighter safety***
 - Threaten firefighters’ pay and living standards***
 - Try to drive through the mutualisation of local fire and rescue services, as a first step towards privatisation***
 - Allow police and crime commissioners to interfere with the governance of the fire and rescue service, further undermining local democracy, transparency and accountability***
 - Utilise the Thomas report to attack and undermine firefighters’ conditions of service***
 - Pursue new attacks on the trade union rights of workers to take industrial action to defend ourselves.***

These measures will further weaken, undermine and fragment our fire and rescue service, putting public and firefighter safety at risk.

As the professional voice of firefighters and of the fire and rescue service, the FBU will:

- **Put forward an evidence-based case to deliver professional standards, in order to ensure a modern, safe and effective fire and rescue service**
- **Campaign with local and national politicians and with local communities to defend our fire and rescue service against cuts, closures and privatisation.**

Cuts and austerity do not just affect the fire and rescue service but are an issue for all workers. Therefore the FBU calls on the whole trade union movement to immediately give the lead to all those opposed to austerity. This must include other workers not currently in trade unions, young people, students, pensioners’ groups and other campaigners prepared to resist.

The FBU calls upon the trade union movement to inspire a mass movement of opposition against the attacks we now face. This must include redoubling our efforts to recruit and organise all layers of workers into fighting trade unions.

The scale of the attacks the Tories propose means that tens of millions of people will suffer as a result. This creates the potential to build a new and powerful mass movement. The FBU stands ready to play our part and we call on others to join us.

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

President, conference, it’s already been discussed and mentioned several times, the general election result and the shock of the general election result. The executive council felt that we needed to put our initial thoughts down before conference as the first opportunity for representatives from across the Fire Brigades Union to discuss the new situation we face. That’s set out in emergency resolution 3. The shock result I think has left many people in the labour movement thinking about what we do next. It ran against the predictions of the opinion polls and the experts, and indeed came as a shock to most of the political leaders themselves. The result of it is we saw two or three (depending on how you interpret it) party leaders resign – Miliband resigned, Nick Clegg resigned, Farage resigned, or then again may be he didn’t. I don’t know if anyone saw the interview but he resigned and said: Actually, I’m going on holiday and I’m going to consider whether I stand again after the summer. So unfortunately he may be back. We saw the wipe-out, the tide of the SNP wiping out Scottish Labour including members of the FBU parliamentary group. There is a debate already emerged in the labour movement about why this happened. Anyone who watched the news or read the press over the weekend and since will have seen that very quickly those on the right of our movement, Blairites, former Blairites, have got off their deck chairs to come out and lecture us all about what needs to happen, and that all this is as a result of dropping the great gifts that Tony Blair gave to the Labour Party. Well, I think we need to remind ourselves that this union used to be affiliated to the Labour Party, and disaffiliated precisely because of the actions of Tony Blair. And we don’t want to see any return to that. *Applause*

Their advice to the labour movement is that they need to shift right, ie to adopt the clothing of the Tories in order to get elected. There’s a debate to be had about this, but if we look at what happened, Ed Miliband made the most ground when he made radical sounding commitments, when he challenged Rupert Murdoch and was the only politician to do so he won huge amounts of support. When he challenged the energy companies he won huge support. When he raised the question of tax in a serious way he won support. When he challenged zero hours contracts he won support. So the idea that what needs to happen is to dump those sort of issues and shift our movement to the right, I think, is fundamentally wrong.

But there was a weakness in Labour’s approach. The weakness, in my view, was around the obsession with so-called fiscal responsibility, the idea that Labour could give no spending commitments in the run up to the general election, because people quite rightly asked what are you going to do about this? Anyone you spoke to in the Labour leadership, any Labour candidates raised this problem that actually Ed Balls has got control of all those commitments and we’ve been told we cannot make those commitments. If you just look from our own experience in relation to pensions, we did a fantastic lobbying campaign. I have to say, we do have to acknowledge the movement that came from Labour because for three years of that campaign they said virtually nothing. Again, that’s not a good comment to make about them, but in the final months of that campaign, as a result of your lobbying and your campaigning and the work our members did on the ground, and the hard evidence presented, and the fact that nobody could beat our arguments, we did shift the Labour front bench to eventually support us over the early day motion. That is quite an achievement for us. It didn’t happen in relation to any other union, it didn’t happen to any other pension scheme in the public sector by the way, that was under attack. But even in those circumstances we still struggled to get a clear commitment. We did get the letter, and again a welcome letter. We can’t deny that. But what we didn’t get was a clear commitment that an incoming Labour government would actually roll back the attacks on pensions, not just in the fire service but across the public sector, because that would have mobilised millions of people to support a Labour vote in the general election.

In relation to Scotland, again I think history has been rewritten. The responsibility for the failures of Labour in Scotland lie entirely with Labour’s right wing, lie entirely with the history of Blairism, with the signing up to a cuts agenda. I can’t for the life of me accept – whatever stance you

take on Scottish independence, in favour, yes or no – the idea that Labour in Scotland would stand on platforms with Tories to argue the case for a no vote. It was an absolute disaster and a stupid tactic to follow. *Applause*

For the life of me I can’t understand this one either. They then elected Jim Murphy as the leader of Scottish Labour, and again I think signed another bit of the suicide note. His first action was to try to out-nationalist the nationalists by signing up that the key aim of Scottish Labour and one of the core values is Scottish patriotism. Again, that’s not going to do anything to recover Labour’s vote.

So I reject the approach and the arguments that have been put forward by those on the right of our movement. We need to engage in that debate.

But the truth is we are now in a horrendous situation, facing huge threats. The question we’ve got to ask here, the question we’ve got to ask back in our branches, and the question we’ve got to ask across the trade union movement is: does this mean we roll over and accept those attacks? I think the message from this conference has to be: never, we are not going to roll over and see our service decimated, see other public services destroyed, cut to pieces and privatised. We will need to think it through, but what is required is the building of a mass movement of opposition to this government and we need to set our stall out right at the start. *Applause*

We have been through bad situations before. To reflect something the president said: we have thought and then we have fought. We need to do both. We do need to take account of the new situation, but we do need to alert people of the need to fight. We need to build and campaign and organise and fight back. I want to pay tribute to one of our disputes currently, in the midst of a long-running pensions dispute. The fact that our members in Essex have taken the stance to oppose local cuts and attacks, including taking further local strike action, should be commended by everyone at this conference. *Applause*

One of the things that we saw under the Thatcher/Major years in the labour movement was the emergence of so-called “new realism” – the idea they are in power and we just have to live with it and accept it and keep our heads down and keep quiet. Actually, all it did was set us up for further and further defeats. So that offers us no solution, no way forward. Yes, we are your elected representatives in the Fire Brigades Union, speaking on behalf of firefighters across the UK. We have to try to engage with ministers, we have to try to engage with government. We will do that, and by the way we will do it in a professional way. We don’t go in there jabbing our fingers; we go in there putting a professional argument to them. But the truth is they haven’t listened to argument so far, and the truth is the scale of what is coming is so huge that there is no alternative. There is nowhere to hide. We need to plan and we need to organise. We need to take that debate into the labour movement. There was a debate under the last government about coordinated action in the trade union movement. I think there needs to be a very serious discussion about what that means. If it means a one-day strike here and there, then that will not stop this government in its tracks. I’m not advocating any mad, immediate rush to industrial action, but clearly political and industrial action both have to be part of our plans for the future.

I am sure many people are somewhat shocked and possibly demoralised by what has happened. The truth is our task, your task as the leaders of this organisation, is to pick ourselves up, get thinking and get organising. People have done that in far, far worse situations than we face today. People have organised trade unions when it was illegal to do so. People across the world today are still fighting to build trade unions in situations far more difficult than the one we face.

I’ll finish on a theme that I mention quite often. Most of us on this platform will recall, maybe some of you are younger but not too many, Thatcher used to frequently use the phrase “there is no alternative”. Her policy was the only way forward; there is no alternative to the market; there is no alternative to accepting these attacks. If you think about it, we’ve always been told that throughout history. The truth is you can make a difference. When you’re feeling demoralised, when you’re feeling you’ve had a setback, actually trade union officials, trade union organisers, every single day of your working life you make a difference. If you represent someone in an interview, a discipline, you are making a difference and you help change the world in a tiny way. If you stop someone getting sacked you change the world in a tiny way; if you campaign against the closure of a fire station you change the world in a tiny way. All across this country today there are millions of people who didn’t vote Tory, there are millions of people who opposed the cuts, and there will be millions of people – workers, young people, students, in trade unions and not in trade unions – who will oppose what is coming and will have no alternative but to fight back. The task we have to set before ourselves is to place ourselves in the forefront of that and demand that the trade union movement places itself in the forefront of that, to build a movement of mass opposition, exposing the arguments, challenging the need for cuts and devastation to our public services, making the case for decent pensions and decent living standards. That’s an argument that can win. There are millions of people out there who are already convinced of that, there’s millions more we can convince if we fight. So let’s get organised, stand up, organise and fight back. I move the resolution. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

I call upon Cleveland to second.

BRO DAVID HOWE (Cleveland):

Thanks, president, conference. Matt, you read my speech out very well there! Thanks very much. Seriously, Cleveland are seconding the emergency resolution but we want to concentrate on one part of it, if you like, the privatisation issue. That will be at the centre of any big fights we have over the next five/ten years, however long it takes to do what Matt's just outlined. It goes to the heart of all the cuts, the financial problems, everything that our managers, our fire authority members pass through. It comes from the cuts. But one of the answers that's going to come to everyone in this room, or it's certainly going to come to Cleveland and I believe that ball will start rolling, is: we need to mutualise. What we know and what we think and what we're right about is mutualisation will lead to privatisation. It will come quick, it will come very quick.

You'll be aware of what's happened in Cleveland. It's been hanging over us now for about four years. Following the disastrous result last week we just wanted to remind you really, whether you support the Labour Party or not, if they had gained power last week I wouldn't be stood here now. Conference, be under no illusions at all, the Tories are coming strong and hard. They're coming to take our fire and rescue service. They'll come with their rich friends, they'll sell it off piece by piece to the highest bidder. That's what will happen. It's happened with everything else. They did it with the Post Office, they did it with everything we can mention, the energy companies. The chief fire officer in Cleveland will be buoyed by the election. He calls himself a socialist. I've never seen much evidence of that. He'll be buoyed by the election result because it was his idea, backed up by Francis Maude and their friends in government. Mark my words, he'll be planning now to move on this mutualisation agenda. The fire authority, up until now, haven't given us the support that we've asked. That's a Labour controlled fire authority, by the way. We will be pushing even harder at that door to try to change their minds and make them stand up. If the Tory government changes the law, that is the only opposition we've got then. If the fire authorities are strong enough to stand up and say: we're not going to do it, then that's OK, we won't do it. But if they're not strong enough we will end up in private hands.

In Cleveland, unfortunately we're at the sharp end of that. I'm extremely proud of the members in Cleveland and how they've stood up, up until now, to oppose mutualisation. Every single one of the members is against it. That's another massive tool in our armoury. Cleveland welcomes the resolution but notes that all of this will happen under the budget cuts, like I've said, and inevitably it will be a reactionary fight. I know we don't like to react all the time; we like to plan. It's been said a couple of times today. But it will be and we've got to fight.

The last bullet point of the resolution reads: "Campaign... against cuts, closures and privatisation". There's not a single more important line in that resolution because all of the rest of it relies on us being a properly funded public service. Support the resolution. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

I open that for debate. Does anybody want to speak. Anybody speak against to give Matt the right of reply? No? OK. I now put emergency resolution 3 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That is *CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY*.

I now bring the executive council policy statement The Future of the Fire Service to be amended by Scotland. Matt.

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL POLICY STATEMENT: THE FUTURE OF THE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Thanks, president. conference, I mentioned earlier that regardless of the outcome of the general election the executive council was well aware that this was going to be a very significant conference because of some of the major issues that we are having to discuss. If anything, the outcome of the election simply makes that discussion all the more urgent and all the more relevant. One of those areas is the EC policy statement on the future of the fire and rescue service where the executive council has attempted to lay out the various threats that we face and how we start to identify them. If we are to try to resist some of the attacks that we're going to face then clearly we need to identify them, identify the scale of those attacks and prepare the arguments, the evidence and the campaigns against them.

What we identify in the paper are a number of areas: more austerity cuts, the threat from the greater collaboration with the police and/or the involvement of police and crime commissioners, the threats from mutualisation and privatisation that Dave has just referred to, the Thomas attack on our conditions. I think we have to add to that the anti-union laws that the Tories are now likely to proceed with, further attacks on our trade union rights. Again, I think there's been very early statements today saying that they intend to proceed very quickly with those attacks. We know that there will be further austerity. Our research shows that in the year since the statement was written, 1,600 jobs were cut. So even since we've conducted the research which is presented before you in the statement, further job cuts have taken place, some 7,000 in total since 2010. That is 11% of all firefighter jobs, and it includes 20% of all control jobs. We know the coalition had set a budget for the next year with 8.8% cuts in central funding, the worst we've ever seen in our service. We know that the Tories plan to carry on cutting until at least 2018. Economists estimate that the Tories plan to cut as much from central budgets as they did over the last five years, around 18%. So the scale of what we've already seen we face again. That's the scale of what we face in terms of the cuts.

But there are other threats too. We know from the Tory manifesto that they will allow police and crime commissioners to interfere further in the

fire and rescue service. These people were elected, sometimes with as little as 10% of the local electorate turning out to vote, with no expertise or knowledge of the fire and rescue service who the Tories now in power plan to allow, if possible, to meddle in our service. They want to also press ahead with further plans for collaboration between the police and the fire and rescue service. This is already starting to happen. We know of co-location projects from joint headquarters, joint control rooms, to even joint fire stations, joint training and joint maintenance facilities. We have to be clear about that. Apart from the need for us to defend the independence of firefighters, we don't engage in a policing role. We had these debates in the 1980s and 1990s in relation to civil disturbances; we may need to have them again. We are not an arm of the state aimed at law enforcement; we are a humanitarian service and we need to maintain that role.

As has just been mentioned, we face the threat of mutualisations. They said in their manifesto they would promote more mutual. They tried to do it through the back door under the last government. We know that mutualisation is a first step towards privatisation; we know that it poses a threat to pay and conditions; we know that it opens the door to the various multinational privatising firms, the Sercos the Falcks, the Capitas, the Babcocks, all the rest who want to waltz in and take over our service and provide half-baked, half-cocked fire cover or training. So we need to assemble a campaign that addresses those areas.

We know that arising out of the last government again the Thomas review into our conditions of service. They got their stooge, Adrian Thomas, to cook up a report for them and finalise it earlier this year. In March at the Local Government Association fire conference he told us he'd completed it, he had 45 recommendations, but he couldn't tell any of us what those recommendations were because he'd been instructed by the minister not to do so. But I think we know what to expect; I think we know that the Thomas review will contain further attacks on our conditions of service, further attacks on our bargaining rights through the National Joint Council, further attacks on the so-called watch culture, by which they generally mean the fact that our members are well organised in a trade union – that's what they really mean when they're attacking that. So we need to be able to prepare to defend our national pay and conditions, and to defend, with all its weaknesses, our right to bargain as we choose with our national employers, and that is through the National Joint Council.

We know that behind that and separate from the fire service of course there is the attack on trade union rights. They are going to make it much harder for firefighters and other workers to take industrial action. They intend to introduce new thresholds, they intend to introduce further, additional thresholds in relation to health, education and fire. We know that if you consider the Carr review into so-called extreme trade union tactics, one of the chapters in the Carr review focused on the Fire Brigades Union and industrial relations in the fire and rescue service.

So we need to consider how we respond to this situation because they will want to present all this as inevitable. None of it is inevitable. The truth is, whatever election the Tories have won, I'll tell you this, people do not want to see their fire service privatised. That's a fact. Every time that's been tested that's backed up by the public. So I don't care whether the Tories want to privatise our fire service. Our fire service is not for sale, not to Falck, Serco or to any mutualisation dreamed up by some chief officer somewhere. *Applause*

This is going to take planning, thought and determination. This resolution sets out what we intend to do to make those preparations. It sanctions the executive council to continue to plan strategically to defend our fire and rescue service. It means head office thinking about how we can best defend and improve members' pay and conditions. It means we might not always just say no to the other side. We might need to engage with new ideas and new initiatives. We will consider them on their merits, just as we were starting to consider with the former Labour fire spokesperson different options about the future of the fire and rescue service. We know that there are different points of view, even within the Tory party, about the management and governance of the fire and rescue service in England.

So we need to thoroughly investigate proposals that come from government and from our employers. We need to develop our evidence-based research response as we have done on pensions. We need to continue to engage with politicians, even those we don't want in power, about the work firefighters do, about the way the service is run and governed, and how it is funded. We need to support and defend the role of the National Joint Council because I've got no doubt that that is going to come under further attack. I think the fire and rescue service National Joint Council is the only UK-wide bargaining body in existence today. That demonstrates how much under threat it is. But the decisions of this conference so far have been that we defend UK-wide bargaining through the NJC until something better comes along, and it hasn't' so far.

So the threats are there, the threats exist. We have one advantage and that advantage is here, it's our union. It's the fact that we've been in tough situations, we know how to organise, we know how to think, we know how to organise campaigns and we know how to fight back. Therefore, the policy statement sets out in very difficult times our aim to continue to shape the future of our service. I will finish on this, president. The truth is the modern fire and rescue service was created by the Fire Brigades Union, without any shadow of a doubt. If you look at the history of the Second World War and the modern fire and rescue service that emerged from the Second World War, it was the Fire Brigades Union that created that, that laid all the groundwork, all the arguments, all the evidence base then. So that at the end of the war and after the experience of the Blitz we were in a position to mould that for the next historical period. We're now at another turning point, unfortunately, where the tide of cuts and privatisation has devastated many of our public services, but nevertheless, even in that

different situation – a far more difficult situation politically – facing a hostile government and often normally hostile employers, our task is to repeat that, to learn the lessons from our own history, to bring to that our experiences, and experiences, knowledge and skills of our members, who are the experts in this industry bar none, and use that to shape the fire and rescue service that delivers for the communities we serve, and delivers a safe, effective and professional fire and rescue service for those who work in it. That’s the task before us. I move the statement. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

Can I call Northamptonshire to second, please.

BRO SHELDON FENNING (Northamptonshire):

President, conference, I second the EC statement, The Future of the Fire Service. I’m sure you will all be aware and have a reason to back this statement. In Northamptonshire we have a maverick PCC who our chief has joined and tried to influence for his own gain. How wrong was he! We now face a Conservative government, and the possibility of a change to legislation for a PCC to run the fire service. We now have a shared headquarters, we are now changing fire stations, plans have been drawn up with no clear divides between fire and police, shared facilities on operational fire stations 24/7 2-2-4. The mix of staff will only strengthen the powers of the PCC. This will only prove to isolate Northamptonshire into a police force whose budget is four times larger than Northampton’s.

I urge conference to back this statement and work hard to allow the fire service to keep its identity, to be valued, and to be proud in what we do. Conference, support the EC statement. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

OK, I now call upon Scotland to move their amendments. There are seven amendments. Is the same mover going to be doing all seven? Superb! Could you tell us which one you’re moving, please, and then I’ll tell you whether the EC support or oppose. So amendment 1 the EC oppose. You’re on one.

BRO STEPHEN REID (Scotland):

Thank you, conference. Scotland are supportive of this policy statement. However, we’re hopeful you will be supporting it with the amendments. I make no apology if it seems pedantic where we are changing a word here and there, but we are aware that our employers will read this, so one word here and there could actually be very important. So on the first amendment we’ve asked to delete the word “active” in terms of firefighters have been active agents in bringing about the progress made. This is about the progress we’ve made in the reduction of fires. We’ve asked to change that word to “primary”. Primary doesn’t mean exclusive; it simply means that firefighters have been that agent for change, that primary agent for change.

Our intervention work is around 5% and always have been. Yes, it alludes to a reduction of 48% in reductions in attendance at fires. However, that was a 48% reduction in what was only ever 5% now. The other work that we were involved in has led to that reduction. So the first amendment is to acknowledge that: that firefighters were the primary agents. So I would ask you to support the first amendment.

THE PRESIDENT:

Second amendment the executive council support.

BRO STEPHEN REID (Scotland):

Thank you. I won’t take up too much time. Our only reason for putting that one was changing the word “expected” to “proposed”. In Scotland there is a proposal to run pilot schemes on medical response. We didn’t want that expectation alluded to in there to be some sort of green light. We did want to get them to hold back.

Third amendment, president?

THE PRESIDENT:

Third amendment the executive council oppose.

BRO STEPHEN REID (Scotland):

Read the wording, it’s on the second last paragraph of page 5 and it starts at the second sentence. This is talking about moving to a single service in Scotland. While moving to a single service in Scotland may have protected the front line to some degree, we are still facing cuts, and we are not going to be silent on that any longer. A benefit of moving to the single service might be a more coherent structure, but to use words like “positive” where we are still having to challenge the Scottish service about cuts to the front line, we wanted that word removed. I acknowledge yes, that is a possible result, but it’s not necessarily a positive one yet. There is no evidence of that at this moment in time. So we would ask you to support the third amendment.

THE PRESIDENT:

Fourth amendment the executive council support, and I think I’m going to change my mind on the third one!

BRO STEPHEN REID (Scotland):

OK, fifth amendment?

THE PRESIDENT:

The fifth amendment, you can remain silent on that one!

BRO STEPHEN REID (Scotland):

I’ll set them up, you kick them in!

THE PRESIDENT:

Fifth amendment the executive council support. The sixth amendment the executive council oppose.

BRO STEPHEN REID (Scotland):

OK.

“The creation of a single management structure has led to a review of response standards and firefighter safety that, if conducted properly, will have an immediate impact on the safety of our 5,000 members.”

The issue we have with this is the statement that it will have an immediate impact on the safety of 5,000 members. How do we know it’s going to have an immediate impact? We are still facing cuts, we are having to argue very strongly to maintain safe systems of work, so how can we say that without any evidence? So that’s why we’ve asked for that phrase to be removed. And, unfortunately, (Matt’s already alluded to it) it refers to the safety of our 5,000 members. Unfortunately in Scotland we now have fewer than 5,000 members, so it is factually incorrect; it may have been correct at the time of writing, but again because of the cuts to jobs that is factually incorrect. So I would ask you to support amendment 6.

THE PRESIDENT:

We are on seven and the EC are supporting amendment 7.

BRO STEPHEN REID (Scotland):

Conference, I would ask you to support all of the amendments. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

Can I thank you, Stephen, for the way you handled that, thank you very much. Speakers? OK, general secretary to give the executive council’s opposition and a change of heart on one of them.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

On amendment 1, the reason we decided to oppose, apart from slight pedantry on the part of the Scottish region, is that it’s very hard to demonstrate that firefighters are the primary agents in the progress in the reduction of the number of fires, because there are a whole number of factors – social change, heating, cooking arrangements and so, to demonstrate statistically (which is the assertion in there) that firefighters are the primary agents in that. We don’t think it is demonstrated so we are content with the first form of words. So we’re asking conference to oppose amendment 1.

As the president has just pointed out, the executive council has had a sudden change of heart on amendment 3 and is content to support that one. On amendment 6, again we are simply not convinced that the wording improves the original wording at all. The original wording is very clear “if conducted properly”. We are content with that. That’s the reason for the opposition, president.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, general secretary. I now put amendment 1, Scotland, to the vote. The EC oppose. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *FALLS*.

I now put amendment 2 from Scotland to the vote. The EC support. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *CARRIES*.

I now put amendment 3 from Scotland to the vote. The EC now support. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *CARRIES*.

I now put amendment 4 from Scotland to the vote. The EC support. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *CARRIES*.

I now put amendment 5 from Scotland to the vote. The EC support. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *CARRIES*.

I now put amendment 6 from Scotland to the vote. The EC oppose. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *FALLS*.

I now put amendment 7 from Scotland to the vote. The EC support. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *CARRIES*.

I now put the executive council policy statement as amended to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *CARRIES*.

Can I ask conference to turn to page 2 of your programme of business, please. OK, we're on Section G. Paragraph G1, G2, G3, G4, G5, G6, G7, G8, G9, G10. Yes, come to the rostrum please.

BRO DAVE CHAPPELL (Devon and Somerset):

President, conference, just to comment on G10 on communication campaigns. If you read your annual report you will see that it refers to the new, some might say improved, FBU website. I really do appreciate all the work that's gone into trying to bring our communications up to speed. It really is important. Some of the stuff that's in there about the increase in the hits on the website are really important. We all know that today you need the communications to be as instant as possible, you do want people to be able access that. But those of you who have looked at the website will see that although it is now more mobile friendly, there are lots of anomalies in it. I defy people to work out how you get to certain bits of information on there. All this is happening at a time which some of you will also know that the other source of information that we would offer news through the government website, gov.uk, has been obliterated. So we are in desperate need of having a really effective database for officials and for members. Sadly, I have to say at the moment the FBU website doesn't achieve that. I would be very happy to hear other people's opinions on that. I would also qualify it and say yes, it has had to change its format and it's supposed to be more user friendly, more pictures and things. But it's not more user friendly if you want real, hard information. When you open up the website and you see 120 pages of stuff you've got to trawl through to try to find things, frankly that's no real use to us. So I'm sorry to have to say this now, we're desperately in need of good information systems. I know it's work in progress but please can we have a commitment to look again at some of the issues that we will need, going forward into this period of struggle that we've got. Thanks. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks for that, Dave. General secretary.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Actually, Dave, I'm genuinely glad you raised that point. It's the first time we've included a report on communications, campaigns and research in the annual report, and we think it's precisely so that you can hold us to account over them. There has been a lot of work done to improve different areas of that, and I will come back to the website. But in terms of social media you will have seen that over the past 18 months the union has significantly improved its position in relation to Twitter and so on, which is I think very popular with a wide layer of our members. I think if you compare ourselves as a union with 40,000 members with unions far, far bigger than us, we punch well above our weight in terms of the engagement of our members through Twitter and so on.

The report mentions improving our research facility and further measures are in place to further improve that and provide additional resources. I think one of the features of our pensions campaign, which has proved to be very much supported by members at local level, has been the evidence base that has stood behind it that's allowed them to develop the political work, challenge MPs and so on, because they've got the hard evidence to back it up with. We need to develop that approach in a whole number of areas of our work.

Coming on to other areas (and I will come on to the website last, if I can), the magazine, again we've had some discussion at head office about the need to review our magazine. I'd like to thank those officials and members who recently engaged in two focus groups that were held to discuss both the website and the magazine. In other words, the issues that have been identified by Dave there are very much on our agenda and very much already under discussion.

Then on to the website, I suppose in many ways it is frankly a hands up job. We engaged a company to work with us to introduce the new website. We had discussions with them about what that should be, and frankly what we've got at the end of it is not what we thought we were getting. So there have been a lot of criticisms; there's no point dodging that. There's been a lot of criticisms and I have to say, I myself

find it mentally frustrating trying to navigate the website. The president, who struggles to turn on a computer, finds it ten times harder than me to navigate the website, so much so that he has to get someone else to do it for him!

The point is taken. We are aware of the demands and needs of officials about the need to access reports and information. Just after one of the lobbies I was collared, in a pub actually, by one of our members who said that on Twitter if you access an FBU circular, that's great, but then you go and try to find that circular on the website, and you can never find it.

By the way, I'm sure it's not from the delegates, this is no criticism of our team in head office who have worked magnificently, I think, to improve our campaigning, social media, communications work. This is down to some failings in terms of work we did with a particular company to introduce that website. We put our hands up to that. We have now identified someone to assist us in improving that. Those discussions are underway. I hope that within a very short space of time we can improve the arrangements in relation to the website. Thanks, Dave, for raising it.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks for that, Dave. That's not going to escape comment. The president's got people to do that sort of thing for him called the general secretary, the AGS and three national officers! Thank you very much.

We are on to paragraph G11, G12, G13. I now call resolution 62 moved by Cheshire and the amendment moved by Shropshire. The executive council support both the resolution and the amendment. Cheshire. Thank you.

Resolution 62 – WHOLETIME RETAINED GUIDANCE
An increasing number of firefighters are undertaking wholetime retained contracts within Fire and Rescue Authorities. This has increased the positive and on-call hours firefighters are working and is a cause for concern. Local Officials need to challenge Fire and Rescue Services to ensure they have suitable and sufficient systems in place for robust monitoring and controlling the hours of work and rest and that members are safeguarded from working excessive hours, fatigue and take adequate rest away from duty.

Therefore, this Conference demands the Executive Council produce guidance for local Officials and members working wholetime retained regarding hours of duty.

CHESHIRE

Amendment
At end of resolution delete full stop and add:
“and then raise this issue at the NJC with a view to agreeing a national policy to be included in the Grey Book.”
SHROPSHIRE

BRO STUART HAMMOND (Cheshire):

President, conference, I am moving resolution 62, accepting amendment from Shropshire. Savage cuts in funding have been used to create some of the worst working conditions in the fire service for many years, and a long hour culture which will lead to an increase in accidents. Wholetime retained has been around for many years and has worked well in all areas. But now management have seen fit to exploit it using austerity as an excuse. The goodwill of firefighters to prop up fire services is becoming more and more apparent but the systems management used to monitor the safety of those individuals is severely lacking. The flimsy way in which management show they have sufficient measures in place has to be questioned. The present monitoring just gives licence for management to permit excessive working through ignorance, mismanagement or both. The pressure by management put on to individuals by senior management teams to carry out wholetime retained is growing, and their methods of recruiting are questionable.

First, we need to ensure that there is a requirement to carry out wholetime retained and then second, and most importantly, ensure correct, robust monitoring methods are in place. Unfortunately, goodwill has also led to firefighters working well in excess of their permitted positive working hours and this is also where the problem lies. Sometimes, like it or not, rules have to be introduced and monitored to protect people from themselves. These individuals think they are safe in working excessive hours, but are they? Where do they stand if they are involved in an accident? Who is held responsible? We need to ensure the wholetime contract and the retained contract are grey book and working time compliant, both individually and collectively. Safeguards should be built in providing compensatory rest to ensure that daily rest is taken and all firefighters on both contracts should be assured at least two days free from duty each week.

Conference, we cannot tolerate excessive working, inadequate monitoring and lack of control. Guidance needs to be clearly defined at a national level to allow local officials to challenge management effectively, and to ensure firefighters are better protected with stricter monitoring and control of working hours. In the interests of safety support this resolution. I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

Does the resolution from Cheshire have a seconder? *Formally*

The amendment from Shropshire. Can I ask them to move that amendment now, please, Shropshire. *Formally*

Formally moved. Does that have a seconder? *Formally*

Andy Dark, do you want to give some comment or clarification?

THE ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:

It’s just a short comment in support, president. That is to say that the comments raised from the rostrum and also the wording of the resolution is quite clear. The issues around excessive hours aren’t just confined to the issues of wholetime retained and we will make sure that the guidance with regard to wholetime retained is put out, but also the wider aspects of where too many hours are being worked and where there isn’t sufficient monitoring by fire and rescue services.

THE PRESIDENT:

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’s *CARRIED*.

I now put resolution 62 as amended to the vote. The executive council support. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That’s *CARRIED*.

We are on paragraph G14. I now call resolution 22 moved by ONC with the amendment from Merseyside. The EC give qualified support.

Resolution 22 – OPERATIONAL PREPAREDNESS OF FLEXI-DUTY OFFICERS <i>The ever increasing non-response work being carried out by Middle and Strategic Managers is severely impacting on the time they have available to dedicate to their own operational preparedness.</i>	
 <i>The reduction in this time means that they are often underprepared to deal with the full range of foreseeable risks that can be expected to occur at incidents within the areas in which they work. This has been highlighted in most, if not all of the recent investigations into incident related Firefighter fatalities.</i>	
 <i>Conference calls upon the Executive Council to campaign for a national minimum standard for the operational training provided to Flexi-duty Officers in relation to foreseeable risk within each individual Fire and Rescue Service, and the time made available for individual Officers to develop their own operational preparedness. This is to be carried out with a view to establishing minimum auditable National standards of operational capability for all Flexiduty Officers.</i>	
 <i>Conference requests that this work commences immediately and includes regular input and advice from the Officers National Committee.</i>	

	OFFICERS’ NATIONAL COMMITTEE
Amendment	
Final paragraph delete “requests” and insert “instructs”.	

BRO SIMON AMOS (ONC):

President, conference, I realise that most people’s minds here are focused on the major disappointment of another five years of attacks on the fire and rescue service. I would like to focus conference and bring us back to earth a little bit, remind us why we are all here in the first place: fighting fires. In these times of austerity we’re seeing a reduction in the number of fires we’re attending; we’re seeing a reduction in the number of firefighter posts; we’re being asked to do more with less. But statistically more firefighters are dying. Why should we be sacrificing quality over lack of quantity though? I ask conference to consider the words “assume” and “demand”. When you go on holiday and get on that plane you assume that the pilot has been given the right training, you assume that they are proven competent at what they are doing, and you assume they get the time to practise that training so they don’t crash the plane. We trust our lives every day to people we assume have been given the right training, been proven, and that they get the time to train to maintain that competency.

When a member of our community has called the fire brigade to a fire at their house with their loved ones still inside, they assume that the fire service will send a fire engine as soon as possible to save their family. They assume the crew has been given the right time to train properly.

They assume the person in charge of that first fire engine has been given the right training and is competent at their job and will be able to save their family. When we attend larger incidents we assume that the person in charge again has been given the time to train for that type of incident and been proven competent.

Wouldn’t you be distressed and alarmed if the person wasn’t trained or competent? Wouldn’t you be even more alarmed if that person has never been given the time to maintain that competency? Conference demands that every fire and rescue service absolutely ensures that the person who arrives on that first appliance and right up to flexi-duty officers who end up in charge has had the right training, is proven competent to be in charge, and is given the right amount of time to maintain that competency. If it was your family calling on the fire service, wouldn’t you be demanding that of your local fire and rescue service? I ask you to support resolution 22. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

Do we have a seconder for that? *Formally*

Formally seconded. I now ask Merseyside to move their amendment. *Formally*

Formally moved, thank you Merseyside. Does that have a seconder? *Formally*

That’s open for debate. I ask the AGS to give the qualification please.

THE ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:

In looking at this resolution the executive council was very clear that the question of operational competence needs to be there for not just flexi-duty officers but all incident commanders, from the very beginning to the very end. But we are aware that there are particular problems that are being faced by flexi-duty officers as laid out in the resolution, not least the fact that there is no programme for flexi officers and there is no time for them to produce the training. We get that and we’re very clear on it.

I suppose the qualification is a very simple one. In terms of the amount of time not given by fire and rescue services to our officer members, that is something that is in the knowledge, if you like, of the ONC members and the wider officer membership that we’ve got. We need that provided to us. But the key issue is that introducing the national standards for the operational procedures and the training standards which fall out of that, which is what the resolution calls for, it is not so much that we want the ONC to input into it, we think that the ONC, alongside the health and safety representatives, are key to producing that. So I think it is a question of emphasis of the role of the ONC in the production of this guidance. That, president, is the qualification.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thank you very much, Andy. 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’s *CARRIED*.

I put resolution 22 as amended to the vote. The executive council have given their qualification and support. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That’s *CARRIED*.

I now call resolution 23 Incident Command Competence to be moved by the ONC with an amendment from Merseyside. The executive council give qualified support to the resolution and support the amendment.

Resolution 23 – INCIDENT COMMAND COMPETENCE <i>Conference notes, with concern, that many Brigades have reduced the number, role and required competence of Incident Commanders. This has the clear potential to severely compromise the Health, Safety and Welfare of Firefighters and the public we serve.</i>
 <i>As a result the Incident Command System is under threat, in terms of the role, number and competence of commanders being planned or available to attend.</i>
 <i>Conference calls for a national minimum standard for Incident Command attendance. This should include such that no incident is attended without at least one competent Incident Commander being mobilised and that the levels, being proposed within the draft Incident Command guidance, include a national standard for the minimum command competence at each level.</i>

OFFICERS’ NATIONAL COMMITTEE

Amendment
2nd paragraph, 3rd sentence after “This” insert “standard”, delete “include such” and insert “direct”.

MERSEYSIDE

BRO MARTIN POTTINGER (ONC):
President, conference, I am moving resolution 23 and accepting Merseyside’s amendment. It would be remiss of me to start this speech without mentioning my grateful thanks to the newly elected Region 1 EC member for dropping this on my desk at about half past 10 this morning because he should have been doing this, not me!

It’s a very similar resolution to the last one really. We’re just aware all around the country of the continual and gradual but increasing reduction of numbers of front line job. Jobs reducing but workloads are increasing all the time. We’re watching firefighters being called upon to perform duties and roles that pull them away from essential training in the traditional skills and functions that we are all familiar with. These are our bread and butter, our craft, and it’s what we pride ourselves on. Middle and strategic managers are absolutely no different in this. A failure properly to prepare for the types and variety of incidents that we may be mobilised to must surely impact on the ability to lead, monitor and support the firefighter teams under our command. Sadly, many of you here have experienced the despair, the heartache and the horror of losing a comrade in the line of duty. Unless we act now, I fear many more of us will feel this grief. Please support this resolution. I move.
Applause

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you. Do we have a seconder? *Formally*

I call Merseyside to move their amendment. *Formally*

Thank you, Merseyside. Is that amendment seconded? *Formally*

Thank you very much. There is a qualification, Andy. Do you want to give it?

THE ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:
Thank you, president. Very similar to the last one. In terms of the information that is required with regard to the variations that exist across the UK both in terms of the competence, requirements by fire and rescue services of individual officers, and also the different attendance standards for officers to complete their command roles or support command roles at incidents, that’s in the hands and heads of our ONC members and indeed our brigade officer officials as well. So a similar point to last time: I think it’s the key emphasis on the role and status of the ONC and the officers in producing that guidance. They will be key to producing it alongside of health and safety officials. President, that is the qualification.

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks very much. 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’s *CARRIED*.

I put resolution 23 as amended by Merseyside to the vote. The executive council have given their qualification and support. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That’s *CARRIED*.

Paragraph G 15. I now call resolution 49 Fire Service Mergers – Union Organisation, to be moved by Wiltshire. The executive council give it qualified support, amended by Merseyside who the executive council support.

Resolution 49 – FIRE SERVICE MERGERS – UNION ORGANISATION
Conference notes the proposal to merge Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Services into a single service. The FBU has previous experience of Fire Service mergers, including the merger which resulted in the creation of Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service. Conference notes that the period following a merger creates significant pressure on the capacity of FBU Officials who have to engage in negotiating new policies, procedures and working practices in a new Service.

Conference believes that any alteration to the organisation of the Union following a merger must have proper regard to all the factors involved, including the geography of the new Service, increased workloads on Officials, different working practices etc. It is also vital that any alteration to the organisation of the Union following a merger must also carry the support and confidence of all the members involved.

To this end Conference believes that when a merger is being proposed, the organisation of the Union must be given proper consideration and be done in proper consultation with the Brigade Committees involved. This should not be done in a “one size fits all” manner but rather all organisational models should be considered.

WILTSHIRE

Amendment
Final paragraph, 1st sentence delete “done in proper” and insert “carried out through full”.

MERSEYSIDE

BRO BRENT THORLEY (Wiltshire):
Conference, this resolution 49 is a request to allow union structures at brigade level to be managed in the best interests of the members we serve after a merger of fire and rescue services. The merger in the southwest region of Devon Fire and Rescue Service with Somerset Fire and Rescue Service showed how this process put significant pressure on our officials through a huge increase in workload before, during and after the merger. It also creates a situation that leaves some members feeling that their voices are not being heard and that their concerns are being ignored despite our best efforts.

In April 2016 Wiltshire and Dorset Fire and Rescue Services will merge to form the Dorset and Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Service. We as a union need to show that we have learnt from our previous experiences, not just in the southwest but around the country. This resolution aims to give us all the ability to manage our brigade structures and allow brigade officials on behalf of this union to provide the best possible service to our members and the strongest opposition to irreversible and detrimental change, and provide the best service we can to the public.

Although we all do the same job, there are many differences from one service to the next, as we know. There is the cultural and historical working practices that can be difficult to deal with, that one side of the merger will become dominant at the cost of the other, the perception that some voices are not being heard because others are shouting louder or have greater influence upon decisions taken by union officials. This only goes to create division amongst our members, divisions that weaken our position with members and are difficult to heal, and allow those that run the service the opportunity to exploit that situation and drive wedges between us and create greater division, allowing their propaganda to gain momentum and give them the opportunity to seek volunteers to help them achieve their goals and further undermine our position. It is from this point that we then have to mobilise our members to fight against the proposals of change that will follow. The very real threat of shift change proposals that fall outside our conditions of service, the loss of frontline appliances are just some of the things already been talked about by the current CFOs and their management teams in meetings with staff, our members, never mind behind closed doors. We also have to keep our members on board for further national attacks on our conditions of service that will come, and to mobilise them in support of other brigades as the government tries to pick us off one by one.

Conference, brigade officials, the passing of this resolution will benefit us now and in the future, and those that come after us, which is vitally important. We always need to be on the lookout for the future, for those who will take over from us and continue to take this union forward, to find the potential in our members to become the next generation of officials, to become active. They are out there, but put off when they see the resources being taken away, the amount of work that needs to be put in, the clamp down on facilities time, and the fact that they see an official’s role as a thankless task, and now a majority Tory government that have made their intentions absolutely clear.

Let us show them that we have the structures in place to support and help them, and to encourage them to step up, and that they will be able to work alongside those more experienced, rather than just being thrown in at the deep end. We’re not asking for more; we’re not asking for an increased financial burden to be put upon this union. We’re asking that this conference allows brigade committees and officials the ability to maintain their strength, to give us the resources we need to do what we do best and that is represent our members, whether at brigade, branch or individual level, the members that this union represents and takes its lead from, to be available to deal with all issues whenever they arise, and to be able to act quickly and communicate efficiently. By that I don’t mean by email or social media, text or phone. I mean by being there in person, face to face with our members. It’s what we do best, and ultimately what works best, particularly when the stakes are high and members are concerned and nervous about their futures, and the effects it will have on them and their families.

We accept that we will now become one service and have one brigade committee, but why should we accept the reduction of brigade officials and at a time when they’re needed the most? Let us not follow the route of the services that merge to save money, subservient to their paymasters regardless of consequence, that shrink and become less effective in the service they provide to the public, show disregard for our members and their families, and take greater risks with our members’ lives, the reduced posts, proposed detrimental shift change, get rid of vital frontline appliances, close stations, privatisation. No, conference, let’s maintain our strength to be able to fight against the onslaught of cuts, to make sure we are providing the best possible service to the public, and the best conditions for our members to work in, and the best possible representation we can give them. We need to strive to continue on as we are: strong, organised and effective. Conference, please support this resolution. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

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

BRO DAVE GALE (Dorset):

President, conference, we are seconding resolution 49 Fire Service Mergers and Union Organisation. It is quite simple, Dorset and Wiltshire are merging in April 2016. We need to learn from the Devon and Somerset merger and ensure that we have enough officials in place to represent our members across both brigades in times of austerity. We have to have a structure to oppose station closures, reduction of firefighters, shift changes, and any other attacks on our fire and rescue services. All we are asking for is for conference and the executive council to allow us to organise our officials in the best way we can and represent all our members across both brigades.

The workloads are going to be significantly increased and we need to be able to support these officials. We cannot be bound by rules which reduce our officials and will reduce our ability to organise and support. I urge you to support this resolution. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

Merseyside to move their amendment. *Formally*

Thank you, Merseyside. Is that seconded? *Formally*

That is open for debate. Dave Chappell. Anybody else want to contribute to this debate?

BRO DAVE CHAPPELL (Devon and Somerset):

Conference, sorry but I've been asked to say a few words as the other brigade in the southwest that's been through this process of combination. Obviously, we 're not the first brigade in the UK that has gone through this. Wales have been through mergers to form consolidated brigades, Scotland have just been through it as well. The key thing that you all know is what's the purpose behind that? What is the actual aspiration (a horrible word) that is supposed to be driving it? If the identity makes sense, then there is nothing wrong with it at all. The problem is that most of the stuff that's going on these days (and you don't need me to say it) is about the increasing corporatisation of our service. It's nothing to do with whether it provides a better service to the public, or even a better framework for our members to work within. That's been part of the problem. The net result is it's an HR officer's field day when you go into all of these things that are associated with combination. Our combination was eight years ago. We've still got two separate pages on our intranet for documents that relate to one part of the brigade as opposed to the other part of the brigade. We still haven't managed to harmonise standard things like BA – two separate BA sets are used, and working at incidents increasingly together we have guys who stand by at other stations, don't even have training on the kit that is available in the other part of the brigade. It is frankly a scandal. At the same time as we've seen massive cuts (we've had huge cuts in our brigade in the frontline) their back office functions – the main reason that we were told that this was all going to make sense on economies of scale and all the rest of it – have been mushroomed, actually expanded overall. It's a running joke in our brigade that you can't go to the headquarters site and find a parking space ever, even though they keep adding parking spaces. So it is part of the problem that you all know about in the way that the service is run. We've lost the plot in terms of what we're there for. We've got one initiative after the other that doesn't seem to do anything. So I think it's really vital that when you have to go into this process, as Dorset and Wiltshire are now, that the union recognise – we all recognise it at national, regional and local level – it's a massive workload for the officials in trying to do the right thing. One final thing to say, which again some of you will have experienced, is that in the case of our combination the Devon officials campaigned vigorously against the combination; Somerset, for other reasons historically, didn't campaign against it. In fact, they were in favour of the combination because they thought it would bring extra resources to them. Now, everybody talks about Devon taking over Somerset, which is a bit of a joke because we were all against it. That can lead to the tensions that have already been referred to, that you have really got to try to keep the membership together. Otherwise people will fragment. All this is stuff you know. I would be really interested to hear the experiences of the Welsh members, the Welsh officials, and how Scotland see their mergers developing because if it's done right it can make sense; if it's not done right then it just becomes another mess. Thanks very much. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

Any more speakers? You're not going to get to know how the Welsh view it, or the Scottish view it because they don't want to speak! I will give the general secretary room now to give the qualified support from the executive council.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

President, conference, I think it's a useful issue to be raised by Wiltshire. Over the years we've had a whole raft of experience of mergers of fire services, fire brigades, fire services and now fire and rescue services, some which we would probably be supportive of, or broadly supportive of, and some which we've campaigned against. It always does raise this problem of how we organise in the aftermath of such a merger. What stance we take in the run up to a merger, and how we organise post the change. I suppose the most recent experience of that has been Scotland. Certainly I've had some involvement in that, and I think there are lessons to learn from the Scottish merger and the union structure that emerged from that. It did take some time for that structure to be put in place.

So I think the executive council's view is that we do want to ensure that that support is given to members and officials locally so that in the aftermath of a merged fire and rescue service members are supported, but most importantly, local officials are able to then negotiate with the new employer, because you will have a new employer, as we have in Scotland now, and there is a whole number of issues that arise out of that in terms of terms and conditions, working arrangements and so on. We still, two years down the line, have not dealt with all of those issues in Scotland as yet. So there is a considerable amount of work to be done. You can imagine on the scale of eight fire services going into one, as we have had in Scotland, there is a considerable workload and that has been reported to us at the executive council. We have had some direct involvement through head office.

I think the qualification is merely to alert conference that ultimately, however, the rule book is clear that we have within the territory of each fire authority under your new rule C6 will exist a brigade committee, and then all the other structures flow from the existence of a brigade committee – the brigade officials and so on. The question of when that comes into play, when elections are held and all of those issues clearly are matters for discussion. The executive council would want to support those officials going through a merger, but with that proviso that ultimately there will inevitably be changes to our structures as a result of a merger, and there will ultimately be a single brigade committee with all the things that flow from that. In terms of providing support through that transition period, there is no opposition whatsoever, and we would be keen to work with the region and the brigade officials to do so.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thank you, Matt. 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 49 as amended 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'm now going to do something which is quite unusual at conference. I'm going to call Steve Shelton, chair of standing orders, to give an interim standing orders report, and you will see the reasons for that. It will be apparent to you when Steve gives his report. Steve.

THE CHAIR OF STANDING ORDERS (Bro Steve Shelton):

Thank you, president. Conference, the standing orders committee is taking the unusual step of giving a report outside of normal practice. Conference, the Merseyside delegation have submitted an emergency resolution of an exceptional nature entitled Merseyside Evictions of Love Activists. The standing orders committee have agreed to place this emergency resolution on the order paper as emergency resolution 6. The emergency resolution is being handed out to delegations now, so delegates can digest its contents before debate. Because of the media attention this is attracting, it will be taken after the tea and coffee break you are about to have.

THE PRESIDENT:

Eventually!

THE CHAIR OF STANDING ORDERS (Bro Steve Shelton):

I trust conference will understand, when they read the emergency resolution and listen to the mover. Thank you, president. I hope you understand, Conference, thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Is that report agreed? *AGREED*

Thank you. I now call resolution 43 moved by West Yorkshire with amendment from Merseyside. The EC support with the Merseyside amendment or will oppose.

RESOLUTION 43 – NATIONAL FIRE BRIGADES UNION

This Conference acknowledges the different pension schemes within the UK Fire and Rescue Services and notes the incredible anguish put upon all Members of the Fire Brigades Union who haven't been balloted for industrial action or who were balloted and voted not to take industrial action during the national pension campaign.

However this Conference demands that the Executive Council will do everything within its power to prevent a fragmenting of the national Fire Brigades Union into the Fire Brigades Union England, Fire Brigades Union Scotland, Fire Brigades Union Northern Ireland and the Fire Brigades Union Wales.

This Conference reaffirms the position that strength in unity.

Amendment
Delete 1st paragraph.

2nd paragraph delete “However this”.

MERSEYSIDE

BRO PAUL DRINKWATER (West Yorkshire):
Conference, president, firstly we accept the amendments from Merseyside to remove the first paragraph and therefore from the second paragraph. I promise that none of this will rhyme, if there’s any concerns!

Strength in Unity, that’s our motto isn’t it? It’s what we’ve stood for since 1918. This union grew from a divided workforce of several unions such as the Municipal Workers Union, Transport & General Workers Union and public employees’ unions. Understandably, they recruited firefighters between the wars. We were a fragmented workforce, paid subsistence wages for long hours of almost bonded labour, doing an extremely dangerous job. We didn’t have national conditions of service and pay. We were employed by parish brigades, local authorities, police brigades, as well as lots of other private concerns. It’s only due to the commitment and hard work of our predecessors, whose voices still echo in our conference hall today, that the Fire Brigades Union became the recognised custodian of all United Kingdom firefighters’ working conditions and pay, and the protectors of the modern fire service which was born from the ashes of the Second World War.

Peter Payne, a barrister and auxiliary firefighter during the war, stated in 1941 –

“By the end of the war much will be in ruins – ideas as well as buildings. The power of the bankers must lie buried in the debris of the City of London. The ghosts of vested interests must stalk disconsolate through the gutted warehouses. The abuses of big monopolies must have been washed down the sewers by our jets. The old capitalist system, like the captive Samson, must perish in the ruins which it has pulled down upon itself. The people alone will survive, the tough, invincible working people. When peace comes this people will build a brave new world. The firemen [firefighters] will be there again in front rank. We shall have learned in the Fire Brigades Union the lessons which must be applied to society as a whole. We shall know the value of unity and loyalty, of persistence against tremendous odds, of self-discipline, and of democratic discussion. By virtue of our knowledge we shall take the lead.”

As we all know, after the war the welfare state was created by the labour movement, and many industries were taken into public ownership to benefit the ordinary working people of the United Kingdom. The Fire Brigades Union won national pay and conditions as well as national negotiating machinery in the form of the National Joint Council. This continues to serve us well and gives us the strength we need to keep the wolves from the door. Unfortunately, the wolves are well and truly at the door. Many of the gains made for the public have already been lost. Privatised water supplies – honestly, it’s unbelievable!

We, the FBU, have managed so far to keep our nationalised service provided to everyone without regard to their ability to pay, protecting the most vulnerable and getting the best deal possible for firefighters. We have retained national pay and conditions, although these are considerably under attack at the moment. The establishment seek to divide us and drive us back into the conditions of Victorian Britain, with firefighters working varied shift patterns not negotiated through this union, doubling working hours, firefighters on different pensions, firefighters working overtime on flat rates of pay, inadequate frontline appliance crewing, and these are just a few things that come to mind.

Local negotiation or imposed conditions are undermining the decisions made by this conference in the past. Our predecessors would be outraged by many of our own members’ disregard for their own struggle. We understand the need for the executive council to engage with devolved governments and to apply pressure wherever they can to get the best results for members. However, uppermost in these negotiations should be our motto “Strength in Unity”. We seek a commitment from this conference for this to remain a single union of the United Kingdom firefighters, and to rebut any attempts to split the FBU into separate Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish and English unions. So we are once again faced with a time that the “ghosts of vested self-interest” are rampant and big monopolies are pulling the strings at Westminster, and indeed across the world. We must remain united, as the United Kingdom Fire Brigades Union. I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Do we have a seconder? *Formally*

Formally seconded. I call upon Merseyside to move their amendment. *Formally*

Formally moved. Does that have a seconder? *Formally*

Formally. That’s open for debate. The executive council support with the amendment. I now put the amendment from Merseyside to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That’s *CARRIED*.

I now put resolution 43 as amended to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That’s *CARRIED*.

Right, conference, you can take a 25 minute tea break. I do want you back in your seats because we will be starting then. The executive council, you’re working through your tea break to have a look at this emergency resolution from Merseyside. Please come to the stage, EC, the rest of you go and have some coffee.

Break for tea

THE PRESIDENT:
Come to order. Thank you. I now call emergency resolution 6 Merseyside Evictions of Love Activists to be moved by Merseyside and seconded by GMC. Merseyside, can you come and move your emergency resolution, please. The executive council support.

Emergency resolution 6 – MERSEYSIDE EVICTIONS OF LOVE ACTIVISTS
Conference is appalled by the use of selected Fire and Rescue Service personnel on Tuesday 12 May 2015 to help evict homelessness activists involved in an ongoing occupation of an empty bank in Merseyside.

Conference applauds the direct action of people to tackle the homeless crisis in Merseyside.

Conference notes that the FBU Merseyside Brigade Committee had demonstrated solidarity and visited the occupation.

Conference notes that firefighters had carried out a fire safety inspection of the occupied premises as part of that solidarity.

Conference notes that no FBU members were involved in the evictions. These were carried out by non-FBU members in the Search and Rescue Team.

Conference further notes the popularity of firefighters in Spain who refused to evict people from their homes.

Conference believes that firefighters rescue people, not banks.

Conference believes that it is not the job of firefighters to attack working class people and other activists who are resisting austerity and defending their living standards.

Conference calls on members to collectively resist by all means any instruction to participate in similar evictions.
MERSEYSIDE

BRO MARK ROWE (Merseyside):
President, conference, not a lot of people thank standing orders, but I’d like to thank standing orders for moving to get this quickly on to the programme today. When I go through it, you’ll understand why it is of such an emergency nature.

The vicious Tory attacks on welfare have clearly had disastrous consequences for those facing homelessness or those already homeless. Many people have ended up losing their homes, many now have no alternative but to sleep rough. Another of the vicious attacks by the Tories has seen the closure of homeless shelters in the Merseyside. Simply disgraceful! As a consequence, the amount of people sleeping rough on Merseyside has quadrupled. But Merseyside is no different from any other area of the UK. Homelessness is on the rise throughout the UK. Conference, this is only going to get worse. £12 billion of welfare cuts will put many, many more people out of their homes, out of shelters and on to the streets. In order to address this huge issue a local group of activists in Merseyside joined together, calling themselves Love Activists and occupied a large empty bank in the centre of Liverpool. They opened the doors of this large empty bank to all homeless people of Liverpool who the Tories had forced on to the streets. As you can imagine, a threat to the established order of this nature has attracted a huge amount of publicity. Members of the Merseyside brigade committee have visited the occupation to show not only solidarity and financial support, but also physical support by donating food to feed the 50 homeless people who took up the Love Activists’ offer of shelter and assistance. *Applause*

These are some of the most vulnerable members of our community, many with drug and alcohol problems. Nobody was turned away, all were given help. The Love Activists provided advice on gaining employment and provided help in overcoming the dependency issues. This was community activism in its truest form. This became a real social hub. Conference, I hope you will join with Merseyside FBU in applauding the Love Activists’ action.

Disgracefully, an eviction was scheduled to take place, putting at least 50 vulnerable homeless people back on to the streets, with all the risks associated with life on those streets. The evictions started at 4 am this morning. Fire and rescue personnel have been used during that eviction. The personnel involved in that eviction are not FBU members. We condemn the actions of those involved in the eviction of peaceful activists. We also condemn the use of public money and resources to secure private property.

This resolution seeks to give assurance to FBU members who may be put under pressure to become involved in evictions in any guise. We are now moving into five more years of austerity. Homelessness will undoubtedly increase. Occupations and peaceful protest will increase. This assurance as conference policy will assure our members that we will collectively resist any pressure fire and rescue service managers try to force on our members to partake in attacks on our own communities. We are and we must remain neutral as a fire and rescue service. The FBU rightly supports peaceful protest.

Bizarrely, it appears that if some service managers have their way, we don't actually rescue people not banks, we actually rescue banks from people! This cannot be allowed to happen. Conference, please support the resolution so we can let our members know conference supports them when they resist pressure to partake in any evictions. I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

GMC to second.

BRO SIMON HICKMAN (GMC):

President, conference, I am seconding emergency resolution 6 Merseyside Eviction of Love Activists. We've already experienced similar occurrences within Greater Manchester during the anti-fracking protest down at Barton Moss. Our members, supported by the officials, refused to take part in the evictions down there. We are now about to enter a hideous period of unprecedented attacks on our communities. Make no mistake, this is coming to a fire and rescue service near you. We can't allow our members to be put in a position where we become the enforcing arm of big business or the state. We can't be seen to be assisting in stifling any form of fight back. Support this resolution. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

Speakers? Any speakers? General secretary.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

President, conference, I'm very pleased that standing orders allowed the emergency resolution on to the order paper, and I've no doubt it will be passed unanimously. What a contrast, eh? All around the room are T shirts that I suspect everyone in the room has worn over the past year/18 months, with our slogan: "We rescue people not banks". And here we have the precise opposite being enforced by a chief fire officer in Merseyside. What an utter disgrace!

Many of you will have heard this story. I'm probably going to tell it tomorrow, but I'm going to tell it now. As I say, many of you have heard the story of where that comes from. But it is worth reminding ourselves, because I think we need to take this message to our members in every single fire station around the country and say: which side are you going to be on if that is put to you?

In Coruña in Northern Spain, because of the crisis there and because of falling wages, pensions being destroyed, a remarkably similar story to what we've been through here, there has been a record growth in homelessness and a record growth in the number of evictions as the banks and mortgage holders and landlords seek to recover what they see as their property from the people who can no longer afford to pay their rent or their mortgage. These stories are about real people. It's not just statistics. There is a lady called Mrs. Aurelia Rey, 83 years old, who was given notice of eviction from her flat in which she had lived since 1979. Of course, the local authorities, in order to enforce this eviction sent firefighters to conduct that eviction, because of course we've got cutting equipment on fire engines and we can break locks and so on. There is also a mass anti-eviction campaign across Spain. The protesters were at that premises of Mrs. Rey and the firefighters (and again, it comes down to, can you change things?), one person, Roberto Rivas a firefighter in Coruña who said: I'm not doing it, I will not evict this woman from her home. Overnight that's where that slogan in Spanish appeared on fire stations all over Spain: "We rescue people not banks". It's not our job to enforce evictions on poor people, members of the communities that we serve, in order to help the banks who created this mess in the first place. *Applause*

When we ourselves as firefighters in the UK and in Spain are seeing our wages attacked, our pensions attacked, our jobs destroyed by exactly the same crisis that throws people out on the streets. So we see the link between what is happening to the most vulnerable people in terms of homelessness and our job to deliver a humanitarian service. As far as I'm concerned, delivering a humanitarian service does not involve kicking people out on the street. Some chief fire officers would do well to remember that. You know Penny Mordaunt launched an enquiry into whether firefighters on strike were upholding the values of the fire and rescue service. I tell you what, I'm rather on the side of the Merseyside brigade committee or Roberto Rivas in Spain, and the Fire Brigades Union across the country here than on the side of this chief fire officer or

any other chief fire officer who wants to assist people, kicking poor people out on to the street so that they can sleep there as part of people paying for the crisis that the bankers caused. *Applause*

It is a testament to our members in Merseyside that actually in order to do this, the chief fire officer has had deliberately to bypass Fire Brigades Union members and go to non-members. But I think it was right that these sorts of things are going to emerge again. We've had issues in relation to protesters about Palestine, we've had accusations which we were able to address in relation to housing protesters in London. But these issues are going to arise as people protest, as homelessness gets worse. And we are going to have to take a stand on it. So I would really urge people to take this discussion on to your fire stations and ask people where they stand, because we don't want to wait until it happens; we want people to have decided in advance: we will not be cooperating with any chief fire officer who wants to use us as an agency of the police or the bailiffs. We rescue people, not banks! *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

I now put emergency resolution 6 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That's *CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY*.

We are carrying on with business, we are on paragraph G16, G17, G18, G19. Up you come, thank you.

BRO RICHARD WILLIAMS (Staffordshire):

Thank you, president. I just wanted to put on record the tremendous efforts of the membership team at head office and all the work they do, because we know our members move address, change their details, they fail to tell us all this information, but when we contact Anna and her team down there, they do a fantastic job. I just want to make sure that is recognised. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

I will certainly take the opportunity to pass that on to those staff at head office who do a brilliant job, all of them. Paragraph G20, G21, G22, G23, G24, G25, G26. I am now on Section D Pensions. Paragraph D1, Dave, yes? Andy too.

BRO DAVE CHAPPELL (Devon and Somerset):

Sorry, conference, I thought we wouldn't get here today. So obviously the big issue for us to discuss, and it's already here on the order paper, is about the latest on our long dispute over the 2015 pension scheme. But there are other issues that a lot of us (and I include myself in this to some extent) have not noticed coming in under the radar. Some of it is contained in the first two sections here, D1 and D2. On D1 it's just the question about when are we going to get more information on Part 2 of the settlement that we have been promised for years for our RDS members? This is the compensation that was not paid but is actually for not having access to the pension scheme as opposed to the other unequal treatment in relation to annual leave and sickness. What would have been really good is for that compensation to be there at the point that people could have opted to go into the modified scheme, and they would have been able to use it offset some of the contributions. It has not happened, but we keep being told that this is in the offing at some point. So where is Part 2 of the settlement?

On the commutation, again please an update.

THE PRESIDENT:

Can I just ask to do paragraphs one at a time, please, because there may well be someone else who wishes to speak.

BRO DAVE CHAPPELL (Devon and Somerset):

Right, that's D1.

THE PRESIDENT:

D1. Anybody else on D1? No, OK.

BRO DAVE CHAPPELL (Devon and Somerset):

D2 on the commutation, it's just to say what's happening there? We're told that that is still waiting for court decision on that. That's just a question.

But one that's not on here at all but we do need to pick up under pensions is that there was a whole raft of changes that came in in July 2013 which many of your members (if they are in the 1992 Firefighters Pension Scheme) will have come a cropper under. That relates to the change in definition of pensionability. If you're not aware of it, then you will probably soon become aware of it as people get their pensions assessments. In effect, what has happened is that the definition of what is pensionable has changed, and fire authorities now have a discretion to make temporary payments or promotions pensionable or not at all. That is already the situation under the 2006 and the 2015 scheme. So any temporary promotions and temporary payments may not have any pensionability attached to them at all. But if they do have

a pensionability applied (and that is down to the fire authority) then the new vehicle will be an APB (additional pension benefit) which is very similar to the CPD payment, which as all of us know who used to get long service leave, it pays a lot less.

In fact, the difference (just to give you an example) one of our members who got his pension assessment who was looking at getting a temporary group manager job with flexi-duty, and he thought his pension by virtue of doing this temporary role would have been increased by £4,000 a year actually went up £300 as a result. So it's large amounts of money involved for the individuals. We think there's quite a lot of confusion over it. That's because the Statutory Instrument that came in in 2013 appeared to treat flexible duty allowance different from other temporary payments. It's open to a certain amount of interpretation either way. But we really do need some guidance on it.

The union did put out a circular in June 2013 which referred briefly to this change, but it said that further advice would follow. No disrespect to Sean, who's had much more to do and there clearly has not been the time to give to it, but we do need to really address this. We've got a lot of members, as they are coming up for retirement suddenly finding that their pension estimates are not turning out to be what they thought they were going to be. I would imagine people in every brigade in the country will be affected somehow. Thanks.

THE PRESIDENT:

Fancy this one, Sean?

BRO SEAN STARBUCK (national officer):

Thanks for that, Dave, I think! I'll do the D1 first about the RDS modified scheme. The RDS modified scheme has been a long-running challenge we've had and it's one of the successes we've had. We've probably introduced through negotiation and through the hard work of our solicitors and members pushing for it as well probably the best pension scheme in the fire service. Unfortunately it is closed.

The compensation issue you're talking about, for not being able to join, I've got to me at a bit of a loss there, Dave. I'm not really sure what you're asking me. I'm not sure if you're asking me about the J4 issue which was for firefighters who couldn't join and were injured on duty, which has been superseded by part of the scheme which now allows people to have an ill health retirement whether or not they're in the scheme. I'm not really clear what you're asking because I'm not aware of any other compensation for people who couldn't join the scheme. The choice is you join the scheme or you don't join the scheme.

On D2, the commutation, unfortunately I'm going to be as vague as you expect me to be on this because we have been pushing this really hard. We've been representing over 6,000 retired members and we've been contacted by a lot of ex-police officers as well around the commutation issue. All I can say, the only thing I am really safe to say, is that we're very confident in our position. We've put together a good case. If we win it's going to be very expensive and it's holding the Government Actuary's Department and DCLG to account. The result is expected very shortly and we're preparing for the result. But I can't say any more than that, Dave. That's why we have been really vague on the issues.

I know a lot of people have been very frustrated, saying it's taken a long time. It does take a long time. We're talking about a lot of money and we expect the Government Actuary's Department to appeal because we know we're right and we know our arguments are right as well.

On the amendment order, yes, I'll put my hands up to that. I never put anything about the amendment order and that was around pensionable pay; it was about getting rid of other rules of the pension scheme as well. I did put circulars out on pensionable pay. What people have got to realise about the pensionable pay issue is that there are other ways you can make sure that if you did have a higher wage and you weren't within your last three years you can take a split pension, and it's important that people do understand a split pension. But what I've got to do, and I'm going to fire this back at you as well, one thing you can't accuse us of is not putting out information, because we have put out a lot of information. I will trawl back and find information we've put out on the amendment order. I will put something else out, Dave, if people have missed it or people don't understand exactly what it means to them.

On the pensionable pay issue fire authorities have got the discretion. You've got to be absolutely clear, though, that if you had any temporary promotion before July 2013 you should be in a position where it is deemed pensionable.

BRO DAVE CHAPPELL (Devon and Somerset):

Can I just add, Sean, about the issue he is not sure what I was asking about. It's dead simple. When the first financial compensation was made, the one organised through Popularis, it was made clear that that was only for part of the compensation. Everybody who is eligible for that is expecting a second payment. The payment is supposed to be for the second element in that. In my brigade they reckon it will be at least as much as the first payment, which as you know, depending on the level of cover somebody had and how many years they were in, was going to be around £700 or £800 payment. So we are told there is another payment that's coming.

THE PRESIDENT:

Any time you fancy just wandering up to the rostrum, just feel free to do so! We always like to hear you, Dave. Magnificent, truly magnificent!

BRO SEAN STARBUCK (national officer):

What I've got to say is the part of the RDS challenge I was dealing with was around pensions. There was no compensation involved in the pension scheme element of it. The outcome was there's a pension scheme, we've negotiated it, the outcome to that was you joined it or you didn't. There was no compensation involved with that element of it.

THE ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:

Conference, we don't want issues that are raised from the floor of conference to go unanswered. There's a little bit of confusion on this one and I appreciate that Dave's not getting up again because I think he can see that conference doesn't want time taken up. We will discuss the issue with Dave outside of session and if needs be we will find a way to come back under a different paragraph.

I do wonder if the issue is related to the terms and conditions part of the part-time workers' settlement. We'll clarify that and, as I say, we'll find a way to wangle some words in under a different paragraph if needs be, to address the point. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Failing us being able to wangle something in under a different paragraph, what we'll do is we'll report the issue to your executive council members who will report back to you in a right and proper manner, maybe even a paper on it. Thank you very much.

Right, we're on resolution 42 Firefighter Pension Schemes – Tax Implications to be moved by Lancashire and the executive council support. Steve.

Resolution 42 – FIREFIGHTER PENSION SCHEMES – TAX IMPLICATIONS Conference is concerned at the HMRC tax implication facing a member who suffers a delay in obtaining their full ‘ill health’ pension entitlement to commute 25% of their pension, due to delays in the IQMP appeal process.
HMRC technical page RPSM09104130 states that the lump sum payment must meet the following condition: ‘The lump sum is paid within an 18 month period starting 6 months before and 12 months after the member becomes entitled to the lump sum’. Therefore, payments outside of these time limits are liable to tax.
This issue was highlighted following a 52 year old Member with 28 years pensionable service, facing a 55% tax demand on a part of their pension commutation, having successfully appealed against the initial IQMP decision to reject an ‘ill health retirement’.
Conference calls upon the Executive Council to instigate an investigation to ascertain the extent of the problem, and if deemed necessary, raise the matter with all relevant bodies to seek to address the issue.
LANCASHIRE

BRO STEVE HARMAN (Lancashire):

President, conference, you'll have noticed on the agenda that Lancashire has two resolutions in relation to pensions, both relating to difficulties our members have faced in obtaining their rightful pensions when they have had to leave the fire service due to an illness or an injury. I've split the two resolutions to hopefully avoid confusion, although there is obviously a link. Although there are numerous HMRC tax implications relating to our pension schemes, this resolution is not about tax avoidance; it's not about tax evasion, or chief fire officers attempting to retire and then be reinstated; it's nothing to do with that.

This resolution is specifically looking at a tax implication a member of ours recently faced when, through no fault of his own, due to delays in the IQMP process he faced paying a 55% tax bill on a large proportion of the commutation if he chose to commute the full 25%. The circumstances were as follows. Our member was over 50 years old and had served over 25 years' pensionable service, so irrespective of any potential illness or injury, as a member of the 1992 he was eligible to retire with a reduced pension under the rule 75. However, at the age of 52 and with over 28 years' service, having been extremely ill for a prolonged period of time, the service deemed that our member would not regain full fitness in the foreseeable future, and with our member's agreement the case was referred to the IQMP to assess for eligibility for an ill-health pension.

As seems to be all too common, the IQMP rejected our member's right to an ill-health pension stating that he did not believe that our member's illness was permanent (which I'm addressing in the next resolution). With FBU assistance our member appealed what we believed was an unjust decision. In the meantime, as our member was on half pay in line with the Grey Book and this had already been extended, he

now faced no pay and no pension pending the appeal, and no prospect of returning to work. It was at this point that the service issued 90 days’ notice that the contract was to be terminated on capability, albeit the appeal was still pending. If the dismissal had gone ahead, dependent on legal challenges obviously, there was a risk that the pension would have been deferred until 60. So our member took the decision to take early retirement which allowed a maximum commutation of 2.25 times his pensionable pay.

The key reason that our member appealed against the IQMP rejection of the ill-health pension was that he wanted to commute the full 25%. It took over 12 months for the medical board to hear the appeal, but they eventually found in our member’s favour overturning the IQMP’s decision.

Now here comes the problem. Having won the appeal, our member informed the service that he now wished to commute the full 25% commutation. As I said, this was his primary reason for appealing in the first place. It was at this point that our member was informed that in line with HMRC guidance, blah blah blah blah, due to the delay in the IQMP process, which had taken over 12 months, the remaining lump sum would now be taxed at 55%. So he just wanted to claim the rest of his commutation. This meant that because of an incorrect decision of the IQMP he faced a £27,000 tax bill if he wanted to commute what was rightfully his in the first place because of a misguided IQMP decision.

The resolution is simply asking the EC to look at this, and if there is a way we’ll have to go through the NJC, through the CLG, they’ll have to then get on to HMRC. So I’m under no illusion it’s going to be an easy task, but if they could look at this, because if it could happen to this member it could happen to anybody. Support the resolution. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

Thank you, Steve. Is there a seconder for that? *Formally*

Speakers? The executive council support. Sean.

BRO SEAN STARBUCK (national officer):

I know the executive council are supporting, but I do think we need to just look at this, because also I looked at the technical page, blah-di-blah whatever it was, all the numbers that Steve put in his resolution, and the HMRC guidance was quite clear. It wasn’t until I’d spoken to Steve that I realised how this person got caught in this way because in the majority of cases the HMRC issue protects people from this. What it actually says is that the timescale runs from when the member is actually entitled to the lump sum. The situation developed because this person got his lump sum earlier by taking the rule of 75rule 75 rather than wait and see the outcome of the IQMP. So that brings up two issues. The first issue, and it’s one which Steve is going to hopefully cover later on as well, is the amount of time it takes an IQMP to look at issues which cause this. The other one we need to consider is if somebody does use this route to protect themselves against getting a deferred payment, they’ve got to be aware that the HMRC time limit starts when they take the rule of 75, not when the IQMP actually decides at a later date, if they do, that they are entitled to a pension.

So we will look at this. I don’t expect there to be many cases where this happens, but I will put something out to brigade officials. When I put something out, please respond because if I find that it is a common issue then we’ll have to look at it as more of a priority. If not, I’ll discuss this and see how we can take it forward.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks for that, Sean. I now put resolution 42 to the vote. The executive council support. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That is *CARRIED*.

Paragraph D3, D4. Resolution 41 Firefighter Pension Schemes – IQMP Process from Lancashire. Steve, part 2. The executive council support.

Resolution 41 – FIREFIGHTER PENSION SCHEMES – IQMP PROCESS
Conference is concerned at the lack of consistency of the Firefighter pension Schemes ‘Independent Qualified Medical Practitioner’ assessment process and in particular, the definition of ‘permanent’ in relation to the requirement for an injury or illness to be deemed ‘permanent’.

Conference calls upon the Executive Council to instigate an investigation to ascertain the extent of the problem, and if deemed necessary, raise the matter with all relevant bodies to seek to address the issue.

LANCASHIRE

BRO STEVE HARMAN (Lancashire):

President, conference, following on from resolution 42, in simple terms this resolution is now asking conference to consider the lack of consistency when IQMPs have been determining the issue of permanency of an illness or an injury when considering eligibility to the ill-health pension. In the worst case scenarios this has left members facing capability dismissals and in other cases members have found themselves with no pay and no pension, awaiting the outcome of the appeal against the IQMP decisions to reject an ill-health pension. The worst case for us, we’ve had one appeal that took getting on for three years.

By the very nature of serious illness and injuries, it is likely that our members will have been on sick leave for extended periods of time, so they will already be on half pay or no pay in accordance with the terms of the Grey Book. With the fire authorities facing such savage budget cuts, extension to the duration of full or half pay is getting less likely.

Many brigade officials will have experience of representing members at their appeals against IQMP decisions, having had an IQMP determine that a member’s illness or injury is not permanent within the definition of the IQMP’s guidance. Paragraph 3.7 of this guidance states: “A fire authority shall have regard on whether the disablement will continue until a person’s normal pension age”, ie 55 in the 1992 scheme. Paragraph 3.8 goes on to state: “Likelihood of permanence for the purpose of this scheme is based on ordinary balance of probabilities applicable in civil cases.” In other words, the question to be answered is whether there is a bet of an even chance that the person concerned will remain disabled, and it goes on to say as well: “An individual would not normally be expected to be considered permanently unfit unless all the appropriate treatment options available to the member had been exhausted without success.”

I’ll now go on to just two examples of when the process has failed our members in Lancashire. As I mentioned earlier in resolution 42, although the member in this case eventually won his appeal, he was initially refused an ill-health pension by the IQMP on the grounds of permanency. This was despite the fact that the member was over 52, he was nearer 53 years old and all sides except the IQMP agreed that he was obviously not going to get back to operational fitness. It’s worth noting that in this case if our member had not been over 50 with 25 years’ service, or had been in the 2006 scheme, then he would have faced a capability dismissal with no fallback position, and his pension being deferred to 60.

The second case I want to highlight is a Lancashire member who is suffering from cancer as we speak. This member has been rejected for an ill-health pension by the IQMP and he is now awaiting the outcome of the appeal, which was a couple of weeks ago. Despite having battled cancer for over five years, despite having gone through chemotherapy, radiotherapy, stem cell therapy, which has resulted in him being unable to work for the last three years, and despite the fact that they simply don’t know whether he will regain enough fitness to return to any available firefighter roles in the foreseeable future, the IQMP took the decision (which it could be argued is correct within the terms of the guidance) that all available treatment had not been exhausted as he could, on the balance of probabilities, make a full recovery before he is 55.

We all hope our member makes a full recovery, but in the meantime, at this time when he is most vulnerable – having had his full pay extended and his half pay extended on more than one occasion by the fire authority – he is now on no pay and no pension, with little chance of returning to operational duties in the foreseeable future.

This is causing our member and his family tremendous stress at a time when he should be concentrating on trying to get better. If the appeal fails (which we really hope it doesn’t), this will leave the fire authority in the difficult position of leaving our member on the books as a firefighter on no pay, hoping that he will eventually return to fitness, or moving to a capability dismissal. Surely this is not the intent of the pension scheme. After all, under K1 of the pension scheme the fire authority does have the right to review a case within ten years if it is believed that a retired member has returned to fitness. You’ll not be surprised that there will be nobody happier than our member if he could return to fitness and return to operational duties, even after retirement he would bite the hand off for that.

Although medical opinions must have an element of subjectivity when determining permanency up to 55 or up to 60, and I assume that forecasting the future in medical issues is an inexact science, following the miraculous recovery last year of Wilko Johnson out of Dr Feelgood who had been diagnosed with terminal pancreatic cancer, as he has now thankfully made a full recovery from the diagnosis of a terminal illness, what does permanent on the balance of probabilities actually mean? If Wilko Johnson’s recovery was now used as case law, a member of the pension scheme would have to physically die before being deemed eligible on the grounds of permanency! Basically, if it’s a cancer situation, if it’s not deemed terminal, can they go down the route of permanency?

As in the previous resolution this resolution again asks that the extent of the problem is investigated, and then if possible raised with the relevant bodies. Again, I assume it’s going to be the NJC, the CLG etc to lobby to get greater clarification for IQMPs and actually implement the true intent of the pension scheme where our members fall ill and have to leave the service. I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

Thank you, Steve. Does that have a seconder?

BRO MATT LAMB (Shropshire):

President, conference, I am seconding Lancashire’s resolution 41. We had an RDS member who fell down the stairs at the firehouse wearing breathing apparatus on a refresher course. It caused him a back injury. It’s been a pretty long and difficult case. We’ve had plenty of support from the union. I’d just like to put on the record a special thanks to Dave Limer for his advice and guidance as well.

Most of the problems have been caused by erratic decisions made by three IQMPs. The first IQMP responded by saying that it didn't need his permission to retire. This was because he could access his pension due to his age. But our member's an RDS firefighter and he needs an IQMP to access an ill-health pension, clearly demonstrating that the IQMP didn't understand the purpose of what he was being asked. The second one, which is more pertinent to Steve's case, is he eventually got referred to a second IQMP. His verdict was even more concerning. At first glance it looked like a bit of a victory. He saw that the injury was 100% attributable to falling down the stairs. But under the question of permanence there's a footnote explaining the question and that footnote says: "Permanent means that at the time when the question arises for decision the disablement seems likely to be permanent or will continue at least to normal pension age, ie 55 for members of the FPS 1992 or 60 for members of the NFPS 2006."

Bearing in mind that our member by this time was 61, he ticked no it wasn't permanent. So we questioned on what basis did he say it wasn't permanent. He said it was looking at the age of 65. So we questioned that again and said why have you gone to 65 instead of, as in the footnote, 55 or 60 and he said it's not permanent regardless of age. So essentially, our member would have to die before he could prove it was permanent. Also worrying about this particular IQMP, his response to the brigade was headed "Retirement from the LGPS"! It didn't inspire confidence, I have to say.

The third IQMP, which was only last week, is better news. He's found that the qualifying injury was actually 50% rather than 100%, but he has said that it's permanent which is moving in the right direction. So eventually we have finally got a result for our member. But this is quite a straightforward simple case. He fell down the stairs at work on a breathing apparatus course in the firehouse; he hurt his back. This happened in 2008. The brigade's internal processes – two rounds of IDRP, both going to appeal, and referral to the Pensions Ombudsman has meant that our member has suffered for seven years with a debilitating injury will having to fight every step of the way for a just settlement. Most of the delays have been caused by erratic decisions and misguided information from the three IQMPs. Please support this resolution. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

Thank you. That's open for debate, conference? Sean.

BRO SEAN STARBUCK (national officer):

Thanks. The EC are supporting this resolution, but I want to take this opportunity to reiterate how important it is that officials do come along to the medical appeals course which we put on, because this does give a real good insight into how we should be dealing with medical appeals. We're currently looking to see if there's any last minute amendments we need to make to it because of the implications in the 2015 scheme. We don't think there are. We will be slotting one of them into the education programme for the latter part of the year. So please come along and do it. You really need to do this before you do any medical appeals.

Following the Martin Marion case, the FBU were involved in the guidance document which has been discussed by both the speakers who came forward. We're on the third version, and it's well worth a recap because it does give us a consistent approach as to how we should be dealing with medical appeals. The guidance is quite clear, but unfortunately one of the problems is the IQMPs don't seem to understand their role, and the fire authorities don't seem to understand the role either. But what we have to do is make sure we understand and we have a consistent approach. That at least gives us an opportunity to put a good case together.

One thing we need to be aware of is that there are other ways we can challenge it as well. Only when you look through the guidance do you see that there is an initial challenge which we probably always overlook and it's one we should be looking at. We don't have to wait for an IQMP to come back and give their verdict, we can actually make an initial submission to the IQMP, rather like in a grievance you wouldn't wait to hear what the outcome of the grievance is; you'd make a submission at that point. When you look at the guidance, it shows you how you can do that as well.

I'd like to thank Ian Murray and Dave Limer for the help they've given us putting together this course. Anybody who has been on it sees that it does give a real good insight into dealing with medical appeals.

Issues around IQMPs are not going to go away and we're going to have to try to put them right. The issues are around independence, they are around permanence, they are also around consistent approaches. So I will do an investigation. I need to find what the scale of the issue is really, because some of these horror stories that have just come up around timescales, I need to look at and then we need to see how we can take it forward. But we will put something out. Please, like the last resolution, respond because we need a full response to make sure that we've got the whole weight of the problem.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thank you, Sean. I now put resolution 41 Firefighter Pension Schemes – IQMP Process to the vote. The executive council support. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That is *CARRIED*.

It always amazes me, conference, how some of our lay officials are brilliant and specialised and are superb at putting over the pensions message. I noted Steve Harman's two brilliant contributions today and wondered why he was absolutely sensational in both of those contributions. I just found out he's about to be a pensioner on Saturday! Steve, you have my regards. *Applause*

That's if the government let you! You have my regards, and if I don't get the chance this week, thank you very much for everything and all your contributions over the years on behalf of this union. A well-earned sabbatical and I know that you'll not be lost from the movement.

We are now on paragraph D5, paragraph D6, D7, D8, D9, D10. I now call emergency resolution 1 Firefighter Fitness and Pensions to be moved by the executive council and seconded by Lancashire.

Emergency resolution 1 – FIREFIGHTER FITNESS AND PENSIONS
Conference notes some recent important developments on fitness, which strengthen the union's case on pensions, notably the first meeting of the Joint Working Group (JWG) on Firefighter Fitness on 31 March 2015. The Working Group received a presentation by Dr James Bilzon on 'Occupational fitness standards for operational UK fire and rescue service (FRS) personnel', which reinforced the importance of fitness standards to ensure that all firefighters are fit enough to safely and effectively perform all the necessary requirements of their role.

This report highlights a number of points that support the FBU's stance in the ongoing pension campaign. He reiterated the conclusion of his most recent report into operational fitness standards for UK fire and rescue services: 'firefighters with an aerobic capacity below an occupational fitness standard of 42.3 mL.kg⁻¹.min⁻¹ would not be guaranteed to be safe and effective in their ability to complete necessary roles within their occupation. Although this does not greatly differ from the current fitness standard of 42 mL.kg⁻¹.min⁻¹, it does indicate that the lower VO₂ max standard of 35 mL.kg⁻¹.min⁻¹ for continuation of work with remedial training amongst operational firefighters is potentially unsafe for the majority of firefighters.'

Conference notes that this undermines DCLG's suggestion that 100% of firefighters can remain operationally fit until age 60 by using the 35 VO₂ standard. The research supports the FBU's case that the majority of firefighters are unlikely to be able to maintain their operational fitness beyond age 55.

Conference does not accept the recommendation that a lower fitness standard of 36.8 mL.kg⁻¹.min⁻¹ be used for incident command roles.

Conference notes that as far back as 1988, the FBU took part in a joint working party on appointment provisions and supported a recommendation that all applicants to the fire service should have an aerobic capacity of 45mL.kg⁻¹.min⁻¹ or greater. The union subsequently took part in the research that led to the introduction of the National Firefighters Selection Test (NFST).

- Conference endorses the recommendations made by the Executive Council on 30 April 2015:**
- ***On the need for an occupational fitness standard for all firefighters in the UK***
 - ***That this standard should be based around the recommended fitness standard of 42.3 VO₂ for all firefighting roles***
 - ***To immediately explore the extent of employers' duty of care responsibilities in relation to this and challenge as appropriate***
 - ***That 'during career' tests and standards must be objectively and clearly linked to the requirements of the job***
 - ***To explore the issue of differing fitness levels for firefighting roles and other roles in more detail and agree a position in the future***
 - ***To support the request from Firefit to involve members in the selected brigades***
 - ***To communicate this position to members***
 - ***For FBU officials to formally meet with the Firefit chair to discuss their work in more detail***
 - ***To ensure that all ongoing work is closely monitored and any decision is revisited if necessary in the future.***

Conference calls for further work to be undertaken by the union to ensure that all firefighters can safely and effectively perform all of the necessary requirements of their role. This work should be part of a continuing campaign to develop and defend professional standards in relation to all aspects of our service including appropriate pensions arrangements.

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

President, conference, again I think in terms of some of the comments we made earlier, this for us is an important strategic discussion. It's about pensions, but in our view it's about much wider issues as well about where this union stands and positions itself in terms of shaping the fire service for the future and establishing ourselves firmly as the professional voice within the fire and rescue service.

The executive council has brought this to your attention because of some significant developments around fitness matters in the past month or so. It also linked clearly, and you will all understand the arguments, around our ongoing pensions campaign. We mentioned earlier the evidence based approach that we had to defending firefighters' pensions, an approach which allowed us to run rings round government, chief fire officers, civil servants, anyone who was put up against us. We made the specific nature of our occupation one of the cornerstones of trying to defend our pensions. We explained in that context that trying to force firefighters to work longer isn't a matter of willingness or unwillingness; it's a matter of achievability. The combination of the physical nature of the job, combined with the inevitable decline in human fitness related to age means that most firefighters, in our view, cannot work safely until 60. I have to say that some of the discussions we have had with government on that issue have been almost surreal, because you talk to anyone in a pub or a supermarket or whatever and they get the idea that fitness declines with age; you talk to a government minister or a civil servant in the pensions team at DCLG and they don't know what you're talking about in relation to fitness declining as people get older.

The government can dress it up in any way it wants, but the facts are undeniable. We've drawn those facts from the best international research available, and we've put firefighters' health and safety at the centre of our concerns. That's not just about the safety of our members, it's about the ability of our members to therefore perform their task safely and effectively, which also clearly has safety implications for members of the public as well. Fitness for the occupation has been central to our case. The evidence that we've submitted has never once been successfully challenged by the Westminster government throughout this process and throughout this long campaign. It remains the bedrock of our case on pensions. That's why we've brought this resolution to conference.

You will be aware of the joint working group on firefighter fitness which was established and is chaired by the English chief fire and rescue adviser. The first meeting of that group took place on 31 March this year. It was attended on behalf of the FBU by national officer Sean Starbuck and EC member Andy Noble. The working group heard a presentation from Dr. James Bilzon on occupational fitness standards for operational UK fire and rescue service personnel. Dr. Bilzon is the head of department of health at Bath University and one of the leading authorities in the study of health, fitness, safety and the performance of people in physically demanding roles, with a lot of experience across those fields in relation to fire service roles and other physically demanding roles.

His presentation and the ongoing research reinforced the importance of firefighter fitness. His report clearly stated:

“Firefighters with an aerobic capacity below an occupational fitness standard of 42.3 mL.kg⁻¹.min⁻¹ would not be guaranteed to be safe and effective in their ability to complete necessary roles within their occupation.”

So the point is guaranteed and there is clearly a debate to be had around the question of VO₂ max and the use of that in measuring fitness.

He went to add that:

“Adopting the lower VO₂ max of VO₂ 35 for continuation of work with remedial training amongst operational firefighters is potentially unsafe for the majority of firefighters.”

So potentially unsafe at a standard of 35 VO₂ max. These standards are very similar to the ones that we have been discussing, and the evidence supports our case in relation to the ability of firefighters to continue in operational fitness beyond the age of 55. By the way, it completely undermines the argument that has been made by DCLG, by the last two fire ministers there, that 100% of firefighters can continue to work until 60 if they can remain operational at VO₂ 35. In other words, DCLG are attempting to adopt a standard which the experts in the field say is potentially unsafe for the majority of firefighters, and that's the only way in which they attempt to make their case about working until 60.

Dr Bilzon concludes that there should be an occupational fitness standard for all firefighters in the UK. Secondly, he said that this standard should be based around that recommended fitness standard of 42.3 VO₂ max for all firefighting roles. Let us be clear, this standard has not been plucked out of the air. The basis on which this work has been conducted has been explained through the working group and in discussions with officials of the union. It is based on work that has been in place for many years, as I will come on to. The tasks that have been used to develop that standard are not extreme tasks; they are not conducted in heat; they are certainly not conducted in extreme heat. They include hose running, casualty handling, equipment handling and stair climbing. In other words, tasks which were identified by operational fire personnel – predominantly our members – as being bread and butter firefighting tasks. This is consistent with the argument that we have made.

There is some confusion, I believe, around the question of measuring aerobic fitness. Let's be clear, it's not a new thing. As long ago as 1988 (I was there and a number of people in this hall were there at the conference where it was discussed) conference endorsed what was then an Orange Book on the joint working party on appointment and promotion provisions that included a fitness standard of 45 VO₂ max. So the discussion around VO₂ max is not new; it's been around for a substantial period of time.

You will know also that our officials were involved in the trials for the national firefighter selection tests which are also based upon practical tests of firefighting tasks, reflecting the real job rather than simply stopwatch tests carried out in the gym.

You will know that our officials have recently attended FireFit conferences and put the views and concerns of the Fire Brigades Union at a number of those conferences, where similar research is also underway and has been underway, and where again a fitness standard of 42 VO₂ max has been promoted and argued for. We know that in relation to international studies there are similar fitness tests in existence in the United States and elsewhere, with trade union and in some cases endorsed and promoted and effectively owned by the trade union.

So let's be clear about the impact of this in relation to pensions. You will recall that Tony Williams, in his report for DCLG, advocated a fitness standard and he used 42 VO₂ max as the standard in his investigation. In relation to that, it was that evidence that allowed us to demonstrate very clearly that large numbers of firefighters would not be able to maintain fitness to the pension age proposed by central government. Yet most governments have now imposed a normal pension age of 60 with no evidence to back it up. They have removed all previous ring fencing protection and simply expect firefighters to be able to reach 60, maintain fitness and who cares about the consequences! We know that maintaining operational fitness is a huge problem for many of our members as they age into their 50s. We've highlighted the threat that is there to firefighters who cannot do so. The question is: why does this matter now? Why does it matter going forward?

The joint working group initiated by DCLG on which we sit is cracking on with that work. The executive council believes there is a strong basis to push for professionally based fitness standards across the service which will strengthen our arguments first of all in relation to pensions, but also in relation to a whole host of other matters which you can begin to think about. If we have properly based standards in relation to fitness that firefighters are required to maintain, then we make the case for other professionally based, evidence based standards in other areas of our work – crewing levels, safety equipment, operational guidance and so on. So this is about bread and butter issues affecting the safety of our members being able to perform their occupation professionally and safely.

So to influence this research we believe we need to participate fully in it. We cannot rely on secondhand reports. FBU members and officials need to be on the inside. This resolution puts a marker down in relation to that. It sanctions that further work.

We are aware that there are a number of areas of considerable concern which we're very alive to. We are aware of the implications for our women members and women firefighters if the government and employers don't take account of our concerns. Some research, including some argued by Dr Bilzon and Dr Williams, has argued for a lower standard of fitness for officers. Again, we can see some of the risks in relation to that point, particularly in relation to pensions matters. We also are aware of people within the fire service who argue for different standards for retained firefighters. We're also well aware that in many parts of the country there are already different recruitment standards in terms of fitness in relation to retained firefighters. It is hard to find any justification, professionally or in terms of safety, for those sorts of approaches. The executive council believes that is the wrong approach. We can't afford to dodge this issue. We think it is part and parcel of this union playing its role as the key professional voice of firefighters, and indeed of the fire and rescue service arguing for a safe, professional and effective fire and rescue service. I urge you to support the motion. I move. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

Thank you. Lancashire. We said goodbye too soon, Steve! Looking good, looking good.

BRO STEVE HARMAN (Lancashire):

Conference, I am seconding emergency resolution 1. I'd like to thank Alan before for his kind words. I have been brigade secretary for nearly 14 years now, for reasons I can't fathom out. It has affected my own personal fitness, especially since I realised if I kicked off my desk in the union office (because my chair is on wheels) I can get right across to the kettle without standing up!

Contracts of employment, pensions, safe working practices, health and safety, they're all linked together and the jigsaw pieces have to fit. On the issue of fitness this is primarily an issue of safety, but it also have important implications for the pension schemes and in particular the current dispute. It is no good having a fitness standard on the basis of safety which then results in members not getting to their pension age due to the risk of dismissal or even worse, a standard that risks members suffering a medical emergency whilst at a job.

The key issue is what should the standard be? The studies now being quoted indicate around the VO₂ 42 mark. That's necessary for firefighters to undertake the more arduous physical demands in a safe fashion, so to accept a lower standard can only put our members at

risk. I think our members will support this proposal as they know only too well the potential physical demands of the role. That is provided that the necessary age related safeguards are contained within the pension schemes.

In regard to the pension dispute, as Matt said, the fitness standard now being quoted totally contradicts the government's position and supports the FBU's endeavours in this dispute. I ask you to support this resolution for two key reasons. One is to protect firefighter safety and the second is to support our campaign for a fair and viable pension scheme for the future. I second. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

That's open for debate. Can I have a show of hands as to speakers? Yes, please, yes please, yes please. Anyone else? Come to the rostrum.

BRO CAMERON MATTHEWS (Cambridgeshire):

President, conference, following three years of a well evidence-based campaign it's obvious to all of us there are serious concerns surrounding the ability to achieve the standards that are proposed, not least because we fully know that these tests are wholly discriminatory in nature, which is utterly unacceptable in the modern fire and rescue service. That said, we acknowledge there needs to be an appropriate form of occupational testing, not only for the health and safety of our members, but also to ensure that we can deliver a service to our communities. Given that we are in this serious and significant dilemma we do not feel that the resolution alone addresses these legitimate concerns. However, we accept that the EC may have considered these issues behind their resolution and therefore we demand some strong assurances before we can support any acceptance of such VO₂ measures.

So (1) how will we address the discriminatory nature of the submaximal testing and safeguard all our members? (2) What action will we take in response to the very likely mass failures of our members to be able to achieve the VO₂ standards and then end up progressing down the performance and capability processes? (3) What will be our response following the first unfair sacking of any member under such discriminatory testing? Of course, the last one is a rhetorical question. So what we ask for is a commitment surrounding these areas, that we may take cognisance of such assurances when we are making our decision and our vote. *Applause*

SIS HELEN TOOLEY (NWC):

President, conference, I am speaking in opposition to emergency resolution 1. First, let me make it clear we totally agree there needs to be a national, consistent approach to fitness standards for all firefighters of all ranks and role. However, we have grave concerns with signing up to this agreement that puts so much emphasis on VO2 max testing, which we know is discriminatory.

VO₂ max testing only takes into account one small part of a person's fitness required to be a firefighter and by agreeing to this standard, by the executive council's own admission, at least 80% of firefighters, our members, will not be able to reach 42.3 VO₂ max at over 55 years old, which would result in a loss of job and a loss of pension. We cannot deny that the general election has changed everything and we will be working to 60. We need to protect our members, and their jobs, and their pensions. The tests Bilzon carried out were only on a very small minority of people – 62 firefighters – 50 male, 12 female. That's 0.1% of our membership. We need a broader study that includes more firefighters – over 40, over 50 and up to 60 years old, more representative of our members before any judgement can be made.

There are many studies that compare direct job related tests and VO₂ max testing for occupational fitness testing. All have found that job related tests that accurately reflect the role are more representative of a person's ability to carry out that role than VO₂ max testing. As the general secretary said earlier, the executive council are here to represent all of its FBU members, and we can't let them gamble with our members' jobs and their pensions. Please think of your members and oppose this resolution. *Applause*

SIS DENISE CHRISTIE (Scotland):

President, comrades, we are opposing emergency resolution 1 Firefighter Fitness and Pensions. In Scotland we went from eight brigades to one since April 2013 and during that period we have been discussing with the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service the introduction of a single fitness policy. Previously we had brigades with no fitness policy or support to some with a VO₂ max pass of 28 and 35. This caused us concerns as we had one member from one area being penalised for capability with a VO₂ max of 34, and another member being allowed to stay on the run with a VO2 max level of 33 due to its legacy policy. We therefore had to embark on negotiating an interim fitness policy to cover every member in Scotland. This policy was based on fairness and included fitness support for those members who previously had none. The interim policy is a three year policy that came into force in 2014. This has allowed us to push for further fitness support which includes compulsory fitness training as part of our members' core duties. The interim three year policy gives us time to explore fully non-discriminatory ways to test a firefighter for fitness. These tests are to include exploring the benefits of drill ground assessments to test firefighter fitness rather than using a step test, bike, or treadmill with gas analysis.

The FireFit report is an interim report and has not been fully concluded, so we need to ask what is the rush to agree a fitness standard and test that is discriminatory towards age and gender? Comrades, we need further time to allow us to look at less discriminatory ways of testing a firefighter's fitness. By passing this resolution we are then allowing fire and rescue services to start the process of sacking our members on

grounds of capability. Of course we need a fitness standard that supports the health and well-being of our members, but the testing of that standard cannot be discriminatory. The resolution calls for further work to be undertaken by the union to ensure that all firefighters can safely and effectively perform all the necessary requirements for the rule. So let's get that work done first, before we agree a discriminatory standard. Let's come back to conference with the details of that work and have a debate that is fully informed and researched. To pass this resolution now is to give our employers carte blanche to get rid of our members on grounds of capability. Conference, I urge you to oppose. *Applause*

BRO PAT CARBERRY (LGBT):

President, conference, we are opposing emergency resolution 1. Apart from the concerns that have already been raised around the discriminatory nature of having a 42.3 applied on fitness, I also have to say there is a fundamental danger in conference and the FBU supporting and endorsing a specific fitness standard such as that. We are not talking about the future. Currently, we have members who are being processed through fitness policies and processed as a consequence of failing those fitness policies. I'm currently doing a number of representations and what we're starting to notice is members aren't just being dealt with under a fitness policy; they're also being done with under-performance. Where you have something like 42, under fitness the fitness policy would say yes, we'll give you remedial training and as long as you show improvement there will be no further sanction. However, under the performance policies, the performance policy says 42 is the fitness level that applies for our brigade; your failure to comply with that 42 level is a failure in performance; therefore it is legitimate to apply a sanction.

So to actually endorse a standard would be wholly unhelpful for officials going in doing representations to have employers turn round and say: actually, the FBU itself is saying 42 is OK; in fact, they are saying 42.3 is what they would apply. So on that basis I would encourage conference to oppose the emergency resolution. Thank you. *Applause*

BRO PAUL DRINKWATER (West Yorkshire):

Conference, president, I've actually got a degree in sport and I've been involved in VO2 max testing, so I know its massive limitations. The idea of fitness testing came up to reduce heart attacks of firefighters on duty. We've got it in West Yorkshire. Nobody so far has been dismissed on capability for failing the test, but just to my knowledge in the last 12-18 months we've had three firefighters who have had heart attacks despite being able to pass the fitness test.

A VO₂ max test is not a definitive test for cardiac health and we need to bear that in mind. What we should be pushing for is better occupational health standards and better testing of firefighters all round.

The idea of failing a fitness test and then being put under sanctions for capability puts our members under additional stress and opens them up to be sacked under competency. As I said, VO₂ max testing is a flawed process. There are many ways you can cheat it. You have a couple of cups of strong coffee. You could do the reverse VO₂ max protocol where you start with the hard effort and go to a softer effort. That gets higher standards. There are all different ways you can change and alter the results. I understand that we're looking at an occupational test based on a VO₂ max figure, so that's covered in a way.

Previous research that seems to be ignored now has shown that heavier, more muscular firefighters use less of the VO₂ max so therefore actually need less of it to perform any given task. Occupational competency, experience and stress levels can offset the need for higher VO₂ max. I'd never try to carry someone down a ladder that was a lot bigger than me. I wouldn't do it; I'd get some help. So I think we need to be looking at the standards and saying perhaps we need to be working more carefully and more safely all round.

Health screening is what is needed, not ever increasing VO₂ max standards disproportionately affecting female firefighters. We need some assurances that that will be considered. We've also got, as people have mentioned, appalling IQMP decisions keeping firefighters employed despite having compromised fitness. We've got heart attack victims in West Yorkshire who've come back to operational fitness despite the fact that they're 40% more likely than anyone else to have another heart attack – regardless of the treatment they've received; regardless of the fact that they've had a bypass. We seem to be able to conveniently ignore those facts.

So what we need to be looking at is protection and support, not capability dismissals. What fire authorities seem to be looking for, and chief fire officers, is a legally defensible capability dismissal based on a fitness standard, and I don't think we should be handing that to them on a plate. So we're not speaking against this, we're just looking for some acknowledgement of the concerns. *Applause*

A DELEGATE

Conference 2015, “discriminatory” is the word being used by all the other speakers. Why would we as a union want to go into any discussion with our employers on something that we already know is discriminatory? So let's push the boat and talk about job related tests, let's talk about all the things that involve being fit for the roles that we carry out. But let us not as a union go down the road of talking about a standard that we already know is discriminatory.

It's not just discriminatory to our female members; it's not just discriminatory to our older members. There are all sorts of reasons in all sorts of studies why VO₂ max standard may be discriminatory. We already know, sadly, sitting in this room that we now have to work until we're 60 whether we like it or not, irrespective of the denouement of this pensions campaign. What I'm saying to you today is do not support something that we're already accepting is going to be discriminatory before we even start detailed discussion. Let's do the detail, let's do the further research and then let's have a proper look at it. But do not, today, support something that has already got a line in it that we know is discriminatory. Please oppose the emergency resolution. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

Conference, due to time, this is the last speaker in this debate and then I will ask the general secretary to have a right of reply after this speaker. Please.

A DELEGATE (West Midlands):

Thanks for the time. I'll be very brief because it's been well debated already. Just a little bit of insight. In the West Midlands we've got a fantastic occupational health unit. They're very pro-firefighters and we've never had anyone dismissed or even considered being dismissed on fitness grounds. They've done a lot of research and we've been carrying out 42 testing for at least five/six, probably going on for seven/eight years, and we're having proper screening. They tell us at occupational health that they're ahead of any other occupational departments in the UK. I've had meetings as recently as last week regarding health screening. What they have told me – and these are experts in the field – is that the 42.3 on its own is a completely flawed system. In the West Midlands they don't just use the 42.3, they use two other measures. I can't go into detail because I'm no medical expert, but basically they also measure the oxygen output and also your muscular usage. They have also identified to me that 42.3 alone is discriminatory because certain races can be just as fit or fitter individuals. They use the example of an African sprinter with their muscle mass and the rest of it, but their VO₂ would be lower. I can't go into great detail, but all I can stress to you is our occupational health unit, who are incredibly pro the firefighters, has said that 42.3 on its own is completely flawed.

We broadly support the majority of this resolution, but on the grounds of the 42.3 and the message that will send back to some dodgy managers within the fire service, we will have to oppose this resolution.

THE PRESIDENT:

General secretary.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

President, conference, just taking up some of the points made there. I think Cameron, Mick and other speakers referred to discrimination within these tests and Cameron asked some specific questions. But I think we need first to address the question of discrimination and discriminatory testing because the truth is any test is discriminatory. The test discriminates between the people who pass the test and the people who do not pass the test. The question is whether there is an objective justification within the workplace for the need for that testing. Nobody would deny that this is a physically demanding occupation, and therefore in order to do it safely and effectively this union has long upheld the need to have safe occupational fitness standards within it, in order for our members to perform their function safely, and in order for them to perform safely for their colleagues and for the community. So if we accept that firefighting is a physically demanding occupation, there will inevitably be some people in the population who will not meet the standards for firefighting. That is simply a fact of life. There will be men who will not meet the standards for firefighting, and there will be women who will not meet the standards for firefighting. And there may indeed be differences between the proportions between the two sexes. That is the case. But that does not mean that what we have here is a standard built around what I presume is being suggested of sex discrimination. That is not the case.

So in terms of Cameron's questions: how do we address the discrimination? We do that by making sure that what we have is objective testing based upon occupational activity. I have to say, some of the examples that have been given by people opposing are not the discussions that are in hand. This is not based upon people being tested on treadmills; this is based upon people carrying out basic firefighting physical tasks and I listed them: hose carrying, equipment carrying, stair climbing and so on. The point, I think, has been missed. People seem to think that somebody has dreamed up the figure 42 VO₂ max and said there is the standard, let's develop some tests around that. In fact, that was specifically what was said by one of the speakers, that the tests had been designed to deliver 42 VO₂ max. That's completely incorrect, conference. It is completely the other way round. The tests were carried out based upon the firefighter tasks which were identified, and what the researchers found was that in the case of the majority of people, that delivered a VO₂ max of 42 or 42.3 or whatever the figure is. So we are getting hung up about a figure of 42.3 VO₂ max. Actually what we need to do is address the practical tests that were used in that, which are by the way almost identical (if not identical) to the national firefighters selection tests which this conference has already signed up to. I have to say, we would be in a bizarre position be endorsing that approach in relation to the entry into the service but saying we don't then support it in relation to this debate about fitness. If we then run, as the Fire Brigades Union, the professional voice of firefighters, against all that evidence, we put ourselves in a very difficult position.

It was claimed that there are all sorts of studies that rubbish the findings that we've reported to you here today. There are not. None of them have been presented to the executive council; none of them have been presented here today. People said we need to listen to the experts.

We have been engaged in discussions with experts in this field who are not necessarily anti-firefighter, or anti-women firefighters, as seemed to be presented by some speakers this afternoon. In terms of Cameron's questions, how we address that, we address that by basing the testing on an objective assessment of the physical tasks firefighters will need to undertake.

Again, I would hope that some of this had been reported back. Perhaps it has not been reported back, but in the discussions at the executive council there is no final position, and the resolution doesn't address any final position of how testing will be undertaken. The discussion at the joint working group in terms of fitness testing, for example, was that you may test a VO₂ max test. If people had a problem with that, you then go on to investigate that: is that some underlying issue, have they got a cold or whatever. You then go on to the drill ground tests. The drill ground tests produce exactly the same measure, but they are based on workplace type tests, which people have said today they don't have an issue with. So I have to say, I think there's an artificial difference and disagreement being created that is unnecessary. Nobody is about to sign this union up – because there is no endorsement of any standards in terms of that joint working group as yet. What we're saying is that we need to engage in that discussion, using scientific evidence, using the best research that we can find, as we have throughout this, and that's how we move forward.

In terms of Cameron's question about mass failures or unfairness – I think they're both the same question actually. Let's bear in mind, there are fitness policies in all around the country already that include capability and they haven't been done with our agreement. I fact, when we did our survey a whole host of policies were reported to the union, some of which seem to have been agreed at local level, some of which had been effectively, I presume, imposed without agreement. We challenge those as they go on. What we're saying is we are far better having a national discussion about that than what we've got at the present time, which is a hotch potch – every chief fire officer making it up as they go along on their own basis. We're saying we want national discussions and national standards, and that's the basis of the approach that the executive council is proposing.

In terms of Denise's comments about Scotland, let's be clear: it was made clear and was agreed by the Scottish region that no agreement would be reached in Scotland. If you think of some of the fitness levels that were being reported, those are the same ones that, if you take some of the expert advice, would put people at serious risk. How can this union be endorsing standards of anything within the fire service which we are advised would put people at risk? We wouldn't accept it in relation to equipment being put on the run. Why would we accept it in relation to people's fitness when the risk that is identified is the risk of sudden heart attack and death? Why would this union sign up to standards which experts say may put people in that position? It would be ludicrous, conference, to do so.

People mentioned the role of chief fire officers and employers. Let's be clear here, the employers nationally do not want any discussion on national fitness standards. Why? Because they want a free for all, they want a free for all where they can pick everyone off against each other. They want a free for all, by the way, so that they can adopt, as they do up and down the country in many parts of the country, a completely different standard when they are recruiting retained firefighters from wholetime firefighters. Lots of you know of that going on. How can we possibly justify, as a professional body, different standards for people simply because they work on a different fire station in the same brigade? That is ludicrous, conference, and we cannot be endorsing that approach.

It was raised the danger of endorsing any particular standard. I draw an analogy with a debate that's going on currently within the teaching profession. Traditionally, teachers have a degree and then a teaching qualification. What the last government has said what we need to do is we need to bring in all these other people to do teaching jobs and they have enforced that so that we now have in many of our classrooms unqualified teachers teaching our kids. I don't think that's a step forward. I support the teaching unions in their campaign for professional standards within teaching, because I think that gives our children in our schools the best education that they can get. But this government is seeking to undermine those professional standards. We're applying that same approach in relation to our profession which also has key safety issues where the result of failing to meet those standards is not simply that a kid ends up coming out of school not very well educated, but ends up with somebody dying as a result of a heart attack by not being fit enough.

People have raised the question of decent occupational health arrangements. Some are good and some in this fire service are appalling. This approach that the executive council is recommending to you gives us the best opportunity to challenge those who are failing to deliver decent occupational health standards in their fire and rescue services. To do otherwise actually weakens our case in relation to that issue.

So, comrades, what we're saying is no by any means that this is over. What we're saying is that this discussion with our employers is underway. If we are not part of it, it will go on without us and you will end up with a far worse position because we will have been excluded from that debate and those decisions will be made by CFA and DCLG and without the involvement of the Fire Brigades Union. Or we take the approach that we use our expertise. I tell you what, we can run rings all of those people, given the opportunity to do so in debate, in argument and in making the case. So we make that case within those discussions and we will not sign up to anything that creates increased risk for our members in terms of how they are going to be treated, in terms of the threats of capability and otherwise. But we've already identified that. You've made it a key feature of your pensions campaign for the past three years. We can't ignore that issue; it exists. The question is how do we go forward from there? We think we go forward by capturing that territory, making it the property of the Fire Brigades

Union and arguing the case for safe, professional and effective standards within the fire and rescue service across the UK without exception. That would apply in all parts of the UK – not brigade by brigade, not country by country but all across the UK. That’s the approach we want to adopt and that’s the approach that is set out in the resolution. Conference, support the resolution. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

OK, conference, we ran over time somewhat. I now put emergency resolution 1 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That is *CARRIED*.

Conference, at half past five (I think it will be delayed now until twenty to six) there is a Unite against Fascism fringe meeting the hotel. I would ask you all to go. It’s in memory of our former president Mick Shaw. Please make the effort to get there. Conference is adjourned until tomorrow morning.

Conference adjourned

MORNING SESSION

THE PRESIDENT:

Conference, come to order please. Take your seats. Thank you very much. I call upon Steve Shelton, chair of standing orders to give the standing orders report. Steve.

THE CHAIR OF STANDING ORDERS (Bro Steve Shelton):

Thank you. Good morning, president, good morning, conference. Please turn to your delegate list. Region 6 Nottinghamshire delete Alan Coates, insert Richard Jones. Region 13 Devon and Somerset (conference can now relax) delete Dave Chappell, insert Bob Walker. Please turn to your programmes of business, page 5 resolution 13 Devon and Somerset withdrawn. Page 9 executive council policy statement Health and Safety – Internal Arrangements, amendment 2 Shropshire withdrawn.

Conference, may I take this opportunity – and I hope you will join me – in wishing both Kevin Brown and Alan Chinshaw (known as “Joey” on the standing orders committee) very happy 55th birthdays. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

It’s not the business normally to mislead conference, but Kevin Brown isn’t 55, that’s for certain! Is the standing orders report agreed? *AGREED*.

Thank you. Conference, yesterday during my presidential address I happened to mention that I was expecting and hoping for some good news in Buckinghamshire with regard to our two sacked members, Tim Morley and Kieron Hall. I can say categorically and from the bottom of my heart it was good news. Both Tim Morley and Kieron Hall were offered their jobs back and full reinstatement. To be honest with you, as I said, that was down to some great work by members in Buckinghamshire, by the national officer, by everybody concerned in the union who had a hand in that. It’s my pleasure today to tell you that Tim Morley decided to take his job back. Kieron Hall had moved on. He has another job and doesn’t wish to come back to the fire service, but there are legal compensations, I believe, for Kieron Hall. Tim Morley, great comrade that he is, is in the room, or he was in the room. Could you stand up, Tim, if I can see you. There he is. *Applause*.

My suggestion to avoid sacking number two is get your hair cut and get a shave, Tim! And you, Paul! *Laughter*

OK, can I ask conference to turn to page 12 of the programme of business. I now call the executive council policy statement Europe and International Solidarity, with five amendments from London. Matt.

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL POLICY STATEMENT: EUROPE AND INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

President, conference, the executive council has brought this statement as part of our developing work and thinking and strategy for the coming period. The truth is that what happens in Europe has a great influence on the lives of working people here in the UK, including firefighters. What happens in relation to the European Union also has a huge impact on people in the UK, including the UK economy. Britain is geographically in Europe, politically and economically, whatever racists and xenophobes say about it. The fortunes of the British economy are bound up with what happens in Europe.

The economic downturn and stagnation that developed in Europe since 2008 has had a real impact also on the recovery of the British economy. The EU buys over half of British exports, so if growth in demand is feeble in Europe, then economic activity in Britain will also be weakened. Britain is the largest recipient of foreign direct investment in the EU, and about a third of foreign direct investment into the EU comes from the European Union. Many of our workplace protections are now taken from European legislation. These regulations, as many of you will be aware, are important floors and ceilings protecting workers from the worst excesses of the market.

This resolution is not just about Europe but about the political and economic structures of the European Union, the EU. The executive council is very well aware that there is a range of opinion on European issues, both in wider society reflected to some degree in the recent general election for example, and no doubt also within our own union. We don’t start from the position of defending the status quo. The current European “project” as people describe it, with the European Union at its heart is, let’s face it, a big business project; it’s a bosses’ project; it’s primarily designed to improve access to markets for the benefit of capitalist corporations, capitalist firms for their markets and their system. It was not and has not been designed by the Labour movement. The bosses unite Europe in their own way for their own purposes. This is reflected in many of the aspects of the European Union structures and policy. We think that those structures are, in most cases, not at all democratic and they should be far more accountable to the people they supposedly represent.

However, taking a balanced view of the situation, the executive council is also clear that there have been some significant benefits for workers from economic and political integration across Europe. European integration has been widely supported by the labour movement for some of the benefits it brings to workers including the development of the economy, the lowering of barriers between peoples and between workers from different countries, the development of wider international political terrain, the weakening of nationalism, peace in Europe since the end of the Second World War, the levelling up of conditions, lifestyle and culture.

For workers there are some very specific debates that have taken place around some specific gains which members of the FBU, officials of the FBU, will be well aware of. On working hours such as the Working Time Directive, on health and safety law including such as the six pack, on agency workers and part-time workers, including retained firefighters.

The European debate in the UK, particularly with the growth in influence of UKIP, has often been reduced in the media to a debate about immigration. I think we need to make a comment about that. Migrant workers come to this country and bring their skills, pay their taxes, bring their cultures and make an important contribution to the diversity and quality of life here. As a union and as a movement we should be welcoming migrant workers into our country, and welcoming them into our movement to join us to fight for better conditions for all workers.

There are 1.6 million people originally from Western Europe, and 1.1 million people from Eastern Europe currently living in the UK. In terms of some of the debates around that, academic studies show very little evidence that migrant workers have depressed wages or taken jobs off people born in the UK. Migrant workers complement the UK-born workforce; they do not substitute for it.

As anyone who's visited the institutions of the NHS knows, migrant workers (as they have done for decades indeed) prop up irreplaceable institutions, as well as doing vital work in agriculture, construction and other trades. Migrant workers are net contributors to the UK Treasury, paying more in taxes than they receive in housing or other benefits. So we need to nail some of the lies that are propagated by the right-wing media, by UKIP and by others in order to whip up hostility to migrant workers. It's an essential task facing us in this union and the wider labour movement.

Let's not forget, when people talk about migrants, that there are 1.8 million Britons living in other EU countries, especially in places like France and Spain, including by the way, not a few firefighters, some of whom are well known to yourselves. The executive council is clear that this union needs to have an internationalist outlook, and internationalist outlook based upon international working class solidarity.

In relation to the debate that is emerging and the likelihood of a future referendum on withdrawal from the EU the EC policy statement at this stage is not taking a position on that possible referendum. The executive council concluded in its deliberations that these issues needed to be debated out fully, based on an assessment of all the evidence. The latest opinion polls show that some 45% of the UK public would currently vote to remain in the EU, while 35% would want to leave the EU. The remaining 20% is undecided.

We have commissioned some working by leading labour movement-friendly economists to ensure we have the necessary data and information to assist the union in providing people with information in order to participate in that debate and develop a position for the Fire Brigades Union. There is a huge debate developing on the role of the EU and we need to have something to say in that debate. That debate will take place at the TUC, at the Scottish TUC, at the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, and we need to be part and parcel of that debate. The Fire Brigades Union will need a position as those debates develop and unfold.

Some economists have argued that the UK economy would lose a great deal with a British withdrawal, others have argued that there would be gains. The calculations are complex, but the difference may not be huge. What does matter is the kind of economy we would have outside of the EU. Those who argue simplistically for an immediate withdrawal from the European Union, particularly within the labour movement, neglect the fact that for the past three decades British governments have been among those pioneering the deregulation of legislation across Europe, to liberalise economies and to weaken workers' protections. So the idea that the British ruling class is somehow going to give us a better deal is again potentially a great illusion that we will need to take up and address.

I want to finish by outlining some of the union's recent international solidarity work. We are and we should be very proud of the links that we have always had and have developed in recent years with firefighter unions across Europe and with other workers' organisations across Europe. Last October we hosted a gathering of European firefighter union representatives in Glasgow. We'd like to thank the Scottish region and also the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service for assisting us in hosting of that meeting. That was part of our work with the European Public Service Unions Firefighters Network.

We learned a great deal about the struggles that our brothers and sisters in other countries have been waging, some to a greater degree than ourselves and others to a lesser degree. Many of those issues have been the same, including fighting cuts, resisting job losses, facing attacks on pay, pensions and health and safety issues. We have built solidarity with workers and with firefighters in Greece, who have faced the most appalling austerity as they are made to pay the price for a crisis that, as we say here, they did not create but was created by the banks here in

Britain and across Europe, that sparked an international crisis that is now still leaving its impact on the lives of tens of millions of people across Europe. Firefighters in Greece have seen their wages and pensions cut, have seen a lack of investment undermining their safety, with equipment left to decay and still expected to face all the risks that firefighters face in our daily work. We will address the next issue in more detail tomorrow, but we've been inspired by the actions of firefighters in Spain, as we discussed yesterday, who refused to take part in evictions enforced as a result of the Spanish government's austerity programme. We are proud to adopt the slogan "we rescue people, not banks" and make it our own, on our banners and our T shirts. We are proud to be hosting Roberto Rivas at this conference who will address you tomorrow.

These examples, along with the battles by firefighters and other workers, demonstrate the benefits of closer links between workers internationally and indeed across Europe. The experiences of the past few years demonstrate very clearly that the attacks we face have an international aspect, and our response must also have an international aspect. The FBU will continue our vital international solidarity campaigning with a key focus on the campaign against austerity here and how that impacts on the campaign against austerity in other parts of Europe by firefighters and other workers through their trade unions and other campaigning organisations.

We will also seek to defend and improve the professional safety and equipment standards for our occupation, and our colleagues in other firefighter organisations seeking to defend and improve professional standards for their services across Europe. To challenge austerity and privatisation seriously will require a huge struggle and major campaigns across Europe. To this end the FBU should be at the forefront of building stronger links between workers and their organisations here in the UK and across Europe. I move the EC policy statement. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

Could I have Cambridgeshire to second, please.

BRO CAMERON MATTHEWS (Cambridgeshire):

President, conference, I'm going to take a unique position and paraphrase someone with the same name as myself. Please do not shoot me until I finish. "We are all in this together." The difference is that it is us that are in this together, workers, and it's not the millionaire elitist prime minister and his best friends who have just been re-elected who are in it with us. They share nothing in common with us, and I share nothing in common with him other than name. I have considered changing that by deed poll as well!

The devastating policies that this government are going to roll out are coming and we need to be aware of that. One after the other is going to attack workers and working class people. Now more than ever, for the sake of our and our children's futures and our rights, all workers must stand united and together in solidarity and not give rise to any divisive and damaging calls for departure from the European Union. What we must do is challenge at all levels what will likely shortly follow this election – the high profile scapegoating of immigration and being members of the EU. All of these calls are based on the politics of fear and disinformation which is issued by the right wing media and its supporters to justify the absolute failure of their capitalist system.

I would also like to mention at this point, as was also commented on by Matt, that it is fantastic that we'll have tomorrow one of our brothers from the Spanish Fire and Rescue Service who was involved with the "we save people not banks" movement. I think what they does show us is the similarity of the struggle across Europe, across the world, of all workers, all working people, that we are struggling against the 1%. What that movement did echo, the "we save people not banks" movement, was the things that we are now starting to experience in the UK fire and rescue service. So it shows you very clearly that this is a united attack on all working people and we must stand up against that.

In finishing, what I would say is unity is strength and therefore to fight back we must stand united and resolute. We must make a case for unity of workers across the board and in this case we must challenge austerity and fight back against the people who are going to try to use the scapegoating of migrants and being members of the European Union to attack our rights and to attack our futures. I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

I now call London to move amendment 1. The executive council support.

BRO PAUL EMBERY (London):

President, conference, fellow Masons. *Laughter Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

We knew all along, Paul, we knew all along.

BRO PAUL EMBERY (London):

President, it would be helpful if I could find out what position the EC is actually taking on the amendments as we go through, because that will determine whether I need to speak to each one or not. I think you said on the first one the EC are supporting. Am I correct?

THE PRESIDENT:

I called amendment 1 which you are now moving and the EC support. Just to let you know, amendment 2 the EC oppose, amendment 3 the EC oppose, amendment 4 the EC support, amendment 5 the EC oppose. So I will take each amendment in turn and I will ask if there is a seconder and then you can move to the next amendment.

BRO PAUL EMBERY (London):

OK. On amendment 1 we are happy to move that formally, president.

THE PRESIDENT:

Does that have a seconder? *Formally*

Amendment 2.

BRO PAUL EMBERY (London):

On amendment 2 I think you said president the EC are opposing. We simply moved that amendment because we feel it would be inaccurate to say that all governments are imposing austerity to one degree or another, because of course the Greek government, it could be argued, was elected on very much an anti-austerity ticket. So that's just simply a tidying up exercise. So we would urge people to support that amendment.

THE PRESIDENT:

Does amendment 2 have a seconder? *Formally*

Amendment 3 which the EC oppose, Paul.

BRO PAUL EMBERY (London):

On amendment 3, president, we're surprised that the EC is opposing because it just seems to be a statement of the bleeding obvious, to be perfectly honest. I think it's pretty clear that the euro, the single currency, has been a disaster for European workers. We've had control of monetary policy which has been taken from elected governments and handed over to unelected bankers who obviously, not surprisingly as they always do, run the economy in the interests of bankers. That is, they've got an obsession with inflationary targets rather than expanding the economy through full employment and investment. Greece has largely been destroyed because of its tie into the euro. So we don't think there's any risk in the union saying that. We think it would be strange, in a statement of this kind, not to make that clear. So we would urge conference to support that amendment.

THE PRESIDENT:

Does amendment 3 have a seconder? *Formally*

Amendment 4, Paul.

BRO PAUL EMBERY (London):

Amendment 4 you said support, president, I think. In that case we'll move that formally.

THE PRESIDENT:

Does that have a seconder? *Formally*

Amendment 5.

BRO PAUL EMBERY (London):

Amendment 5, president, we feel that the first sentence on amendment 5 is a little bit sweeping. We don't think there's any particular substantial evidence to corroborate that first sentence. The second sentence talks about being cast out into the political and economic wilderness if there's a withdrawal from the EU to satisfy the banks and governments. I think conference needs to be very careful about taking that view because as the general secretary alluded to, many people on the left are opposed to the EU; it's not just an issue for right-wing Tories and people who are opposed to the EU on the left are generally opposed to it for one of the reasons that the general secretary himself said: because it's a big business club, it's a bosses club, it's a capitalist club, as you often hear it described.

We're going to have a debate in this country as part of a referendum in 2017 – in fact, 2016 if the papers are to be believed. The Tories are looking at bringing that forward. I think we would need to be careful about saying that if we were to take a position as a union in favour of a no vote, if the trade union movement was in favour of a no vote, if the outcome (whatever our view) was a no vote, then somehow we would be cast into the political wilderness. Either it's a capitalist club and we should have our concerns about it, or it's not, in which case we wouldn't

be cast out into the wilderness. It seems contradictory, it seems presumptuous and an incorrect statement to make. So we would urge support for amendment 5 as well.

THE PRESIDENT:

Does amendment 5 have a seconder? *Formally*

That's open for debate, conference. Anybody else wish to join in this debate, please come to the rostrum. Micky.

BRO MICKY NICHOLAS (B&EMM):

Thanks, president, conference. The only thing I want to raise with Matt and the executive council is the issue around the ETUC and where our TUC general council is. Matt sits on that general council, and the role Matt will have on that general council with regards to international solidarity especially around the referendum as well. So if Matt can make some comment on that as well, I think that would be helpful. Paul is absolutely right, I think as a trade union movement we're pretty well 50-50 on where we stand in terms of the EU referendum. Certainly the trade unions can have quite a big role to play in terms of where our members are come the referendum. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thank you. Matt.

BRO MATT LAMB (Shropshire):

Thank you president. Conference, just wanted to add really there isn't any mention of the transatlantic trade treaty which is sitting with the EU at the moment for negotiation this year. It's clearly a framework for multinational and global companies to come in and privatise and take over our public services. I think this is the opportunity we need to so particular raise that issue and campaign against that. Could you address that, please? *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

General secretary to give the opposition to the amendments and answer the other two points, of course.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Thank you, president. Thanks for the questions and comments that have been raised. I'll answer the two concerns or questions that were raised first and then come on to the EC's position on the London amendments. Mick asked about the TUC relationship with the European TUC, how that will impact on debates around the referendum and so on. The TUC is affiliated to the European TUC and sends delegates to the congresses and committees of the European TUC.

What the executive council is saying is that we need to be having these debates on our brigade committees so that we reach an informed conclusion, so that if we choose to participate in that debate as a union that's following some form of debate. The majority position in the British trade union movement is to support continued membership of the EU. I think that is likely therefore to mean that the majority view in the British trade union movement will be to oppose any moves to withdraw as part of a referendum.

If you take the view across most of Europe, it is probably stronger than it is in Britain. Certainly the older countries of the EU there are much stronger associations, identification with the EU and its institutions. The question of withdrawal in most of those countries and certainly in the trade union movement in most of those countries is again more pro-EU than anti. So there will need to be a debate, and there will be debates at the Trades Union Congress this year and following at the STUC and the Irish Congress to which we are affiliated. We are affiliated to three trade union centres in the union. We will need to have a point of view in each of those.

I think Matt's highlighted a very important point in relation to TTIP. It is something we have made comment on before. It is an omission in the statement. I think most people will be aware that the concerns that have been raised by trade unions and campaigners is that TTIP, the secret trade negotiations that are going on apparently on our behalf but without anyone being able to know what's in them or see the details of them, ie in a completely undemocratic fashion, are about liberalising further trade in certain new areas and are perceived very clearly as a potential threat to the provision of public health services, and in our view also potentially of public fire and rescue services. So it is a matter that we've raised concern about and we shall continue to do so.

I suppose the debate around TTIP comes back to some of the issues in the London amendment and the concerns that people might have about a coming referendum on the EU and what stance we might wish to take in relation to that. I will come on to some of those in more detail in a moment. In terms of the specific amendments and why the executive council is opposing them. Amendment 2, I think the reason the executive council opposed the London amendment 2 was precisely the point that Paul raised. What we were seeking was clarification of a single government in Europe that hasn't implemented austerity policies. We think it's pretty clear that every European government, to one degree or another, has implemented austerity – less clearly in Germany actually than most other places, but even in Germany there have

been reductions in public expenditure which is one of the austerity measures. In terms of Greece, clearly the reason the Syriza government was elected was precisely because of the implementation of austerity policies in Greece. Actually, I think the debate that's now going on in Greece, including on the left, is the fact that the Syriza government is implementing austerity policies and continues to do so, and that's obviously one of the conflicts that is taking place between the Syriza government and the institutions of the EU. That's why we are opposing that. We don't think "most" actually improves the statement at all.

In terms of the London amendment 3 on the question of the undemocratic, bureaucratic and costly EU structures, we deliberately chose a broad phrase in that regard because, as I said, what the executive council has done is commissioned some work by a couple of academics to provide advice and information for the executive council and for the union to consider some of these issues in more detail and in a more informed manner. That would include issues around the question of the attitude we might take to a single currency, the euro. But where I would disagree with some of the disagreements that Paul made, the truth is that actually in the UK also monetary policy has been taken away deliberately by the Blair government and handed to the Monetary Policy Committee, the Bank of England, with precisely the same terms of reference that exists in the European Central Bank. So our monetary policy is not controlled democratically by debate in parliament; our monetary policy is set by central bankers who have exactly the same agenda as the central bankers in the European Central Bank.

In terms of amendment 5, again, we believe it's simply a statement of fact that the majority of people in Greece want to remain in the EU. I have to say, I don't think Paul actually provided any evidence to the contrary in that regard. The proof of that is actually in the recent elections. The vast majority of votes cast by people in Greece, whatever their political persuasion, were for parties which oppose a withdrawal from the European Union. So in terms of the opinion poll of an election, then that is clearly the votes that people have cast. The majority view in the Greek left, for example, is to oppose withdrawal from the European Union. The main party on the left which campaigns for withdrawal from the European Union is the Communist Party of Greece which had a single figure vote in the recent general election in Greece. Syriza is broadly pro staying in Europe.

That comes down to the question then of what stance we take in relation to the debate around a Greek exit. The point that we're making in the EC policy statement is this. The Greek people have voted for a government which they hope will stand up and challenge austerity. In response to that, elements within Greek society have launched a campaign against that government. Equally, the institutions of the European Union and other European governments have brought about huge pressure on the Greek government to reverse their radical stance, and to toe the line and to start implementing policies like everyone else is supposed to do. There is huge pressure being exerted. We make the point elsewhere in this statement that the aim is to humiliate the Syriza government, to teach everyone a lesson. That is, don't vote for parties that will stand up to austerity because this is what we will do to you. That's the agenda that Greek workers are facing.

So the debate currently about a Greek exit from the EU is effectively about a forced Greek exit at the demand of the European Central Bank led politically particularly by German politicians. I have to say that we should stand in solidarity with Greek people and Greek working class saying we don't want to be forced out of Europe. We have to make a decision: do we stand with the Greek people on their stance in opposing austerity, or do we side with the European Central Bank which effectively may at some point force them out of the EU? I know that's not what Paul is arguing, but I think that's the implication unless we're clear on this issue that this is about potentially forcing Greece out of the EU. The position is clear: the majority of people have voted that they do not wish to leave the European Union.

So the executive council statement as it is written is factually correct, and amendment 5 does not take us any further forward. Thank you, president.

THE PRESIDENT:

OK, conference. I now put amendment 1 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 amendment 2 London to the vote. The executive council oppose. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *FALLS*

I now put amendment 3 London to the vote. The executive council oppose. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *FALLS*

I now put amendment 4 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 amendment 5 London to the vote. The executive council oppose. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *FALLS*

I now put the executive council policy statement as amended to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. Conference, there are people not voting. That's not what you're here for. I would ask you to exercise your votes. That is *CARRIED*

Can I now ask conference to turn to page 4 of the programme of business. Conference, come to order. I now call emergency resolution 4 Firefighter Pensions in the Aftermath of the General Election. To be moved by the executive council. Can you come to order please. Comrade, can you come to order. Thank you. General secretary.

Emergency resolution 4 – FIREFIGHTER PENSIONS IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE GENERAL ELECTION
The new Tory government presents the FBU with a new situation regarding pensions and undoubtedly new challenges.

Conference does not accept the imposed 2015 pension schemes.

Conference recognises that the union has consistently won the arguments that the new pension schemes are unfair, unsustainable and unworkable.

The FBU will continue to make the case at Westminster and with other governments that the changes to the pension schemes are unacceptable to firefighters and damaging to the fire and rescue service.

The FBU will continue with our political campaign. We will work with sympathetic MPs and other political representatives to articulate our case.

The union will refine and expand our arguments and continue to exert pressure on governments to improve the current pension schemes.

The FBU will continue to explore all legal avenues and work with the union's solicitors to this end.

The FBU has taken over 50 periods of strike action, as well as prolonged periods of action short of strike, in order to advance our case. The union congratulates members for the unity and strength shown so far in taking action to defend our pensions.

The pension schemes remain unfair, unworkable and contain different elements in Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales and England, which ultimately result in different benefits for firefighters.

The Executive Council will assess the new situation and consult with members in every brigade.

The Executive Council will continue with a strategy that integrates our political, legal and industrial action – and takes account of the other attacks we face.

Conference agrees to mobilise our members to bring the greatest pressure possible on the Westminster government and other governments to improve the pensions of all firefighters.

The Executive Council will keep members informed through circulars, films, bulletins and other means, so that members are ready to renew action if and when necessary.

The FBU message to the new Westminster government and to other governments is that we are not going away and we will continue to fight for pensions for firefighters which properly reflect the challenges of their occupation.

Conference reaffirms that the FBU's pension dispute is not resolved and our campaign will continue.
EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

President, conference, clearly this debate was supposed to take place yesterday in the context of the other discussions about first of all the general election and then about pensions. The election has a huge impact on our struggle over pensions. Undoubtedly, as we identified yesterday and everyone has been very well aware of, it is a major setback for the entire trade union movement, including ourselves, including in relation to our campaign over pensions.

It is true, and we have to have a balanced assessment of this, that Labour, had they won the election, may have given some improvements to pension arrangements, but I think we also need to acknowledge the limitations of what was being discussed. Certainly doors were more likely to be open and were being opened in terms of the discussion with the Labour Party front bench around that issue. I think we have to take a moment to pay tribute to our members, to yourselves in particular, for organising that – a fantastic lobbying campaign that led to that position. It really is worth thinking about.

The pension attacks of the last government have changed the pensions of 5.7 million people working in the public sector in the UK. That's a disastrous position for workers and for firefighters as part of the public sector. In terms of our own campaign, as you know, we launched the most recent round of political lobbying towards the end of last year around the early day motion and the prayer against the legislation. We launched a fantastic lobbying campaign, I think unprecedented in this union in terms of the commitment that people demonstrated, the determination, the systematic approach of all MPs. It was that which shifted the Labour Party. Let's be clear, as we said, they have not made those comments previously. They had said nothing during the debate on the Public Sector Pensions Act, and it was your actions, our members' actions, which forced them to move and eventually as we saw, Miliband to sponsor the early day motion and to get official Labour Party support.

The election obviously changes all of that. We need to assess the situation. I think there are broadly three options we might face in relation to, for example, the consideration of our trade dispute, which is one aspect of our campaign. The options there, if you like, would be that we either very quickly move to further strike action, that we keep our trade dispute live with a view that it may become necessary to take strike action again, and the third option would be that we very quickly close down that dispute, we ballot members and we close down that dispute. The executive council considered all of those options.

We certainly picked up no calls for immediate strike action, but we equally think it would be disastrous for this union to close down our trade dispute. The truth is that we don't know what the mood of our members will be in the next weeks and months. Certainly closing down our trade dispute kills off many aspects of our ability to engage in that campaign and continue that campaign. Our view is that we need to continue campaigning on pensions, we need to keep that pressure on (including that political pressure) despite the setback of the general election. In the run up to the general election, as you are aware, we had launched an attack on the question of the so-called guarantee that the former fire minister gave. We had a number of Tories who we had targeted and challenged over that issue and there are Tory MPs, whether we like them being in parliament or not, who have given commitments to our members at local level that if that guarantee turns out not to be worth anything they will then be taking that issue up. We have to follow that up, as we have done on every issue, to take forward every possible avenue of trying to challenge the government over the questions of pensions.

The discussion we had yesterday on fitness standards gives another angle in order to progress that. I think it's about developing a strategy. We had always said that whatever happens in the immediate future, this union will continue to campaign and fight for decent pensions for firefighters. I've certainly not been confirmed yet, and we don't know whether it's been confirmed who the new DCLG fire minister is. We will, whether we like them being there or not, have to meet them and we will have to raise our questions on pensions again. That may be difficult; it is more difficult than it has been prior to the election but that's the task that the executive council believes we have got to do. We've still got work to do in all parts of the UK – in Northern Ireland, in Scotland and in Wales. None of the issues are completely resolved. There are some movements, and a far better position, for example, in Northern Ireland, but there are still issues to be discussed.

We still, in our view, have now an imposed, unworkable scheme which we need to continue to try to pressure government to improve. That's the position this union has. We've got no alternative but to do that. We have, in the aftermath of that general election setback, to pick ourselves up, get ourselves organised and we have to continue fighting for decent pensions for our members. That's the position of the executive council; that's the position the executive council puts to conference. I move the emergency. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

I call Surrey to second.

BRO RICHARD JONES (Surrey):

Conference, president, we knew when we started out on this campaign it wasn't a win or lose campaign. The status quo would have been the only way we could possibly have won, and we knew from the outset that that wasn't going to happen. As soon as the heads of agreement came out (a curiously named document) we knew that we were facing a campaign which was about minimising losses. We were never going to be happy with the outcome. It was about winning back as much as we possibly could and minimising the losses.

The campaign, I believe, has been done very well. You look at what we've done in comparison to other public sector unions, we've done far better on our pension scheme than they have. We want more, there's no doubt about it, we want more improvements. We've always looked for more improvements. But we're moving into a new phase now. With the campaign without a certain win or lose it is always going to be difficult to know when you've reached the point where you've got as much as you can possibly get. We haven't reached that point and we

never will. Let's be honest, we've never reached that with a lot of the things we do. You look at the FPS, the changes that came in that in 2004-2006 damaged that scheme massively in terms of ill-health retirement and several other things. It led to the court case, the London Three etc. Then we had 2006 with the FPS being imposed on us; we were never in agreement with it.

So I think 1 April this year was the turning point in this campaign. We got to a point where we'd made significant gains. We want to make more, but we need to recognise that we have made gains, and better than other unions do. We need to move now to another phase in the campaign. We keep going, we keep negotiating, we keep demonstrating, we keep campaigning, we keep lobbying and lobbying for more. At every opportunity we should try to get better. That's not just on the 2015 scheme, there are still improvements that we want in the FPS and the NFPS. We've just got to keep on moving forwards with negotiation at this moment in time.

The policy statement yesterday on fitness, that may give us a further option to go back and have another go. So I think we've just got to keep going, keep moving forwards, recognise what we have gained, but keep pushing for more. This is the new phase. We've got to be fighting on several fronts, not just pensions from hereon. Please support. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

That's open for debate, conference. Please come to the rostrum. Anybody else want to speak? Come to the rostrum please. Anyone? No.

BRO YUSEF TIMMS (London):

Morning conference, president, we are supporting the EC resolution, albeit like a rope supports a hanging man! We have serious reservations about what this rather open ended and nebulous resolution really does and whether it takes the campaign any further forward at all. It's no secret that London has opposed what we always saw as a rather half-hearted and excessively cautious industrial strategy. We accept that things have changed since we met in Manchester, not just because of the election result which effectively put paid to what was left of our strategy, but also because the pension is now a reality for us. So we do support a consultation of the members to discuss where we are, how we got here, and what we should do next. What we don't support is any sort of process that attempts to try to shift the blame for the outcome of this dispute from the leadership on to our members. *Applause*

This dispute has been long and exhausting, but it has not so much sapped our strength in London as our morale. Asking our members what they think should be done now that the pension is already in place and the Tories have just won an election is a Hobson's choice, and it will be seen as such by the majority of our members in London.

We await with interest any proposals that the EC have for taking this campaign forward – proposals that I am afraid are sadly lacking inside of this resolution. Nevertheless, in case you forgot, we support. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks for that support, comrade!

BRO MIKE TULLY (Gloucestershire):

Undecided yet on the emergency resolution 4. I must admit, I'm disappointed in Matt's comments that he does not know the mood of our members. We had a recall conference not that long ago and I know that we were not the only brigade expressing concern about further strike actions. We have regular meetings with our region and I'm hoping that the views of what's happening down in the South West is being passed up to head office.

However, our members' hopes for any further improvements in pensions rested firmly with the election of a Labour government and that ship has clearly sailed now. We feel that any further non-continuous strike action will only add to that feeling and have a detrimental impact on membership. That membership will also be severely hampered now by electing yesterday for a VO₂ max of higher than when people joined. For this reason Gloucestershire may well oppose this resolution, as our members are not prepared to take any further discontinuous strike action unless there is clear evidence to show that this would lead to any further improvements.

We have made fantastic gains, and let's not forget where we are within Scotland, Ireland and Wales. But unless we see a clear strategy and our membership can see a way that that strike action is going to improve the situation, then we do have some severe reservations. Thank you. *Applause*

BRO MICKY NICHOLAS (B&EMM):

Mike talked about the recall conference and the mood of the delegates at the recall conference. He was also quite clear, and quite frankly honest about where the campaign was hanging. I think the election result last Friday told us where the campaign was. I'm going to be blunt about it. If anyone sitting in this room thinks or believes that their members (especially in England) are up for further strike action in any form on the pension legislation that is in, quite frankly I think they are kidding themselves. I think we've got to be quite honest about that, really

honest about that. Probably here and now is not the time and place to have a post mortem about that. But the reality is in terms of industrial action, any form of industrial action, let alone industrial action that's going to change anything here and now, I think we're kidding ourselves and I think we've got to be honest about that.

How we go about expressing that, how we go about being honest about that again is open for debate. If anyone really and truly thinks after 1 April, after that election result last Friday when all our hopes and our dreams were hanging on a change of government, really thinks that this campaign, including industrial action, is still on the table, I'm sorry, I can't share that. I'm sorry I can't share that. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

No other speakers. General secretary to reply.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Clearly it is an important discussion. In terms of Yusef's comments, I believe that the London position is that you support a move to immediate strike action. I have to say that if that is the position you did have the opportunity to bring an emergency resolution putting that position to conference and you haven't chosen to do so. There's nobody attempting to shift any blame on to our members at all, by the way. I want to be absolutely clear. I tell you what, our members have been absolutely magnificent throughout this campaign and we should be all extremely proud of what they have done. I think they have set a shining example to the labour movement. *Applause*

This union, I think, can be proud of what it did in pensions under the last Labour government. We fought, to be frank, far harder and for far longer than any other union, and despite all the talk about other unions coming out, they didn't apart from on about three occasions. This union continued to take strike action on our own. I think Vinny summed it up and made some very important points. The only way that a complete victory (if that can be the term used) would have been achieved is a complete U-turn by the last government. Certainly in the run-up to the campaign I was absolutely clear in every single meeting I did that if anybody expected David Cameron to run up a white flag and say: I've got it wrong; I'm withdrawing all these attacks, you were living in cloud cuckoo land. I said that at every meeting, including all the meetings I did in London, by the way Yusef.

In terms of debate, we're quite happy to do that. Yusef, I'm quite happy to come to your branch and have that debate with members. That offer is there. The national officer has been out and about in the run-up to the general election. I have to say, Mick, that may be your position that you're not prepared to take further strike action, but there are members around the country who have told us within the past couple of weeks that if necessary they are prepared to take strike action. *Applause*

So you may be giving up all hope of further strike action. This executive council and this general secretary are not. Yes, we have had a huge setback. The hopes of thousands/tens of thousands of firefighters, to be honest, were placed on a different outcome in the general election. By the way, that is not, Yusef, a strategy of wait till Labour gets in, as you've published. That's not what the strategy of the executive council was at all. This union has never sowed illusions in the Labour Party in the run up to the general election. We challenged them and we were the only union that seriously challenged Labour over their stance on pensions. We were the only union, despite the fact we are not affiliated, that forced effectively the leader of the Labour Party to come out publicly and oppose the Tory attacks on our pension scheme, when he'd actually supported the attacks on every other public sector pension scheme in the UK. That's an achievement that this union made that nobody else made.

In terms of what the campaign did achieve – and we've got to be balanced; it's a huge setback in terms of our members in England – again, we are the only union that has forced a government in Northern Ireland to deliver a pension age of 55. It is the only scheme anywhere in the UK with a pension age of 55, that this union achieved in relation to Northern Ireland. We achieved the improved actuarial reductions in Scotland and we will achieve that in Wales, and we achieved the no job/no pension discussion in Scotland. But we then have to come back to are we prepared to carry on? A Tory MP, Rory Stewart, said to our people precisely the point I made in opening that if we demonstrated that Mordaunt's guarantee was a lie, then he would be committing himself to campaign to expose that and to challenge that. Again, we'd be letting down and betraying our members if we didn't take up that opportunity and take up every single opportunity to improve and try to improve the pensions of our members.

Just a couple of comments on Mike. Mike raised an important point. I think this is also partially addressing Yusef's point. The truth is that the recall conference, representatives of our members, elected by their members locally, made very clear that there were a whole range of views at that stage on whether further strike action should be taken. Actually, if you go further back, at the officials' meeting in Liverpool the same concerns were expressed. So the idea that this is a plot by the executive council to betray a struggle is just fantasyland, Yusef. It's not the reality of what this executive council has done in relation to pensions. I think it's disgraceful to make that suggestion. I think we can be proud. I'm proud of what this executive council has done, despite disagreements we've all had, rows we've occasionally had. I'm proud of what this union has done on pensions, I'm proud of what our members have done on pensions. And I'm prepared to carry on doing it, even if other people aren't! *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

I now put emergency resolution 4 Firefighter Pensions in the Aftermath of the General Election to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That is *CARRIED*

We are now on Section E, AIF; Section F Legal report. Yes. Come to the rostrum, please.

BRO GORDON FIELDEN (London):

Conference, I'd just like to place our thanks to Thompsons and our barrister, Oliver Segal, for the magnificent work in our crew manager's star case. As you will recall, conference, in 2010 the London region entered into a trade dispute with our fire authority led by the leader the infamous Brian Coleman which aimed to destroy our shift system, equalising our shifts. That dispute did see some of the worst uses of Tory laws against a union. As we know, the threat that was there with redundancies for the whole of the London fire brigade, all our members. One of the tactics used was this partial performance deduction of pay. As you recall, at the end of that dispute we reached an agreement, but what we didn't get from our management was a refund of that money. We then took legal action through Thompsons after the executive council agreed that that case should go forward. Initially we lost the initial tribunal on a technicality but thanks to Thompsons we won an appeal and then proceeded to a court case in 2014.

I'm pleased to report that that case was successful, thanks to Oliver, Lindsay Neal from Thompsons, Ian Leahair, Paul Embery as well as the rest of the London region and particularly the four members involved who were the test cases that went forward. I have to say, being at that tribunal over that three-day period, it proved to me that management and their tactics and the way that they approach these things was inconsistent and when put before a judge, and barristers asking about their actions, it fell apart. At risk of being disingenuous to them, one could turn round and say that some of the things they put down in their statements didn't in reality prove to be correct.

The end of that case is that I am pleased to report that our brigade now has agreed that they will pay £325,000 or near that amount of money, back to our members who had that money deducted, which I think is absolutely tremendous. Also, on the last section of it, we're in discussions where we hopefully will get back an additional up to £90,000 as well. If we're successful in that, that proves that being a member of the union and continuing and fighting hard for things that are right and proper, and with the help of a very good legal system provided by Thompsons, we can be successful and overturn Tory laws. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks for that, Gordon. We're now on Section A, NJC. I now call emergency resolution 5 Compulsory Redundancies Following the General Election to be moved by Leicestershire. The executive council support.

Emergency resolution 5 – COMPULSORY REDUNDANCIES FOLLOWING GENERAL ELECTION
Following the election result of the new Tory government forming a majority, further cuts and compulsory redundancies is likely.

Leicestershire Combined Fire Authority have already agreed proposals that would see the reduction of over 120 Wholetime Firefighter posts in the next 5 years, out of a current establishment of 440, only 40 are due to retire in that time. We are currently over establishment by 32 Firefighters and our Medium Term Financial plan predicts that we will have used all reserves and not be able to present a balanced budget by 2017. This means that over 60 Firefighters currently face the very real threat of compulsory redundancy.

If any Wholetime Firefighter is made compulsory redundant and following that brigade winning a successful local ballot for industrial action, then this Conference instructs the Executive Council to Recall Conference. Conference will then debate with a view to recommend a ballot for national industrial action up to and including strike action.
LEICESTERSHIRE

BRO GAVIN LYNCH (Leicestershire):

President, conference, over the last five years under the coalition government we've seen unprecedented attacks on our service. Many of the fire authorities have delayed difficult financial decisions in the hope that 7 May would have brought us a change. Sadly this was not the case. In fact, it was much worse. As we now have a majority Tory government it looks even worse. We know the next five years will be difficult. For many of us the attacks on jobs and on our service as a result of the severe financial problems will arrive much sooner. Conference, like us in Leicestershire, many of you will be fighting cuts to your service. Unfortunately, the planned cuts in Leicestershire represent the single biggest threat to our terms and conditions and jobs in Leicestershire fire service's history. Officials have been working tirelessly politically to oppose and prevent these horrendous cuts. We've been lobbying MPs and local councillors up and down the country, in parliament etc. FBU members have turned up in their numbers to anti-cuts rallies. We've rallied the last three fire authority meetings at our brand spanking new

£11 million headquarters with the chair of the fire authority even having the audacity to ask us can we turn the “Ring Of Fire” music down, please, on the battle bus. As every member in this conference knows, nobody turns down Johnny Cash!

Members have been mobilised in their hundreds and collected thousands of signatures opposing the cuts. Unfortunately the fire authority has ignored this and has agreed to cuts which will be implemented in the next two years. Worst case scenario, we are looking at 80 wholetime compulsory redundancies. Conference, we cannot stand by and allow this to go through unopposed. We are and we will continue to try to avoid this situation. However, should Leicestershire members get issued with notice of redundancies we need to consider carefully our industrial response. Should we win a ballot in Leicestershire for strike action against compulsory redundancies, this emergency resolution is asking that we recall conference to debate this issue in support of our members, if and when we are made compulsorily redundant.

We recognise that the resolution may cause difficulties for our union. But, conference, we have passed resolutions before which have caused us problems, but we also recognise the message this would send to other fire authorities and chief officers if we did nothing. Let this emergency resolution act as a deterrent against compulsory redundancies. We ask that you support this resolution and hope that we never have to use it. Conference, I move. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Seconder please?

BRO JULIAN JENKINS (Hereford and Worcester):
President, conference, we’ve been facing these cuts ourselves for the last two years, the same situation as Leicestershire. As of April this year we are 58 firefighters over establishment; we haven’t got the budget for 58 firefighters. We’ve been lobbying FRA members, MP members, not just ourselves as officials but all FBU members. We’ve really got into our FRA members and we’ve tried to put the fear of God up them in that if anybody’s made compulsorily redundant then there will be a national backlash, all firefighters across the country will be taking strike action. That’s what we’ve been telling them and it’s worked. We managed to get various concessions from them; we’ve tried to get people out to other services on secondments, career breaks, all sorts of things to try to make sure that nobody is made compulsorily redundant.

But with the new government that’s coming in we’re facing the same kind of cuts again in about 2017. So we’re going to be looking at another 50 firefighters over to the 30 or so we’ll have left come that year. So we’re facing it all again. I would say we support this emergency resolution, we second it. We’re going to be asking everybody in the country to support us, Leicestershire and anybody else who’s facing cuts. Let’s face it, we’re all going to cop for it with this government. Our unity is our strength. We support this resolution. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
That’s open for debate. Anybody? General secretary?

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:
Just a point of clarification for conference. The executive council do support the resolution and would remind conference of the decisions we took at conference 2008 in relation to the position we take in relation to compulsory redundancies, which clarified the union’s policy in that regard. But you do need to remind yourselves, and you do need to remind brigade committees that there are potential huge legal difficulties in relation to that in terms of the law governing so-called solidarity or secondary action. Certainly on a simple call for strike regarding support for a brigade in dispute would generally be unlawful. The executive council would need to consider how we might get round that, but that’s certainly a discussion which I know Leicestershire are well aware of, that we would need to discuss in the run-up to any such recall conference. If that means preparing members for that discussion and the possible consequences and outcome of that, then that needs to be part of what takes place in the run-up to a dispute in Leicestershire on this issue, and a possible recall conference that arises out of it.

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks general secretary. I now put emergency resolution 5 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That is *CARRIED*

We are on paragraph A1. I now call resolution 7 National Negotiating Machinery from the CSNC. The executive council support.

Resolution 7 – NATIONAL NEGOTIATING MACHINERY
This Conference re-affirms its support for the National Joint Council as the only negotiating body for the Pay, Terms and Conditions of all Grey Book employees in the UK Fire and Rescue Service, including Emergency Fire Control members.
CONTROL STAFF NATIONAL COMMITTEE

SIS AMELIA DIALLO (CSNC):
President, conference, this resolution doesn’t really need much explanation. We heard the general secretary touch on the subject yesterday when moving emergency resolution 3. So we reaffirm the position. Please support. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Scotland to second.

BRO STEPHEN REID (Scotland):
Conference, the National Joint Council and Middle Managers Negotiating Body have provided a form of national standard in terms of pay and a baseline for terms and conditions. Without these national standards we have to recognise there would be an open season on a whole range of terms and conditions including, but not limited to, duty systems, hours of work and allowance. This would have a huge consequential impact on our pay rates, our members’ pay rates, and the potential pension entitlement. The existence of the National Joint Council is a significant barrier to the emergence of local pay rates. Local pay rates would see some services experiencing rapid throughput of staff as recruits come in, get trained and then move to higher paid areas. Government and employers would almost certainly welcome a move to local pay rates as a precursor to extending their privatisation agenda, as a cost cutting exercise, and as a tool to pit worker against worker and destroy the unity of the Fire Brigades Union. Please support this motion. I’m happy to second. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
That’s open for debate. No debate. I now put resolution 7 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That is *CARRIED*

I’m on paragraph A2, A3, A4. I now call resolution 5 CPD Equalisation to be moved by Dorset. The executive council give it qualified support. Happy birthday for yesterday, Karen.

Resolution 5 – CPD EQUALISATION
Conference believes that the rate of CPD should be equalised across the UK to the highest rate currently paid by a Fire and Rescue Service. Conference instructs the Executive Council to achieve this at the earliest possible opportunity.
DORSET

SIS KAREN ADAMS (Dorset):
President, conference, continuous professional development pay replaced the 15-year-long service payment following the 2002 and 2003 pay dispute. This move was contentious at the time, made even more so in that the payment was divided amongst all firefighters. This meant that brigades with few retained members received the highest CPD and those with the most received the least. In 2006 the original document recognised the differences in pay and sought to redress the balance. The National Joint Council recognised the importance of CPD in rewarding employees whose experience, skills and knowledge would bring value to the fire and rescue service. It stated that each fire and rescue service is encouraged to explore the ways in which the value of continuous professional development payment will be brought to a minimum level of £500 per annum, within the constraints of affordability.

Of course, fire and rescue service used the excuse of constraints of affordability. So at the moment we see Cornwall being paid £285 whilst Cleveland are being paid £905. Please also remember that the retained firefighters only get paid 25% of this figure. It cannot be right that pay provided for competence is based on the proportion of part time workers that a brigade employs. Does this mean that a firefighter in Cornwall need only have a third of the knowledge possessed by a firefighter in Cleveland?

The time has come for CPD to be fully recognised and firefighters rewarded for their skills and experience that they achieve each year. At conference in 2010 Merseyside’s motion to protect CPD payments from attacks by brigade managers trying to punish firefighters for taking industrial action was unanimously carried, proving how valuable these payments were. Faced with fragmentation of the payment by some brigades West Midlands at conference 2013 requested that services share information over the different ways that CPD is paid, and the conditions placed on its payment. Dorset’s motion seeks to move this matter forward.

The NJC say that these measures are unaffordable, or that they will take from the best paid and give to the worst, and pay to provide a level playing field. As a union representing firefighters our ambitions must always be to win the most for our members whilst protecting benefits that we have won. This is why we demand that the fire brigades should reach the same standard as those currently enjoying the highest payments. This was recognised in Scotland in 2014 when the FBU negotiators took the position, during their amalgamation.

Finally, comrades, please bear in mind the words from the front of our rule book: “The immediate aims of the Fire Brigades Union are to serve its members by winning for them the best possible conditions and to serve the community by encouraging its members to be skilled at

their craft.” Improving the pay for CPD will meet these aims and drive forward the professional competence of all our members. Delegates, I urge you to support this motion. I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

Do we have a seconder for that? Please come to the rostrum.

BRO JOHN CASTLEDON (Cornwall):

We would not be representing our members if we did not support this resolution, as Cornwall has the lowest CPD payment in the country. However, this is not a cap-in-hand, or a green-eyed monster sort of plea for Cornish members. It is equally not a race to the bottom, as we are not suggesting anyone should suffer the indignity of rewarding our members’ professional development by having their CPD payment to be lowered to a pitiful £285. The issue is simply about equality and unity.

As a point of principle we must fight against this postcode lottery to decide what payments our members deserve. We have approached the brigade locally. We get the usual response about financial climate. We therefore call upon the EC and conference to support the resolution to get equal pay for all members. Pay is and must remain an NJC matter; it is not a local agreement or a step towards regional pay.

I remind you of the resolution we’ve just passed, 7, which quite clearly says that the National Joint Council is the only negotiating body for pay. Conference, I urge you to stand together and support this resolution. Cornwall formally seconds resolution 5. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

That is open for debate, conference. No debate. I will ask the AGS to give the qualification please.

THE ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:

It’s a simple qualification. It is simply that the resolution calls for changes which are existing policy and in pursuing those changes obviously it needs to be taken in the context of the wider demand for pay and the work we will do around pay this year and in the future.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thank you. I will put resolution 5 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That is *CARRIED*

I now call resolution 6, Removal of CPD Payments upon Promotion to be moved by Dorset, and the executive council support.

Resolution 6 – REMOVAL OF CPD PAYMENTS UPON PROMOTION
Conference condemns the current practice of some Fire and Rescue Services, including Dorset, of removing CPD payments upon promotion. Conference instructs the Executive Council to enter into negotiations at the earliest possible opportunity with the aim of achieving an end to this practice.

DORSET

SIS KAREN ADAMS (Dorset):

President, conference, the rationale of this perverse procedure was stated in the original documents and agreements when CPD was agreed in 2007. Some brigades, aware of the problem that this would cause and the barrier it has provided for promotion, decided to continue to pay CPD to people seeking to further their careers. Other brigades, most recently GMC in March this year, have negotiated CPD payments to remain when people go through the promotion process. The idea that a person loses all their professional knowledge and skills when they start a new job is preposterous. It also means that the loss of pay is a disincentive to people applying for promotion and taking on the huge challenges that this involves. Many brigades have extensive and thorough development programmes that people have to complete before becoming competent. This is a huge amount of extra work on top of the maintenance of their existing skills. This was reflected in the increasing complexity of the national occupational standards as you step up to the roles.

The career progression in the fire service rightly expects that managers should understand and be competent at the roles that they manage. This implies that professional development must continue. The payment of £300 to cover the cost of CBT and make sure that the promotion process still has a benefit was introduced in order to cover up the unfairness of this policy. Retained firefighters are only offered 25% of this, a meagre £75 for the increase in responsibility and the work entailed in attaining the next role up.

West Midlands, at conference 2013, sought to identify the differences in CPD payment across the brigades. We recognise the unfairness in this present situation and seek to make sure that this is one aspect that is corrected, so that there is a clear benefit to the promotion process that rewards those going through it and does not inflict the penalty of a loss of CPD on those seeking to become managers of the fire and rescue service.

Many progressive brigades have already changed to a better fairer system. We urge the executive council to expand these in negotiations so that all firefighters benefit from the fairer and better arrangement. I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

Do we have a seconder for that? *Formally*

That is open for debate. No debate. I now put resolution 6 to the vote. The EC support. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That is *CARRIED*

Break for tea

THE PRESIDENT:

General secretary to the stage, please. Conference, take your seats, please. Come to order, conference. I now call upon Steve Shelton, chair of standing orders, to give an interim standing orders report. Steve.

THE CHAIR OF STANDING ORDERS (Bro Steve Shelton):

Thank you, president. Afternoon, conference! Can you please turn to your programmes of business page 9 executive council policy statement Health and Safety – Internal Arrangements, amendment 1 Scotland withdrawn.

Can I remind delegates that their credentials must be displayed when at the rostrum, please?

The standing orders committee have received a request from Scotland for a bucket collection to assist in allowing facilitators to engage with support groups in parliament and to provide accommodation to visiting Palestinian firefighters, and to allow FBU participation in filming in Israel and Palestine to highlight the extreme conditions firefighters endure in the occupied territories. The standing orders committee have agreed to hold this bucket collection at lunch break today during the showing of the documentary “Firefighters under occupation”. Thank you, conference.

THE PRESIDENT:

Is that report agreed? *AGREED*

Conference, I was told at the break that I may have looked slightly miserable this morning when I came in. To be honest with you, I’m a jovial kind of upbeat kind of top of the morning kind of guy, so I apologise for that. But what I will say to you is you have a break. I invariably let that break go on for five or ten minutes. We’ve had half an hour’s worth of break there. If there’s a problem with the tea and coffee please let us know. Your breaks are supposed to be for a quarter of an hour. I always extend them to 20/25 minutes. But I will be taking business at the right times at conference because it is only fair to those delegates who’ve got something at the end of the week and everything’s being moved formally. So please try to get back at the allotted time. I know you like to talk, but maybe do some talking in here and then in the bar after conference. Thanks very much for that. OK?

A DELEGATE:

Apologies, president! *Laughter*

THE PRESIDENT:

I wasn’t even looking in his direction! We are on paragraph A5, paragraph A6, A7. I now call emergency resolution 2 Technical Advisory Panel Outcome to be moved from South Yorkshire. Cheshire, if you can be up and ready to second, please.

Emergency resolution 2 – TECHNICAL ADVISORY PANEL OUTCOME – 18 FEBRUARY 2015
Conference condemns South Yorkshire Fire & Rescue (SYFR) for introducing a Close Proximity Crewing (CPC) type duty system despite there being no collective agreement reached with South Yorkshire Fire Brigades Union (SYFBU).

This resulted in SYFBU unilaterally referring the matter to the National Joint Council's Technical Advisory Panel (TAP) in accordance with Section 4 of the Grey Book 6th Edition that details the nationally agreed procedure for dealing with any proposed new duty systems.

The relevant paragraphs of the Grey Book state:
3. Duty systems will need to meet the requirements of the fire and rescue authority’s Integrated Risk Management Plan. Any proposed system should be discussed with the recognised trade unions and be based on the following principles:

- (1) Basic working hours should average forty-two per week (inclusive of three hours of meal breaks in every twenty-four hours) for full-time employees.*
Hours of duty should be pro-rata for part-time employees.
- (2) There should be at least two periods of twenty-four hours free from duty each week.*
- (3) It should comply with relevant United Kingdom and European law, including the Working Time Regulations 1998, and Health, Safety and Welfare at Work legislation.*
- (4) It should have regard to the special circumstances of individual employees and be family friendly.*

4. *Where, following discussion, there is no agreement between the fire and rescue authority and recognised trade union over a proposed duty system (and it does not accord with the principles of any of the existing national duty systems at paragraphs 7 to 16 below) the difference can be referred by either party to the NJC’s Technical Advisory Panel. The Panel will be chaired by an Independent Expert (appointed on a three-yearly basis by the NJC), who will be assisted by the Joint Secretaries.*
5. *The Panel will seek to broker an agreement between the parties, but where that is not possible it will make recommendations. The Panel’s recommendations will ensure that the duty system follows the four principles set out at paragraph 3 above and is compatible with the deployment of resources that the fire and rescue authority has determined is necessary to implement its Integrated Risk Management Plan. This process will be concluded within one month of reference to the Panel, or longer with the agreement of the parties. The parties will decide their responses to any recommendations from the Panel within fourteen days of receipt.*

The meeting of the TAP took place on 18th February 2015 in Central London but concluded with no agreement being reached.

Conference notes with concern that the panel did not make recommendations that follow the four principles, as the procedure clearly states they should, where there is no agreement between the parties at the TAP meeting.

Conference is further concerned that the Chair of the TAP stated in his report that he is unable to make recommendations, instead he opted to suggest ways in which the issues could be resolved.

- These suggestions include:*
- By a collective agreement with the FBU which may modify or exclude certain requirements but recognising that those volunteering to work this CPC shift system would be asked by management to sign individual opt-outs of the 48 hour weekly maximum as provided for in the Regulations, or,*
 - By SYFR ensuring that staff work an appropriate shift pattern with adequate rest periods and compensatory rest in compliance with the WTR, and,*
 - By the introduction of a shift system with an average of 48 hours per week or less.*

Conference is of the opinion that the Chair of TAP has seriously undermined the nationally agreed procedure by suggesting in his report that the issues could be resolved by both parties agreeing to areas that are clearly outside of the four key principles, rather than recommending an option to ‘ensure that the duty system follows the four principles set out at paragraph 3 above and is compatible with the deployment of resources that the fire and rescue authority has determined is necessary to implement its Integrated Risk Management’

Conference believes that this is a serious breach of the laid down procedures contained within the Grey Book.

Conference instructs the Executive Council to raise this, as a matter of urgency with the joint secretaries and to demand that this issue is immediately revisited.

The FBU’s joint secretary must ensure that the panel make recommendations, as the procedure clearly outlines and must also ensure that the Chair of TAP amends his report so it is in accordance with the nationally agreed procedure.

SOUTH YORKSHIRE

SIS NICKY BROWN (South Yorkshire):
Conference, president, following South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue putting forward a new close proximity crewing type duty system and no collective agreement being reached with the FBU, they pressed ahead anyway and introduced it at two stations. This being the case, the FBU unilaterally referred the issue of the new CPC duty system to the NJC’s Technical Advisory Panel, TAP as it’s known, to try to resolve the matter. This is the nationally agreed procedure laid down within the Grey Book for dealing with any proposed new duty systems where, after discussions there’s been no agreement locally.

We attended TAP on 18 February 2015 and after a full day of discussions with South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue basically not willing to move on not a single thing the day, not surprisingly, ended with no agreement being reached. South Yorkshire FBU eagerly awaited the outcome of the TAP by way of the report of proceedings by the chair, including the expected recommendations made by the panel. Unfortunately, this didn’t happen. The procedure within the Grey Book is quite clear. If, after discussions, there is no agreement between the parties, the panel will make recommendations. The procedure doesn’t say the panel *may* make recommendations, or can make recommendations; it says the panel will make recommendations. It also states: “The Panel’s recommendations will ensure the duty system follows the four principles set out in paragraph 3.”

Conference, there was no agreement at our TAP hearing and there were no recommendations made by the panel. Then, to further add insult to injury, the chair of TAP included within his report that he was not willing to make recommendations following the TAP hearing. However, he was willing to make some suggestions on how the issues between the parties could be resolved.

This is an area that South Yorkshire FBU have big issues with. We’ve got the chair of the Technical Advisory Panel who states in his report of the proceedings that he is not willing to make recommendations, as the procedure clearly states the panel should, recommendations that should be in accordance with the four principles. Yet, he is willing to make suggestions that could resolve the issues between the parties. And it just happens that some of those suggestions do not even follow the four principles. It makes a mockery of the whole procedure.

We believe the South Yorkshire TAP outcome was clearly outside of the agreed procedure and believe this needs raising as a matter of urgency at national joint secretary level. Conference, there aren’t many occasions where the FBU can unilaterally refer our differences with brigades to an external third party and this is one of them. South Yorkshire management didn’t want to go to the TAP. At first they were refusing to attend, but eventually changed their minds because they didn’t want to seem to be the ones not adhering to the nationally agreed NJC procedure. It should have been that we came away from TAP with the panel making recommendations that the CPC-type duty system being proposed was not in accord with the four principles, and making recommendations of one that did, or even as a fallback recommend that South Yorkshire come back and negotiate with the FBU on a duty system that is in accordance with the four principles.

We admit that South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue management might still have ignored recommendations made by the panel, but we’ll never know that, because the panel didn’t make them. If they had, we could have used them against South Yorkshire.

Conference, this is our nationally agreed procedure contained within the Grey Book for dealing with any proposed new duty systems where local discussions have concluded with no agreement. It’s not by any shape or form the answer to our prayers in halting the many attacks we are seeing on existing duty systems. But let’s not let the procedure be circumnavigated by the TAP not doing what the national agreement clearly states they should be doing. Conference, please support the motion. I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Cheshire to second.

BRO DAVE WILLIAMS (Cheshire):
President, conference, Cheshire have just been to TAP with a shift duty system including 12-hour shifts and an additional 36 reserve shifts. We share South Yorkshire’s concerns regarding the remit of the independent chair and his recommendations, or lack of recommendations. The chair concluded that agreement could not be reached despite everyone’s best efforts. This did not reflect the discussions, as our management refused to compromise and would simply not negotiate on 12-hour shifts.

Within the chair’s findings he did find that the proposal was not fully compliant with the Grey Book. However, rather than leaving it there, he made suggestions as to how they could make their proposal fit the Grey Book. Where we differ with South Yorkshire, is that the South Yorkshire proposal is way outside the Grey Book and the chair should have returned a recommendation consistent with this.

We’ve been aware for a long time that fire and rescue services pay little respect to the principle of family-friendly within their proposed duty systems. But we are now in serious trouble if TAP doesn’t rule out proposals that do not fit the Grey Book and working time regulations. We support the resolution. Conference, support the resolution. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

That's open for debate, conference. Please come to the rostrum. Anybody else?

BRO RICHARD JONES (Surrey):

President, conference, it's the first time I've seen this, what's come back on this resolution and the bullet points, I think there's another point here. The first bullet point, the suggestion as it is rather than a recommendation, I don't believe the way that's worded that it actually complies with the working time regulations anyway. So to me that shows the lack of understanding of the chair, and I think that's an even bigger issue that we need to challenge: that the chair of TAP must understand the regulations they are actually ruling against. I stand to be corrected, but I'm positive that first bullet point does not fit the working time regulations. Please support. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

I call upon the general secretary.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Conference, I thank South Yorkshire for bringing the issue to conference, but wish to assure conference and the South Yorkshire delegation that the executive council has already begun to address this issue. It was raised at the most recent pre-conference meeting of the executive council where the report was given on the outcome of the TAP into the South Yorkshire duty system issue. The concerns that were raised from the floor were raised and discussed at the executive council. The executive council has already begun that process of raising the issue in relation to TAP. There is a joint secretaries meeting on 20 May and we will be raising the issue there. That is likely to lead, following that, to a discussion which needs to be had with the chair of TAP, which is a position jointly appointed by the NJC, both our side and their side. So there are issues that we will need to discuss with the chair of TAP.

Just to alert conference to some of the other thoughts that we need to flag up, however. The final paragraph we do have some concerns with in terms of "The FBU's joint secretary must ensure that the panel make recommendations, as the procedure clearly outlines and must also ensure that the chair of TAP amends his report so it is in accordance with the nationally agreed procedure." What we can achieve in relation to those discussions we don't know until we've had them, but the executive council shares the concerns that have been raised. Those have been discussed, as I say. They will be raised at the joint secretaries on 20 May.

THE PRESIDENT:

South Yorkshire?

SIS NICKY BROWN (South Yorkshire):

Conference, following the assurances given by the general secretary South Yorkshire FBU are willing to withdraw this resolution to allow the executive council to deal with our concerns and to raise the issues in the relevant arena. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

Thank you. Paragraph A8, paragraph A9, paragraph A10, paragraph A11, A12. I now call resolution 2 Discipline Procedures to be moved by Cleveland. The executive council give it qualified support. If anybody is going to second this could they please come to the rostrum.

Resolution 2 – DISCIPLINE PROCEDURES

This Conference notes the ever increasing problem of the misuse of the disciplinary procedures in the UK Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) against Fire Brigades Union Members.

In most cases a ‘Final Appeal’ against a dismissal will be heard by members of the respective FRS Fire Authority.

Conference demands a move to an ‘Independent’ appeal panel for all Final Appeals against a FRS decision of dismissal.

Conference demands the Executive Council, at National Joint Council level, seek improvements to the disciplinary procedures through the introduction of such ‘Independent’ appeal panels at the earliest opportunity across the UK FRS.
CLEVELAND

BRO BRIAN GIBSON (Cleveland):

Thanks, president. conference, like most resolutions, this one is brought because of a continuing major problem on our doorstep in Cleveland whereby (and I'm sure it's the same in other brigades) the brigade, the organisation, are misusing discipline procedures in our view, in order to keep FBU members in line. We can handle management most of the time during these procedures. In our experience recently as well, if any of these discipline procedures go the distance to an appeal to the fire authority, we believe that certainly in Cleveland and around the country, fire authorities have a vested interest and are not independent. It's happened time and time again in Cleveland where we've got to an appeal

and it's got to a point where we're saying enough is enough; something has got to change. We've lost confidence in our fire authority and I'm sure some of you have in yours as well, and in their ability to deal with cases fairly and independently.

Whenever we've had an appeal to the fire authority my experience of over six years now at that level, they have, without question, upheld management's original decision on every occasion I remember. It can't carry on. Let's be clear, these appeals are only brought when a member has been dismissed by management, and so it's the most serious position you can get in when you're representing your members.

Conference, all we ask is that the EC raises the point of independent appeals panels, or whatever you want to call them, at a national level and steps forward are made to take these life changing decisions away from fire authority members who continually nod to management's wishes without question, and put them into the hands of a panel that has no vested interest or stake in the fire and rescue service. I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

Seconder.

BRO DAREN SCOTCHFORD (Hertfordshire):

I am seconding resolution 2, and first time speaking at conference. *Applause*

President, conference, Hertfordshire have, like many others, had first-hand experience of the misuse of disciplinary procedure, the case of Ashley Brown being a prime example of which many of you will already be aware. Before I continue I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all on behalf of Ashley for your messages and actions in support of his plight. Ashley's dismissal appeal was heard by a senior manager from another department within Hertfordshire County Council. This is as independent as it gets in Hertfordshire and this process deprived Ashley of natural justice.

We strongly believe that had Ashley had recourse to a truly independent appeals panel, the blatant misuse of our discipline procedures would have come to light, and had a positive effect on the outcome for Ashley and his family. Should the executive council be successful in securing the introduction of an independent appeal panel, brigade senior management will perhaps think twice before abusing the process, and natural justice will truly prevail. Please support the resolution. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

That's open for debate. No debate. I will ask the AGS to give the qualification.

THE ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:

Thank you, president. There are a few qualifications. The first one may seem like a minor point, and that is that the resolution says "in most cases" the appeal is to the fire authority. That isn't the understanding of the executive council. Certainly there is a sort of contradiction there, when the appeal is actually an internal one to the chief officer or to the deputy. So I think that's an important point because the problems aren't just with fire authorities; the problems are also when the appeal goes to the chief fire officer or to the deputy for appeal. The essence of it that we have a problem with regard to justice within the fire and rescue service across the UK.

The other key one which I don't think we should shy away from saying to conference is the question of achievability. You will be clear from what the resolution says that essentially what we will be saying to the NJC (invariably made up of fire authority chairs and certainly advised by chief officers and who would in turn take it to the fire services management committee of the LGA at least) is that essentially we will be saying: you are no good; you need to admit that you're no good as fire authority chairs. We'll have to find strategies and tactics to achieve that. But we do need to point out achievability, given the likely resistance from the employers, is a key factor.

But the primary issue, the primary qualification, is this. Before we do raise the point we do need to be clear as a union – and the executive council will have to put its thoughts to this – it will need to take advice from other unions or seek information from other unions in trying to determine what we mean by an independent panel. Who appoints? Who would be on there? We must make sure that we don't replace one system of injustice with another system as well.

So they are the qualifications. We do support the resolution. Thank you, president.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thank you very much. I now put resolution 2 Discipline Procedures 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 8 moved by Northern Ireland and the amendment from Merseyside. The EC give qualified support. If anybody wishes to second please come to the rostrum now.

Resolution 8 – CONDITIONS OF SERVICE <i>Conference instructs the Executive Council to prepare the necessary steps in readiness for a trade dispute and ballot in the event of our employers forcing through detrimental changes to our conditions of service.</i>	NORTHERN IRELAND
Amendment <i>After “for a trade dispute and ballot” insert the words “for industrial action”.</i>	MERSEYSIDE

BRO STEPHEN BOYD (NIFB):
President, conference, we are supporting the Merseyside amendment. Conference, I'll keep it brief as the resolution speaks for itself. We all await the outcome of the Thomas report and the potential impact that that could have on all of us. We're old enough and smart enough, and in my case cynical enough, to know that this is going to be an attack on the Grey Book. So this resolution just puts on record that it's not the job of central government to dictate to us what our conditions of service should be; it's the job of the NJC and we must continue to make sure that that's the case. Please support as amended. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Seconder.

SIS AMELIA DIALLO (CSNC):
President, conference, attacks on our conditions of service affect all members of the FBU and the CSNC has noted the erosion of control conditions of service in control rooms UK wide. We therefore support this resolution and request that control members be included in any trade dispute or ballot for industrial action in relation to the detrimental changes to our terms and conditions of service. I second. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
I now call Merseyside to move their amendment. The executive council support. Is that formally moved? *Formally*

Is that seconded: *Formally*

Thank you. That's open for debate. No debate. I'll give the general secretary a chance to give his qualification.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:
The qualification from the executive council is simply to be clear what we're talking about. When we discussed the issue we weren't entirely clear what attacks were being referred to. Obviously, the mover has referred to the Thomas review and that does pose a potential national threat to national collective bargaining, to the National Joint Council. That would have to be responded to by the entire union. If, on the other hand, local employers were attacking local conditions of service, then it may be more appropriate that there were local ballots and disputes. That's the qualification from the executive council, which I think, to be fair, Stephen did help to clarify.

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 8 as amended to the vote. The EC have given their qualification. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That is *CARRIED*

I now call resolution 9 moved by South Yorkshire with the amendment from Merseyside. The executive council support.

Resolution 9 – CLOSE PROXIMITY CREWING <i>Conference will be aware that Emergency Resolution 10 regarding Day Crew Plus and Close Proximity Crewing type systems was passed unanimously at Conference in May 2011. The resolution demanded that the Executive Council:</i> <i>Table this issue at the National Joint Council with a view to achieving a joint circular informing Fire and Rescue Services (FRS's) that such systems will not be supported by the NJC;</i> <i>Raises this matter with Thompsons seeking urgent legal advice regarding areas such as the Working Time Directive and Equality legislation;</i> <i>Sends out a circular to all members informing them of the dangers of such systems and urging them not to sign any “expressions of interest”;</i> <i>Considers a strategy of co-ordinated action within the FRS's who are considering the implementation of such Duty Systems.</i>	
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<i>In South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue we have had two new Close Proximity Crewing stations introduced in October 2014. These stations have been introduced without any agreement with the Fire Brigades Union.</i>	
<i>Therefore conference demands that the points raised in Emergency Resolution 10 May 2011 are acted on as soon as practicable and also:</i> <i>Ensure that all members are made aware by circular of the detrimental impact these systems have on the firefighter pension schemes.</i>	SOUTH YORKSHIRE
Amendment <i>Final paragraph delete “as soon as practicable”.</i>	MERSEYSIDE

SIS NICKY BROWN (South Yorkshire):
Conference, president, we are accepting the amendment from Merseyside. Conference, in South Yorkshire the FBU have been campaigning to oppose the introduction of close proximity crewing type duty systems for all the reasons that we are so familiar with: they cost jobs, they put an unknown burden on the pension schemes, they have crews available for emergency response for unacceptable and dangerous lengths of time, they undermine national pay rates.

Conference, this resolution is calling for all of the points in the emergency resolution 10 from the 2011 conference to be acted upon. This is not just a case of ensuring the boxes get ticked from that resolution, but we're raising it with this conference with the intention to once again highlight and reiterate to brigades throughout the UK the current FBU conference policy position relating to these and similar types of duty systems. That is: we campaign against them.

In South Yorkshire we have refused to sign up to a collective agreement on a CPC-type duty system. We've utilised the TAP process to try to stop the introduction of such duty systems. Unfortunately, that didn't go as well as we'd hoped. These duty systems can be stopped, but the worst part is that some of our own members have gone against the FBU's advice and individually signed up to undertake the duty systems for personal financial reward.

We believe that the FBU, locally and nationally, should be doing more to oppose these duty systems. We should be using more campaign materials to stop firefighters volunteering. We need to do more to highlight the unknown burdens these type of duty systems could place on the pension schemes. We believe the FBU need to explore every single legal option available to try to get these duty systems banished from the modern fire service. We need to be enforcing the HSE at national level to challenge the clear breaches of the working time regulations by employers who have introduced these types of duty systems. We've tried to do it locally, but now they've sloped their shoulders and passed it on to their national HSE officers and as such we now need to force them to act.

Conference, we as officials of this union all have a collective responsibility to ensure that we do everything in our power to rid the fire service of these Victorian types of duty system that blight the modern fire service. This newly elected Tory government are going to be slashing the funding to the fire service. One way that brigades will look to address their shortfalls will be by the increased use of these and similar duty systems. That is why we must act now to educate our members about why they shouldn't volunteer to work them. If every member refused to volunteer to work these duty systems that are outside of the working time regulations, then they just wouldn't come in. They can't be forced to work the duty system; they have to volunteer.

Conference, our resolution asks for all the points raised in emergency resolution 10 of the 2011 conference to be acted upon, some of which already have been. But, conference, we need to wake up and get proactive and discourage all members from even considering volunteering for any such duty systems, even before it becomes an offer within their brigades. If we educate members we can stop it. Conference, support the motion. I move. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Seconder.

BRO TONY SMITH (Hertfordshire):
Good morning, conference, day 2, Hertfordshire has woken up! We are seconding resolution 9 from South Yorkshire. LA's, LALAs, day crew plus close proximity, 1950s-style fire stations! Here we are again, 2011, really trying to resist the urge of telling conference and the EC I told you so! Do you know what, in 2011, those of you who were here will bear testament that I told you so! After the visit to the rostrum we called a meeting outside at the end of that day. Sixteen brigades attended that meeting, all looking at, LALAs day crew, 1950s-style duty systems and here we are there years later.

When I told you so, what did I tell you? I told you it would go viral and it's gone viral. These people are cutting jobs and saving huge amounts of money with this horrendous duty system. We've got three now in Hertfordshire, and we're staring down the barrel of number four. That will be a total loss of 56 firefighter jobs in Hertfordshire, just from this LALAs system. We've no agreement from the FBU. Let's make that quite clear, we've not agreed to this; we've not signed up. But the problem we have is that there is a long line of members lining up to do this crazy system. But because we've had it for three years in Hertfordshire now, those people that were queueing up and really keen, believe me the interest is starting to wane now that the reality of this duty system is setting in amongst those people.

The first thing that went out the window was family friendly. They tell me this. This system is not family friendly and it's never going to be. Pensions, you pay 100% pension and then walk away with 124% pay out at the end of it. Where's that 24% coming from? Where does that come from? Who's put that in the pot? Nobody, that's who's that in the pot. So the more of these stations we get, the more burden, the more strain on the pensions pot. I'm not a mathematician but I can see that one. Extra shifts – can you now cover, can you now come in and cover; so-and-so's long term sickness, so-and-so's got an operation now, can you come in and cover? Then we get to November and everybody's done their shifts and it's: what do we do now – overtime? But all the time people are doing extra shifts on it, they're pushing the boundaries of the working time directive. We're looking at a government that maybe is going to tear up the working time directive. Do you know what, the working time directive is torn up on the floor of fire brigade headquarters all around the country; it's already been done.

We've got to get a grip on this as a union, as a collective, nationally. It's not too late, but we really have got to get a grip of this system. I tell you what, give it another three years when I'm up at this rostrum, we'll all be on the LALAs system. It will be the only system that exists. The kids joining the job will be saying: what was it like in the old days to work 2-2-4? And we will say: do you know what, I can't remember, I've been on this horrendous system, I've done so many hours, I'm so tired I can't remember who I am! *Applause*

I'm really pleased to see this come up and to second this and I want you all to get behind this unanimously and let's push. EC, I really do implore you, please to form a national collective way forward on this, a way that we can fight this together – template letters, template campaigns. Let's crush this horrendous duty system back from the 1950s before we're all on it, and before we all suffer all the detriment that goes with this system.

Having said that, I'll leave you on a cliffhanger, because next time I come to this rostrum I'm going to tell you about the new duty system that's been introduced in Hertfordshire that makes LALAs look pretty attractive! You look forward to that one. I second. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
I call upon Merseyside to move their amendment. The executive council support. *Formally*

Is that seconded? *Formally*

That is open for debate. Bob. Anybody else want to speak, please come to the rostrum.

BRO BOB WALKER (Devon and Somerset):
President, conference, I got up here in 2011 and moved the resolution on day crew plus because it was being proposed in our brigade. We had over 200 people put expressions of interest in for it. But I tell you what, we did the work, we went round, we put them off, and we did put them off, and the chief officer ended up withdrawing it. Ironically, just the year before last, he ended up (when he was putting his cuts in place, I hasten to add) thanking the FBU for pointing out the flaws in the system and he wouldn't be introducing it from then. So you've got to support this resolution. People have got to wake up. I've just heard that people volunteer to do extra hours. Where do you get the hours in a week to do extra hours? It's absolutely barmy. Support the resolution. *Applause*

BRO KEVIN DEACON (Lancashire):
President, conference, this resolution asks the FBU and its members to oppose the introduction of this kind of duty system. Fortunately, it doesn't suggest what we should do where it is already in place. I am not here today to support close proximity crewing or day crewing plus, or similar duty systems. But as conference will know, when we spoke at the 2011 conference Lancashire already had appliances on the day crewing plus duty system crewed by FBU members. As contained within the head office circular on this issue dated 6 March 2015, we know that DCP is not motivated by improving fire cover or service delivery. It is merely to make cuts to the workforce. In Lancashire we have lost a third of our firefighter posts, including wholetime, RDS, officer and control posts. Green Book posts have also been decimated. We are currently facing a £6.8 million shortfall on our budget. Although DCP is not going to be rolled out any further, if DCP had not been introduced in Lancashire, those appliances would have been downgraded and even further, lost altogether. Depending if your glass is half full or half empty, it could be argued that we saved 14 jobs at these stations, not lost 14 jobs. The key issue for us is that if this government's funding cuts continue the decimation will continue. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
AGS, do you wish to contribute?

THE ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:
Conference, the executive council are supporting the resolution without qualification, but I think it's appropriate that some words are said on behalf of the executive council, particularly given some of the contributions. None of the contributions can be criticised, and we wouldn't seek to. But one thing that we are clear on is that in terms of the work that the executive council has done in putting the information out there, we don't believe we've ticked the boxes; what we have done is performed and carried out those elements. However, I think the clear message is that you want further focus and continued focus on the issue. That is what the executive council will deliver.

A number of the points within the resolution do replicate correctly the emergency resolution 10 in 2011. But one of the clear issues which we haven't addressed significantly is the question of trying to get joined up action over the issue. That is something that the executive council commits to engage with to deal with this issue.

I will say the real problem that we do face – and it's an aspect which we need to address within the strategy that we formulate – is the fact that whilst 99.9% of our members are solid on the issue, there is unfortunately a small number who do choose to volunteer, against the advice given by local and national officials, against the stream of work which is done by local officials. That is a problem for us. We will attempt to address that issue within the strategy.

There is one clear issue, and I think Hertfordshire raised it, and that is where members (and perhaps in some cases non-members) who have applied and are currently doing this duty system are less than satisfied with it now they've experienced it. It is contained within the guidance that we've put out, and in the circulars that we've put out, but we will ensure that it's re-emphasised. If any employee of any company – and let's face it, that's the way fire and rescue services are viewed by chief officers nowadays – wants to opt back in under the working time regulations, they can do it. Unless there's a specific clause within the local policy that the individual has signed up to (the individual contract, if you like), then the default is three months. Three months' notice and they're off, they're back and they're back to the shift system which has been agreed between the Fire Brigades Union and that employer.

But let's just be clear. We do need to address the issue. The executive council does recognise the issue needs to be addressed. The issue isn't the executive council, the issue certainly isn't our local officials, and the issue isn't the vast majority of our members. The problem is the chief officers and a small minority of members who we haven't yet managed to persuade. We will find a way to ensure that they are persuaded. Thank you, president. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you for that. 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 9 as amended to the vote. The executive council support. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That is *CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY*

Thank you, conference. I now call resolution 10 with the amendment from Merseyside. The executive council support. Duty Systems to be moved from Derbyshire.

Resolution 10 – DUTY SYSTEMS <i>This Conference condemns the budgetary pressures that the National Fire and Rescue Service are being subjected to by the Coalition Government. The method that a number of Fire Authorities are using to meet these budget cuts is through changes in duty systems.</i>	DERBYSHIRE
Amendment <i>Final sentence delete “their unavoidable”.</i>	MERSEYSIDE

BRO CHRIS TAPP (Derbyshire):

President, conference, apologies firstly, conference, the wording of the resolution isn’t actually factually correct now because it obviously refers to a coalition which we all assumed we’d probably end up with. So we tried to play the safe game and that hasn’t panned out too well!

The resolution’s intentions are genuine here. However, we’ve just heard some of the stories from the rostrum here about the dangers involved with duty systems. In principle the resolution’s intentions are to support us as officials to try to fight the detrimental changes that do come to our duty systems. It also is designed to open up that alternative thinking for officials when we are faced with some of the most hostile attacks on the budgets, terms and conditions which include the shift systems.

I understand the executive council will be giving some qualification of support to this resolution and suspect that conference can all see the potential dangers when you look at the wording in this resolution. To be clear, this resolution’s request for information, the study, is not designed to assist chief fire officers and their desire to erode our duty systems and our terms and conditions, and as we have just been hearing, cut firefighters’ jobs in our services. So therefore, with all this considered and in discussions with delegates at conference, we are willing to consider withdrawing this resolution on the understanding that the executive council are alive to the problems with the different shift patterns, the need for information on this issue at local level, and some assurances on the way that this work will be looked at, will be carried out, and the information passed through the executive council, through regional committees and down to us at brigade committees. So if the general secretary could give some assurances and information on this issue, on how it may be progressed, obviously we’ll consider that withdrawal. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

Is that seconded? *Formally*

Amendment from Merseyside. *Formally*

Is that seconded? *Formally*

That is open for debate. Please come to the rostrum.

BRO CAMERON MATTHEWS (Cambridgeshire):

I’m urging conference to support the resolution. President, conference, I thought it was important to speak on this, not least because Cambridgeshire have the five-watch duty system. I think this resolution is vitally important so that all information can be readily at the hands of members and officials about the different varieties of shift systems across the country. To give the example that I’ve discussed would be the five-watch system that’s in place in Cambridgeshire. I would highlight that it was accepted under extreme pressure placed upon members by our senior management team. It was one of those decisions that what transpired when we actually started to work the system was people realised that things weren’t being delivered as they were promised. The reason I thought it was important to get up and speak on it, is because we know our senior managers have been scuttling around the UK, telling every other senior manager in other brigades that Cambridgeshire members are quite happy with the system and quite like it. I can categorically tell you that that’s not true. We conducted a survey of our members which over 80% said that they would not recommend the five-watch system to other firefighters in the UK over the Grey Book 2-2-4. So I thought it was important to highlight that as an example about why we need to have something which we can all go to, look at the details and actually have an accurate analysis when we’re having certain shift systems proposed to us. I would urge you to support the resolution, and if we can get back to rallying round a single system of shifts negotiated by the NJC, that would be the ideal situation. Support the resolution. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

Any further debate needed? No? AGS.

THE ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:

Thank you, president. I know that Chris asked for the assurance from the general secretary, but we had already divvied up who was going to speak on which resolution. But take it as read, the assurance is given on behalf of the general secretary and the full executive council.

That is that we do recognise that this work needs to be done quickly. We need to follow up on previous surveys and that will happen very quickly after conference. I would ask all of you to respond on that.

The resolution itself calls for a number of things: the establishment of a working group, which we’ve done; it calls on the work to be done quickly, and we will ensure that we do that. I think there is an important point within the resolution. It does say, and it was emphasised from the rostrum, that the report that we give will be and should be kept with a degree of confidence amongst officials. The suggestion was that we do it via the regional secretaries to distribute and to make people aware via the regional committees. The executive council will give

consideration to that. Certainly the regional committees is logical, but there is also the question of making sure that we do get the information to brigade level as well. We’ll just give some consideration to that.

We give that firm assurance to Derbyshire and Cambridgeshire, and we also give it to conference. One small point, I think we do still have a coalition government. It’s made up of right-wing Tories and even more right-wing Tories! There you are. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

Derbyshire.

BRO CHRIS TAPP (Derbyshire):

Thank you, president. I think with the assurances that have been given, and I thank Cameron for his contribution and they have the same dilemmas, with this split second of thinking time now (sorry we haven’t had discussions with more people). I just think it’s in the best interests that we do withdraw this resolution because clearly the work is underway. I thank the assistant general secretary for giving us those assurances. I don’t think anybody’s under any illusions that it’s not going to happen. I am alive to the fact that there are potential pitfalls here of making information widely available and allowing others to use it as a resource for things that we as conference would not support. So we’ll put our faith in our executive council (they will all be pleased to hear) and we’ll ensure that that work has been done. I know that it will be. Thank you. We will withdraw. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

Put your faith in the executive council, comrade! I would have stuck with your resolution and seen it through! *Laughter*

I now call resolution 11 moved by Buckinghamshire with the amendment from Merseyside. The executive council support. Buckinghamshire. If there’s anybody wants to second will they please come to the rostrum.

Resolution 11 – STEPS TO ADDRESS PARTIAL PERFORMANCE <i>Conference demands that the Executive Council take steps to address issues related to partial performance.</i>	
<i>To this end the Conference calls upon the Executive Council to:</i> <i>a. ensure that discussions are commenced with the appropriate Government departments; local employers and/or national employers as appropriate on the matter of partial performance; and,</i> <i>b. investigate whether the Fire Authority or senior managers who took these decisions have to any extent breached their statutory responsibilities, or in any way acted unlawfully.</i>	
<i>This is necessary due to the unprecedented nature by which partial performance was implemented in Buckinghamshire during the course of the pensions dispute.</i>	
<i>A Fire and Rescue Service which implements partial performance prior to and/or following periods of strike action does so in the full knowledge that fire cover is being jeopardised. This exposes the public to extended periods of risk. The motivation by the employer in Buckinghamshire for making this decision was financial.</i>	
<i>This financial gain was at the expense of the health and safety of the public and firefighters from the surrounding Fire and Rescue Services. The employer made a deliberate decision to preserve its financial position to the detriment of public safety. This is an erroneous decision and one which Conference unreservedly denounces.</i>	
<i>If during the course of this work it becomes apparent that the Fire Authority or senior managers who took these decisions have breached their statutory responsibilities, or in any way acted unlawfully, the FBU shall utilise all legal avenues to hold those decision makers to account for their actions.</i>	
Amendment <i>2nd sentence, after the words “To this end” delete the word “the”.</i>	BUCKINGHAMSHIRE MERSEYSIDE

BRO GREG O’NEILL (Buckinghamshire):

President, conference, let me be clear, this resolution is simply not tasking the EC to determine the legality of an employer being able to apply partial performance to those firefighters who take industrial action and withdraw their labour for part of a shift. This resolution focuses on tasking the EC to use all available avenues to examine and investigate the legality of decisions taken by publicly funded bodies whose

primary purpose is to protect public safety and minimise our communities’ exposure to risk who knowingly and wilfully jeopardise public safety and by their actions greatly increase the risk to the public.

The extent and the scale on which Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire and Rescue Service senior management use partial performance is unprecedented and it has been used in an incredibly disproportionate manner. The previous chief fire officer and members of the fire authority publicly maintained their decision not to extend partial performance was a means to protect public finances, but they deliberately stayed silent on the matter.

In July 2014 during seven consecutive days of strike action consisting of four hours in each 24 hours the FBU and chief fire officer were able to agree a compromise which prevented partial performance being implemented for the full seven days. It was acknowledged by the chief fire officer that an effective lock out of 39 hours was enough to enable the service to recoup costs and therefore deducting any more wages from firefighters would be punitive. However, the very next month the FBU announced a further series of short strike periods which amounted to 24 hours over an eight day period. The former chief fire officer chose to prioritise and protect the public purse at the expense of public safety and was willing to expose the public of Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes to increased risk due to fire cover being dramatically reduced for an additional 168 hours.

Out of the possible 36 fire appliances available, at time there were only four covering the county of Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes. Despite the duration of the strike being less in terms of hours than those of July, regrettably, and to the surprise of FBU officials, all offers of compromise were refused out of hand – a tacit admission that the extended lockout was entirely punitive, even when those offers more than satisfied the public position of the authority to control costs. Senior managers put forward a counter offer saying the only way of avoiding a lockout, partial performance for the whole eight days was if members of the FBU agreed to be mobilised to life risks during periods of industrial action. Clearly, this was not acceptable to the members of Buckinghamshire.

What was highlighted to the FBU was that in fact it had nothing to do with money, and the declared position of the fire authority was using partial performance to recoup the costs of industrial action. The real motivation of using partial performance was as a tool to attack FBU members with the intent of breaking our resolve. Public safety was wilfully and irresponsibly put in jeopardy for the purpose of political motivation and gain. The disproportionate and cynical application of partial performance by Chief Officer Jones was designed to be punitive at a maximum financial penalty incurred by FBU members engaged in lawful industrial action.

A chief fire officer is a senior public servant, the professional adviser to the fire authority, who should be a guardian of public safety and should prioritise his or her decision making to ensure that the priority of public safety remains. It cannot be acceptable for a chief fire officer to advise a fire authority on a course of action that knowingly and wilfully undermines public safety by implementing partial performance and in effect locking out firefighters for eight days.

It is an absolute disgrace that the fire and rescue service whose fundamental reason for existing is to preserve and protect public safety – a role which is bound in legislation – should deliberately and unnecessarily put people and property at greater risk of harm for the purpose of financial reward or political gain. It is only by chance that this misguided decision did not contribute or cause harm to the public.

However, this should not be justification for the decision or a reason not to investigate the legality of any other fire and rescue service choosing deliberately to undermine public safety. It is morally and ethically redundant deliberately to put the public at greatly increased risk of harm. In our view, this decision did not conform to the fire authority’s legal obligations and as such conference calls upon the executive council to investigate whether Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire and Rescue Service, senior managers or any other fire and rescue service authority which has imposed partial performance have, to any extent, breached their statutory obligations, or in any way acted unlawfully. The FBU should utilise all available legal avenues, and if it is found that they have acted unlawfully, we must ensure that these decision makers are held to account for their actions.

Finally, as a member of Buckinghamshire I would like to pass on thanks of every member for the messages of support that came into Buckinghamshire and hardship fund donations. Thank you. I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Seconder?

BRO RICCARDO LA TORRE (Essex):
President, conference, we are seconding Buckinghamshire’s resolution 11. Essex, sadly, along with the Buckinghamshire members are all too familiar with the vindictive and punitive tactic that is the non-acceptance of partial performance. We’ve seen it not only in our current local dispute, our local dispute before that, and also as far back as the New Year’s Eve strikes during the early stages of our pensions dispute. The general secretary actually saw the new year in on a cold, Essex picket line that evening. Conference will be all too aware, and you will

remember the disgusting, insulting, unprofessional comments that came out of the Essex chief fire officer at the time around the idea of not being prepared to pay firefighters double time to come back in and sleep it off after a strike!

This is a tactic that’s constantly being used against us in Essex. You’ll be all too aware we’re in the middle of our current dispute at the moment. That is a fight we’re going to continue to have. As long as they are forcing our members out of work, as long as they are making our women choose between a career or a family, it is a fight we will continue to have. This, unfortunately, is a tactic that is hanging above our heads. Essex have put out a standing statement that they will not accept partial performance in any circumstances going forward as their default position. That’s before they have any knowledge of the type or length of the strike action that they’re going to be facing.

I’m sure Buckinghamshire members will agree it can be a very lonely position being locked out. There are emotional pressures on you as well as the financial pressures. I’d like to echo the Buckinghamshire sentiments of thanking conference and all of your members. What did become apparent to us is the quality and the strength of the union of which we are a part, because we got support financially and message of solidarity from every corner of the Fire Brigades Union every time we’ve been locked out. So I’d like to thank you, conference.

Buckinghamshire’s resolution mentions that the motivation is financial. I always find that a bit perverse when we hear employers in Buckinghamshire and in Essex bleating about the financial pressures. I would like to remind conference that that financial pressure is only born from the sizeable price tag that these mercenary strike breakers put upon their so-called loyalty to their employer. That’s where the financial pressure is born from. *Applause*

In considering this resolution, conference, what we can’t ignore is that this is a tactic that is as much motivated by ideology as it is by financial reasons. This is a direct attack on our members. This is an attempt to undermine our lawful strike action and force us back to work when it’s employed by chief fire officers and fire authorities. I often hear from comrades from other trade unions in Essex that they consider us to hold a certain position in our movement, and they look to us, to our losses and our victories, and they use us as inspiration in their own struggles. If that is true, that is also a fact that will be known by our opponents, our opponents at the highest of levels. Any attack on us will have wider implications for all workers if successful.

So it’s clear that partial performance has been weaponised by our employers and it’s a blade that we absolutely need to blunt. I urge you, conference, please support the resolution. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
I call upon Merseyside to move their amendment. The executive council support. *Formally*

Thank you, Merseyside. Is that seconded? *Formally*

That’s open for debate now. Please.

BRO RICHARD JONES (Surrey):
As you’re probably aware, Surrey was the first brigade on the first strike to get partial performance and lockout. We were lucky; there’s no two ways about it. Because it was the very first day of the action and we had a couple of hours’ notice that they were going to lock us out, we were able to gain support. We had a national news team from Sky and BBC following us around half the day; we had some national officers, EC members from supporting brigades. We had massive support, and the cameras did the job to be honest. It was plastered all over the news for the day, and our Tory council didn’t like it. They backed down big time, and that was the end of it; they never did it again. We actually managed to get the money refunded to our members, which was good as well, but let’s be honest, it was a bonus; it was only five hours’ loss of pay. But at that point we could have been like Buckinghamshire or Essex. We didn’t know that that wasn’t going to carry on for ever and a day.

But I think the big point here is it is bullying, there’s no two ways about it. Putting it down to money, funding strike action, we all know that’s total rubbish. This is about bullying us into not taking strike action, not exercising our right. So we know we’re going to get new legislation coming at us in weeks if not days, making it harder to go out on strike. If they are allowed to continue with partial performance, we are really going to be up against it in the future, getting our members out the door. So I think it’s absolutely essential that we do all we can to get rid of partial performance. Please support. *Applause*

BRO DAREN SCOTCHFORD (Hertfordshire):
I am speaking in support of resolution 11. President, conference, non-acceptance of partial performance was once described to me by a brigade manager as just another tool in the toolkit. There really did seem to be a lack of understanding of the risk to the public in the wilful reduction to fire cover for extended periods. Rather, it was a lever to be used to force us back to work. This manager didn’t even have the courtesy to at least pretend that this was financially motivated in the interests of the taxpayer, as we have heard from the management in Buckinghamshire.

Non-acceptance has had a direct effect on firefighters in Hertfordshire. Assurances given to us in writing by management if we were ordered to cross the border that a full Hertfordshire PDA would be mobilised was not delivered the very first time it happened. This led to crews being exposed to significant health and safety risks, despite our previous warnings in the form of notice of safety concern. Subsequently, Hertfordshire members, when raising their concerns, were threatened with disciplinary action if they didn't cross the border. In fact, our service thought it was such a good idea that very shortly afterwards they requested and were given the authority not to accept partial performance in Hertfordshire as well.

Conference, the use of non-acceptance of partial performance for financial, or in fact any other reason, which increases the risks faced by the public and firefighters alike, should be challenged by all means necessary. Those making the decisions should be held to account if they have breached their legal obligations. Please support the resolution. *Applause*

BRO PAUL EMBERY (London):
President, conference, I am speaking in support of the resolution. We've got some experience if not of actually being locked out in London certainly of the threat of being locked out. Boris Johnson, as you may know, has threatened should there be any future strikes he'll lock people out, dock people for partial performance in circumstances where the strike lasts for less than a shift. I have to say, that is a bitter irony really because if you read the papers yesterday you would have seen that Boris Johnson has now been given some kind of cabinet post. I think he attends cabinet without having any kind of portfolio. So effectively we've got somebody who's the mayor of London and a member of parliament, and a journalist or columnist for the Daily Telegraph and now a cabinet minister who is threatening to dock firefighters' pay for partial performance in their jobs. It's an absolute outrage frankly. I think also it demonstrates – if you look at the line that Boris Johnson is taking about our strikes – that actually public safety becomes completely secondary. He has been presented with evidence, we've written to him ourselves and presented him with the evidence, showing that during our strikes the crews who they have brought in have not been able to perform anywhere near good enough as professional crews. Response times have gone through the roof. I think the average time in the document published by our commissioner, the average first response time in London has gone from around six minutes to around 17 minutes during periods of strike action. There's been a number of incidents where people have been injured. In one case somebody sadly died, simply because the strikebreaking crews were not able to get there in time because they are massively depleted compared to the normal fleet that's on the run.

What also is ironic in the most tragic way is that the very people who are criticising us for taking strike action and who say that we are endangering public safety when we take strike action are the same people who are prepared, for political reasons, to lock us out, to break our strikes, with all the consequences that has for fire cover and for the protection of people in their communities.

But there's no doubt, as comrades have said previously, this new lockout tactic (I say new lockout tactic, it's probably new for the fire service) is a crude tool that is used by managers who want to break industrial action. As Gordon said previously, we had the docking for partial performance in 2010 in a dispute we had over shifts. Fortunately we won a stunning victory in that legal case. But we need to be acutely aware that managers more and more are resorting to what can only be described as Victorian methods, by effectively trying to starve people back to work, saying to firefighters: if you dare to take strike action, if it's for less than a shift, we'll gamble and we'll try to starve you back to work. It's a crude tool and we've got to fight it as much as we possibly can. Support the resolution. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
OK, 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 resolution 11 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 12 National Overtime Ban from Cleveland. The executive council oppose.

Resolution 12 – NATIONAL OVERTIME BAN
This Conference recognises with concern that many Fire and Rescue Services across the UK are blatantly using pre-planned overtime to ‘fill gaps’ and save money.

Fire Brigades Union Members should not be used to ‘prop up’ a failing service caused by years of Government financial cuts.

Therefore, in order to, in the longer term, increase employment opportunities in the UKFRS and in the shorter term protect FBU Members from working excessive hours, this Conference demands the immediate introduction of a national overtime ban which will run until further notice and can only be lifted by national Conference/Recall Conference.
CLEVELAND

BRO BRIAN GIBSON (Cleveland):
President, conference, after the decision made yesterday, this will now not be my last conference. A little history lesson. As early as 1974 after reform of FBU structure there was a recall conference that year over government threshold pay limits. Firefighters of that era were being asked to do far too much with few numbers on such low wages. This led to a call at that time for a 40-hour week, a ban on overtime, and a ban on wholetime/retained. Not long after that, the ban on pre-arranged overtime was put in place, which lasted until 2002/2003, not forgetting the inclusion of a very successful pay formula. Over time I and many others have come to thank that conference decision made in the 1970s. Why, you may ask? Because of such a ban there were regular recruitment drives in the 70s, 80s and 90s, and because of such a ban I and many others in this room gained employment which has lasted on for many years. As we approach 2016, comrades, we are once again seeing dangerously low numbers of firefighters, firefighters working harder than ever, firefighters working longer on day crewing plus and different silly systems, and once again on restrained wages. Now we see regular recruitment freezes because of continuing austerity.

Finally, conference, there is one more thing that puzzles me immensely. After the 2002/2003 pay dispute when the longstanding pre-arranged overtime ban was lifted, it was on a premise that such overtime did not cover for "permanent shortfalls in staffing". It's apparent, comrades, that there is the use of pre-arranged overtime to maintain minimum staffing on frontline appliances out there today in the UK fire and rescue service. If that's not the use of overtime for permanent shortfalls in staffing, then just like Paddy Ashdown, I'll eat my hat. Conference, please support this resolution. I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Seconder? Dave.

BRO DAVE WILLIAMS (West Yorkshire):
President, conference, we are seconding motion 12 National Overtime Ban. West Yorkshire welcomes this motion and are slightly upset that we actually missed the opportunity to bring it ourselves. We're kicking ourselves for that oversight on our part. We want to thank Cleveland for bringing it.

Conference, my members in West Yorkshire were incredibly disappointed when we had recall conference of 10 February. We actually came away from that weaker than we went in. Previously we had the pre-arranged overtime ban as part of ASOS, and recall conference decided in their wisdom to remove that as well from ASOS.

The removal of pre-arranged overtime from ASOS affected two groups in our brigade: one who carried out young firefighters' instruction on their days off; and one who formed part of the marauding terrorist firearms team in West Yorkshire. The stress that those two minority groups went under was immense, especially the MTFA groups. But they stuck to that call, they stuck to the decision taken prior to conference to keep away from pre-arranged overtime.

Brian mentioned the job opportunities that will come by going back to pre-arranged overtime. If anyone can stand up here and argue the case that that won't be the matter, then I'll eat his hat. Brian did mention the fact that we had quite a successful pay formula linked to this. Here's something dynamic. What we've been campaigning for for years is a pay formula to make sure that we get decent returns year on year. Why don't we go back and say: let's link our pay formula to pre-arranged overtime? That will give members an incentive not to do it, not just us asking them. Greed is rife in some members, and it is a minority but it is rife. So if they got something in return rather than just a adhering to a call from us lefties at conference, they would actually go with that.

The chief tested our mettle with the pre-arranged overtime ban. The first opportunity he had to press the recall to duty button was for a ten-pump fire at a nightclub. Ten pumps, that's all. He wanted to stand at four pumps. Thankfully, our members refused to go. We had four people attending. None of them were drivers. I'm not sure how many were members. But we stood strong.

Conference, my members are up for the fight. We are here today because we are up for the fight. We will support the motion that Brian and Cleveland has brought. What my members need is clear instructions, strong leadership and support by the unity of their brothers and sisters elsewhere in this FBU. Thank you very much. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
That is now open for speakers. Anybody who wishes to speak please come to the rostrum. Yes, brother. Carry on.

BRO SEAN MCCALLUM (Nottinghamshire):
Thank you Mr President. When the vote takes place for this you're going to see two hands raised for Nottinghamshire in opposition. I have to qualify that, just so conference is aware, as I did in Manchester. In Nottinghamshire we work an annualised hour system and we are under the very real threat of dropping to fours as a few brigades have done, riding fours as standard. This motion for us will be damaging and

tantamount to saying to our chief fire officer that we're quite happy to ride fours as standard. For that reason, not for financial gain, we're going to oppose it. Thank you. *Applause*

SIS JENNY IMPEY (Kent):

President, conference, I'm very sorry, we've got to oppose this resolution. We were mandated by our membership before we left and we've been given a direct instruction to oppose this. However, our heart is saying one thing but our mandate says another. I'm very sorry. *Applause*

BRO DAVE BURN (Cumbria):

I can only echo what my colleague has just said there. Overtime in Cumbria is used to cover permanent shortfalls in staffing. It's as simple as that. It's used in the way we knew it always would be when the overtime ban was lifted in 2003. Over 50% of our members work overtime. The reality is that a national overtime ban would fragment the membership in Cumbria to the detriment of our union. Personally I would welcome an overtime ban. I don't do it myself. Other members don't work it, but unfortunately over 50% do. I and our secretary represent our members today and this proposal would fracture Cumbria irreparably. Our managers are very clever and they appeal to our wallet, be it through duty system changes or offering overtime. It's tragic that people are motivated by money but that's the reality and our managers know this. Morally we support this, but on behalf of Cumbria we are handcuffed, so don't shoot me on the way back! Applause

BRO MIKE TULLY (Gloucestershire):

We are opposing the resolution. We are opposing it because we just don't see a need for it. In Gloucestershire we have an overtime policy in line with the Grey Book. That policy clearly states that pre-arranged overtime will not be used to make up any planned shortfall. It's only used to cover sickness. If, at any time, management tried to use overtime for any other reason, then it would be opposed. The Grey Book makes that possible, so for that reason we oppose the resolution. Thank you. *Applause*

BRO BRENT THORLEY (Wiltshire):

I do feel uncomfortable doing this, and I appreciate the passion of the people in support, but we will oppose this. Sadly in Wiltshire the number of non-members, retained and wholetime, who are happy to give more cover than they normally would because of cash incentives keeps pumps on the run in Wiltshire. It completely undermines this type of action. The CFO then goes to press singing their praises and claiming he has defeated the union in the action and the public can be reassured of their safety, which the union was going to compromise. This obviously causes the members to question the action and the lining of non-members' pockets. We are going to face talks in the future on posts and shift change. The members do feel that the fallout from this could compromise those discussions because the chief already has his argument that he doesn't need us. So I oppose. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

Thank you. General secretary to give the executive council's opposition.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Thanks, president. The executive council are asking conference to oppose resolution 12 for a number of reasons. The introduction set out very helpfully the background to this. It is quite a remarkable story that in 1974 members of the Fire Brigades Union voted at their conference to put a ban on pre-arranged overtime, and to ban wholetime/retained. That's 1974, before even the president was in the fire service. So a long, long time ago indeed. That stayed in place until 2002, so a remarkable achievement for the Fire Brigades Union and for that generation of FBU members who did that and who did create jobs, who did improve duty systems. There are huge lessons to be learned.

However, we also have to face reality as it is now, because another conference of the union, our conference, also voted to lift that overtime ban. There is no point in debating the ins and outs of what went on then. This conference voted to lift the overtime ban.

Mike, I think helpfully, drew conference's attention to the provisions of the Grey Book, because there are protections. Whether you think they are strong enough or not, there are protections within the Grey Book that set out when pre-arranged overtime can and should be used. What seems to be being reported is that local employers are abusing that national agreement in relation to the use of overtime. So that clearly is something that needs to be challenged. Certainly initially, I think that needs to be challenged locally. It may be then that there is a national issue. But I think the approach that Mike set out, what we should have in place, is local agreements on overtime that reflect what is in our national agreement. That's the first step that we need to take.

It is clear that employers are using overtime and other mechanisms of additional hours, so that people are working overtime not on agreed rates of pay as well, we understand, to undermine staffing levels in the fire service. That's become increasingly clear. An overtime ban is a tactic which we may have to use at some point. One other big change since the policy was introduced in 1974 is, as you know, there has been a whole raft of legal changes so an overtime ban today would have to be balloted for. We would have to have a lawful trade dispute and we would have to run a ballot for that. In 1974 it was simply a vote at a conference, and members complied with that decision. Things are different today.

I think the opposition that was expressed from delegates today gives a further reason why the executive council are asking conference to oppose. That is, during the course of the pensions dispute the question of overtime ban and other actions short of strike was probably (I don't think I'm giving any secrets away) one of the most divisive issues on the executive council. Executive council members genuinely reported from their regions huge differences of opinion between regions, and huge differences of opinion within regions to the degree that some executive council members found that the tactic was extremely divisive actually to the extent of potentially weakening the campaign. That is why, as they reported, that was reported to the recall conference that that would be lifted.

So our recent experience of an overtime ban on a national level is that I has caused huge divisions. That is not to dismiss it as a tactic. It is a tactic that we would need to think about. But it strikes me that what comes out of the debate – because we are certainly not being dismissive of the points that are raised – what I think the executive council needs to do is collate that information, issue guidance, do an audit of whether we have overtime agreements in place, whether they do comply with the Grey Book, whether those are then being ignored, but also link that to a survey of how those systems and additional hours and other secondary contracts and all those issues, all those measures are being used to undermine full time staffing within the fire and rescue service. Then we need to develop a strategy arising out of that.

It may be the case at some point, one of the tactics we use to challenge that is an overtime ban. But clearly, from what has been reported into conference today, that would take a major campaign among our members to convince them of the need to do that. So the way the resolution is written, in our view, would effectively insist that that took place now. We are not remotely in that position, conference. We urge you to oppose the resolution. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Cleveland right of reply.

BRO BRIAN GIBSON (Cleveland):

Thanks, president. It's quite obvious, conference, that a lot of comrades with heavy hearts have stood up and outlined the problems such as destaffing, riding four and four, annualised hours etc. But that's our point exactly. How many more reasons do we need to introduce an overtime ban? Matt mentioned the need for a trade dispute. If we can't raise a dispute over 5,000 members losing their jobs over the next five years – I just can't quite believe it! Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

I put resolution 12 National Overtime Ban to the vote. The executive council oppose. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *FALLS*

(A card vote was called)

Conference, come to order. Has everybody cast their votes in the card vote? OK, thank you very much. We will call the result after dinner. Be here at 2 o'clock, please.

Break for lunch

AFTERNOON SESSION

THE PRESIDENT:

Take your seats, please. Thank you very much, conference. Come to order. Before I introduce you to our guest speaker – she really should take no introductions but I'll introduce her anyway – there's been a problem with one of the scrutineers who's hurt his back lifting one of the boxes. I'm not sure which one of the boxes it was, to be fair! So the card vote will be dealt with after our next speaker. I want you to give a warm welcome, conference, to Frances O'Grady, the general secretary of the TUC, and not because she is the general secretary of the TUC but because I believe she's a great general secretary of the TUC and certainly a great friend to this union. She has spoken at our conference on several occasions, so much so I had to ask her which tat we'd sent her away with before, so we could get a decent present for her! She's been here two years ago. You may know, Frances, that we now meet as conference annually, so prepare yourself for more tat.

We know what's in front of us; we've discussed it this week. Everybody knows what's in front of us. Certainly we need cool hands on the tiller, both in our union and certainly decent hands on the tiller at the TUC. Frances is all of that. I'm very happy for her to address you, conference. Frances O'Grady. *Applause*

SIS FRANCES O'GRADY (general secretary, TUC):

OK, I don't have to shout now. As always, I'm honoured to bring greetings and solidarity from the TUC. I have to say, in what has been a punishing week it is very good to be among comrades today. Delegates, I want to put on record my appreciation and admiration for the work of the FBU and your members. Under Matt's leadership, without doubt, over the past few years I think this union has really gone from strength to strength. I was very proud to help launch your brilliant anti-cuts tour at congress last year. That campaign has saved fire stations from Gosport, Sunderland, Wallsend, and that means that your campaigning has saved lives too. So thanks for everything that you do on behalf of our movement. If I can add to that thanks, that brilliant exercise in Merseyside firefighters refusing to act as bailiffs for the likes of this government and their mates, I would like to add my sincere congratulations for that too. *Applause*

I've been quite busy yesterday on this issue of trade union rights, so I just want to start straight away by saying that in turn I want to offer 100% support to all those firefighters and control staff who have taken industrial action over the last few months, whether it's defending pensions or shift patterns, I want to make something absolutely clear: that workers taking strike action, exercising that human right to withdraw your labour, will always be able to count on the support of the TUC.

So conference, here we are, six days on from what, without doubt, was an extraordinary general election. I think it does rank alongside those defining moments in our political history. Let's not beat around the bush, last Thursday delivered great news for the bankers, the tax dodgers and the media barons, and bad news for all of us because, whichever way you dress it up, the Conservative Party won a clear majority of seats. I'm not sure that too many of us saw it coming on the day, certainly not the pollsters, certainly not my mates who were texting me just after that exit poll came out. I think the most concise text of all that I received was "WTF". I'm still trying to work out what that stands for! Not even the organisation that I have come to trust most on these kinds of issues, and that's Paddy Power. Nobody got it right.

I realise that in what I'm going to say, my analysis, if you like, of what went wrong may not be shared by everybody today. But I hope and think that we can have an honest dialogue about that, so I want to tell you what I think happened, I want to share with you what I think we need to do. Whether it's later today or later on, I hope that you will share your views with me.

The big news of the night was SNP sweeping the board in Scotland. Undeniably, the mood has changed profoundly in Scotland. I would say that the SNP's leader, Nicola Sturgeon, was probably the stand-out star of the campaign. Labour was caught by that devastating pincer movement, an unstoppable SNP on the one hand, and a right-wing English nationalism on the other, fuelled by the Lib Dem collapse, fed by UKIP, but given its lifeblood by shameless Conservative scaremongering which questions the very legitimacy of democratically elected Scottish MPs.

But we also have to be honest and realise that the Tories talked up that issue about Labour being propped up by a party committed to putting Scotland first, because in many parts of England people feared that they would be put second, stoking up resentment, encouraging working people to compete against each other for funding, and feeding a culture whereby allegiance to country trumped loyalty to class. In his acceptance speech David Cameron invoked one nation conservatism, but the truth is Conservative politics have always been and will always be about divide and rule.

I don't know when or whether the SNP will press for another referendum. I don't know whether the Conservative and Unionist Party (so-called) will preside over the ultimate breakup of the UK. But we shouldn't be surprised if the Conservatives offer fiscal autonomy – not because they support self-determination for Scotland, but because it suits their narrow party political interests to do so in England. We should also be clear that this would impact in different ways on working people in every part of the UK.

Then on Sunday, of course, we had Tony Blair launching the battle to write the story that Labour lost because it was too left wing. He is wrong; in my view he is wrong. Any Labour manifesto worthy of the name should be about building homes, should be about raising wages, and should be about protecting the NHS. That's what I call real aspiration. *Applause*

If anything, I believe a key problem was Labour's early failure to counter that Tory mantra that the deficit was caused by too much spending on public services. I also believe that the admission that Labour had been too soft on banking regulation when it was in power came far too late, and that too much ground was given to the economics of austerity when in fact the only hint of growth we've had in the last five years was when George Osborne temporarily eased his vicious programme of cuts.

I think there were other factors at play. It's true that leadership matters; it does matter. But I don't propose personally to indulge in that ugly sport of attacking Ed Miliband. I'll tell you why. It's because I think there's been more than enough of that from the non-dom owned press without the left joining in. Of course Ed had his weaknesses, but he is an essentially decent man – more to the point, with decent values. We allow those values to be rubbished at our peril. Another factor: nearly four million votes won by UKIP. The politics of scapegoating immigrants and crude attempts to ditch EU membership obligations like workers' rights to paid holidays and health and safety, they will need our urgent attention.

But perhaps the most difficult election outcome that we in the trade union movement need to face up to is that many who had voted Labour in 2010 this time turned to the Tories. All of this suggests to me that the reasons why Labour lost are not simple or easy to explain away. We can't just look at the party either. I think it means that we as a trade union movement, in respect of our values, our organisation, our membership, have got a lot of rebuilding to do. Some people will say that the answer to Labour's predicament will be a new party of the left. Fair enough, that's a conversation that needs to be had. But it's not a view that I share. I firmly believe that Labour remains the best chance of winning political representation at Westminster – something the trade union movement has fought for over generations for the great mass of working people in this country. Labour has been written off before and it's bounced back before. But I'll be blunt – it's going to be bloody tough this time!

While others agonise about the future of Labour, and the leadership there, frankly comrades, we have got our work cut out fending off Tory attacks in the here and now. So we're going to have to stick together through the difficult days, weeks and months ahead. As the old saying goes: "United we stand, divided we fall". We will need that unity and discipline to exploit and take advantage of each and every pressure point on this new Tory government. I don't underestimate this new government's cunning, but don't overestimate its strength either. They may be ruthless but they are not invincible.

Firstly, remember this will be a weak administration with a smaller majority than the previous coalition, in fact, a smaller majority even than John Major had. The SNP sought office with the promise that they would keep Labour's feet to the fire. But now we know that the real battles of the next parliament will be blue on blue. Without the Lib Dems as a kind of human shield Cameron will feel the full force of his own backbenchers. Some of them, we know, still want to hug a hoodie; a lot more of them make Norman Tebbit look like a bleeding heart liberal. Secondly, Cameron has already said he will not stand another term. That means that the contest for the next leader of the Conservative Party has already started, and it will last a full five years. In fact, the only face I saw on election night that looked more disappointed than Nigel Farage was that of Boris Johnson! Thirdly, there's that European referendum. Be in no doubt, the Tories will tear themselves apart.

Of course, nobody is under any illusions that Cameron's troubles mean that we're in for an easy ride. The PM's talk of healing and compassion was about as convincing as Margaret Thatcher reciting the St Francis prayer. We know that the NHS is a prime target for privatisation. We know that £12 billion of cuts to welfare will hit in-work benefits and child benefit, as well as the young unemployed. And of course, we also know all too well that the FBU is among those in the frontline of Tory plans on industrial action, not just to ban strikes by the back door (because you know you can beat those ballot thresholds even if others can't) but to give bosses more ways to break strikes, and what is more, to criminalise pickets into the bargain. The Tories' plans represent the most draconian, the most aggressive, the most right-wing assault on basic labour rights anywhere in Western Europe. But, conference, I want you to join me in saying this to Mr Cameron: if you think we're going to give up our freedom of speech, if you think we'll surrender the human right to protest against workplace injustice, if you think we're going to give up our right to strike without a fight, you'd better think again! *Applause*

Brothers and sisters, we know that this is a crucial time in our movement, and most of all for the six million people that we represent, and all working people, none more so than the men and women in your union, still having to get to grips with the destruction wrought by the last government. During the 2010 election campaign – you will remember this one – David Cameron promised firefighters in Carlisle that there would be no cuts to emergency frontline staff if he won. Conference, he lied. Overall, funding for the fire service cut by over a fifth, with further cuts to come. With vultures like Specialist Group International hovering over fire services like Surrey, the mission of this new Tory administration is clear enough: more privatisation, more cuts, more attacks on your terms and conditions, including of course pensions – the dispute stretching back two long years, changes imposed last month without your agreement, never mind that sham guarantee from former minister Penny Mordaunt. Of course, we all know what it's about more: pay more, work longer, get less. Plainly, that is not fair.

The same goes for the dispute affecting your members in fire control in Essex, most of them women, many of them mothers, but in my view, each and every one of them an inspiration. *Applause*

You know better than I the story: around 180 jobs at risk despite reports that one in six shifts is already understaffed, a state of the art IT system in complete disarray and changes to shift patterns having a devastating impact on family life, despite the FBU putting forward a clear alternative on the table that was cost-neutral. Dedicated staff deserve better than this. Together we have to be determined they will get it.

The challenges facing firefighters, control staff at heart are no different from the challenges facing all public service workers, and in fact workers right across the economy. As a trade union movement I think the lessons are clear. We have to organise, we have to organise hard to win the trust of workers, whichever way they voted in this election. We have got to build up our industrial power. We’ve got to box clever in the corridors of power, building allies, confusing the enemy. We’ve got some plans for that. When the time is right, we will also have to campaign on the streets, to defend decent jobs and wages, to defend rights at work, and to defend our public services.

At a special executive next month, a special executive of the TUC, I will be setting out proposal for how we do just that. But one thing I know for sure, delegates, is that women and men, black and white, young and old in every part of the UK, our fortunes will always rise and fall as one. That’s why our values have never mattered more: solidarity, compassion, and above all, above all for the trade union movement over this next five years, unity. These are the values that bind you together as firefighters; it’s what inspires us as trade unionists; and it’s what makes our movement, and our movement is, never underestimate it, we are still a powerful force for equality and justice. So let’s stick together, let’s campaign together, but most of all, delegates, let’s get stuck in. Let’s not waste any time, let’s get out there and fight for our people together. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

Frances, thanks for that and thanks for everything that you’ve done for us over the last few years. Rest assured we will be coming back for more. I think the mood of conference this week, we’re all in shock, I think everybody was in shock after Friday. Certainly there will be time enough for counting when the dealing is done. It hasn’t really been done yet. We’re going to see what emerges in the movement, and see what emerges. We’re going to be moving and we’re going to be shaking and we’re going to be doing our best as a trade union on behalf of the people that we work for, the people that we strive to give our best for and that’s the public. We have been the main defenders of conditions and it hasn’t been for any greed on our part. I thank you for joining with us at every juncture of every campaign that we’ve run.

I did joke with you earlier that we give you some presents, and sometimes you can carry them and sometimes you can’t. What we’ve got for you isn’t in fact tat; we’ve got something quite nice for you this time. And you can carry it or you can lose it. Please accept it. It’s a pen. *Applause*

Stick that in your box of biros. Thank you very much.

OK, while Frances leaves, can I ask the chief scrutineer to come to the stage, please. Kevin Deacon, you have the honour of giving us your first card vote result.

BRO KEVIN DEACON (chief scrutineer):

President, conference, as chief scrutineer I am here to announce the result of the card vote for resolution 12 National Overtime Ban moved by Cleveland. The result is as follows: for 7,216; against 30,601. Therefore, resolution 12 *FALLS*

CONFERENCE WENT INTO CLOSED SESSION

THE PRESIDENT:

We are waiting for a guest. I expected them to be on the stage but I’m going to go on with business whilst he gets his act together or we find him. We’re on resolution 17 Independent Fire Service Complaints Commission moved by Cleveland. The executive council oppose.

Resolution 17 – INDEPENDENT FIRE SERVICE COMPLAINTS COMMISSION

This Conference has very serious concerns regarding probity, fairness and transparency in the UK Fire and Rescue Service.

This Conference therefore urgently calls upon the Executive Council to explore at both National Joint Council and Department of Communities and Local Government level the possibility of the introduction of a National “Independent Fire Service Complaints Commission” (IFSCC) for the UK Fire and Rescue Service similar to the model used by the Police Service.

Conference insists the outcomes of the Executive Councils explorations are communicated to the next national Fire Brigades Union Conference and that if it is found to be possible then an “IFSCC” be set up at the earliest opportunity.
CLEVELAND

BRO BRIAN GIBSON (Cleveland):

President, conference, when an FBU member, after a case of impropriety, raises an allegation of bullying harassment against a senior manager or director you would think that such a case, taking into account all the evidence, would be heard by the chief fire officer or the director and ultimately resolved fairly, transparently and with dignity. Quite often though, as we know, this doesn’t happen. It’s usually with the result of no further action to be taken. After that, the routes for the complaint to be taken further become quite strained. Maybe a fire authority board or a service legal adviser is usually next stating that the decision is final. It could be investigated by a neighbouring brigade, maybe the local authority ombudsman, possibly the secretary of state for communities and local government can get involved. Well good luck on that one!

I’m sure members, officials and reps throughout the UK will be all too familiar with such cases, and we’ve heard some of those cases today. Unfortunately, it’s happened before and it will almost certainly happen again. The point I’m trying to raise, comrades, is there should be in place a national independent complaints process for such cases which ensures probity, fairness and transparency. Such complaints at the highest level should never been investigated in-house. I know the police version is very different in practice as it investigates complaints against both serving officers and the actions of senior officers. But we should not be afraid of that. As we all know, it’s not the rank and file FBU members who are guilty of impropriety on an almost daily basis.

Conference, all we are asking for is that the EC explore the possibility of a formation of such a complaints service at the NJC and also with the employers. Please support the resolution. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

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

BRO MARTIN POTTINGER (ONC):

Thank you, Mr President. Conference, we are seconding resolution 17. I’m aware that the EC are opposing this resolution but I’d like you to just really listen exactly what it is my comrades in Cleveland are asking for. As an officers’ representative, we actually do have officers around the country who stand up and oppose some decisions made by senior brigade managers. That quite often is to their detriment, including fire brigade. Overnight I lost 24 (which is all) of my officer members above watch manager level due to the industrial action that we were taking over the last couple of years. But one or two of them did stand above the parapet, and that’s led unfortunately to a couple of them having to leave the service or move away and find another job because they couldn’t bear to work any longer in the organisation that I work for.

It would appear that on occasions senior managers in fire brigades across the country have now made themselves above the law. What they do when they’re found wanting or at worst, if you like, bullying people below them, when anyone makes a complaint they get a mate from a neighbouring brigade to come and investigate it and sweep it under the carpet. Careers have been ruined because of this. This in-house sort of kangaroo court system really shouldn’t be allowed to continue. Every single one of you sat in front of me now, if you are guilty or you do something at work you will be thoroughly investigated, believe you me, you’ll be thoroughly investigated. Somewhere along the line a senior manager in your brigade will make a decision on your future. So why should our senior senior managers not be investigated in a similar manner? Not by their mate from next door, or not by somebody who they can call upon who they know will find nothing for them, but by somebody who’s completely independent, who does not know them, who has not worked with them, hasn’t been to Moreton-in-Marsh with them and shared a couple of pints with them. An independent complaints service to assist and help our members really in reality should be something that none of us should be afraid of and we all should support. I second. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

Thank you very much. Conference, it was a little bit remiss of me. I did tell the stewards but I didn’t tell you, conference is now out of closed session. Thank you. OK, that’s open for debate. Anybody wish to contribute? I’ll ask the assistant general secretary therefore to give the EC’s opposition.

THE ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:

Conference, we do understand the deficit which exists in the fire service when it comes to fairness, transparency, justice. We know it exists. The executive council are very mindful of that and were very mindful of that when discussing the position to take with regard to this resolution.

The resolution is quite clear when it talks about probity and probity goes well beyond the issues of discipline, but in moving it the issues have been confined to that area. It has been said that this will only apply (and it was certainly said that way in moving the resolution) really to senior

officers. The problem is that it wouldn't. If it came in, for our purposes to hold senior and principal officers, and principal officers in the main, to account, we also know that they would take the opportunity to move the issue of investigating firefighters away from fire and rescue services and put it in the hands of some other body.

I'll be frank, when we lost the fire service discipline regulations we lost something, and we knew we lost something. We got the Grey Book procedures. It was for reasons that we know in a time period that we know that we lost something. We could lose something else if we're moving towards this IFSCC. The IPCC (and the resolution is clear, it's making a comparison with, it's looking for similarities with the IPCC) is not held in good regard; it is not held in high esteem. There is a real danger for this union to call for the establishment of a body such as that when we know that when we're calling for its terms of reference to be a mirror image of those of the IPCC. That is a real problem for this union. In trying to account for the deficit within the fire and rescue service the executive council feel that we're trying to choose or select the wrong solution. We do not believe that this is a fix. We support the ambition of the resolution, we support the ambition of Cleveland, and we support the ambition of the ONC in seconding it. But, as I say, this is not a solution to the problem.

Just in finishing, in terms of what was said when the resolution was being moved, DCLG, if they were called in to investigate, can't be trusted to do it. The truth is the resolution itself calls upon us to enter into negotiations with DCLG, with the NJC. If we think about the LGA, because of the local elections which took place last week, the LGA is now has got as the biggest party the Conservatives yet again, with the Lib Dems holding the balance between Labour and Tory. That is a real issue for us, because if we are selecting them, they will be part of the selection process of who comes to form or be part of that IFSCC. The solution probably or possibly may lie within what the previous resolution looked for and called for which is an inspectorate. Perhaps it might be that. That is not the solution the executive council is looking for, but the executive council is clear that the IFSCC, in the way that it is being called for to be a reflection of the IPCC, is not the fix that we could recommend to conference. For that reason, conference, we ask you to oppose the resolution. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

I now put resolution 17 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *FALLS*

I now call resolution 19 moved by Lincolnshire with an amendment from Shropshire. The executive council support both the resolution and the amendment. If there's a seconder could they make their way to the rostrum, please.

Resolution 19 – FLOODING – A STATUTORY DUTY <i>Conference welcomes the Labour Party's commitment that they will prioritise a statutory duty for Fire and Rescue Authorities/Services to respond to flood incidents. However, currently Fire and Rescue Service and Fire Authorities are still paying for the cost of training, equipment and responding to the ever increasing threat of flooding.</i>	
<i>Conference instructs the Executive Council to urgently raise this issue with both the employers and the Government to make progress in this vital area of a statutory duty for flooding.</i>	
LINCOLNSHIRE	
Amendment <i>At the end of the resolution delete full stop and add “and other related water rescue incidents.”</i>	SHROPSHIRE

BRO BEN SELBY (Lincolnshire):
President, conference, members in Lincolnshire are, year on year, called to respond to flooding across the county that we protect. We see each year the flood defences along the east coast and our low-lying Fenlands flood. This is due to east coast flooding and also heavy rainfall. You may see these statements as obvious and that they are, conference. However, it is less clear when we actually consider who is responsible for tackling flooding and the strategic incident management.

Flooding across the UK is a real threat, and before we run away with carrying out the statutory roles of other organisations like the ambulance service and the police service, we must negotiate a statutory footing for flooding. We have 6,500 fewer firefighters now than we did in 2007 and in 2007 we saw the destructive flooding across Yorkshire, the Midlands, Gloucestershire, Worcestershire and South Wales to name a few, floods that were described by the civil and military authorities as the biggest rescue effected in peacetime Britain.

This of course highlights the real fact that we are now less prepared than we were just a few years ago. As it states within the agreed EC policy statement The Future of our Fire and Rescue Service, the demand for necessary resources is backed by the Pitt review and other stakeholders. Penny Mordaunt has repeatedly praised firefighters in their response to flooding. We didn't want that praise; we wanted a Penny pledge. It was clear that she was more concerned with the welfare of her poultry.

When Lyn Brown MP addressed the LGA fire conference she said words of encouragement that if the Labour Party came to power they would make it a statutory duty for the fire and rescue service to respond to flooding incidents. Sadly, we saw last week the Labour Party emphatically fail in their bid to form that next government. That said, the words of the shadow fire minister shared at the LGA fire conference shouldn't be left just in the history scripts. Lyn Brown accepts, when discussing flooding within her speech, that "it is a growing risk for the future" and then she goes on to say "our aim in putting it on a statutory footing is to provide clarity and increase safety".

Let's be clear, comrades, in Scotland we have achieved a statutory footing for flooding, and in 2012 we saw the devolved government of Northern Ireland accept that flooding should be on a statutory level too. Why is it again that England and Wales are lagging behind? That is the question conference instructs the EC to address. Ironically, Lyn Brown also said within that speech: "I will not be the minister that leaves services across England to sink or swim." I hope she can swim!

The truth is out there, conference, we've all witnessed it. Services across England and Wales are just having a go at water-related incidents. This ad hoc approach causes misuse of resources at the expense of the taxpayer and ultimately endangers the lives of our members. I accept the amendment from our comrades in Shropshire. We need flooding and other water-related incidents to be placed on a statutory footing. This would allow for the appropriate funding to be issued to the services to provide adequate training and the required resources. What would also fall out of a statutory duty would be a robust incident structure that provides clarity when working regionally and nationally.

The cost currently for large scale flooding incidents like what we only saw last year on the Somerset Levels is incomprehensible. The cost of ad hoc crews attending regionally or national deployments cannot be underestimated, and without a clear management structure and programme for resources this will only continue to rise. The impact on our control capabilities must also be considered when assessing the overall cost. During spike conditions our control rooms are inundated with calls, and fire and rescue services locally are left to pick up the cost of increase in those staffing numbers. We see right across all services that large scale flooding incidents pull right at our staffing levels and our resilience.

Let's be clear, conference, until the areas of concern are addressed by a statutory duty for flooding and other water-related incidents we will be left to sink or swim. Conference instructs the executive council to urgently raise this issue with both the employers and the government to make progress in this vital area of a statutory duty for flooding and other water-related rescue incidents. I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

Can I have a seconder? *Formally*

Thank you. I call upon Shropshire to move their amendment. The executive council support. *Formally*

Does that have a seconder? *Formally*

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 resolution 19 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 20 Firefighter in Charge to be moved by South Wales and the executive council give it qualified support. If there's a seconder for this could they please come to the rostrum.

Resolution 20 – FIREFIGHTER IN CHARGE <i>Conference is astounded that despite continuing firefighter fatalities and injuries to operational crews, a number of Fire and Rescue Services are still pressurising Firefighters to ride in charge of appliances in order to improve statistics. This practice is being used by our employers to mask the true figures relating to availability and crewing of appliances, and instead of investing in training and recruitment, Fire and Rescue Services are putting the lives of firefighters and the public at risk in order to save money.</i>
<i>Conference therefore demands that the Executive Council produce a policy statement instructing our members not to take charge of any appliance unless properly qualified to do so, regardless of the subsequent availability of any appliance. This policy shall be produced within 12 months.</i>

SOUTH WALES

BRO ALEX PSAILA (South Wales):

President, conference, as a newly elected official last year and a firefighter of nearly 25 years my mind was totally blown when I realised South Wales were using non-supervisory qualified firefighters as OICs of frontline water ladders, just to keep the pump on the run. Upon further investigation I found out South Wales were not the only brigade adopting this working practice. Along with the then brigade chair, we took it to brigade committee to challenge our management on this issue. I was absolutely mortified by the responses that were given. In fact, my ACO said “Nothing’s happened yet”, the kind of attitude I do expect from ACOs. Even the safety measures they put in place we felt weren’t good enough from putting our members in potential predicaments. I pointed out to management that we were trying to save them from potential law suits and the caveats that they put in place just weren’t adequate. The moral pressure that was going to be put on crews on arriving at incidents would have just been too much.

They did start to take note, and although it didn’t stop totally, between us we managed to reduce the amount of occasions the members were put in potential danger by good negotiations. With FBU officials’ help, they started consultation with the relevant stations and station commanders to understand the importance of reducing the number of times a firefighter was in charge. They did contractual reviews to serve the needs of the station while creating increased supervisory officer capacity. We got better recruitment introduced on stations as they were running under establishment, and collaboration with training school in providing additional initial incident command courses and ongoing competency-based training.

But my brigade committee truly believe these have massive health and safety implications, but more, I believe it makes a mockery of anybody doing a supervisory qualification. So conference therefore demands that the executive council produce a policy statement instructing our members not to take charge of any appliance unless properly qualified to do so, regardless of the subsequent availability of any appliance. Conference, I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

ONC to second.

BRO SIMON AMOS (ONC):

Conference, the ONC have already had two resolutions passed at conference relating to incident commanders being given the right training and being proven competent. South Wales and other brigades are deliberately putting our members at risk, pressurising firefighters to ride in charge of fire engines through limited numbers of staff. As a union we need to protect our members. I ask you to support the resolution from South Wales to ensure that any incident commander of any rank is properly trained and qualified. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

That’s open for debate. Anybody who wants to debate please come to the rostrum.

SIS JENNY IMPEY (Kent):

President, conference, Alex asked us to say a few words on this and we’re more than happy about that. We were asked to negotiate a deal in Kent. We had firefighters who were riding in charge anyway without our agreement, so we had to get in and make the best out of a bad job. So what we did was we put in safety measures. We put in certain criteria. One of those was that they had to ICS level 1, they had to be Managing Safety IOS trained, they had to have an annual risk assessment, and they had to have an acting up payment if they were tipped out. However, for the first two hours of any acting up, so if they were waiting a standby coming in, they wouldn’t be acting up for that period. Consequently, a lot of them have chucked in their ticket. There’s just too much of a tickbox exercise in the first place for them to get their promotion and to become a crew manager, and they realised it was more trouble than it was worth in the first place. So we put in that certain criteria and it’s safeguarded our members in the long run. So please support this resolution. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

Thank you. I call upon the AGS to give the qualification.

THE ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:

Conference, in giving the qualification to the resolution, I do want to make it clear the executive council is very much in support of what the resolution is calling for, and that is maintenance of high standards, of competency for all personnel, particularly those who have management responsibility on the fireground where the activities of those members are clearly risk critical. When discussing it we wondered whether this was an issue which was purely confined to South Wales. From discussions and information received at the executive council we are told that it is more extensive than South Wales, and South Wales have identified some of the measures taken by the fire and rescue service as a result of pressure by our officials to attempt to resolve the issue.

It would be useful, in the short aftermath of conference, to have an indication of exactly how widespread this problem is. That said, we will put the guidance out. It doesn’t matter if it’s one brigade, two brigades, or all 50 – it can’t be all 50 given that we’ve got wholetime ones. However extensive it is we do need to get that guidance out to you, we recognise that.

It is a quite clear message that we do need to send to our members, which you as officials are giving. We have important visitors that can hopefully assist and give some publicity to this matter. Time and again, when the HSE did have part of its role of going into fire and rescue service it found command and control was lacking, not by our professional members but by the so-called professional principal managers that weren’t providing the training or the ability for individuals to get competent. IPDS came in for a good reason and that was to ensure there was competence, and to ensure people – whether a crew manager or (as it was then) a leading hand – up to the highest levels were able to perform their jobs on the fireground. We need to reassert that. That’s why it’s in the role maps; it’s there for a reason – health and safety as well as pay. These halfway measures that fire and rescue services seem to be introducing to allow firefighters to get some kind of qualification and a bit of training on the side, and a bit of awareness – it’s quite simple. All they’ve got to do is do the job properly, give them the training, give them the input, assess them, keep assessing them, and give them the rank. It ain’t hard.

Conference, the qualification is we need to know the extent of the problem to make sure that this isn’t just a local problem. You will tell us that in the aftermath of conference and with that minor qualification we support strongly. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

I now put resolution 20 the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That is *CARRIED*

Thank you, conference. It certainly gives me great pleasure to give a warm welcome to a comrade and a friend, Ian Lavery. I asked Paul Hampton, who had to research to tell me something about Ian that I didn’t know, and he couldn’t. Ian’s from my part of the world. He was a miner. Exactly the same as the last time. He was a miner but then again we all were at one time. He was on strike for a year during the miners’ strikes in 1984/5 and became very high up, so high up he became president of the great union the NUM, taking over from Arthur Scargill in 2002. In 2010 Ian stood for parliament for Wansbeck which takes on board his home town of Ashington, which is a great place in the North East to go to, and also have a fantastic football club of which Ian is the chairman. Basically, if his constituents ever want to speak to him they don’t go to his surgery; they just go to the match and heckle him!

Ian has stood side by side with this union for ever, it would seem. I see the banner behind us, and I can remember when our region had a pretty elaborate banner and we didn’t have any poles for that banner. I used to go to the NUM and beg, steal and borrow Ian’s poles which were sometimes never returned, and the NUM took that on the chin as well. Great guy, somebody who’s stood by us and who will continue to be a leading light as a socialist, and I’m very pleased to see, a newly returned member of parliament for the right side. So here he is, Ian Lavery. All the best. *Applause*

BRO IAN LAVERY MP (Labour Party):

Thanks very much for that, Alan. I was writing a speech last week for this event and I’ve had to change it! Comrades, listen, it’s an absolute delight to once again be here at the FBU conference and address what I believe is one of the finest trade unions in the UK. I’m proud, and I always have been proud, to be associated with your union. I was delighted to receive the support of the FBU at the last general election. Not only the financial support, but the bodies on the streets, which was very important because there were FBU members in my constituency of Wansbeck who came out and helped canvass, and helped deliver leaflets, hoping that we would be successful at the general election. So thanks so much for that from the FBU.

Before I move on, I think it’s important just to recognise the work that MPs have done on behalf of this great union who sadly got booted out of office – as Dennis Skinner would say, like a dog in the night, mainly in the Scottish area. Some of these supporters, MPs in parliament, have been fantastic at representing the FBU. Chris Williamson, Ian Davidson, Katy Clarke, Michael Connarty, and others who left because of retirement reasons.

You know, we’ve got a great group in parliament and thanks to Simeon and Richard and the whole team, the FBU has got a very strong voice in the Commons, a very respected voice as well on all issues. We’ve had meetings in parliament on all types of issues related to the fire and rescue service. We’ve participated in parliamentary debates, circulated briefings and news, we’ve communicated across the political spectrum. We’ve even had Tories at the all-party parliamentary group supporting the FBU. We needed at all times to have maximum support for what we were trying to achieve. In particular, just before Christmas, the issue with regard to the pensions. We’ve done parliamentary questions, we’ve had meetings with shadow ministers, we’ve had meetings with ministers, and we’ve always been in consultation with the national officials of the union. We’ve had prime minister’s question time, we’ve had statutory instruments, we’ve tried to get rid of prayers, which has never happened in the history of parliament, and it was me that tried to do it, but it was fantastic on behalf of what we were trying to achieve on behalf of the fire and rescue service.

Comrades, we’ve discussed lots of things, and I notice from the agenda I think there are 66 resolutions. I’ve seen some fantastic things. This union should be very proud of the wide and varied motions which it has got on the agenda this week. It’s not surprising, because for generations the FBU has led the progressive part of the trade union movement. I’ll never forget the support the FBU gave the National Union

of Mineworkers over 30 years ago. It was absolutely outstanding, when we were in our darkest hour the FBU were there rallying behind us, again not just financially but morally as well. For that, every time I address an FBU meeting I thank you so much for that.

We’ve got lots of problems. The pensions issue, privatisation, mutualisation, flooding, governance, continued cuts with the crews, manning levels, among many other issues. I’ve got to say, I cannot begin to tell you how disappointed I am with the election result. I wish I could stand here and tell you that I’m not frightened for the future. When I say the future I mean the future of our country. Because I am. I mention just a few things with regard to the fire and rescue service, including privatisation, including mutualisation. Comrades, this isn’t the time to sit back and reflect on the heaviest defeat we’ve had for quite some time. We’re trade unionists; we’re born into struggle; we dust ourselves down and continue to fight like never before. *Applause*

Comrades, this isn’t an option. Every single representative here, every single representative of the trade union movement has got a moral obligation to stand up and dust themselves down and continue the fight against what is and will be even worse, the most right-wing Tory government we’ve seen in generations.

Michael McGahey, the great trade union leader – fantastic leader of the NUM, said quite candidly: “If you stop running they’ll stop chasing”. I think I’m getting that just slightly wrong, quite the opposite by the way, but never mind! The reality is, comrades, that it’s easy to sit back and I’ve said that it’s not an option. What will happen will be this government will be after the privatisation of this service. That’s their ultimate objective: the privatisation of everything and anything they can sell. So of course we’ve got a job on our hands. Five years ago the Conservatives set out to destroy our public services. 6,700 jobs, frontline firefighters, lost their jobs, about 11% in real terms. Next year and the year after they’ll be after the same sort of cuts. A prime target was, of course, yourselves.

Labour fought a gallant battle, I’ve got to say, on behalf of the fire and rescue service, but we face an onslaught, we face mistruths, we face lies in the Commons. I was proud to be part of that debate in the Commons where we just narrowly failed to change the statutory instrument, the prayer that forced through regulations which would secure the pensions issue for those in England.

But, comrades, I haven’t given up. I expect there isn’t anybody in here that gives up. The PLP will continue to fight for justice for the comrades up and down the country, anybody who’s got problems we’ll be there to support you. It’s so important. Yes, of course, we’re down but we’re not out. We’ve been in many difficult situations before. That’s what this union, and that’s what the trade union movement is about. It’s born into struggle. Once we’ve won something on behalf of our members, that’s not the end of the job, it’s what we can gain further and further and further. So we cannot sit back and never sit back on our laurels.

Comrades, the Labour Party. We’ve heard a part of the inquest, we’ve heard representatives saying that the party was too left wing. Too left wing, and when we move to the left we lose elections. What a load of bollocks! The party was not in any way left wing at this election. *Applause*

Comrades, I’ll ask anybody in this hall, anybody, and if you want to tell us afterwards come and see us, what’s left wing about trying to support the NHS so it’s free at the point of need for everybody? What’s left wing about getting rid of zero hours contracts? What’s left wing about 200,000 affordable homes every year for five years? What’s left wing about getting rid of bogus self-employment? What’s left wing with any of that? That’s the manifesto of pledges which the Labour Party, or part of it, put forward. Comrades, it’s a move. We will not be lurching to the right. We didn’t lurch to the left at this election; we had a manifesto based on social justice for all.

I was quite proud. I know there’s been criticism of Ed Miliband. Ed Miliband, I’ve got to tell you, was the man, the only man in the House of Commons that got the issue regarding the fire and rescue service pension on the agenda, let me tell you that. It wasn’t Hilary Benn, it wasn’t Lyn Brown, it wasn’t Chris Williamson, it was Ed Miliband who demanded that we try to seek justice for the firefighters. Just because the man cannot eat a bacon sandwich properly he was vilified in the press! He might not be the best looking person in the world, but this is X Factor politics unfortunately, something which we shouldn’t be up for.

We need to get back, comrades, we need to get back to where and why the Labour Party was initiated some 110 years ago. It’s simple stuff, you know. It’s not left-wing rhetoric, it’s not Trotskyite, it’s not Stalinistic, it’s about the class issue; it’s about working to support people who haven’t got a voice in parliament – the disabled, the disadvantaged. The trade union movement was born out of struggle and formed the Labour Party. It wasn’t the other way around. It wasn’t the Labour Party who formed the trade union movement. I think some of the New Labourites in the party believe that actually was the case.

But, comrades, we’ve got a massive task ahead. We’ve got to regain trust as politicians. We’ve got to challenge austerity. Austerity isn’t working. We need to seek social justice and equality and fairness, oppose privatisation and mutualisation as I mentioned before, value our public sector workers with better wages, terms and conditions. We’ve got to build a better future for the young in society by offering hope instead of utter despair. We’ve got to have enhanced workplace protection with the repeal of anti-trade union legislation. Comrades, this was within our

grasp only six days ago. We are facing difficult times ahead. We’re looking down into the Tory abyss, the government are rubbing their hands gleefully at the opportunity of hammering the trade union movement, and indeed impacting upon the democratic process in the meantime.

We haven’t got many options other than to stand up and fight back. We need to be proud of what we represent and the people who we represent. But listen to what they’ve got to say. We need to strengthen the resistance against the attack from the right and stiffen our resolve to ensure that our members get the best we can possibly achieve for them, and more of course. As the banners of the trade union movement quite proudly sound out: “Unity is strength”. The trade union movement, in my view comrades, is the beating heart and the social conscience of the Labour Party. Your great union, the FBU, belongs to this great movement, it belongs in the Labour Party. We’re one and the same with the same visions, and we need to make sure we’re best together, stronger together, on the front foot attacking the common enemy.

Comrades, we want a better, brighter future for all. I’m going to give you this commitment: to the last breath in my body I’ll support the working classes in today’s society and support the fantastic union, the Fire Brigades Union. Comrades, it’s time to organise, not moan. Thank you very much. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

I don’t know about you, conference, but I needed that! I needed that. I’d like to thank you very much, Ian, for making time once again to come and speak to us, and know that we will continue in our support for both you as an individual and everything you strive to do, because you do truly represent the working classes. I know first hand that to be the case. I have a little gift for you. Basically, it’s something that somebody might want to fill up for you tonight if they see you at the bar. I certainly will. I’m going to try to get out for a couple of pints with you later, but once again, thank you very much. *Applause*

OK conference, thanks for that. We’re now on paragraph B2, B3, B4, B5, B6, B7, B8, B9, B10, B11, B12, B13, B14, B15. Cleveland, I understand you want to speak on this paragraph? Is that true? Stop telling people you want to speak on a paragraph! OK. Thank you. I now call resolution 21 moved by London and the amendment from Merseyside. The executive council support.

Resolution 21 – PRIVATISATION AND MUTUALISATION <i>Conference notes the insidious and ideologically driven shift towards privatisation and mutualisation of the Fire and Rescue Service.</i>
<i>Greater swathes of the service have been privatised or outsourced over recent years, and at least two local Fire and Rescue Services have launched a drive towards mutualisation.</i>
<i>Wider mutualisation and privatisation of the Fire and Rescue Service is facilitated and encouraged by the Localism Act 2011 and Sir Ken Knight’s Government-commissioned Facing the Future review.</i>

This trajectory, along with the statement by cabinet office minister Francis Maude in December 2014 that Fire and Rescue Services could be run ‘outside the public sector’, suggests that no part of the service, not even the frontline, is immune from the threat of being sold off, contracted out or mutualised.

Evidence from industries and services elsewhere demonstrates that privatisation invariably results in an inferior service and a detrimental impact on the pay and conditions of employees.

The threat of privatisation and mutualisation (which is a stepping stone to privatisation) is real and growing.

This Conference reaffirms its belief in a publicly owned, publicly funded and democratically controlled Fire and Rescue Service, not one run in the interests of profit-seeking privateers.

Conference further calls on the Executive Council, in partnership with Brigade committees, to monitor developments keenly and place high priority on the fight against ever deepening privatisation and mutualisation.

LONDON
Amendment <i>Delete final paragraph and insert:</i>

“Conference further calls on the Executive Council, in partnership with Regional and Brigade committees, to challenge developments and place as a high priority the fight against privatisation and mutualisation.”

MERSEYSIDE

BRO PAUL EMBERY (London):

President, conference, we are accepting Merseyside’s amendment. I think we were all hoping, conference, that this resolution would take on less significance as a result of last Thursday, but probably, almost certainly because of what happened last Thursday, it’s probably more significant than ever. Certainly privatisation and mutualisation is a serious threat in the fire service, arguably the most serious threat at the moment. We know that chunks of non-core parts of the service have been outsourced – a process that was started under Labour unfortunately, but I think it’s fair to say that the threat to the frontline has never been so real as it is. We’ve seen two fire and rescue services attempt to make moves towards mutualisation. There will be more, there is no doubt about that. We’ve seen the Fire Service College privatised. We know that the Localism Act 2011 is a Trojan horse for privatisation and mutualisation. We know that Ken Knight’s Face the Future review embraces privatisation and mutualisation. I would seriously urge everybody to read it from cover to cover, because it really does embrace privatisation in the most enthusiastic way. We know that document is being treated with a great deal of seriousness by the government. We know also that Francis Maude, the former Cabinet Office minister, said at the back end of last year (I think he was quoted in the Daily Telegraph) as saying that in the future fire services could be run outside of the public sector altogether.

We obviously need to challenge that consensus. You will occasionally hear managers say (we get it in London) they don’t care where the money comes from provided they get the money. That’s an old mantra that they use. I think that line is only legitimate if you believe that where the money comes from is without consequence. That’s the key thing. If you believe that there are no operational, political or industrial implications from whether you get the money from the private sector and they take control or whether you get it from the taxpayer then of course that argument seems perfectly reasonable and plausible. But of course we know that there are enormous consequences for fire and rescue services in terms of the difference between getting the money privately or publicly.

You will be aware of the fiasco in London, a company that eventually morphed into AssetCo, which took over the entire fleet of fire appliances in London. I know our comrades in Lincolnshire have got experience of AssetCo as well. It was a complete bunch of cowboys, frankly, who eventually went bust, but as they did so, sold the entire fleet of appliances for £2, not per appliance, the entire fleet for £2 to some mad, eccentric Tory venture capitalist who was into classic cars and various stuff like. He then took control of the fleet, owned the entire fleet, and nowhere in that process, at no point, did a single politician or a single fire service manager, or a single Londoner have the ability to intervene and say no, that’s not going to happen. It was only when this crazy Tory eventually provided an even worse service than AssetCo did (if that was at all possible) that the London Fire Brigade exercised what they called step in rights under the contract to take the fleet back into their own hands. But they had no right to do that unless the service itself reached such a poor level, as it eventually did.

There was also (I’ve just reminded myself) a point during that process where, before it was sold to the Tory venture capitalist, a Bahraini-based bank called Arcapita were alleged to be bidding for the entire fleet. We did a bit of a Google search on them. It turns out their board was filled with people with alleged terrorist links. They had been investigated by the government in the US, etc. So at that point we faced the very real prospect (and I think it was something that the general secretary wrote to the then fire minister, Bob Neill, about) that the fleet of London appliances that would be responding to a terrorist attack would potentially be owned by people in the Middle East with alleged terrorist links. That is the absolute craziness of the experiment of privatisation in London.

I think it’s important to talk about what the Tories’ view about it is as well. The Tories are presenting mutualisation as some sort of diffusion of power where they are giving control to workers and local communities. Sometimes I think we’ll all admit that mutualisation as a principle is not necessarily always a bad thing, but it depends on who’s doing it and it depends on what their motives are. So, for example, the old-fashioned building societies and employee share ownership schemes in the private sector and the cooperative movement, all of those kinds of things had their roots in the principle of mutualism. But it’s about the direction of travel. We know that the Tories are not doing it because they believe in the principle of mutualisation, because otherwise they themselves wouldn’t have demutualised the old building societies in the 1990s. We know that the reason they’re doing it is because they see it as a stepping stone to privatisation. They might not be able to get privatisation at the first attempt, but they can see it as a stepping stone to privatisation, which is their real goal.

We know, conference, that where public industries have been privatised usually they’ve been unmitigated disasters. That’s the truth of it. You only have to look at the rail industry, the water industry, energy and most recently the scandal of the first privately run NHS hospital, Hinchingsbrooke in Cambridgeshire where I think the private firm cut and run in the end.

So they have been generally disasters when public industries have been sold off to the privateers. We know the reason is because all of a sudden, profit becomes the prime goal and everything else is then subordinated to that goal of making a profit. The truth is, conference, we cannot allow what has happened in some of those other public industries – given the effect that it has, given the effect in terms of the service, given the effect on our members’ conditions of service which will be trashed as they generally are when a public industry goes private, given the effect on job numbers because jobs will be slashed again as they always are when public industries are sold off to the privateer – it needs to be on our radar. We owe it to our members and we owe it to the public to make sure that as a union we coordinate to fight every effort by any brigade or any politician locally to mutualise or privatise the fire service. It has to be a priority over the next five years and it’s a cause that we’ve all got to rally to. Support the resolution. I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

Cleveland to second.

BRO DAVID HOWE (Cleveland):

Thanks president, thanks to London for bringing this resolution 21. Conference, I said a lot of what I needed to say on privatisation yesterday, so I won’t go over that again. That’s the reason why I declined your kind offer, president, a minute ago. Just two things really. Thanks to London for managing to write a grand total of 229 words in eight paragraphs without mentioning Cleveland, because believe me, we do get sick of being the ones all the time who get mentioned. I think Paul didn’t even mention us in his speech either, so a welcome break really because we’re always on the front page. Secondly, very quickly, is to ask conference to support this resolution wholly in word and deed, because it calls on all of us to mobilise against privatisation and put it as a priority, like Paul said, and against mutualisation because that is definitely the stepping stone to privatisation. We’ve seen it in other industries in other sectors and it’s clear; it’s there right in front of us. Ian has just concentrated a lot of it in his speech as well.

In Cleveland we will, and I’m sure in London you will, but we need all of your support, all the members’ support. When you go back to your branches, when you go back to your brigades, we need help, we need solidarity and we need to win this battle. Please support. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

Merseyside to move their amendment. The executive council support.

BRO MARK ROWE (Merseyside):

President, conference, we put in regional committees as well, and the reason we did that (and I know London accept this amendment) is to give a greater level of control within our structures whilst we defend against privatisation and mutualisation. I’ll take a little bit of poetic licence, if I may. What I will say as well while I’m up is we shouldn’t forget that at the forefront of these attacks currently are our members in control. I just ask you to keep that at the forefront of your mind. We’ve already got in the North West, the North West Fire Control, so privatisation and mutualisation is here. So please keep that at the forefront of your minds, that our control members are under massive attack constantly. Thank. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

Thank you. Is the Merseyside amendment seconded? *Formally*

That’s open for debate. Anybody wish to speak please come to the rostrum. Anybody else?

BRO RICHARD JONES (Surrey):

President, conference, I’ll keep it brief because the previous speakers have said it really well. I just want to say we’ve got this problem in Surrey as well. They’ve skipped the mutualisation; they’ve gone straight to privatisation with Specialist Group International. The bit I want to add really is we’ve got to develop some kind of strategy how to fight this stuff. I know Cleveland have had problems. It’s how you go about it. We’ve got nowhere in Surrey. That’s the bottom line. We’ve been absolutely powerless to do anything about it. I’m really, really fearful now, with the election result last week, that that has given them the green light to expand. So we need a cohesive plan as to how we’re going to wipe out this privatisation before it’s too late. Thank you. Support. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

Thank you, conference. 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 21 as amended 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 B16, B17, B18. I now call resolution 14 moved by Scotland with the amendment from Merseyside. The executive council oppose the Merseyside amendment and give qualified support for resolution 14. If anybody’s coming to second it will they make their way to the rostrum please.

Resolution 14 – “LIFE RISK BASED” FIRE & EMERGENCY INCIDENT COVER
Conference demands that UK Fire and Rescue Services implement “life risk based” Fire and Emergency Incident Cover as required by the principle of Integrated Risk Management Planning and that this continues to be sustainably funded.

Conference also recognises the need for robust emergency response standards to be agreed and implemented to ensure public and firefighter safety on the incident ground by providing an effective speed of response and weight of

attack to emergency incidents based on the Critical Attendance Standard (CAST) scenarios developed by the FBU. The need for this is also clearly acknowledged by Fire and Rescue Services in the Brigade Response Operating Standards (BROS) that have also been developed based on the assessment of risk on the incident ground.

Conference further demands that local Brigade Officials and the Executive Council challenge, by judicial review and/or via the Health and Safety Executive, any local cuts that undermine the principle of “life risk based” Fire Cover, the safety and security of firefighters and the communities we serve, where the evidence clearly supports this.

	SCOTLAND
Amendment	
Final paragraph after the words “and the communities we serve” insert a full stop and delete “where the evidence clearly supports this.”	
	MERSEYSIDE

BRO PHIL McDONALD (Scotland):
President, conference, I am a first time speaker. *Applause*

Conference, for too long fire and rescue services in the UK are introducing blanket response standards across the entire service areas that do not reflect the diverse range of risks that exist within the communities they serve. The principle of standards of fire cover based on life risk must be robustly defended and be at the forefront of this union’s strategy to defend and improve our United Kingdom fire and rescue service. Only with the robust and professional response standards underpinned by the integrated risk management processes, the FBU’s critical attendance standard scenarios, and the brigade response operating standards can the health and safety of the public and firefighters be safeguarded.

Any attempt to dilute these recognised standards must be strongly opposed by this union. Unfortunately, recent history has shown for us that too many of our members have paid the ultimate price in past years. So any attempt by fire and rescue services to dilute or ignore these professionally developed and recognised standards must be strongly opposed by this union. Conference, please support the resolution. I move. Thanks. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
ONC to second.

BRO ALAN CUNNINGHAM (NIFB):
Mr President, conference, thank you. Also first conference, first speech, seconding resolution 14. *Applause*

Comrades, the IRMP, in our humble submission, provides the minimum safety net for firefighters in their response to emergency incidents and also ensures that the public receive the appropriate level of response to give the best chance of survival at incidents. In addition, it maintains a standard in which logical, evidence based arguments can be made to employers to fight against station closures and crewing reductions. It also starkly demonstrates to the public why they need the emergency services that we provide in the places we provide them. It is the safest option to safeguard firefighter health, safety and welfare, and also to provide the effective and efficient service that the public expects from us in this day and age.

I know a lot of people feel that Northern Ireland have had it fairly easy over the last few years and we have, thanks to the determined work of the FBU members in Northern Ireland. We have been protected from a lot of the horrendous stories that we hear when we come to conference that have happened to other brigades through the country. Currently in Northern Ireland employers are cynically manipulating the IRMP to justify a reduction in attendance times. Obviously this is financially motivated due to the fact that we are now being imposed with fairly devastating cuts, and it’s designed to reduce firefighter jobs. It is being opposed by FBU in Northern Ireland.

Part of the foundation to oppose this is the life based risk assessment argument that shows that there are flaws in their revised IRMP. So it has a second spur, as well as providing safety that we can make logical arguments from that.

We are here to save life. Ours is an occupation where firefighters make reasoned decision that jeopardise their safety to protect others. Firefighters deserve a robust network to safeguard others. Life risk based planning ensures budgetary considerations don’t supersede the core value of saving life. Comrades, we would humbly second this resolution and ask for your support. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Merseyside, come and move your amendment, please. The executive council oppose the amendment.

BRO MARK ROWE (Merseyside):
Conference, president, I won’t go into too much depth on this amendment. What Merseyside are seeking to do is clarify and assist. That was the nature of our amendment. We take cognisance of the fact that the EC is going to oppose if the amendment is successful, so we don’t want to jeopardise a resolution that we support. Therefore, Merseyside will withdraw our amendment. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
That’s open for debate, conference. No? I call upon the AGS to give the qualification and the qualified support. Sorry, the general secretary.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:
Yes, president, the executive council has three qualifications to the support. Firstly, in the use of the term “life based risk fire and emergency incident cover”. Clearly there are other risks which we believe IRMPs should take account of – economic risk, environmental risk, and others. To do IRMP properly it needs to take account of all of those. Secondly, the concern is about the reference to judicial reviews. We do need to alert conference to the risks of placing too much emphasis on the question of judicial reviews. One potential outcome, even if you can put together a case which is potentially successful in a judicial review, is that the fire and rescue authority are merely instructed to go back and start the process again. So it doesn’t necessarily guarantee that cuts will be ended completely. The third qualification is that clearly while the use of legal challenges and Health and Safety Executive are part and parcel of what we do, so too (and not mentioned in the resolution) are our political campaigning which is probably the main activity that we undertake in relation to try to defend fire cover. And of course, industrial strategies that we undertake on occasion in order to try to defend fire cover. So with those three qualifications, the executive council supports. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you. With that qualification I now put resolution 14 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That is *CARRIED*

We are on paragraph B19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24. I now call resolution 16 moved by North Yorkshire with two amendments from Merseyside. The executive council support and support both the amendments.

Resolution 16 – INCREASED THREAT TO PUBLIC SAFETY
This conference will be alarmed at the number of CFO’S wanting amendments to the Scheme of Conditions of Service 2004 (Grey Book) and in particular to Role maps and Duty Systems. This would allow for further efficiency savings and front line cuts.

This is further evidenced in the Knight Report of 17th May 2013, where he calls for the widespread use of on-call firefighters as the preferred way forward to achieving significant savings.

The recruitment and retention of RDS (on call firefighters) remains increasingly difficult to achieve for a large number of Fire and Rescue Services (FRS’s). Some are looking at increased response times of 15 minutes and even an hour, as a way of attempting to mask this problem. Simply reducing Wholetime firefighter numbers is not a safe and effective way of reducing cost.

The continuing reduction of firefighter numbers to below acceptable resilience levels in some areas will only increase the risk to both firefighters and the public we serve.

We call on this Conference and the Executive Council to continue to raise the concerns around the Knight Report and look at a national media campaign to highlight to the public the dangers and increased risks that their local FRS are willing to put them under. Using the Knight Report to force through cuts to frontline services and draconian working patterns, enforced by the continuing funding reductions from central government will have a detrimental impact on public safety.

	NORTH YORKSHIRE
Amendments	
1. 4th paragraph, 1st line delete “resilience”.	
	MERSEYSIDE
2. Final paragraph, 6th line, after the words “will have a detrimental impact on” insert the words “firefighter and”.	
	MERSEYSIDE

BRO SIMON WALL (North Yorkshire):

President, conference, just before I present our resolution, the evidence presented by Bucks in resolution 11 and seconded by Essex adds further evidence of the increasing neglect of public safety that is done using budgetary constraints as a weak excuse. Does this get circulated to the public when pricing up the astronomical cost of sausage, chips and bean that the public pay for?

The resolution from North Yorkshire, we accept Merseyside's amendment. This conference will be alarmed at the number of CFOs wanting amendments to the Scheme of Conditions and in particular to role maps and duty systems. This will allow for further efficiency savings and frontline cuts which following the disastrous general election result, is almost certainly going to be directly driven by the Tory government. This is further evidenced in the Knight report of 17 May 2013 where he calls for the widespread use of on-call firefighters as the preferred way forward to achieve significant savings. This is despite over the last ten years, whilst attempting to protect the public, the UK has witnessed the horrific series of 14 firefighter fatalities. Often these fatalities occurred in similar settings and similar circumstances, but it is without looking at the serious injuries to firefighters from fires and other major incidents. Whilst the risks of firefighting are obvious, the scale of death and injury is unacceptable. Too many times at regional and brigade committees and amongst the executive council they have to have a minute of silence out of respect for our fallen comrades. This has got to stop. Once upon a time – pre 2004 – fire and rescue services were accountable through the Fire Services Inspectorate to ensure minimum standards were maintained, including establishment levels, how they responded, how they were organised, and how they were trained. Since 2004 we have lost the Fire Service Inspectorate, which was a bit like a governing body that went round and actually made sure that fire services measured up. Ironically, austerity measures have hit fire and rescue services hard, which has resulted in key decisions being based purely on budget and not risk. Firefighter deaths and injuries have risen, and the risk to the public increased through longer response times and fewer resources available to respond to emergencies.

The continuing reduction of firefighter numbers to below acceptable levels in our brigade and other areas will only increase the risk to both firefighters and the public we serve. All Knight states in his report is to carry on forcing through cuts to frontline services. This is alongside draconian working patterns which are becoming increasingly more common across brigades due to the continued funding reductions from central government.

Conference knows this will lead to only one outcome: a detrimental impact on firefighter and public safety. Knight also emphasises the need to recruit more RDS on-call firefighter staff. Yet our experience in North Yorkshire tells us that the recruitment and retention of RDS staff remains increasingly difficult to achieve, with management now putting forward the proposal of increased response times to 15 minutes and even an hour as a way forward. This is simply a disgraceful way of attempting to mask the problem. Simply reducing wholtime firefighter numbers is not a safe and effective way of reducing costs and protecting the public. Increased response times with reduced numbers will only affect our commitment to public safety when responding to life-threatening or property incidents. It has been proved that assertive firefighting makes a difference which can only be carried out if a five to ten minute attendance target is maintained at all times.

Our members train, undertake personal development on a daily basis, and partake in brigade and district exercises to ensure they deliver a professional, effective frontline service to the public when called upon. Evidence of increased response times has already been reported, thus putting the public at increased risk. Part of the blame lies with the fire and rescue services regularly attempting to hide behind ill-thought-out IRMPs, using the term “risk-based approach” and how calls have reduced when they clearly mean it's a cost-based savings exercise. The IRMP should provide the framework and machinery within which firefighting goes on and provides the basis for staffing, resources, training budget, and all other elements that create safe working conditions and effective management at fires that help us to protect the public.

How many times do fire and rescue services attempt to introduce change to working practices without producing quality impact assessments alongside the required risk assessments? These should be produced for the recognised bodies to allow correct consultation and negotiation. These IRMPs effectively show the disregard some chief fire officers clearly have towards the public and firefighter safety. Whilst we agree some calls have reduced, the risks to firefighters from the emergency calls we attend have increased. This has been clearly evidenced in the recent research by Andrew Watterson, who is part of the occupational and environmental health research group at the University of Stirling in Scotland.

This goes against what Knight's report says. Some chief fire officers have argued for integrating firefighter health and safety into all the fire service does. However, Knight's proposals effectively disaggregate that. His report provides no evidence-based consideration of the impact of the changes for good or ill beyond a throw away comment that firefighters are much safer today than they were, and can provide proper public protection. Firefighter fatalities do not bear out this picture and nor would occupational health figures. All his report seems concerned about is the efficiency and quality of service to the public, yet loose comments that firefighters themselves are much safer today, even though they risk their lives to save the public, lack evidence for the implication of his proposals on firefighter health and safety, coupled with the fact that firefighter fatality figures (mentioned earlier) over the last ten years have clearly been ignored.

Firefighter deaths in structural fires remain significant and have not dropped at the rates that they would have been expected to. Reducing UK-wide budgets and numbers of firefighters will lead to more deaths of both firefighters and members of the public if not challenged by conference. Our members deserve more protection, not far less. And the public rightfully expect the first class service they regularly witness

and pay for, but as we all know within this room, this is becoming less likely to happen with government policies now underway and that will become even more significant following last week's general election.

The last government showed their lack of respect for firefighters by failing to provide a fair, sustainable and workable pension scheme when evidence was provided. Are we prepared to let down the public we serve? Not a chance, because it's not in a firefighter's DNA to put themselves before others. We must and will act. I call on this conference and the EC to pass this resolution and continue to raise the concerns around the Knight report and their other impending government cuts proposals, based on the factual evidence that has been published in our documents, some of which I've talked about today. We must and should look at a strong national media campaign to highlight and educate the public and members about the dangers and increased risks that their local fire and rescue services are willing to put them under through the level of front costs. Conference, I move this resolution. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

Comrade, could you stay at the rostrum. I wouldn't rob you of your round of applause. Just that you didn't give your name at the start and it's for the records.

BRO SIMON WALL (North Yorkshire):

Simon Wall, North Yorkshire brigade chair. Apologies, president.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks very much. Seconder?

BRO TONY SMITH (Hertfordshire):

We are seconding resolution 16 from North Yorkshire. I promised you this, didn't I? Now I'm not going to let you down. It's getting a little late towards the evening, we're all away from home, so gather round the camp fire because I'm going to tell you a horror story!

Reservists. Write that down on your notes, conference. Put an asterisk beside it. What is a reservist? Zero hours contract, one week's training, 48-hour turnout. We already have 20 reservists on the books in Hertfordshire. We've issued notice of safety concern to senior management. Forget about negotiating; it's never going to happen anyway, certainly not to consult. Bear in mind one of the impetuses of this was for them to ride on the resilience motors in between eating sausage, chips and beans, and we pointed out to them that, as much as it pains us to admit it, we do have some members riding on those trucks. There is a lot of health and safety minds in this room. Anybody who wants to stand up and criticise me, my understanding would be that they would have a legal obligation to consult with us because of the ramifications on health and safety of the members that are riding those trucks, as we are the appointed safety reps. They know that, and they have told us they have no intention. Clearly, boldly Daren, in meetings, haven't they, no intention of talking to us about it.

So they've got 20 of these. We've just recruited for a wholtime course 24 new starters. The second 24 people on that list have now also been offered reservist contracts. We had hoped that the nightmare that occurred last Thursday (I still hope maybe I'll wake up, but I'm not going to now, am I?) if Labour had got some strength together and overturned this whole zero hours contract thing, maybe this whole horrendous hare-brained idea of our senior management might have gone away. That's not going to happen now. So we're stuck with this.

It's one of those things. You've got to believe me because I just couldn't make this up. I swear to you, conference, I couldn't make this up. But it's real, it's happened, it's happening. What I don't want is that “I told you so” thing in three years' time on this one, people. Really, honestly, seriously, we need your help, we need your support. I need you please EC at the very next lodge meeting to put this high up on the agenda. We've just got to stop this nonsense. We have got to stop this rot that is reservists. It is the biggest single dumbing down of this industry I personally have ever seen. I'm sure you would agree, along with all the terms and conditions. This is not in the Grey Book; I have looked.

Please, we ask, get behind this resolution. This gives us a lot of weight. We welcome that from North Yorkshire. Thanks for bringing it to conference because it has given us a vehicle because this is so hot off the press for us. It has just blindsided us, as these things always do. I don't need to tell you that. Please, put your weight behind us. Please watch this space. All the help, please, on the agenda at EC meetings. We've already got a pledge from our region that they're going to do everything they can to help us fight this. This is an important one. If we call you up to Hertfordshire, please get up there in big numbers because if we don't' stop this now we're all in trouble. Forget about day crewing and all that; this is where you're going to go with it. There it is. What else can I say? We second. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

Can I have Merseyside to move their amendments, please. *Formally*

Both moved formally, Merseyside? Thank you for being so helpful. Are those amendments seconded? *Formally*

That's open for debate. I don't think anybody can follow that, to be honest with you. I now put amendment 1 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 amendment 2 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 16 as amended to the vote. The executive council support. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That is *CARRIED*

I think it would be a good time for you to adjourn, conference. See you bright and breezy tomorrow morning. Thank you. There is an important fringe meeting, I believe it is downstairs in the same room. It's on blacklisting and it will start in about 20 minutes. So please attend that if you can. Thank you.

Conference adjourned

MORNING SESSION

THE PRESIDENT:
Conference come to order, please. Come to order. I now call upon Steve Shelton to give the standing orders report. Steve.

THE CHAIR OF STANDING ORDERS (Bro Steve Shelton):
Thank you, president. Good morning, everyone. Please turn to your list of delegates. Region 6 Nottinghamshire delete Richard Jones, insert Alan Coates. Region 10 London delete Anthony Richmond, insert Daniel Gibling. B&EMM insert Brian Amos.

Can you please turn to your programmes of business page 6 resolution 26 Co-responding from Dorset has been withdrawn. Staying on page 6, executive council policy statement Firefighters and Response to Medical Incidents, amendments 1 and 2 are in closed session.

Conference, I am very pleased to announce that the bucket collection Support Palestine from yesterday's lunchtime raised £498.22. Well done. *Applause*

Conference, as previously announced, the standing orders committee election is this morning and nomination forms are being handed out to brigades. Completed nomination forms must be placed in the ballot box at the rear of the hall by 11 am. Thank you, president.

THE PRESIDENT:
Any speakers? Is the standing orders report agreed? *AGREED*

Conference, before we start today's business, it's a responsibility of mine and a very sad one to report to you the death in service of a member in West Yorkshire, Brother Matt Wood of Cleckheaton fire station, who lost his battle with cancer after 18 months. He leaves a wife, Amy, and three children. He will be sadly missed by all his colleagues at Cleckheaton. I'm sure that through the West Yorkshire officials we'll send them the love and regards of conference.

It would also be remiss of me not to mention breaking news and news that's coming from the Philippines where I believe there's been a horrendous factory fire with first reports that 72 people have been killed. It just underlines some of the things that we're going to be talking about at this conference, and something that we're always aware of. It doesn't matter where fire strikes, it doesn't matter where in the world it happens, tragedies like that, for me, it's just the most horrendous news. So we will be kept updated by the general secretary on that, because I don't think that will be the final figure because of the nature of the factory.

Now, conference, on to conference business. I don't really know how to start this speech, so I'll start it as best I can. Bomberos en España Conferencia! Are you up to speed with Spanish or not? OK, Firefighters in Spain. Conference, it's a real privilege for me to introduce you to our next guest speaker. Many of you are wearing T shirts with the slogan "We rescue people not banks". It's a classic situation whereby you hear the story, you wear the T shirts. Now you're wearing the T shirts you're going to hear the story from our guest speaker. On Tuesday, very proudly for me, you showed your solidarity with the occupiers in Merseyside and voted to refuse to evict people from their homes who are protesting.

Today I want to introduce you to one of the firefighters from Spain who made the slogan "We rescue people not banks" a reality. When firefighters were told to help evict people from their homes our guest today, Roberto Rivas, was one of those firefighters who refused to comply. He's here to tell us that story of what our brothers and sisters have done in Spain. The translation will be provided by one of our London members, Nico Sanchez and not by me as you would have hoped. Roberto, amigo, you have the floor.

BRO ROBERTO RIVAS (Spanish firefighter):
Thank you very much. Good morning and thank you for inviting me here. I am Roberto Rivas. I am firefighter in the small city in the North West of Spain. To me it's a great honour being here. I have a problem. I don't speak English!

THE PRESIDENT:
Nor do they! *Laughter*

BRO ROBERTO RIVAS (Spanish firefighter):
It is all English I know. I think I speak Spanish to you. Is OK? *Applause*

For me, I'm delighted, it's a pleasure to be here and to be able to transmit everything that is happening in Spain because I've got my heart in two countries, in Spain and the Union Jack as well. Shock and surprise and happily shocked that you are here talking about firefighting but you are also talking about problems that are happening to people like the TTIP and also all the relevant problems that maybe the European

Union is a problem or not, or maybe the Euro is good for us or not. I am happily surprised that you also talk about people's problems, not only about our business.

We don't only have problems with fires and rescue, we've got problems with what is happening to our communities. At the moment our communities are suffering in many different ways and we have to show support however we can to them.

I want to show some solidarity with the colleagues in Merseyside. What they did is great. I am happy to hear all this news that is happening in other countries. The firefighter, no matter where you are working, you are all the same. We are the same firefighters.

Before I start talking about what happened, the eviction problem and everything, I think I need to put it in context about how the fire brigade in Spain runs, just a brief explanation about that. Just before all this economic crisis, in Spain the economy was based in only two things, the main two things were tourism and building construction. So we have more buildings and apartments and flats than France, Germany and the UK together, only in Spain. If you add that to the problem that the fertility rates in Spain are really low – it's one of the lowest in the world – and then that together with the unemployment rate which is 25% at the moment (that's official figures but in some places they hit the 40% unemployment rate) we've got the problem that we've got fewer people and lots of empty flats and apartments and houses. At the moment with the crisis we're losing our best university students that have been publicly funded, and they're going to Germany. So we've got a funny paradox, which is we've got lots of buildings without people, and we've got lots of people without buildings. So this is a small introduction to give you an idea of the problem we've got with evictions. So we've got lots of empty flats and lots of people who need flats, and the government is pushing them out basically.

So we're moving to the emergency service in Spain, and please don't make the mistake of comparing the UK fire service. I'm here because this is a professional fire service and in Spain it's a mess. We've got 17 different local governments with 17 different laws and some governments want to have a professional fire brigade and others don't really care about that. That's the problem in Galicia. Even within the 17 different regions in Spain you've got all the local governments to divide even more the working force. These problems together with the financial crisis, now we've got a directive from the European Commission saying that you cannot pay more money to firefighters. That is a joy for many governments because they are just doing whatever they want with the money. Whatever little money they've got, they're not putting that money into the local fire brigades; they're doing experiments with it. Galicia is the region where the most experiments are, especially privatisation.

They've got this cut, which is a 25% cut in the budget for the local fire brigade which means that they've got 35% less people than 10 years ago working for the local fire brigade. So politically they need to make a solution. So politicians are making lots of different experiments like their special rescue unit, which is a bunch of people interested in playing firefighter on their free time with nothing. They don't really know what they do, but they wear the uniform and everything. For the local people they look like firefighters, but they're not. So they use the public money to fund private companies which normally are the friend of a friend. They recruit people which are not qualified to be firefighters all over the place. They started playing with these 10 years and now with the cuts it's even worse.

There is a guide from the European Union saying that you should have a firefighter for every 1,000 population in your village and that doesn't apply in any brigade in Galicia. All these private and volunteer fire brigades, the types of fire brigades that are not the official ones, are located not thinking about rescuing people or saving lives, they are just located for the show. So they are not even organised in any way for the emergency service. It's just a political statement basically.

Because obviously it's a company, they need to make money, the normal number will be around 10 firefighters in every watch, but they cut down to three and that has been standardised in every single fire brigade in Galicia, and I have to say, half of the firefighters in Galicia are private and in one station it's only three firefighters attending all incidents – warehouses, flat fires, rescue, everything, only three.

I'm just going to give you two examples and then we're going straight into the evictions to show you the reality of what happened. In a big city like mine we are fully qualified and we do everything as planned, and we are very professional and I'm very proud of it. But we can only attend incidents within our city limit. Because the 112 or the 999 call centre is being privatised as well, they've got priority to send the private fire brigade, and they have to go from one side of the city, right in front of our door (remember it's three firefighters and we are 15 of ours waiting there) watching them passing by our gates. We probably take two minutes to attend that incident, and they will take 20 minutes from one side of the city, crossing to the other side of the city. We have to witness that one day, and another, and another, and another, and another. Basically thinking that you've got firefighters that are motivated to be firefighters, they're working for a private company and they're looking to get money; they are not interested in anything else apart from money. And they do charge people. They perform rescue into a big hole and they charge the gentleman of the house €4,000 for rescuing his dead dad in the house. So what is happening now, our communities don't want the fire brigade to come and help them because they know it's a private company. So they say no, I've put the fire out, I've rescued my dad from that hole, I don't need you any more because you're going to charge me a lot of money. We are in a financial crisis, I don't have that money. Another big problem with private firefighters is they don't have any authority and they have to ask for permission for everything. We don't have to do that; we have authority as police and other services. That is causing a lot of problems as well.

This is the last thing I'm going to say just before the evictions. A big problem we've got in Spain is now that we have five suicides every day in Spain, and it's a blackout in the media and everywhere. Even for us, we cannot say that that was a suicide and they just killed themselves for the evictions. Mainly, one of the things is the evictions and the financial crisis. This is one of the first questions I ask you: what is our moral obligation? Shall we still not say anything about suicide people, or shall we say something? At the moment it's a blackout and we can't say anything legally.

Just to end with all these problems of the financial crisis that firefighting is having. We have a lot of problems now because people are starting to heat their houses with old methods like candles and wood inside the house and all that. That's been forced by the government as well. We've got the Big Five in Spain that are putting the prices of electricity up. Again, we cannot say anything about that. We are attending fires that are caused by poverty, caused by a candle or caused by wood inside the house.

I just wanted to give you that. Sorry if I stand myself too long. I'm now going to go straight into the evictions. It's not going to take long and this is why I'm here, just to speak about what is our position about evictions.

Under a Labour government, surprisingly, there was a change on the eviction law. Before it used to be different that if you didn't want to pay we're going to evict you, but if you can pay for whatever reason, we will take that in account and maybe you can stay in the flat. The same with the civilities and things like that. But now that law is ruling everything out, and if you don't pay you're going out.

At the moment there's a second question I ask you and you can ask yourselves. We are here to help people and to support our communities and to save lives. So what about if there is a law that is telling you that you have to take someone out of his house? But there is another law that tells you you have to look after that person? At the moment, that is not happening in Spain, but it could happen. We don't have the obligation unless there is life at risk, exactly the same as in England and Wales, in the UK. We don't have the obligation to open the door for anyone, not even for the police, if there's no life at risk. But there's a fine line there, and they are looking to take that line there and take a judge to tell you that you have to open that door to evict that person. What will you do? At the moment, we know what we do: we rescue people not banks.

I've been a firefighter for 15 years and I've seen many things, but when you get called – especially when you're listening on the radio about an eviction. I was listening to the radio and heard about the eviction when I was on duty. When you go there and see the person crying, and you see hundreds of people outside blocking the entrance, when you leave that situation and you walk away, you feel sad and happy at the same time. It's one of the worst experiences I had in my life when I had to do that. If you saw the video just before we started talking with a few of the images of that.

The last thing I want to say is that after I felt really sad and deeply emotional about what happened that day when I got called by the police to break that door, to get this 85-year-old lady out, the solidarity shown around the country and outside the country, and all the people shouting "We rescue people not banks", it gave me an immense happiness. I am glad to be here today to tell you that this is our duty. We have to help people out there, we have to help our communities and we have to be on their side, not on the other side. Thanks very much. That's all I have to say. *Applause*

Thanks a lot. Just one last thing. It happens that on 15th, tomorrow, there is a firefighter demonstration for all over Spain. We've got here rescuers. Would you mind if we stand there with you all and we take a picture to show solidarity to the brothers and sisters in Spain? *AGREED*

THE PRESIDENT:
Before we take the picture, because Roberto will be leaving and it's very important that we have international speakers, but none more important than Roberto today. I would say once again, conference, a struggle for one is a struggle for all and struggle knows no borders or boundaries, international or otherwise. Roberto, you came in here today to show us what's been happening, the horrendous things that have been happening in Spain. You leave with our solidarity and our eternal admiration. We'd like to thank you very much for coming here. We'll take the photograph now, but we've also got a little presentation for you. *Applause*

There's me thinking Paddy Ashdown had eaten all the hats!

CONFERENCE WENT INTO CLOSED SESSION

THE PRESIDENT:

Come to order, thank you. Conference is now out of closed session. Can I now ask delegates to turn to page 8 of the programme of business. I now call resolution 18 moved by Cheshire with amendment from Merseyside. The executive council support both.

Resolution 18 – FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE CUTS AND CAMPAIGN MATERIAL
Fire and Rescue Services are cutting their establishment of firefighters, reducing pumps and crewing levels under the guise of austerity. Locally and nationally the FBU are campaigning against the cuts and making best use of the resources available to make the case against the cuts with the public and politicians.

The resources available are supplemented and very much based on the work undertaken by the FBU into task analysis and response times. These technical arguments that have proved useful whilst engaging with Fire and Rescue Management regarding Integrated Risk Management Plans (IRMP) proposals, however these technical arguments can present difficulties in making the case and highlighting full impact of IRMP proposals to the public and politicians.

Therefore this Conference, demands that the FBU continue to build on the work already undertaken and look to produce a video or short film that highlights the impact on the safety to the public and firefighters involved in an emergency incident with slower response times and reduced crewing levels.

CHESHIRE

Amendment
1st paragraph, 2nd line after the words “reducing pumps and crewing levels” insert a full stop and delete “under the guise of austerity”.

MERSEYSIDE

BRO DAVE WILLIAMS (Cheshire):
President, conference, we are accepting the Merseyside amendment. The fire and rescue service has always been under attack for as long as I can remember. Believe it or not, that is a very long time now. We have had to campaign and protect the level of emergency cover provided by the fire and rescue services. So what has changed? In my early days we were part of a much larger council budget, and the fire brigades budget was minimal compared to the larger budgets such as education that all came from the same pot. With fire brigades having such high esteem and the protection provided by the brigades against the consequences of fire, it was easier to stave off financial reductions by running campaigns that persuaded the politicians to supplement any budget deficit elsewhere from the council. Secondly, national standards of fire cover ensured the level of service had to be maintained. There was clear methodology regarding the categories of risk and clear, defined standards specifying the level and speed of response that had to be achieved. Fire services were religiously inspected, and failing fire services were exposed by the inspectorate. If this didn’t happen, we exposed them. National standards made our job easier to demonstrate how brigades were falling short and not providing the service that the communities were paying for.

Now, and for over a decade since national standards have been abolished, it has become an almost free for all and opened the way for a decade of cuts. Many decisions are made purely on the back of the chief officer’s professional opinion and the political will in that area. Weird and wonderful methods of assessing risk have been used since the introduction of IRMP. Some now are confined to the scrap heap, but not before they’ve been used to produce risk profiles that have allowed them to pave the way for fire and rescue services to cut their emergency responses.

The Fire Brigades Union has often been a lone voice in opposition to the cuts and our members have been very inventive in running campaigns to bring what pressure they can on fire authorities to resist downgrading. As a union, we have also been inventive and have strived to educate and empower our officials and members to be well equipped to win the arguments in favour of sustaining frontline services. Possibly the best example is the critical attendance standards (CAST), developed by the FBU after the government buried their own findings, produced during the Pathfinder trials. These standards have proved invaluable, giving officials the technical arguments for maintaining the weight and speed of response, although the original work has now become a little dated.

Fire and rescue service officers tried their best to ignore this work, but eventually conceded and ran with this methodology. However, they misinterpreted much of the task analysis, merely producing lists of tasks required for different types of emergency incident, often doubling up on tasks, relying heavily on dynamic risk assessment and putting far too much onus on crews to make critical decisions of whether to commit or wait for back up.

Whilst fire and rescue service managers may understand the methodology of CAST, it is difficult to demonstrate the technical aspects to members of the public and the local politicians with the ownership for IRMP, the importance of both speed and weight of attack. Therefore, recently the FBU have been looking to produce a film that will be capable of getting the message across about the crucial importance of getting fire service response that is quick and sufficiently resourced.

We don’t profess to be the instigators behind developing this work. I believe it was an idea from the top table. This resolution is more about ensuring the work can be resourced, continued and concluded by the FBU as soon as practically possible. A short film will tell a thousand words, demonstrating the effects on life and property from reduced crewing levels and slower response times. The cuts are happening now and fire and rescue services are gearing up for a sustained year on year continuation of the cuts throughout the foreseeable future. Each and every proposal from reduced crewing down to four riders, three riders, alternate crewing, removal of bumps, downgrading from wholetime, longer response times for retained duty firefighters to respond, station closures will in turn quickly come to a fire and rescue service near you, each time with much greater vigour. We need to be able to combat this. Conference, support the resolution. I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

Is that seconded? *Formally*

I ask Merseyside to move their amendment. The executive council support. *Formally*

Thank you, Merseyside. Is that seconded? *Formally*

It’s open for debate. Speakers? Anybody else wish to speak?

SIS AMELIA DIALLO (CSNC):
President, conference, I am speaking in support of resolution 18. Over 280 control jobs have been cut since 2010, which equates to a 20% reduction in posts, higher than any other area of the fire service. The role of operators in supporting incident resolution is extensive and complex, yet public perception is that our part ends after the initial call has been taken. The CSNC requests that any production as requested by this resolution features the role of control and the impact cuts to control have on the events the public see unfolding before them at an incident. It is vital that we highlight all cuts in the fire service and their impact. Please support this resolution. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

General secretary.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Just very quickly, conference. The executive council supports the resolution. In fact, some of the work in relation to the third paragraph is already underway. We’ve had discussions with an organisation about how you might present some of our arguments about fire cover, response times, crewing levels and so on in the form of video film and so on. So that is all underway. In particular over the next few years we’re going to have to develop lots of new ways of presenting our arguments, both to fire authority members, to politicians at other levels and to local communities. So the resolution is very welcome and we support. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

Thank you. I move to the vote. 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 18 as amended 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 B25. Section H Education paragraph H1, H2, H3, H4, H5, H6, H7. I now call resolution 51 moved by Shropshire with amendments from Merseyside and the CSNC. Both amendments can carry. The EC give qualified support and support to the amendments.

Resolution 51 – PENSION EDUCATION FOR MEMBERS
This Conference recognises and applauds the work of all Officials in informing and motivating members during the FBU pension campaign to resist detrimental changes to firefighter pensions.

Officials’ experiences during the campaign and due to the changes brought by the 2015 scheme, it has become apparent that members need greater assistance to understand the pension schemes, the changes to them, and how these changes affect them individually.

Therefore this Conference instructs the Executive Council to design and deliver a training package for members regarding Firefighter Pension Schemes.

SHROPSHIRE

Amendments 1. Start of 2nd paragraph insert “Through”.	MERSEYSIDE
2. Paragraph 2, line 2 delete “2015 scheme” replace with “new schemes”. Paragraph 3, line 2 delete “a training package” replace with “appropriate training packages”. Paragraph 3, line 2 after “Firefighter” insert “and Local Government”.	CONTROL STAFF NATIONAL COMMITTEE

BRO STEPHEN MORRIS (Shropshire):
President, conference, we are accepting the amendments from Merseyside and the CSNC. It's apparent over the extended period of our pension campaign the indisputable truth has always been that everybody is worse off due to the changes that were brought about, and have now been imposed by government. However, it's increasingly evident that the complicated nature of the pensions and how they apply differently to individuals depending upon their age, their start dates, their length of service, have made it difficult for members to understand how these changes will affect them.

We feel that to continue any sort of campaign into the future it is imperative that our members understand the pensions schemes, the history and the purpose of struggle against the government. The purpose of this resolution is not to provide individuals with pension forecasts, rather to enable all of our members to understand how the pension scheme provisions will work in practice.

Over recent weeks it's clear that the EC has given consideration and has acted upon this need with visits to brigades, the production of videos, PowerPoint presentations, but we feel that the process of education must continue now and well into the future. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you. Is that seconded? *Formally*

I call upon Merseyside to move their amendment. The EC support. *Formally*

Is that seconded? *Formally*

CSNC to move their amendment. The EC support.

SIS AMELIA DIALLO (CSNC):
President, conference, our amendment seeks to open up the scope of the resolution so that appropriate training on the Local Government Pension Scheme can be included for the benefit of control members, alongside training for the firefighters' 2015 scheme. Please support the amendment and the resolution as amended. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Is that amendment seconded? *Formally*

That's open for debate. Sean, can you give the qualification, please?

BRO SEAN STARBUCK (National officer):
The EC are supporting both amendments and the resolution with the qualification. I've got to say that the lack of understanding of the scheme is pretty evident when you go out and talk to people. That's not down to us; that's down to the employers and the government who have imposed the scheme. They are supposed to be managing the scheme, but they haven't told people about the scheme. It's not down to us to do it, but we do it because we want the best for our members, as you can imagine.

We haven't stood idly by, we've put out the really exciting PowerPoints and the short films, we've been round to stations, we've put out loads of circulars. This really, all we've got to do is expand upon that. The qualification we've got is yes, we can deliver this, but we can't deliver it to every individual member, so there is going to be some cascade training involved if we want to do it face to face. If we're going to do it by short videos then I'd probably say that's not the best way of doing it. So we will develop a package, deliver it probably to regional committees and you're going to have to assist, to take it out to members as well.

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you, Sean. 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 the amendment from the CSNC 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 51 as amended to the vote. The executive council support. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That is *CARRIED*

Paragraph H8. Yes. Goodness me!

BRO PAUL EMBERY (London):
President, conference, speaking on paragraph H8. President, our comrades on the ULF stall outside, bless them, they can't contribute themselves, so they've just asked through me if they can make a small contribution to this paragraph with your indulgence if that's OK, president. They just wanted to bring to the attention of conference some of the benefits of getting involved in the Union Learning Fund. So they've given me a short list, just to read out a couple of things.

THE PRESIDENT:
Do you wholeheartedly believe in that?

BRO PAUL EMBERY (London):
I don't actually know what it says, president, because I haven't actually read it! So this could be very interesting for all of us or it could be a set up.

THE PRESIDENT:
In the interests of harmony go ahead.

BRO PAUL EMBERY (London):
Thank you, president. See how he's worked his way up to the top table! Even the Grand Wizard is in on the joke! *Laughter/applause*

Apparently anyway, the qualifications are nationally recognised and can be used both inside and outside of the fire service. The qualifications and courses are used by our members as evidence of CPD. We use the maths and English courses and qualifications to help new recruits to the fire and rescue services gain the necessary standards to become firefighters or control operators. The IT courses of the ULF and qualifications help our members climb the promotion ladder and evidence CPD in work. We have helped dyslexic FBU members and stopped disciplinary cases against some of our members through our work on dyslexia awareness. We are the only trade union in the UK which has an accredited learning centre and a contract with the Skills Funding Agency to deliver courses directly to our members. We've been working with Leeds City College trade union education unit delivering a Skills Funding Agency contract for the past four years. Our members tell us we have a direct impact on their lives by providing skills and qualifications that would otherwise cost them hundreds of pounds. Our most popular courses in the last two years have been mental health awareness and nutrition and health. Both are accredited by the awarding body, NCFE. We have a fully subscribed FBU ULR school as part of the national FBU education annual programme. Our FBU learning centre has just achieved the Matrix national standard recognised by all UK learning providers and the government. Aren't they marvellous! Go and visit their stall. Thanks, president. *Applause*

BRO GARY KEARY (GMC):
Conference, president, it is difficult to express in words adequately the effect that unionlearn has had both for me personally and for the membership in GMC. Around eight years ago my watch was visited by the brigade ULR, Paul Smith. He came to talk about lifelong learning, something none of us knew anything about. The prospect of free and affordable learning interested me greatly that day, and I decided I wanted to become involved. It was that introduction to union learn that changed the way I saw the union and set me on the path to where I stand today. Literally hundreds of members have benefited from unionlearn in GMC, be that from IT courses, fitness instructor courses, sign language courses – I could go on and on. Importantly, all of these courses are underpinned with literacy and numeracy. This input offers a great refresher of day to day life skills, even for those who initially thought they did not need them.

I recently enrolled on the mental health awareness course. I decided to do this training following a series of tragic events within our brigade. I genuinely believe this course has given me to knowledge to be better able to understand and recognise the signs of mental health issues.

Lastly, I'd like to mention the dyslexia awareness training available through unionlearn. I've only this year completed this training. I have already seen its value in supporting our members and protecting them from ill-advised managers who look to punish our members through discipline due to the effects of their learning disabilities. Unionlearn is an empowering and valuable asset of our union, which in reality costs us nothing. Let's protect it. *Applause*

BRO ALEX PSAILA (South Wales):

President, conference, in our roles as officials we go through issues with members facing discipline proceedings, as has already been explained. These individuals whose root problems perhaps stem from dyslexia. Having a mechanism not only to support individuals to address their issues, but also something to help us in our roles as officials during disciplinary proceedings has been a valuable asset. In South Wales and through the FBU's promotion of the understanding of dyslexia, these have resulted in the service recognising their duties as employers. This has resulted in turn in them adopting a screening policy for all new entrants, utilising the British Dyslexia Association paper-based screening tool to help us identify any potential issues so that suitable assistance and support can be applied to any individual who may require it, allowing them to have the best chance of reaching their full potential.

There's also an increasing appetite for the learning opportunities that the Welsh Union Learning Fund project has been able to deliver, and in particular the distance learning qualifications have been well received and taken on board by members. They've also welcomed the extension to the number of different course topics that are available. From feedback it is clear that the flexible learning style of distance learning courses is extremely well suited to the needs to our members. As officials I firmly believe we need to support the union learning funds to keep them alive. *Applause*

SIS HELEN TOOLEY (NWC):

President, conference, I also had the list to read through, so I'll just make two quick points. The FBU learning fund is now starting its twelfth year and thousands of past and present FBU members have benefited directly from its work. The FBU learning fund exists through successful funding applications to central government and has the backing of the executive council. We hope that this continues for the future. Thank you. *Applause*

BRO MARTIN HARDING (Cambridgeshire):

President, conference, I am the ULR coordinator. I'll try and make this, like myself, short and simple. People have run political campaigns on education, education, education. The FBU are dedicated to the promotion of the learning culture through the fire service, and supports learners regardless of age or status. Through the lifelong learning agenda we support and assist individuals in achieving their full potential at work, at home and in their communities. Upping skills levels of people is being driven by the FBU, as we believe this is the best long term policy for all. The benefits from a learning culture in the workplace are endless and self-explanatory.

Individuals who enrol in the lifelong learning programme receive recognised qualifications, but more importantly, they enjoy their experiences and enrol on other courses and opportunities provided by the FBU service and other education providers.

We have spoken about this before. You're amazed at the number of officials that start in the lifelong learning programme and progress, like myself, to other positions within the union.

What is education? The answer I've heard is if you heard if you take a pen or a pencil and draw a picture it shows you what you're looking at, it shows you what you need to do. But if you add colour to that picture it develops it. It gives it fulfilment, it gives it potential, it gives it depth and emotion. That's what education does to every individual that gets involved.

Firefighters are respected by the young and the old, resident or guest, and trust plays an important role in that relationship. Alan Johnson MP said of ULRs: you can have all the managers and men and women in suits, lecturing people and trying their best to enthuse people about picking up new skills, but the union learning rep who's got no angle in this, who gets no bonus, is enormously powerful. For this reason I believe the lifelong programme should be encouraged and supported by everybody, especially FBU officials. I hope you're aware of the excellent work that's been done in the lifelong learning programme, and I believe the FBU sets standards that others would love to replicate. It shows the FBU to be a forward-thinking, modern union that communicates and understands the importance of the working partnership between the fire service, the FBU and the public to provide, and what is mostly required, the important subjects of education and development. Please support the lifelong learning programme. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

National officer.

BRO SEAN STARBUCK (National officer):

Yes, I was going to get up and say all that! Obviously, we've got a new project manager, Mark Dunn, and I'd like to welcome Mark. We've got a new outlook on what we going to be doing. It's going to be a lot more visible, as you can see. Mark's already got people coming up speaking on his behalf. It's about communication as well. I think we need to go in there and we need to go and see firsthand what the ULF can provide for people because it's a project we should be proud of, and it's a project that we should be using. We need to use it while we've still got it, because if the Tories get their way, I think we're going to be struggling on that one as well. So it's about communication as well. If Mark had communicated his list, I would have read it out and then Paul wouldn't have done it with the vigour he did it! So if you can get in

there, like I say, we've got a new project manager, we've got two new PSOs, and we are trying to still embed the project in the FBU. The new PSOs are with us on a seconded basis. I'm going to say it again: please go into the room and speak to Mark and see what he can deliver for you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks very much, Sean. We're on Section J Health and safety paragraph J1. I now call resolution 47 Brigade Safety Representatives to be moved by Shropshire. The executive council oppose.

Resolution 47 – BRIGADE SAFETY REPRESENTATIVES

This Conference believes that Brigade Health and Safety Representatives have insufficient means of contact which is having a detrimental effect on the ability of the Union to deal with Health and Safety issues.

In order to be able to deal with Health and Safety issues more effectively, this conference demands that Brigade Health and Safety Representatives be issued with mobile phones which have e-mail facility.

SHROPSHIRE

BRO MATT LAMB (Shropshire):

President, conference, when we brought this resolution to conference in 2013 we remitted it to the EC. We did that because we were given assurances that providing phones with email facilities to health and safety reps was already in the pipeline. The mobile phone contract was being negotiated, and health and safety reps would be included in the new contract. The EC are now asking for this resolution to be remitted to them again because there's a review of the phone contract at the end of the year and they would be able to deal with it then.

I have to say, you've had your chance. The phone contract was renewed and brigade officials in the room have had new phones 18 months ago. Very nice they are too, but still nothing for our health and safety reps. I'm also a bit perplexed by the EC stance: remit or oppose, on the grounds that they're going to look at it at the end of the year. Because if they are going to look at it at the end of the year and implement the wishes of the resolution, surely they should be supporting.

The EC policy statement which we're going to now hear after lunch says: "The Executive Council recognises the importance of the contribution of our FBU health and safety representatives at both brigade and regional sectional level." We spoke earlier in the week about the need to refocus on health and safety. It's where we have our strongest rights and where we can be most effective. Brigade health and safety representatives are key to the work of this union and it's important that they get the support, the training and, in the case of this resolution, the tools to do the job. Being contactable by a mobile phone and email is a minimum requirement for them to work effectively. The benefit it will bring to this union is immeasurable, and the costs of these devices is falling all the time. It must be within the capability of this union to negotiate a good deal when sourcing somewhere in the region of 50 of these devices. If these devices, whatever they are – tablets, phones, whatever – are not quite what the resolutions asks for, I'm sure we'll accept it as long as it helps our representatives to do the job.

The situation in Shropshire at the moment is that I have to act as a go-between for our health and safety reps, forwarding emails and back again. That's only the ones that are copied to the brigade secretary. I don't know how many others get missed. We're hardly helping ourselves to be an effective union doing that, are we?

The EC policy statement highlights that we need to refocus on health and safety. There have been and there are too many changes afoot. The incident command system is next on the horizon for review, and we need to be better at what we're doing. We need to provide our health and safety reps with the tools. Please support our resolution. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

Seconded by Scotland.

BRO JOHN MALCOLM (Scotland):

President, conference, first time at conference, first time speaking! *Applause*

Conference, we all know the important role health and safety plays within our union and yet we are asking these officials to function effectively with insufficient means of communication. Scotland has eight brigade health and safety reps and one regional rep. Now there's a single service our regional safety rep is also classed as our brigade health and safety rep.

The Fire Brigades Union in Scotland has restructured into seven districts, some of which could be classed as a large brigade. My own district

covers a large geographical area with 52 stations, including wholetime, RDS and volunteers. To give you an idea of that area, it's from here to Carlisle as the crow flies. It is just simply wrong to ask these officials to continue to function effectively without the necessary means of communication. Region 1 is happy to second this resolution from Shropshire. Please support. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

That's open for debate. Anybody? Yes, please.

A DELEGATE:

President, conference, for all those at the fringe meeting last night, and if there's any police spies in the room, my name's Matt Wrack and I'm from Guernsey!

Conference, this is not the most challenging issue that we face, as we all know, but it's still an important one. It's about giving our officials, our members, the right tools and equipment to assist us in everything we do. Our health and safety officials are at the forefront of most things that we do in our brigades, be it detrimental policy changes, equipment, all sorts of things. It's important that they have this equipment. Come on, conference, this is really a no-brainer.

Comrades from delegations all around the country have stood here up at the platform and said how important health and safety is. There's been numerous speakers from the Masonic Lodge of Kingston upon Thames who have all mentioned health and safety. Let's be sensible, let's sort it out, let's give them the equipment they need. I support. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

I call upon the AGS to give the executive council's opposition.

THE ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:

President, in moving the resolution and in supporting the resolution speakers were very clear that we do need to support our brigade health and safety reps. The executive council is very clear that we want to and will do that. But there are pragmatic and important issues that we do need to take into account. Last year the telecoms bill faced by the union increased by £117,000. We do have reduced budgets. What I'm not setting you up for is: please remit because we're going to say no and it makes it easier for us. But if we do have to buy another 50 new phones – 50 plus by the way, because as I think the delegate from Scotland was clear, Scotland is going to be wanting more than one for that brigade and I imagine the same will be true of London as well – that does mean that a large amount of the budget needs to be found from somewhere at a time when there is a reduction in income. What we spend on phones will need to be found somewhere else.

As I said earlier, we're not saying that if you remit it it's a means for us to say no, but what it does allow us to do – and we give you this promise, we give you this guarantee and we take the point that we've made the promise before – as part of the review when the phone contract comes up for renewal as it does at the end of this year, in advance of that we can undertake a review of the provision of the tools that we give to all officials, and this will be taken into account, seriously taken into account, because we do recognise the needs of all officials and the needs of brigade health and safety representatives as well.

We give that commitment. We do ask you to remit because we do not want to oppose. But at the end of the day the executive council has to balance the entire budget. I really do ask you to remit. Please don't have a position whereby our opposition needs to be put into effect. Conference, we do ask you to oppose if it isn't remitted. I'm not going to use the phrase "heavy heart", although I just have. It isn't something that we want to be saying to conference, but budgets are budgets; facts of life are facts of life. We really do ask for it to be remitted.

THE PRESIDENT:

Right of reply, Shropshire.

BRO MATT LAMB (Shropshire):

Thank you, president. Just two points. Firstly, as I said before, we brought it in 2013 and it hasn't been done, so I think you've had your chance.

Talking about cost, health and safety and what we've not been able to do over the last two years demonstrates that the cost of whatever this is going to be is not the point; we need to be able to do this. There are still changes to our operating procedures, incident command system is next. We need to be able to react; we need to be able to deal with it; we need this to pass. Delaying it any further is just not acceptable. Please support our resolution. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

Thank you. conference, I now put resolution 47 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That is *CARRIED* *Applause*

I now call resolution 66 moved by the CSNC with the amendment from the CSNC. The executive council support. Amelia, can you move your amendment and your resolution together, please? Thank you.

Resolution 66 – SAFETY CRITICAL CREWING LEVELS IN EMERGENCY FIRE CONTROLS
Following the completion of the recent survey of existing crewing levels within Emergency Fire Controls it is concerning to note the number of times Emergency Fire Controls are running at or below safety critical crewing levels. This is a dangerous practice which is potentially harmful to the health, safety and welfare of all Fire and Rescue Service employees and members of the public.

This Conference calls upon Brigade and Regional Officials to help eliminate this dangerous practice.

- This should be done by:***
- ***Supporting members to challenge critical crewing with line managers.***
 - ***Assisting Control Branches in building a case to tackle underlying problems.***
 - ***Raising the issue at Brigade and Regional Committee level.***
 - ***Using existing Health and Safety Legislation and where necessary, issuing Safety Critical Notices.***

This Conference also calls on the Executive Council to raise awareness of the issue with our employers at National Joint Council level.

Amendment
Paragraph 1, line 3, after “crewing” insert “and/or supervisory”.
Paragraph 4, first bullet point, after “crewing” insert “and/or supervisory levels”.

SIS AMELIA DIALLO (CSNC):
President, conference, I am speaking today on the increased frequency of occasions when emergency fire controls are staffed at or below safety-critical crewing levels, as highlighted by a recent survey carried out by the CSNC on crewing levels within controls nationally. We all know that when a fire station has insufficient crew to mobilise a pump that pump is taken off the run, the next nearest resource is mobilised and the pump remains unavailable until a full crew can be raised. In control, however, we cannot change our status to off the run. Control rooms must continue to function, emergency calls must be answered, and the required response must be mobilised. So how can we maintain business as usual if control is running at or below safety-critical crewing levels? The simple answer is we can't, and your lives could be put at risk as a result.

The detrimental impact on the health and safety of our control staff members is obvious, as they're forced to maintain the full mobilising, command and control function whilst understaffed, operating under increased pressure, working without proper breaks, eating their meals at their desks, and making difficult decisions on how best to manage events within their limited resources. Decision such as: should I request an ambulance to the RTC persons trapped now, or should I answer a priority message coming in over the radio first?

It's decisions like these which highlight the less obvious impact on all fire and rescue employees and on the public of running emergency fire controls at or below safety-critical crewing levels. It is unacceptable that up and down the country we risk mobilising delays which could jeopardise the lives of firefighters and the public as a result of unsatisfactory crewing levels in control, leaving fewer staff available than is required to complete the time-critical work we do.

I'm moving the amendment on this resolution, as having further considered the issue, we felt it necessary to highlight that safety-critical crewing isn't only about staffing numbers, but also includes a requirement for adequate supervisory management levels in control. We need only look back a short time to the Coroners' Rule 43 letter in regard to the Shirley Towers tragedy to realise the importance of adequate supervision of emergency calls. Ensuring we have sufficient numbers of staff on duty, including those with the right skills and experience to manage control operations, is vital if we are to prevent similar occurrences in future.

We successfully challenged inadequate supervisory levels in Lincolnshire fire and rescue, and as a result they now have a watch manager on duty at all times within the control room. This is the level of supervision the role maps deem necessary, and at a time when fire and rescue services are seeking to make cuts and deliver more with less, we must challenge attacks on control staff numbers and supervisory manager levels. I therefore move the amendment and urge conference to support control branches in this matter through brigade and regional committees, through the use of health and safety legislation, and through discussions with our employers at NJC. Please support the resolution as amended. I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

Does the resolution have a seconder? *Formally*

Does the amendment have a seconder? *Formally*

That's open for debate. No. I now put the CSNC amendment to the vote. The EC support. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That is *CARRIED*

I now put resolution 66 as amended to the vote. The EC support. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That is *CARRIED*

Please, EC, note that we did spend a lot of time on that debate this morning and rightly so, and we've fallen a way behind with some of the business. So much so that I'm cutting your lunch break by 10 whole minutes. Please be back here by two o'clock because we've got two more policy statements this afternoon and a raft of other business. Break for lunch/dinner.

Break for lunch

AFTERNOON SESSION

THE PRESIDENT:

Conference come to order now. I'll call on Kevin Deacon to give the result of the standing orders election. Kevin.

BRO KEVIN DEACON (Chief scrutineer):

Thank you, president. Conference, as chief scrutineer I am here to announce the results for the standing orders committee election. The result is as follows: Brother Steve Shelton was re-elected unopposed. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

Thank you. Give me that badge back, Steve! I now call upon the chair of standing orders to give the standing orders report.

THE CHAIR OF STANDING ORDERS (Bro Steve Shelton):

Thank you, president. Thanks for your support, Micky! Please turn to your list of delegates: NWC delete Helen Tooley, insert Louise Connell. Region 10 London delete Lucy Masoud, insert Nathan Cane. Region 6 Leicestershire: delete Gavin Lynch, insert Dean Thornton. Region 13 Cornwall delete John Castledon.

Can you now please turn to your programme of business page 9? After Paragraph J2 insert Emergency Resolution 7 Hydraulic Hose, Scotland. The emergency resolution has been handed out to delegations so delegates can digest its contents before debate. Thank you, president.

THE PRESIDENT:

Any speakers? Is the standing orders report agreed? *AGREED*

Thank you very much. Conference, we've had a request to inform delegates of the funeral details of an out-of-trade member, a very recently deceased out-of-trade member from South Yorkshire, Brother Darren Preston-Smith. He was very well known to me. He just retired in November and unfortunately Darren was killed whilst on holiday in Dubai. His funeral will be held at Sheffield City Crematorium on Friday 22 May at quarter to two. Once again, conference, our condolences go out to all of Darren's family and friends on this sad occasion. Thank you very much.

Can I now ask all delegates to turn to page 10 of the programme of business. I call the executive council policy statement All Different All Equal – Review, with amendments from Scotland, Shropshire, London and B&EMM. John.

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL POLICY STATEMENT: ALL DIFFERENT ALL EQUAL – REVIEW

BRO JOHN MCGHEE (National officer):

President, conference, I will come to the amendments – a number of which we're supporting and some of which we will be opposing – as I go through the paper. I think it's probably important that we reflect a bit on where we are and how we got here.

We came in 2011 with a motion calling for a review of our All Different All Equal policy, which is our key policy on equality for this union. We came back in 2013 having not made significant progress in that review due to the amount of campaigning work that was going on, and the difficulty for the officials on the ground to participate properly within that review. Following that, the executive council set up a task and finish group, after an initial review was carried out. The executive council had a look at that and decided that they would set up a task and finish group. Actually, that task and finish group had five people on it, and by the time they finished there were two of them left in the union, so I suppose it puts a different slant on task and finish, because they did the task but by then most of them were finished!

Let's talk about the consultation, because the consultation has been undertaken over a long period of time. This policy has now been around in the union for more than a decade. It's a policy that has stood the test of time because it's a policy that indicates to our members that if you're being bullied, harassed, or victimised then it will not be tolerated by any official in this union. And that remains the position today, and that's why this policy statement has changed in a very subtle way, and not in a great deal of substance. I think we should be proud of that, conference, because the policy that was written more than a decade ago has stood the test of time.

There were obviously flaws in the policy itself, and in particular the flaws relating to how we could manage the investigations and how we could conduct those within the timescales that were laid out inside the policy. What I do not intend to do is to go through this policy page by page and highlight each of those changes. But what I can say, conference, is that there are significant changes to the timescale set out. Most, if not all of our regional secretaries, indicated in the consultation process that it was virtually impossible to meet the previous timescales that were within that policy document. On almost every single occasion where representation had been requested and an investigation had

been conducted, then the investigators had asked for an extension of the timescale in order to carry that out. So those timescales were impractical and it was something we had to change. The task and finish group has gone through the policy and has updated and clarified a number of the areas within the policy in order to ensure that it's easier for our members and our officials to understand.

Conference, let's just talk a wee bit about the policy to remind some of you. I had an interesting experience. I attended the B&EMM school late last year in Eastbourne, if I remember correctly. The president was there and we were having a bit of a chat. There were a lot of new members of the Fire Brigades Union, or new to our education programme and not activists within the union at that school. It became apparent, as we were having discussions with the school, that when people were talking about the Grey Book, for example, this was language that wasn't familiar and people really didn't know what the Grey Book was.

At the time I said to the president, I bet if you asked the same question of the people in this room, they probably won't have heard of our All Different All Equal policy, which is our flagship policy on equality. The president said to me: No, no, no. I said: Go on, ask them. Alan made some remarks at the school and was addressing the school. He stopped and he said: Can you put your hands up all of you who know what All Different All Equal policy is? I think both he and myself were more shocked than we expected to be, because it was literally a handful of hands went up, and the majority of the people in that room had never even heard of our policy All Different All Equal.

That tells us a great deal, conference, in terms of who we are communicating our policy to our members. I'm happy to report, conference, that the number of cases that we get in terms of requests for applications I think is relatively low. They are relatively low, but still far too high, if that makes any sense. Where I come from in Scotland it does make sense. The point that we've got to get across, if we have a policy that is our guiding policy on how we expect each other to be treated and how we expect to challenge that offensive behaviour, we need to make sure our members are aware of that policy. I don't expect that in that room full of the B&EMM members, that there would have been a flood of those saying: actually I need to use that policy; I want to make a complaint. I don't believe that's what it was. I attend all of our equality schools and I pick up as I go across the union the way the behaviours inside the fire service have changed dramatically in the last 10 to 20 years. I don't think that we've wiped out all the behaviours that we want to wipe out. I think we still have a challenge in order to make sure that people are not bullied, harassed or victimised within the fire and rescue service, and within the Fire Brigades Union.

I want to say something about the government's approach to this. Back in 2008 we were working with the then Labour government to deliver an equality and diversity strategy for the fire and rescue service that was going to set out a number of issues, in particular recruitment targets and retention targets as well as a number of other monitoring arrangements. The first thing that the coalition government did when they came in was scrap - I'm jinxed this week, there's another flood. This roof's leaking again. My room's flooded three times this week! I'm now getting a bit nervous!

The first thing that they did was to scrap that equality and diversity strategy. They sent a very loud signal to our employers to say: If you're interested in equality we're going to leave it to you because we are not. We wrote to the minister for fire, saying that we would like to meet and have a discussion with you about equality. We got a very simple response back. Very simple, short and abrupt. Somebody better tell maintenance – that's getting worse! The response was just quite clearly: Look, this is something you need to talk to your employers about; it actually doesn't really have very much to do with us. So that was the coalition government. I can tell you that if we think that this government that's coming in now is going to take a more proactive approach to equality, then we really are kidding ourselves on big time.

So we have got a job to go to our employers, locally and nationally, to make sure that the behaviours in the fire service are behaviours that we expect within this union, and we expect to be applied right across the workforce where all of our members are.

Conference, I ask you to support the executive council's All Different All Equal policy. I say this to you. The price of progress is eternal vigilance. If we do not keep looking to see that equality is improving, it will go backwards. If we allow people like the Tory government to be in control of the standards of behaviour and expectations in the fire service, then we really have got no chance. We need to challenge offensive behaviour wherever it arises and wherever we see it, whether it's men abusing women, whether it's racial, sexual, or any other type of harassment, we have got to speak up. We must be the voice of reason and the voice for equality. I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

Is that seconded? Are you moving to second, comrade? Please.

BRO ROD O'HARE (NIFB):

President, conference, I am fairness at work official for Northern Ireland. Conference, we are here to second the executive council policy statement on All Different All Equal. You know, it has taken a long time for us to get to this point. It has taken a lot of hard work, but we believe that the journey has been both worthwhile and fruitful. The original All Different All Equal policy was, to be fair, probably ahead of its time. In fact, I would suggest it could be described as ground breaking within the trade union movement. That's something we should be really proud of. Whilst we as officials value the policy, many members aren't aware of its existence, as has been alluded to earlier. This review gives the union the opportunity and the incentive to address this issue.

Equality, and in particular the executive council policy statement, needs to be high on the agenda at every level in the union. To ensure that this is the case we need to look at the FBU education programme and ensure that it reflects that. This means that courses should, where at all possible, be commissioned and delivered as a matter of urgency and as reasonably practicable. I appreciate there's a fair amount of work involved at other times as well.

This policy review must be subject to regular review to ensure that it's current, relevant and fit for the purpose for which it's intended. Conference, I urge you to support the policy and we're happy to second. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

I now call upon Scotland to move both of your amendments at the same time. Thank you very much. The executive council oppose them both.

BRO GARY LENNIE (Scotland):

President, conference, we have often heard the excuses of members being bullied as just being banter and having a laugh. The interpretation of having a laugh can have a completely different meaning for that individual on the receiving end of so-called laugh. By including that wording in this policy statement we feel that this sends out the wrong message. The wording is not strong enough and trivialises the seriousness of the intentions of the policy statement. In order to send out a clear message that our union will not tolerate bullies, we need to make the language more powerful. With that in mind we would ask conference to support this amendment. I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

Is that amendment seconded? *Formally*

Move your second amendment, please.

BRO GARY LENNIE (Scotland):

Thanks, president. Moving amendment 2. This amendment now has the option to cover all rules by including "s" by clearly stating that representation may be withdrawn due to breach of any of the rules. It gives clear meaning to the reading and understanding of the policy. This amendment strengthens the policy and we would ask conference to support this amendment as it leaves the reader in no doubt about the rules of representation. I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

Is the second amendment from Scotland seconded? *Formally*

Thank you very much. I now call Shropshire to move their amendment. The executive council oppose.

BRO MATT LAMB (Shropshire):

President, conference, we have for many years debated the pitfalls of representation under All Different All Equal. It's been divisive and I can see both sides. No one wants to represent a bully or a harasser who has acted contrary to the rules of the union. But on the other hand, the frustration of not representing somebody accused innocently until proven that that individual is worthy of our representation is a real dilemma.

But the reason for our amendment is not for that. The reason for our amendment is on the basis of trust, the basis of trust in our officials and the basis of trust in our regional committees. The point is that the rule as it stands means an individual, because of the timescales, would be entitled to FBU representation regardless of the decision of the regional committee. Having done All Different All Equal investigations, and considered cases on the regional committee, it's a big ask. It's intensive work to complete an investigation, and the cases are always diligently considered with all the knowledge, expertise and experience by the regional committee.

To have a rule which can disregard the work done by the investigator and the decision by the committee until it gets to appeal is disrespectful to that committee and will be a massive disincentive to do that work. Why would anyone go through all that if it can be not upheld during the appeal part?

If the appeal committee is the only decision that really counts, perhaps they should do all that work. Please support the amendment. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

Is the Shropshire amendment seconded? *Formally*

OK. London. How many amendments are you moving, Paul? Yes, good.

BRO PAUL EMBERY (London):

President, conference, we've got 10 amendments there. All but one of them we're happy to move formally. In terms of amendment 7, which I understand the executive council was going to oppose, we've had sufficient assurances from the executive council around that amendment, so we're happy to withdraw amendment 7 and to move all the others formally.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thank you very much. With the exception of amendment 7 are all the other London amendments seconded? *Formally*

All formally seconded. Thank you, conference, that was cheeky! Could I have amendment 15 to be moved by B&EMM, please. The executive council oppose.

BRO BRIAN AMOS (B&EMM):

President, conference, page 7 of version 4 All Different All Equal, Equality Education: "The FBU will ensure that all courses provided at regional or national level will follow our educational aim of deepening an understanding and the practical implications of the equality agenda." Based on that statement we are proposing that the ADAE policy should have the provision for a national fairness at work school. As John McGhee alluded to in his address, we need to re-communicate our policy via education.

The policy expresses the need for officials to have information and knowledge on equality issues. National education is what we are asking for as there is no longer an FBU provision for regional education.

We are in a position where the downgrading of the equality agenda has impacted on the base knowledge and understanding that we received from the fire service, and more importantly from our union, We cannot expect our reps or officials to challenge management when we are ill-equipped on equality issues. A national fairness at work school does not have to be an annual provision within the education programme, but should clearly state all reps or officials who have responsibility for the equality agenda (and that includes fairness at work reps as well) attend a fairness at work school as an expectation.

It seems that we are at odds with our principles within this union on this one, a union constantly fighting for fair treatment of its membership yet has no structured national fairness at work school or training within its education programme is for me similar to laying the foundations without any concrete support. Let's have that support. Thank you, conference. Support the amendment. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

Does the amendment have a seconder? *Formally*

That is open for debate, conference. Would anybody like to speak? Please come forward. Yes, comrade from the back. Anyone else?

SIS CLARE HUDSON (NWC):

President, conference, I am speaking in support of the EC policy statement ADAE review. We need to ensure that as a union all our members are aware that the All Different All Equal policy exists. We need to ensure that all reps are educated to enable us to implement this policy if necessary. This includes ensuring ADAE courses are in the FBU education programme.

Finally, we the FBU must be the leaders in stamping out unwanted behaviours. I support. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

No further speakers. Can I ask the national officer to give the executive council's opposition to the amendments of Scotland, Scotland, Shropshire and B&EMM, please.

BRO JOHN MCGHEE (National officer):

Thank you, president. If I can, I will deal first with the Shropshire amendment. Matt, you said that it's disrespectful to the committee and why would we go through it if once we've made that decision then we don't wait for the appeal? It's an argument and a discussion that's taken place and that the task and finish group gave consideration to and took some guidance from our solicitors. In terms of natural justice, we argue for that in a number of cases in the fire and rescue service. One of the executive council members who is up here (and you will come to a motion later in the week) was given no right of appeal, Ricky Matthews. So it seems almost perverse that we have a system but we don't allow it to be completed. Our solicitors are saying if you have an appeal system in place then the decision that's taken until the end of the appeal process should remain until the end of the appeal process. So if someone has been granted representation, the regional committee decide they shouldn't have it, then we need to exhaust the appeal process first.

We will give you the assurance that we want to make sure that regional committees get that appeal process done as quickly as possible. If

you look at the timescales in there, we've tried to keep that as tight as possible so that the decision is not left hanging for a long time. It's not designed to be disrespectful to regional committees. The policy has got every respect for the regional officials who have to administer it and also those who are involved in the investigations, but I would advise and ask conference to oppose Shropshire's amendment.

I then come to the B&EMM amendment. Brian, let me give yourself and the B&EMM committee the assurance from our education department, from the executive council, that the commitment to fairness at work education throughout our education policy is absolute. That is no doubt of this union's commitment to including fairness at work and equality education right throughout the programme. It is there. Whether that means that we need to have a national fairness at work school, actually that might not be all we need to do. In fact, what we do need to do is make sure that when we're educating our officials, regardless of what school they are at, we make sure that fairness at work and equality are right through every agenda for a school and every course programme. So I give you the assurance, Brian, that it's not taken lightly, we don't want to write what the education programme should be. Our education programme is a separate document, it's a separate thing that is updated and is reviewed on a regular basis. This is a policy where we want to set out the values and expectations for our members. So I would ask conference to oppose B&EMM's amendment on that basis.

I will come, if I can, to the two Scottish amendments. I have to say, I encourage you again, on the first amendment from Scotland to oppose. I'm sorry, Scotland, I really don't see how deleting that sentence makes the policy stronger. The purpose of that sentence in there is we were trying to make sure that you bring awareness to our members who will be reading this policy. In fact, there is a world of difference between having a laugh with colleagues and subjecting people to ridicule. As I say, I really don't see how just deleting that sentence makes the policy any stronger. I think it is quite clear, and I think it is a helpful sentence to leave in there. Conference, please oppose that amendment.

In terms of Scotland's second amendment, again conference, I have to ask you to oppose it. In actual fact it's not something we can achieve through this policy. What this policy doesn't do, it doesn't discipline somebody in accordance with the rules. If you agree the second amendment that Scotland have put in there, that's what that is saying. What that amendment is saying is that it may result in representation being withdrawn. The only way that representation gets withdrawn is following an investigation under All Different All Equal – not through the rules, it's not in the new rule book. We didn't write it in as a sanction; we have it as part of this policy. So it's not part of the rules. So in fact, as I say, passing that second amendment would be factually incorrect and not something that we could impose. It would put a contradiction there altogether.

Let me just say about the London amendments. It's a bit remiss of me not to thank London for putting in helpful amendments to the policy. In terms of the one that Paul withdrew, and if you look at that, it looked as though it was a repetition of a short paragraph. I have to apologise to the delegates and to the officials. You comb through these documents in order to make amendments, and that was a typing and printing error that I never picked up before. I have to say, standing orders never picked it up either actually, but we won't have a go about that. You just re-elected Steve! I do apologise for that, conference. It was a repetition of a sentence that was in the original document. It is set aside as a text box, shall we call it, so it finished up in there as a repetition.

I don't want to finish on just talking about the errors we made in the printing. I want to finish on saying that the task and finish group put an interim paper to the executive council that said that the executive council would relaunch the policy and reinvigorate that policy. So Clare, in terms of your contribution, we will make sure that this policy is communicated to all of our members. We are the upholders of equality and justice in the fire service, and we have to continue to be that. We do have to continue to be at the vanguard of the drive for equality. Please support. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

OK, conference, I now put amendment 1 Scotland to the vote. The executive council oppose. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *FALLS*

I now amendment 2 Scotland to the vote. The executive council oppose. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *FALLS*

I now put amendment 4 Shropshire to the vote. The executive council oppose. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *FALLS*

I now put amendment 5 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 amendment 6 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 amendment 8 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 amendment 9 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 amendment 10 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 amendment 11 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 amendment 12 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 amendment 13 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 amendment 14 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 amendment 15 B&EMM to the vote. The executive council oppose. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *FALLS*

I now put the executive council policy statement as amended to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That is *CARRIED*

I would personally like to thank London as well for their diligence in their approach to this, and the manner that they've gone through it and helped us immensely. There's nothing worse than an inadequate policy statement, as you all know. Thank you for that.

I call resolution 59 Mental Health and Our Members, Durham. The executive council give qualified support.

Resolution 59 – MENTAL HEALTH AND OUR MEMBERS
This Conference is concerned at the growing problem of mental health issues in today's society.

With 1 in 4 people suffering the effects of a mental health issue, it is important to make sure our members are supported by the Fire and Rescue Services they serve in. Aggressive attendance management policies may well create non sympathetic employers who don't realise when an employee is suffering from issues beyond their control, when as a consequence it is support they require rather than warnings about their sickness records and disciplinary sanctions.

This Conference therefore instructs the Executive Council with immediate effect to create workplace best practice guidance on mental health which would help local Officials when consulting with Fire and Rescue Services on mental health policies. This to include a holistic approach to dealing with mental health and to create supportive environments for our Members to recover and deal with their condition.

This best practice guidance to be completed within six months from the end of Conference 2015.

DURHAM

BRO PAUL DAWSON (Durham):
President, conference, mental health conditions are sharply rising, and it is now the number one reason for sickness, putting musculoskeletal injuries in second place. The nature of our workplaces and the incidents that we deal with often put our members at considerable risk of considering conditions relating to mental health compared with other vocations. If you combine this point with the stringent attendance management practices, this inevitably has the outcome of a serious conflict of interests. Our members are subjected to unsupportive arenas with misguided managers using inflexible policies that make no allowances for this type of condition, often causing more damage instead of providing individuals with the support that they require to get them back to full health.

This type of illness is unseen, yet can be just as debilitating as a physical one. As the resolution illustrates, one in four people suffer mental

health problems, which is why a workplace best practice guide must be introduced to assist our officials when negotiating policies to promote prevention and recovery and give this growing problem the recognition that it deserves.

We recognise the EC's concern of six months to complete this body of work, but it is important that we are supporting our members, so we would urge them to do it as soon as practically possible. If we can have the assurances from the EC that this work will be completed as soon as they can achieve it, please.

We need to be the drivers of making sure our members are fully supported so please back this resolution. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you. Does that have a seconder? *Formally*

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

BRO MICKY NICHOLAS (B&EMM):
Recent research has showed us that BME people in our society are disproportionately affected by mental health issues, so I think this particular resolution is not only topical for us but a very well worded resolution. I also want to assure conference and the executive council that any working document will meet with the full assistance of our section with regard to some of the mental health issues that affect our people in our society and therefore in our fire service workplace. Thank you. *Applause*

SIS CLARE HUDSON (NWC):
President, conference, I am speaking in support of resolution 59. I'm actually delivering the speech on behalf of Helen Tooley from the women's committee who had to leave conference at lunchtime. So this is on her behalf.

In Mind's recent study they found that 85% of fire and rescue service personnel have experienced stress and poor mental health at work. Although we are more likely to experience mental health problems, we are also less likely to take time off work. If you take time off you're looked on as weak and told to just get over it, return to work, don't let it affect your performance, and that's what's expected. It's mental health awareness week this week, hashtag mhaw15. The police are also looking at similar guidance to what is mentioned in the resolution, and there is a lot of information about it on social media.

Mental health should no longer be a taboo, not spoken about and not recognised. It's an important issue, and we need our employers to recognise this too and not to be the cause of it. Considering the possibility of going to medical incidents, this is even more important. The service broke me recently. I'm fighting back now, but not with proper support from the organisation. Please support. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
No further debate. AGS to give the qualification.

THE ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:
Conference, it is a very simple qualification and that is, as the mover outlined, the question of time frame. The question was posed to the executive council from the rostrum: Will we do it as quickly as possible? Yes, we will give that assurance. Similarly, as Micky Nicholas raised, the question of ensuring we get the advice and assistance of B&EMM, that the issue is raised with them for input to be considered. We give that assurance as well. Thank you, president.

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you. I now move to the vote. I now put resolution 59 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That is *CARRIED*

Paragraph J2. Yes, please come to the rostrum.

BRO GARY KEARY (GMC):
Conference, president, you will all be aware that on 13 July 2013 at a fire in the city centre of Manchester we tragically lost our comrade, Brother Stephen Hunt. In the time since, Greater Manchester police have attempted to bring a prosecution against a juvenile for arson with intent to endanger life. I can now inform that prior to the trial date of 13 April, following representations from the defence team, all charges were dropped. The FBU believe this was the correct decision.

This juvenile didn't cause the death of Stephen, who died six hours after the initial attendance of the fire service. He died within two hours of coming on a night shift and attending the incident as part of a relief crew. It is only now, following the collapse of the criminal prosecution that

some of the restraints have been lifted from the union in regard to confidentiality. It is the case that the union has been, and continues to be, represented on gold command. We do have a serious accident investigation team in place and we are set to meet with the coroner next Friday.

The coroner’s Inquest has been provisionally set for September. The time between now and then will see the officials involved work tirelessly to ensure the reports they produce provide the answers and leave no stone unturned.

Conference, the confidentiality restrictions that we have faced meant that until today there was very little that we could share. Unfortunately at this time there is little more I can add. I can commit, however, that the FBU and GMC will do everything within their power to find the answers to every question, and if any fault is found that resulted in Stephen’s death then we, on behalf of Stephen, his family and comrades, will ensure that the truth is told and justice achieved. Thank you. *Applause*

BRO DAVID BENNETT (Scotland):
President, conference, I am regional health and safety rep Scotland, speaking on Dalry Road. Brother Ewan Williamson was a member of green watch based at Tollcross fire station in Edinburgh. On the morning of 12 July 2009 the watch was mobilised to a fire in the basement of the Balmoral Bar in Dalry Road. Ewan was part of a breathing apparatus team who were recommitted to the bar within minutes of a previous BA wear, and during that deployment he became trapped and was killed before the fire could be brought under control or rescue teams could reach him. Ewan was one of the good guys. He loved being a firefighter and was a great friend and comrade to all who knew him. It goes without saying that he is sadly missed.

Following the fire, a multi-agency investigation involving the police, the Health and Safety Executive and Strathclyde Fire and Rescue Service was instigated under the direction of the Crown Office health and safety division. More than four years later in October 2013 an indictment was served on the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service. The charges from this indictment were significant and detailed, and the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service pleaded not guilty to all of them. Between October 2013 and January 2015 negotiations took place between the Crown Office and the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and this resulted in four reduced charges. Of the four charges the only one that was deemed to have been causal to Ewan’s death was that the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service failed to adequately train firefighters to ensure close personal contact was maintained during firefighting and search and rescue activities.

The reduction in the charges also resulted in the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service changing their plea to guilty. The judge fined the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service £54,000. The result of the reduced charges, as well as the final sentencing, left the family with very little in the way of answers about what happened and why. There is no doubt they feel let down by the criminal justice system and their loss remains unresolved.

During the five years and seven months it took for the death of Brother Williamson to be investigated and prosecuted by the Crown, Lothian and Borders Fire Board initially and then their successor body, the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, refused to discuss the health and safety implications of this fire with the Fire Brigades Union. The fire service was an accused person in a criminal case and so to some extent their unwillingness to engage with FBU is understandable. However, there were serious and urgent lessons to be learned from this incident and what went wrong at the Balmoral Bar fire.

Unfortunately, the nature of criminal proceedings is that they are adversarial. The burden of proof is beyond reasonable doubt. It is not a process which lends itself to full discovery of the facts and circumstances, nor is it a process that happens quickly. In this case, although the advocate depute read out a long and detailed account of what happened that night, there could be no forensic examination of the evidence and in particular no inquisitorial investigation into the full facts and circumstances on a without prejudice basis. The end result was that while the Crown secured a conviction against the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, the prosecution itself did not help in the process of addressing the lessons which needed then and are still needed to be learned from that fire, improving health and safety on the fireground.

Where does that leave us? In Scotland we have a system of fatal accident inquiry. A fatal accident inquiry is mandatory in all cases of death at work. However, there’s a discretion clause within the legislation that allows the lord advocate to forego the mandatory element of the fatal accident inquiry if he considers that the criminal proceedings have established all the facts of the case. It is unlikely that the lord advocate will call a fatal accident inquiry in this case. Therefore, ultimately we are left relying on the goodwill of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service to address some of the significant failings that we have highlighted.

As I said earlier, the reluctance of Lothian and Borders to discuss the case continued into the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service. However, they were willing to discuss with us a plan of introducing a firefighter safety programme. The basis of that programme is to identify recurring themes from investigations into firefighter fatalities at fires from 1991 to 2013, excluding of course Dalry Road and also, as we just heard, Oldham Street. The analysis of all available evidence in the investigation report will be used to implement changes in how the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service deploys and deals with emergencies, and in particular fire. We’ve already seen the benefit of the programme by way of a BA welfare policy that recognises the need for structured rest periods between BA wears, and the importance of hydration, pre-hydration and rehydration.

Since the Scottish service pleaded guilty, we have met and discussed with the chief fire officer about how our report recommendations can be integrated into the firefighter safety programme. It’s fair to say we’re encouraged with how these discussions are going and we are optimistic that most of our recommendations will be addressed.

To sum up, we’re confident that through the firefighter safety programme and in partnership with the Scottish service we can bring about effective change. However, that must not be allowed to disguise the fact that in this case the criminal justice system has failed Ewan’s family and failed this union in terms of ensuring that the health and safety of our members is protected. The criminal justice system is a prolonged process that introduces barriers that prevent a common approach to the identification and acknowledgement of lessons to be learned. It has not provided us with anything tangible that we can take to chief fire officers across the UK to apply pressure for change.

It is vital therefore that we explore other options. In this respect I would like to refer conference to what for us is a key recommendation from the recently published Stirling University report Voices from the Fireground. The recommendation is aimed at the HSE and states: “Consideration should be given to the establishment of a fire investigation unit along the line of the marine accident investigation board or air crash investigation bodies. Such a unit could pool resources from across HSE, CFRAU and the Fire Services College at Moreton-in-Marsh to investigate serious fire incidents.” I urge the executive council to ensure that this recommendation is pursued. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
John, do you want to reply on that? Yes.

BRO JOHN McGHEE (National officer):
Thanks, president. I think it is important to recognise once again the work of our safety representatives because dealing with serious accident investigations is extremely difficult. I think we have published now the report on Dalry Road and that’s been circulated to brigade officials and should be available on our website pretty soon.

I just want to pick up on one of the points that Davy mentioned in relation to the Andrew Watterson report. That’s the recommendation around the creation of an independent investigation unit similar to air accident investigation or marine accident investigation. Once that report was published we contacted all the governments, fire services and CFRAU etc, asking to meet with them in order to discuss the recommendations of the report. We have so far had meetings with the Scottish inspector and Welsh government, both of whom have made (dare I say) sort of lukewarm noises to the idea of such a body. They certainly weren’t opposed to it, but in order to achieve a body like that, it is going to be a considerable piece of work. It will take a good piece of campaigning and probably won’t be achieved overnight. But it is something certainly that we would pick up from Andrew Watterson’s report and try to progress.

In terms of the Stephen Hunt investigation, I want to again say to our comrades in GMC that head office will give you every support we possibly can to continue and complete the investigation right up until the inquiry. That’s going to be very important for us. Dave has picked up on the issue for all of us. Again, if we look back to the Warwickshire report which we had hoped we would have been able to publish the final report earlier this year – in actual fact we had it prepared but we had some legal issues and challenges to overcome before we can now circulate that to everybody and hopefully we will do that pretty soon. There was also the accident in 2014 in Northampton where Jamie Thompson and Malcolm Faulks suffered serious injuries. Again, Colin and Ben, the safety representatives in Northamptonshire, have done a fantastic job investigating and pushing for changes in that brigade.

So the work of the safety reps in all of this is paramount and they do a terrific job. We think back to the discussion that we’ve just had about mental health, when you’re faced with the pressure of trying to deliver change because you can see (Davy again used a term from the Scottish courts) beyond reasonable doubt. I think anybody in this room, when they see the evidence of all the fatal accidents that we have had, would come to the conclusion that beyond reasonable doubt our members were killed when they shouldn’t have been and didn’t need to be. So our test of reasonable doubt is quite different from that of the courts. It’s going to be our job to continue to push to make sure that we have the lessons learned and we stop any further serious accidents. Again, thank you to the safety reps for the work that they do. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
I now call emergency resolution 7 Hydraulic Hose to be moved by Scotland. The executive council support.

Emergency resolution 7 – HYDRAULIC HOSE
Conference will be aware of the horrific hydraulic oil injury which was suffered by our member during a training exercise. The FBU’s health and safety representative in Scotland has now received a report on the destruction test of a length of hydraulic hose on 13 May 2015.

A joint health and safety investigation into the cause of a serious high pressure injection injury identified a manufacturing defect within an aftermarket hydraulic hose. This led to its agreed withdrawal and replacement with

new manufacturers’ original hose. Following use at an operational incident an inspection of this particular manufacturers hose identified damage. Detailed independent testing was carried out on the affected section of hose and has now reported that a similar manufacturing defect exists.

- As far as we are aware this hydraulic hose is in use throughout the UK Fire and Rescue Services and has the potential to inflict further serious injuries to FBU members and members of the public. The Scottish Region has taken a measured and pragmatic approach throughout the investigation in recognition of the consequences of demanding that the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service withdraw all relevant hydraulic hose from use. Understandably our members are becoming increasingly concerned for their safety and, therefore, Conference calls upon the Executive Council, as a matter of urgency, to;*
- Undertake further investigations to confirm these findings*
 - Engage with the HSE at national level, UK Fire and Rescue Services, DCLG and relevant government departments to identify and implement potential solutions, including consideration of replacing hydraulic hose with a suitable alternative*
 - Identify if the only practical safe measure is to demand the withdrawal of hydraulic hose from use*
 - Report the findings of any further investigations, as soon as practicably possible, to the FBU Health and Safety Committee, Regional and Brigade Committees*
 - Issue recommendations and any necessary guidance from these findings*

SCOTLAND

BRO DAVID BENNETT (Scotland):
Conference, president, it's like waiting for a bus! Conference, this has been a very complex investigation and I could bogged down in delivering a lot of technical information to you today, but clearly this is not the place for that. Hopefully most of you are aware of the issue to an extent. I've been providing updates to head office and also to the FBU national health and safety committee, and it's also captured within the serious accident investigation section of the EC report.

In March of last year a member was taking part in routine RTC training when he sustained a high pressure oil injection injury. He was unaware that the injection had occurred for a couple of hours until his hand began to swell. He had felt nothing during the training. Thankfully, one of his colleagues was alert to the possibility of an oil injection and he was taken to hospital. What has happened since then has been life changing. Brother McDonald had to have 11 operations all under general anaesthetic and has had a finger and part of his hand amputated. He continues to have problems with grips within his hand and is still receiving medical treatment. It is unknown whether he will recover sufficiently to allow him to return to operational duty. He and his family have been provided with access to counselling services to assist in their recovery. His young daughter in particular has been having difficulty with the visible effects of the injury.

The investigation. From an early stage it was agreed that a joint investigation would be carried out with the Scottish service, and it's fair to say it has been quite a journey. The equipment in use on the day was a Clan Lukas power pack and tools and hydraulic hose from both Clan and Premier Hose Technologies. Testing carried out by the service and by Clan Lukas failed to identify the problem and the equipment was sent to the Health and Safety Laboratory in Buxton. As we were unable to find a cause we requested that a suspension was placed on all non-emergency use of hydraulic hose. For example, it wasn't to be used in training, competitions and demonstrations. This was reluctantly accepted by the service and remains in place to date.

The power pack and tools were quickly ruled out as being the cause of the accident. Pressure testing of the hoses also failed to show any signs of an oil leak. The breakthrough came when the hose was tested with nitrogen gas and three areas of potential leakage were identified in the Premier hose. Further independent testing has been carried out but at no time during this process has oil been seen to leak from the hose. The independent testing was carried out by a representative from the British Fluid Power Association with over 40 years in the industry. He told us from the beginning that we were looking in the wrong place by testing the hose. He said that if there was a hole in the hose then the oil would always find a path to escape. We proved that wrong when we created a hole in a brand new piece of hose and showed it could self-seal.

In November 2014 the Premier hose was sent for destructive testing. The resulting report indicated that a manufacturing defect exists on the liner of the hose. The FBU requested, following this report, that all Premier hose was removed from service and this was accepted by the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service. The service made the decision to replace the Premier hose with Lukas Joys of Life hose. Their justification was that the Lukas hose was of a different construction from the Premier hose and complied with an HSE safety alert which was issued in September of last year. A replacement timetable was agreed by the end of January 2015 for all Premier hose to be taken off the run.

At the beginning of April 2015, two months after the replacement programme had completed, a station in Glasgow attended an RTC. On return they vigilantly inspected their hydraulic rescue equipment and damage was observed to the outer surface of the hydraulic hose.

Nitrogen bubble testing confirmed a failure and at our request it was agreed that the same destruction testing which was carried out on Premier hose would take place. This has been completed and yesterday it was confirmed that a similar manufacturing defect exists.

The injury became reportable and the HSE got involved following the amputation. The HSE are not taking any action against the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service. I've supplied a report, which was agreed with the AGS, to the HSE posing fit for purpose questions in relation to the use of hydraulic hose in the fire and rescue service and requested that it is referred to the national lead. This has been done and we await their opinion.

In Scotland we have a wide range of hydraulic rescue equipment in use: Clan Lukas, Webber, Holmatro. It's important to stress to conference that no work has been carried out in relation to Holmatro, Core Technology or Webber supplied hose. The investigation findings relate only to Premier and Clan Lukas supplied hose.

To conclude, conference, the aim of this resolution is not to be alarmist. The likelihood of high pressure oil injection remains very low. However, the consequences of it occurring are horrific. It's clear from the findings of the investigation that this is way beyond a local issue in Scotland. There are national, indeed worldwide, implications for the fire and rescue service should these findings be substantiated. Please support the resolution. I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

I call upon London to second.

BRO GORDON FIELDEN (London):

Conference, there you go, there is a very geeky, technical aspect of something that is very serious. I want to place on record our thanks to the Scottish region and health and safety reps for doing this work and working so diligently to bring it to our attention.

We do have a slight problem in so far as the emergency resolution is concerned, and we would ask that the executive council put any control measures that are needed for England in as soon as they know they are available rather than perhaps wait for the outcome of an investigation, if they know that this needs to be changes. I've come up here just to second that purely on the basis of thanking Scotland. They have an excellent team of health and safety investigators. Thanks very much. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

That's open for debate. No? The executive council support. The AGS wants to comment.

THE ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:

Conference, this is clearly an extremely important issue. Dave has spoken quite comprehensively in that short period of time, giving the explanation of what happened and what's been done, particularly by the Scottish reps, in addressing the issue. We have outlined some of the issues before in Circular 0-696. You might want to just go back to that, because this is an issue which is going to roll correctly, and needs to be addressed again and with some vigour.

Before conference closes I hope to get a template letter for you to send to your fire and rescue services which will be an update to the work that you've previously done. This is to bring to the attention of the fire and rescue services the development in Scotland and asking, in the first instance, what individual fire and rescue services intend to do with regard to their hose. We note of course, as Dave said, that this is in relation to Premier and Lukas hose, but we can still ask the questions in respect of other hose which is out there.

There has been a lot of dialogue with the Scottish region. We are pleased that it is a very measured resolution, a very succinct resolution. It does make demands, correct demands, of the executive council and asks for those measures to be taken out with some urgency.

I think it is an important point that London raised in terms of: don't wait until the very, very end before you bring your recommendations, executive council; it's saying if you've got interim control measures that you think are suitable then report them through the structures. We do commit to doing that.

There is concern with regard to the view, the stance taken, by the local HSE. That is despite the (I wouldn't just call it protestations) work that has been done by the Scottish reps to try to get the HSE up there to take a bit more of a forthright approach to the issue. As Dave said, it has been referred to national level; we have started that discussion with the HSE. Clearly that does need to be pursued with more vigour, particularly in the light of the new information.

I will not run through the demands made of the executive council. They are absolutely appropriate and we commit to deal with this as a matter of urgency with the seriousness which it deserves. Thank you, president. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks very much. I now put emergency resolution 7 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. *That is CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY*

Paragraph J3, J4, J5. I now call resolution 60 National Breathing Apparatus Standards to be moved by North Yorkshire. The executive council give it qualified support. If anybody wants to second this one will they make their way to the rostrum please now?

Resolution 60 – NATIONAL BREATHING APPARATUS (BA) STANDARDS

In view of the widespread introduction of new BA practice and procedure, through closely coordinated efforts by over 30 brigades, using the DCLG BA Guidance to dilute current safety standards in order to fit local Integrated Risk Management Plans and widespread service cuts. Conference demands that the Executive Council challenge this approach centrally, instead of relying on individual Brigade Health and Safety Representatives, supported primarily by their Brigade Committees. Such a key safety critical area as BA needs a clear national standard.

NORTH YORKSHIRE

BRO STEVE HOWLEY (North Yorkshire):

President, conference, currently in our brigade the week before last we were at the joint secretaries trying to get resolution to a situation where our brigade are trying to dilute the safety protocols around rapid deployment and the use of rapid deployment. Our brigade are looking to use rapid deployment as the norm, almost in replacement of Stage 1 procedures, purely because they're intent on reducing wholetime firefighter numbers down to fours on pumps, and in some cases twos and threes. So all the safety protocols around TB197 and the strict use of rapid deployment has gone in the proposals being put forward to our brigade. We are reconvening the joint secretaries on 26 May so I can't say too much more on that.

Until recently, as I've stated, we had a national BA standard, TB197. Instead, we now have unagreed guidance from DCLG. Fire services across the UK will now cherry pick from this document to suit the purpose of a cuts agenda and not the safety of our members. At present, individual brigade reps, supported by the brigade committees, are trying to challenge national guidance. This is not a role for local officials. Safety standards are being diluted in this area at our expense, to enable further damaging cuts to our working terms and conditions. BA is a critical area of our work. It is essential that its practice is maintained and improved to prevent more deaths and serious injury – as we've just heard our colleagues and comrades from other areas explain.

Over 30 brigades have joined together unofficially to support each other in implementing various misguided practices. Conference, we need to unite, to stand against this creeping tide. Without a national standard, practices and procedures become piecemeal and further erosion becomes easier to achieve, brigade by brigade. If we stand together behind common standards we can defend these standards as a national union, which makes it much harder to attack by individual services. In the current climate we cannot afford to be picked off one by one. In the last closed session we've just voted on an EC policy statement about co-responding which is, as we've been told, to stop that particular circumstance: being picked off one by one. So we cannot afford to let this happen on something as serious as BA protocols.

Therefore, I urge conference to support the resolution and vote such that the EC take back the management of breathing apparatus policy and procedure to drive one acceptable BA standard for all of us. Conference, I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

Is that seconded? *Formally*

That is open for debate. I call upon the AGS to give his qualification.

THE ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:

Thank you, president. The executive council has looked at the resolution and read it as a particular focus being placed on the demand to ensure that we get agreed national guidance. You will be aware that because of the changes which have occurred over the last 10 years – primarily with the closing of CFBAC but more importantly, the failure during that 10-year period to come up with a process which ensures that we can get agreed national guidance – we have got a problem whereby quite often this guidance comes out without sufficient discussion with us, particularly on the final draft, and it comes out unagreed. That is certainly what happened with regard to the DCLG National BA Guidance, replacing as it did TB197. That still remains our position: that there must be agreed guidance, that we need structures to do it. We are making efforts to ensure the National Operational Guidance Programme, which has been set up over the last three years, does give us the opportunity to come up with agreed guidance. We believe that we do have that opportunity, although we do have some severe concerns. We will pursue that with some vigour. That is UK wide. As of April, all fire and rescue services across the UK have bought into that and have signed up to be part of that process in every part of the United Kingdom. We do clearly accept that we should continue to pursue that with vigour.

There is a qualification and the qualification is quite clear and simple. We do need to say it. It is that there can be no “instead of”. There can be an “as well as” but not an “instead of”. We cannot get national guidance instead of it being done locally. In the days of TB197 that was a unique piece of guidance that came out centrally that said it was mandatory on all fire and rescue services. Manuals of Firemanship and other TBs that came out did not have that stipulation. It was produced as guidance. The fact is the fire and rescue service recognised, during all of those years prior to 2004, the most logical thing to do was to implement the good guidance, the good practice that had been negotiated effectively centrally between CFOA, between the government departments and the Fire Brigades Union. But things changed.

What I would say to you is this: that even in those years there still had to be local implementation via the local health and safety committees, and that has not changed. Be clear, what we are not saying is that we believe that all the onus should be placed on brigade committee or brigade health and safety committees. We are not saying that. What we are saying is there is still a “must be”, a process whereby local joint health and safety committees ensure that it's implemented, ensure that it's monitored, ensure that it's audited and ensure that it's reviewed. That is the qualification.

But we are very clear, you want agreed national guidance the same as the executive council want agreed national guidance. We will continue to pursue that with the health and safety reps, with yourselves as well, the broader lay officials that inform our position with regard to health and safety standards and operational guidance. So the qualification is it cannot be instead of; it's as well as, but we understand entirely what the resolution calls for and we accept that entirely. Thank you, president. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

With the qualification I'll put resolution 60 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That is *CARRIED*

I now call resolution 65 Fire Behavioural and Real Fire Training to be moved by London. Executive council give it qualified support.

Resolution 65 – FIRE BEHAVIOURAL AND REAL FIRE TRAINING

Conference is alarmed by the increasing number of burn injuries to members participating in fire behavioural training and real fire training. Conference does not accept the principle of 'learn and burn', which seems to be the approach of many employers throughout the UK.

There is evidence that, in some fire and rescue services, the number of burn injuries sustained in the training environment now exceeds those sustained in the operational environment. This cannot be tolerated.

Conference therefore demands that the Executive Council immediately:

- *Establish a working party to produce a best-practice document covering fire behavioural and real fire training, to be published and circulated as soon as practicable.*
- *Seek an urgent review of fire service manual guidance on fire behavioural training, recommending appropriate amendments to ensure, so far as practicable and reasonable, that training reflects real-life scenarios.*
- *Enter into discussions with all relevant parties with a view to bringing about changes that enforce the 'safe person' concept in the training environment.*
- *Continue to pressure the Health and Safety Executive and the other relevant bodies to produce a new European standard for personal protective equipment.*
- *Challenge the Health and Safety Executive's incorrect assumption in respect of the level of burn injuries which should be reported under legislation.*

An update on progress in respect of all of the above points shall be provided to the next Conference.

LONDON

BRO GORDON FIELDEN (London):

Thank you, president. I'm sure many of you know “learn and burn” or variations of that term. I thank Northern Ireland for that term, who have been very helpful in helping us address some of these issues. It is with alarm that, over a period of the last three years with the introduction of a private contractor delivering our fire safety training or our fire behavioural training and real fire training, we have seen an alarming increase of burn injuries to our members who are training, to the extent that our employers turn around and suggest to us that it is acceptable to send our staff to a training event for them to receive a burn injury. They say that the HSE says that's reasonable and acceptable.

I've always understood the fact that a training event was exactly that: to learn to do something in a safe and controlled manner where you wouldn't get an injury. Therefore, when you got to the operational ground you would be able to do that without hurting yourself as well. So I've learned a lot in the last year, working with our brigade in the introduction of an ex-health and safety inspector taking control of health and safety in London.

But it's not just London that's got this problem. I speak to my colleagues around the country and they've had the same problem. When we looked into this work what we found was that there is a Fire Service Manual produced in 2004 which quite rightly was a result of a number of serious accidents and deaths of our firefighters, but since then there's been nothing new. Over that period of time fire and rescue services up and down the country have used this work, which was tremendously good at the time, in identifying areas and techniques that could be used in a defensive mode to protect our members, not in an offensive mode. At the same time during that period we've had vast improvements in PPE. But what we've had is we've had a European standard on PPE that we all know is faulty, in 2012. The HSE, the same people that did the test for Dave in Scotland on the hose, did the same test on our PPE in London. They found that there was nothing wrong with the PPE; it met the standard. But what they said was that the standard was faulty. When they looked at the bodies that look into this, they found in the UK the body that was doing it was all the manufacturers! The users, us, weren't even on that board! Therefore, they committed to us over a period of time that they would look to change and raise those standards. But again, being part of the European Union, it's very difficult to get a quality standard improved, because obviously as the EU has expanded it's brought in some of the other poorer countries in the Eastern European area and they have to move up to the standard that we've already got.

So we then go to look at what is the training that's being delivered because if you're going to do a control measure, if the PPE is good, then what you will then do is say: OK, if we've accepted that, we've got to do that, what you as an employer have got to do is deliver a safe system of work that firefighters are able to identify when they go into an area that's going to be too hot or they're going to receive burn injuries from the activities they are doing. Then we look into that scenario and we look at our operational procedures, and what we find out is that these trainers are sending our people into a metal box. Let's be absolutely truthful. How many of us on the fireground would ever go into, or find a fire in a metal box, open the door, shut the door on themselves, beast yourself for a while and they say let it get a bit hotter, let it get a bit hotter? I think what we'd do is we'd stand outside with a jet, we'd give it a blast, shut the door and put the fire out! That is how you put that fire out. So we've got a one dimensional system going on in fire behaviour training that doesn't reflect anything that you would see on a real operational incident.

Also, the spray techniques in London. We've had firefighters who've been operational firefighters for 30 years now going to do fire behavioural training, and because they didn't get the right click on the button, they're taken off the run and deemed not competent to ride on the run. It's ridiculous, the scenarios that we've got to! This seems to be consistent not just in London but other people are there.

So we are looking at this. What we've asked in this resolution is to take a review of the existing guidance in terms of training, and also take a realistic, practical approach on what it says in the regulations for health and safety – suitable and sufficient and fit for purpose. If we go to fires in houses and buildings we shouldn't go into metal container boxes to try to simulate something that's not there. People are not going to learn.

The level that this has got to – we had an incident in London. You may laugh at this; you may have come across it yourself. We have had the younger firefighters who have had less operational experience and tend to go to fewer fires, turning up to car fires and pulse spraying the car fires and not putting the things out! The sense of this is ridiculous.

It's quite comprehensive, and obviously we would be because from health and safety we want to look at all those aspects. Yes, we do have the evidence: 23 injuries last year, burn injuries ranging from reddening of hands (and I know there's some health and safety experts suggesting that a reddening of the hand is not a burn. We think it is) to members being hospitalised as a result of training. So please support this resolution. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

Thank you. Seconder?

BRO RICHARD WILLIAMS (Staffordshire):

Conference, president, I could probably beat your story in terms of we had a new firefighter off to the container, they go to the front of the container, don't actually put the fire out because it's the next person's turn, did that on a job! So people aren't learning from the experiences they are gaining, which is concerning.

In Staffordshire we went through lots of problems around FBT training. Three years ago we had three or four members burned, and two still off the run now with the injuries they've sustained. We've worked with the service because the manufacturers hide behind regulations and the standards that they've got. We welcome this resolution. Hopefully this should stop our members getting injured because they've got every right to come to work and go home in the same condition. We shouldn't be burning them. At training school we've had issues around trainers whacking the temperature up just because it's a macho thing to do, getting people burned inside the containers. As Gordon already put out there, those containers, we wouldn't go into them if it was that hot out in the real world; we would just go defensive. So we need to really grasp this resolution and do some work on it. Support the resolution. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

Speakers?

BRO SEAN McCALLUM (Nottinghamshire):

President, conference, we are supporting the proposal brought by London and we're grateful for them bringing it. Just to highlight another issue around the same thing and that's one that we've not addressed so far in this conference. That's the issue of cancer, just to relate to you some of the issues that we've been having in Nottinghamshire. It stems from just this very thing: compartment fire behaviour training and how it evolved in Nottinghamshire was a knee-jerk reaction to a serious incident investigation.

Basically, we ended up in a position where we had a smoke complex that had been rigged to try to replicate compartment fires. It wasn't very good. They scrapped it. But in the meantime we had seven out of 10 trainers in just under two years come down with cancer and cancer-like illnesses. We put this down to the use of oriented strand board within the complexes that we use, and the polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons that it produces if it's not burned at a sufficient temperature to be hot enough. We also found as well that post-training the procedures for cleaning kit etc were absolutely appalling.

So we do support the motion, although it is from a slightly different type from that intended, but we just wish to urge that brigades are aware of this issue because it is growing and we have got members that are suffering as a result of it. Thank you. Support the motion. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

No further speakers. I now call upon the AGS to give the qualification.

THE ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:

Thank you, president. I won't address the issues regarding cancer because I think that's coming up later on the agenda. Not to dismiss the points made, but simply just to say that I won't be covering that within this comment.

The qualification from the executive council is that there is no doubt at all, it's very clear to us from the discussions at the meetings of the health and safety committee, in the emails and exchanges that take place amongst members of the health and safety committee, and indeed what has been said at conference here today in moving and seconding the resolution, that there is data and information out there. There has been an amount of information that has been received from London. I think there is perhaps more to come because it is an ongoing issue. Certainly from across the country, if we are going to address it, or rather when we do address it, it would be better if we could make as comprehensive a case as possible. So we do need that information in.

I will take a certain amount of licence because in moving the resolution Gordon did raise the issue of the standards of PPE generally, and the fact that the union doesn't actually have a voice in setting those standards. It's been certainly in excess of a decade since this union has been involved in setting European standards, largely as a result of issues that we've been doing in that 10 years, largely as a result of the increased demands upon the national union – and that's the entire national union. It is something the executive council has examined; it is committed to look at how we do reinject ourselves. It isn't just that the Fire Brigades Union isn't involved in that. As Gordon said, it is primarily manufacturers.

We're told the manufacturers do want our input. There will be an element of truth in that because at the end of the day they want our input because they want us then to say what a great standard it is and therefore to encourage certain goods being sold, no doubt. But CFOA, for example, do not play a role in it. I think again that is as a result of demands within the service, the ever-changing service, chasing round in circles making change for the sake of change. That is being addressed by the executive council. Thank you for the licence on that, president. I think conference needed to be informed of that part. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

Thank you very much. I now put resolution 65 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That is *CARRIED*

Conference, I've had a message from Sue Offland, the CSNC secretary, who's suffering with a serious illness and is away from conference and can't be at conference due to that illness. She's wishing us all luck and love from Sue. I'm sure that's mirrored right back at her from us at conference. It's a testimony to the woman and the way she handles herself and the way she handles her job that she's thinking of us whilst she's battling a pretty heavy illness. I'm sure she'll battle and win it though. Thank you. *Applause*

Conference, break for tea. Take 20 minutes, but please be back because we're going into one of the policy statements on health and safety.

Break for tea

[Recording starts]

THE CHAIR OF STANDING ORDERS (Bro Steve Shelton):

... Please take time to complete the form and hand it back to the communications team at the rear of the hall. Thank you, president.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thank you. Any questions? No. Is that agreed? *AGREED*

Thank you very much. We're still on page 9. Can I now call the executive council policy statement Health and Safety – Internal Arrangements with the amendment from Devon and Somerset. The executive council oppose the amendment. Will you just bear with us, conference.

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL POLICY STATEMENT: HEALTH AND SAFETY – INTERNAL ARRANGEMENTS

THE ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:

Apologies, conference, I was off in a daydream then! Conference, the EC has continued to place this statement on the order paper for a very good reason. The EC recognises that it needs to make a statement to show its commitment to health and safety, and in turn conference would want to make a statement to the wider membership through this written vehicle of its commitment to the safety of members and the health of members. We do that through the campaigning for safe systems of work, high quality of procedures and equipment, and indeed high standards of service delivery. We need to ensure that we as a union, whilst fire and rescue services, do assert the primacy of the underpinning process of risk assessment and national standards, agreed, high quality national standards.

We've made references to this time and again at conference, in EC policy statements, resolutions brought by brigade committees. It was right to agree those in previous conference, it's right to agree the resolutions brought here this week, and it's right and proper that we should agree this EC policy statement. We should continue to reiterate it and will continue to reiterate it as a conference to the members, and more importantly, to the fire and rescue services and to government departments in the future.

In the statement the EC commits to produce high quality guidance to our officials. I just want to dwell for a few moments on that aspect. Health and safety is central to everything that we do. I think the general secretary alluded to that fact on Tuesday. They may not come out as clear, defined, health and safety documents, but the question of health and safety, addressing the issues of health and safety, is within all our publications, within all the comments and statements that we make and the work that we do, whether it's reporting to the select committee and the things that we say there, in our press releases, the whole works in some ways. But it is central to what we do, and it is every official. We are very clear: it is not just the regional health and safety reps; it isn't just the brigade health and safety reps; it needs to be all of us.

Despite the demands that all of us have that pull us in different directions, it needs to be and continues to be, all of us. We do need to continue to address all issues, both from the industrial relations perspective and from the health and safety perspective, and not to allow management to try the trick that they often try; to say this is just industrial relations and actually you only need to have consultation; you've got no powers under the consultative part of discussions in the industrial relations forum, whereas they know that we do have powers when it comes to consultation in the health and safety forum. So we need to be clear, we need to sharpen up our act to make sure that we stay on top of that game, because that's the game of the fire and rescue services, to try to trick us in the way that they do.

This is all about fire cover. Health and safety is all about fire cover. It's all about operational procedures, and it's all about professionalism. I've got to say this. We are a singular, united and committed voice. One of our problems that we do face is that CFA purports to be the professional voice of the fire and rescue service. They can practise, they can rehearse their voice as much as they want, we are the voice of the professionals, we are the voice of the firefighters, and we are the voice of the officials, their representatives that work in their interest, work in what they require, to make this a safe service.

The statement does make a comment with regard to meetings. The issue of meetings has been made clear by conference in the clearest of terms. We are more than conscious of that. The president was very clear at the beginning of conference when he opened conference and made it absolutely clear the rules govern all, and whilst there is an element within this policy statement, it is subordinate to the decisions that were made on Tuesday and the rules are sacrosanct.

As I say, the resolution is clear. This executive council, this conference, commits to the highest standards of health and safety and we urge conference to vote for this, as I'm sure you will do, unanimously and send the message out, not just to our members but also to fire and rescue services. We have shown that in this statement, you have shown that in passing the two new rule changes – one within rule A2(15) and the statement that we've made in our rule book in that respect, and also in respect of Section E brackets something, in respect of the duties of members with regard to what their commitment needs to be with regard to health and safety. Let's face it, we do put out guidance. You correctly pursue that guidance within fire and rescue services and within our membership at brigade level. It is unfortunate that we do in some ways have to turn a ship round. That is a reluctance for some members, to obey frankly the safety instruction given by you as officials.

We need to make sure, through regular and consistent meetings with members, getting the message across, getting them to understand that even if at times they don't agree they have to understand that the union has not made the decision lightly; it makes its decision with regard to policy after a lot of consideration, and that we do things for the right reasons and for the right objectives.

So I think, conference, I will finish there. I am sure that you will support this EC policy statement to show our commitment to health and safety. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

Lincolnshire to second.

BRO BEN SELBY (Lincolnshire):

President, conference, we absolutely agree with the EC that safe systems of work, high quality operational procedures, and quality training are key to delivering high standards of fire and rescue service for the public. The expertise of our well-trained and dedicated safety reps is key, and their value is rightly recognised within this EC policy statement. This is not only about the safety of firefighters, although that is more than important enough. High standards are a matter of professionalism and the status of our profession is closely linked with the pay and conditions that we can demand. Our once high standards of emergency response are being eroded by the endless cuts and financially motivated so-called IRMPs. These IRMPs must be fought. The professional status of our members is being undervalued. The government and our local FRAs are expecting our members to take higher and higher risks whilst receiving lower and lower reward. These are terms and condition issues, industrial relations issues, and not simply a matter for health and safety reps. Comrades, the EC policy statement highlights the importance for the future of our fire and rescue service, of developing national standards, robust operational guidance, safe systems of work, and properly risk assessed IRMPs. Our safety reps do have a vital role to play, but these are matters for all officials.

We have benefited recently in our region from holding a meeting, a workshop, involving brigade safety reps and brigade officials together about the practical use of health and safety to challenge local cuts and the IRMPs. With some help and input from a couple of members of the EC health and safety subcommittee, our eyes were opened to various rights, obligations, safety regulations and existing national guidance which has proved exceptionally useful in our local campaigns.

So we welcome the commitment in the policy statement to review the provision of training for our health and safety reps, and the guidance in respect of health and safety and IRMP. But let's be clear, the training and guidance is not only needed for specialist safety reps; it's needed by the rest of us too. We second the EC policy statement. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

Devon and Somerset to move their amendment.

BRO JAMES LESLIE (Devon and Somerset):

President, conference, on the basis of information received from the EC Devon and Somerset will withdraw their amendment. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thank you. That's open for debate. London. Anybody else wish to contribute to the debate? Thank you, Gordon.

BRO GORDON FIELDEN (London):

Conference, this will be my last time speaking at this conference and my last time coming to conference as well. *Applause*

I know there's been some difficult debates and the EC have been overturned a few times on health and safety issues at this conference, but again that's never done with any malice; it's done on the basis that the safety reps and those people out there work tirelessly for you. As I go, I look around the room and I see younger faces which I'm glad to see. But I would like and urge all of you is to get behind this statement and allow the EC to move on with the next generation of safety reps and officials working together, within IR and in the health and safety arena, because you can stop some of these mindful, wilful and disastrous policies that these brigades bring forward, trying to injure our members, and make our workplace safer. Please support the statement. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

Stay at the rostrum, please. I'm taking a bit of licence here. I didn't know that this was your last conference, Gordon. What I will say is that we would have gladly had 12 health and safety meetings a year if I knew you were going to be retiring! *Laughter, applause*

OK, thank you very much. I now put the executive council policy statement to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That is *CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY*

Thank you, conference. OK, we're on paragraph J6. I see a load of EC support and a flowing conference from now on. Resolution 63 Taking

Action Against Cancer in the Fire Service from Merseyside please. The executive council give qualified support.

Resolution 63 – TAKING ACTION AGAINST CANCER IN THE FIRE SERVICE
Conference is deeply concerned at indicative results from recent reports into firefighter cancer rates.

The most recent of those reports ‘Taking Action Against Cancer in the Fire Service’ was published in August 2013 as the result of a study undertaken in April 2013. The cross-party participants in that study came from varying backgrounds which included legal, medical, social research and the Fire Service including chief officers, firefighters, fire training directors and Unions.

The participants from the Fire Service came from different backgrounds: wholetime, wholetime retained and retained. This is therefore an extensively researched document and whilst it is a study of firefighters in America, Conference will agree that cancer does not recognise International boundaries and that the products of combustion from a fire in the UK would be in most cases identical to the products of combustion from a fire in the USA or anywhere else in the world.

Multiple studies have repeatedly demonstrated credible evidence and biologic credibility for statistically higher rates of multiple types of cancer in firefighters compared to the general population.

The report ‘Taking Action Against Cancer in the Fire Service’ identifies potential contributory factors and recommends control measures. These control measures are not routinely applied by firefighters in the UK due to a lack of education and information.

Conference instructs the Executive Council to liaise with the National Employers to organise a large scale representative study of UK firefighters to assess the levels of cancers in UK firefighters. This study should, where possible, include retired firefighters.

Conference further instructs the Executive Council to issue an immediate All Members circular advising FBU members of the control measures contained within the report ‘Taking Action Against Cancer in the Fire Service’.

MERSEYSIDE

BRO MARK ROWE (Merseyside):
President, conference, firstly, I'd like to just reassure CSNC that we are aware of the specific problems with cancers and very specific cancers in the control rooms. We haven't omitted them from this resolution because this resolution deals very specifically with the products of combustion, and I'll take you through that now. What I would say is that if this resolution carries I would hope that CSNC and control staff would have that input into the survey that we're calling for.

Sadly, this is quite a poignant resolution after the sad news this morning that another FBU member lost his fight against cancer. Comrades, a situation recently arose in Merseyside which I'm sure is no different from a situation that occurs throughout the UK fire and rescue service and something that we all face daily. Several of the Merseyside crews were involved in tackling a fire at a large wood reclamation yard. Essentially, it was just chopped up wood that was being crushed and used to make chipboard. The fire went on for several days with many crews attending for protracted and repeated periods. There's been many large fires at this plant over many years, and eventually the plant has now been closed down. After that, several firefighters contacted the Merseyside officials complaining of sore throats, headaches etc, and these symptoms lasted from a few days to several weeks, and in some cases to several months after they had initially attended.

We sort of decided that we'd look at personal injury claims as a vehicle to getting this looked at. We went through Thompsons. As a lot of crews had attended multiple incidents at this plant over a number of years, we ran a sort of survey of our members and put an All Members out to try to get a grip and ascertain the problem, not just in relation to incidents at this plant, but anything else, any other symptoms in relation to any other incidents people had attended.

Conference, we were absolutely shocked by the responses, particularly around cancers. Not all were attributable to this incident that I'm referring to, but nevertheless, they are all, I believe, attributable to our occupation. There's a document that's recently been published and I'd urge everybody to get that and circulate that amongst the members. It's called Taking Action Against Cancer in the Fire Service. Multiple studies have been done recently, and as I say, that is one of them. They've now repeatedly demonstrated credible evidence and biological credibility for a statistically higher rate of multiple types of cancer in firefighters compared to the general population. Just a few of the examples in the documentation are: testicular cancer - 2½ times more likely a firefighter will develop testicular cancer compared to the general population; skin cancer – 1.3 times greater; leukaemia 1.2 times greater; non-Hodgkin's lymphoma 1.5 times greater; and a recent document on breast cancer amongst firefighters states in its conclusion in reference to all cancers:

"We are just beginning to understand the horrific magnitude of the problem, the depth of our naivety, the challenges involved and the changes required in education, training, operational procedures, medical screenings and personal accountability to effectively address cancer in the Fire Service."

Conference, the signs of cancers in firefighters are everywhere. We see photos every day, even in the Firefighter magazine, of firefighters working in active and other environments with BA on their backs but not masks on their faces. Even now, firefighters still proudly wear dirty and therefore contaminated PPE as symbols of their firefighting experience. Firefighters put contaminated and dirty PPE in the boots of their cars, even when official studies have shown that PPE, when stored in a vehicle, and when it becomes hot, gases off, which can happen at even quite low temperatures. When it gases off it releases carcinogens that spread throughout the vehicle compartment and can be detected right throughout the compartment, even in the footwells. Conference, cancer also doesn't discriminate between firefighters and their families. Evidence states that firefighters who routinely transport their PPE in their vehicles may be exposing their families to carcinogens. Firefighters will not fully shower after each fire. That's right, after each fire. That's what the guidance is saying. Even though we may not look dirty, carcinogens are building up in our hair and on our skin. The rate of absorption of our skin increases 400% every five degree increase in skin temperature. So due to our occupations, we're quite literally sucking up carcinogens into our bodies on a frequent basis.

The report Taking Action against Cancer in the Fire Service gives 11 immediate actions that you can take to protect yourself, actions which include changing clothes immediately after fire – that's not just your PPE, that's your T shirt, that's everything – showering thoroughly after every fire, and not taking PPE home or storing it in your vehicle. We've done a lot of work with the fire service on Merseyside, and they agree with us that this is an immediate problem that must be tackled head on. So they've agreed to undertake a whole host of testing of PPE and kitbags etc. They're going to do mass spectrometer testing of sample PPE, and we've also got an outside organisation Bureau of Veritas to come in and conduct extensive testing of PPE to try to identify the potentially harmful carcinogens. Merseyside management have also agreed with us, through our pushing on this really hard, to issue advice to every single FBU member on Merseyside and contained within it is the 11 points to mitigate against the cancers. Some of the things, as I've just said, like don't transport your fire kit while it's dirty.

To comply with the recommendations of this report and to protect us all adequately from occupational cancers, that's undoubtedly going to cost a lot of money, not least because the report in essence says that we should not be transporting our own fire kit. I know a lot of brigades do for various reasons, but if you're transporting your own fire kit, you should have at the forefront of your mind that our health isn't for sale. We need a full and extensive survey as to the extent of the problem of cancers in firefighters and retired firefighters, and taking into account all the new evidence that has become available. This resolution calls for that. Please support. I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Seconder, please? *Formally*

That's open for debate. Could I ask John McGhee to give the executive council's qualification.

BRO JOHN MCGHEE (National officer):
Thank you, president. Mark, the qualification is relatively simple, but I'll just say a couple of things about the resolution. This is something the executive council have been aware of and tried to progress for a number of years. We've previously issued guidance to our members about the issues you mention there, about changing clothing after being at incidents, not carrying contaminated gear, etc. Just last week actually I had a long conversation with our Australian comrades who have already done a lot of work on this. I suppose this is part of the qualification, but perhaps not quite what the executive council were expecting me to qualify. We don't need to reinvent the wheel here because our comrades in North America and Australia have already done a whole load of this work. In fact, they're already got legislation in place that protects firefighters in terms of compensation the minute they are diagnosed with cancers, because it's then recognised as being caused by the jobs that we do. So that work has already been done, and we are going to have to use as much of that as possible. Head office will be liaising with our international colleagues to utilise the evidence that they've already built.

The qualification that I was going to give, Mark, really is that it's difficult, so we don't want to give a commitment that we'll get this done. If you're doing a study like that, it has a value, so we have to find the right person to do it in order that it can be something that stands up to scrutiny. It might not be just as easy as going out there tomorrow and getting somebody off the shelf to carry out this study. But we will do our best. If it's needed, we'll get that study done, but if we can get the protection for our members – you've given them the guidance, you know what you shouldn't be doing. Gordon outlined earlier there the kind of things that we are witnessing in our training that we should be stopping. We should be stopping people going into those environments in terms of training. That's the trainers and the trainees. So we know what we need to do in order to stop it happening any further. But we've got to make sure that we get compensation and we get people treated properly, whether it's on pension on any other kind of compensation. So that's the qualification, Mark. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you, John. I now put resolution 63 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That is *CARRIED*

Paragraph J7, J8. I now call resolution 64 Crewing Levels from Staffordshire. The executive council support.

Resolution 64 – CREWING LEVELS
Conference demands that the Executive Council communicate with the National Employers their concerns over the Health and Safety and safe systems of work being employed by Fire and Rescue Services up and down the country. Many Fire and Rescue Services are reducing crewing levels below 4 and attempting to crew frontline fire appliances and in some cases vans with 3 crew members, these are being sent to property fires and RTC's. We strongly oppose the reduction in service being provided to our communities and the additional risk being placed on our Members.
STAFFORDSHIRE

BRO RICHARD WILLIAMS (Staffordshire):
President, conference, I'm here today to talk about three riders. I think some of our senior managers in Staffordshire have been on holiday to where Roberto Rivas comes from in Spain, because this three riders is coming big style, and I know a lot of brigades have got similar issues.

We have had small vehicles, targeted response vehicles, in Staffordshire for many years now, going to secondary fires only. The service now is dead set on trying to introduce three riders to persons reported house fires, RTCs, any incident basically. The example they use is that it will just be part of a makeup of crew, but we all know the potential is that that vehicle could get there first and three people would be put under extreme pressures to do something, putting our members at great risk.

We've been challenging this for some considerable time now, the last three years in Staffordshire. We've managed to get it put back. It's off the radar, if you like, for maybe another two years, depending on the budget constraints, but we know they'll be coming again and again, challenging the amount of riders we have on appliances, especially as we can just about manage to ride four on our retained pumps.

So really it's quite straightforward in this resolution that we are asking for some support. A lot of the resolutions we've previously had that have come forward over the last couple of days and today with health and safety talk about high quality guidance. We do need that high quality guidance, and we need strong leadership from the EC about where we're going to and how we're going to oppose some of these things that are happening. Managers who have benefited from 16 on a watch, riding fives on appliances, now are bursting their way through to the top and destroying our service, and trying to ride three on pumps. We really could do with some support and some guidance so that when we're faced with these situations we've got some guidance from the EC about what we do. We know that they try to target us individually around the country, split us off, so that people think: in Staffordshire, you're riding threes, what's happening there? But we are fighting as best we can, because they are targeting our members and non-members, taking them down to Moreton-in-Marsh, giving them all the fancy training down there. But it's not adequate for what we require, so we need support and we need strong leadership from the EC. I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Is that seconded? *Formally*

That's open for debate. Yes, please.

BRO DAVE BURN (Cumbria):
Thanks president, conference, we are supporting resolution 64. We ride at four in Cumbria. This consists of one crew manager and three firefighters rather than what I think it should be: one crew manager and four firefighters; that should be the definition of it. The pressure on crew managers and firefighters on the first attendance at a primary fire, or indeed any fire really, can be absolutely immense. I'm speaking as a crew manager. We opposed this when it was offered up to our councillors. We're a county fire service. That was back in 2012. I personally emailed an objection document to over 50 councillors before the decision was made in a council meeting. I got one reply, and the reply was the fire service reply: "noted". That was it. It got voted through without hardly even a debate, to be perfectly honest. But so far in Cumbria we've got away with it. It's only a matter of time until something happens and you can insert your own nightmare into that scenario.

I'm surprised it hasn't happened in more services rather than ours up to now. I know some services are riding at four and the rest of them are being considered. It's coming and it will come, and it will happen before you even know it. I'll be surprised if you don't go back to your brigades tomorrow and find out it's already happened. It's full support for this resolution. We have to find a coordinated way to stop service managers butchering our crewing and blaming austerity for that.

Just on an addition to that, much of the BA guidance was written to support four person crewing. I'm sure you've all read that. It stinks of a four letter word: CFOA. The Fire Service Training Manual has still got five person drills in that, and I had a discussion with our chief regarding doing those. We can't do them any more because we've only got four. Where do you go from there? Support. Thank you. *Applause*

SIS JENNY IMPEY (Kent):
President, conference. I, like many others 30 years ago (lucky old Gordon, I've got to do 32), remember riding six. Although it was a best messy in the back when you were on the way to a shout, an elbow in the face here and there, it was a privilege to ride with six. In Kent we thought that riding with four was low, but us, like Staffordshire a few years ago, we're now fighting three. They've introduced it as a trial station at an RDS station where all the members have dropped out of the union in order to take part in this trial. They're saying they need to ride three in order to get an initial attack for their village and the community within their village. All appeals are falling on deaf ears at the moment.

We're doing everything we can, working with our EC members and the executive council. We're doing everything we can with the HSE who are proving quite unhelpful at the moment. But we'll let you know next year how we get on. But we're not holding out much hope. Please support this resolution. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
General secretary.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:
Thanks, president. Conference, this is a very important resolution and we're grateful to Staffordshire for bringing it. It ties in with a whole number of themes of the week. What's going on under the guise of austerity and the pressures of finance is that gains that we have made over many decades are being rolled back and taken away from us. We had debates here at conference 20 and 30 years ago insisting on a minimum crewing level of five on pumps. We didn't achieve it universally, but some parts of the UK we did manage to start achieving that, and to make gains and moves towards it. Now, under pressure of finance those gains are being turned back. Some elements of it in terms of pumps in particular in relation to RDS firefighters, but also with the invention of new vehicles. With the abolition of the CFBAC the whole standard setting process in the UK fire service was scrapped. So every chief fire officer just dreams up whatever they want, invents a fire engine or invents a vehicle, calls it a fire engine, and we end up with CARPS and these small fire units and so on. Some fire authorities think they're doing us a favour, by the way. They say: we're saving stations by getting rid of pumps and introducing small fire units. Well, the battleground is about having proper assessments of what needs to be done at fire or other emergency and then deciding how you tackle that safely, effectively, and professionally. That's the approach we have to take.

We're happy to raise this with the employers. I tell you, the employers will resist this. If you read your Grey Book there is a commitment in there to high standards of health and safety, but one thing our employers nationally are determined to do is to resist those national types of discussions, because they unfortunately, like the Westminster government, are committed to localism and letting every fire authority do whatever the hell they want. So this is a real battleground for us.

Just echoing something that John said, we need to develop these discussions and battles internationally. You heard from Roberto this morning. There are debates which we should be having in Europe, there are debates which we should be having internationally. We've had dialogue recently with our colleagues in North America, the IAFF, who actually, building on some of our earlier work around CAST, have recently conducted their own trials with certain fire departments about the standards of crewing that are needed in relation to high rise fires and other incidents. So we need to build on that sort of experience. Obviously, firefighting techniques may be different in different countries and different parts of the world, but nevertheless, there are experiences we can share and use to develop an international argument, international standards that support each other.

I know there was some debate around it, we had a discussion around fitness standards the other day. If there are chief fire officers who say we need to have a professional fitness standard, that's fine and we've agreed that we will engage in that process. But it can't stop there. If you want professional fitness standards then you've got to start looking at other areas of our profession. You've got to start looking at how we fight fires, how we design and develop fire engines and other equipment. We want professional standards all across the board. The reason that will be resisted is because if we win those arguments and we start to set those standards, then we know that actually the case will be made for increasing the number of firefighters not for slashing them to pieces.

In that process we need also to try to identify allies. You all have issues with your own chief fire officers – some more than others, and I have issues with some of them more than others – and we have CFOA which is supposed to be some sort of organisation but actually I think is a collection of 46 different egos generally. Interestingly, the policy of CFOA changes according to who is the lead official on it. So one year they call for statutory duty for flooding, the lead spokesperson changes and overnight the CFOA policy also changes. That's completely different from the way we discuss things, which is to bring the case to conference, take a decision, and whether we like it or not individually, that becomes the policy and that's how we approach it.

But we will need allies. We will need to identify chief officers who may be more progressively minded than others. We need to identify politicians who may be more progressively minded than others. So this really is a key battleground, and is probably the way in which we are

best placed to try to defend our service in the coming five years, in the face of the huge cuts we’ve been discussing all week. So thank you to Staffordshire for bringing this forward. The executive council urges you to support, but there is a hell of a lot of work to do to deliver what’s set out in the motion. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

I now put resolution 64 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That is *CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY*

Paragraph J9. I now call resolution 61 moved by Cheshire with amendment from Merseyside. The executive council support the resolution and the amendment.

Resolution 61 – HEALTH AND SAFETY EXECUTIVE (HSE) FATIGUE AND RISK INDEX CALCULATOR
Fire and Rescue Services are using the HSE Fatigue Risk Index Calculator scores as part of their business case to change start and finish times and the length of Fire and Rescue Service shifts. The Fatigue and Risk Index Calculator was designed for use in the Railway Industry and is not specifically designed for use or has it been modified to be capable of assessing risk and fatigue with Fire and Rescue Service shifts.

There are a number of shortcomings and local FBU officials believe it is therefore not fit for purpose.

This Conference demands that the Executive Council liaise nationally with the HSE and initiate an investigation into the Fatigue and Risk Index Calculator’s suitability for assessing Fire and Rescue Service shifts.

CHESHIRE

Amendment

1st paragraph, 2nd sentence delete “or” insert “nor”.

MERSEYSIDE

BRO DAVE WILLIAMS (Cheshire):

President, conference, national duty systems have been up for grabs since 2004 and we now see many varied, concocted duty systems up and down the country, in the main used to reduce the number of firefighters, lower fire cover and increase response times. Increased fatigue and risks to firefighters haven’t been a factor. There has been no hesitation from fire and rescue services promoting long hours culture provided the fire cover is cheaper and more efficient in their eyes. However, they have recognised that for a basic 24/7 shift pattern, the 2-2-4 duty system is the best fit and any significant move from this would potentially more and only lead to pressure for a reduced working week. Therefore, efforts have been concentrated in looking to get as much as they can from this system. They forget that national duty systems are intrinsically linked to basic pay, without any additional, unsocial hours payments for working nights and weekends. Twelve-hour shifts have long been an aspiration of the fire and rescue services, and to move away from the more traditional nine-hour day and 15-hour night shift. Since the introduction of IRMP initiatives to introduce 12-hour shifts have repeatedly been proposed, using a variety of reasons and drivers for change.

Some fire and rescue services have discovered the HSE Fatigue Risk Index calculator for shift working conveniently produced fatigue scores to support their case for 12-hour shifts, reducing the length of the night shift and increasing the length of the day shift. The FRI calculator has not been designed for fire service shifts. It cannot differentiate between busy stations, quiet stations; it cannot differentiate between busy periods and quiet periods.

We involved the HSE and although they didn’t want to get involved in any dispute over shifts, they agreed the calculator has limitations, and the fatigue scores were probably exaggerated due to the calculator’s inability to take account of rest periods. We also involved QinetiQ, the company who designed the tool, who tended to agree any rest periods during the night shift should stop the increase in fatigue and potentially reverse the scores. Therefore, we are making delegates aware that fire and rescue services are sharing their business case, and although we no longer need national assistance on this matter, we felt it was worth bringing to the attention of conference.

President, we wish to withdraw the resolution. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

Thank you. Paragraph J10. Section I paragraph I1, I2, I3. I now call resolution 52 Fire and Rescue Service Job Migration from B&EMM. The executive council support.

Resolution 52 – FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE (FRS) JOB MIGRATION
The most recent Labour Government introduced the National Firefighter Selection tests after a long period of

consultation with the UK Fire and Rescue Services (FRS’s). This was to enable the FRS to carry out a robust, fair and transparent recruitment process, which accurately reflects the firefighters job role.

The Tory led coalition Government has imposed the most savage spending cuts on the public sector in over 60 years, with no consultation, as a result FRS budgets have been reduced every year and we will continue to see further cuts for the foreseeable future.

As a direct result of these cost cutting measures and no longer having to report on diversity targets, the FRS’s commitment to diversify the workforce has been lost. There has been little or no recruitment in the last 5 years.

Many FRS’s are now using a job migration strategy when there are recruitment opportunities. This means that retained fire service staff are being recruited into wholetime posts without having to undergo the National Firefighter selection procedures in its entirety. The retained service is over 95% white male and job migration means there is little or no chance of having BME candidates applying for any wholetime vacancies. The impact of these procedures means that the fire service will continue to remain almost exclusively white and male.

This conference demands that the Executive Council carry out a full review on how the job migration process has impacted on the British FRS recruitment since 2010 and report back within the FBU structures by May 2016.

BLACK & ETHNIC MINORITY MEMBERS COMMITTEE

BRO BRIAN AMOS (B&EMM):

President, conference, this process clearly benefits some of our members, but it’s to the detriment of future members. Historically, there were in place targets for recruitment, to have a fire and rescue service that reflects our communities. That’s gone. We had the fire and rescue service equality and diversity agenda, which included positive action initiatives. That’s gone. We had equality officers advising reps, officials and most importantly our employers on their legislative responsibilities. Most of them are gone, and the ones that have gone haven’t been replaced. Also B&EMM and equality sections had a vote at brigade and regional committee meetings, but that’s gone as well. That’s another subject, sorry.

Ninety-five per cent of retained staff are white male. Thus the job migration process under the equalities agenda is clearly flawed. All we are asking for is a level playing field. Our communities deserve the opportunity of a clear and transparent opportunity to a career fire service. Diversification of operational staff is unachievable if this quick fix, money pinching procedure continues. We urge conference to vote in favour of this motion. We need to challenge these practices for the future of our FBU members. Thank you. I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

Is that seconded? *Formally*

That’s open for debate. No debate. Sean Starbuck.

BRO SEAN STARBUCK (National officer):

Yes, the EC are supporting this, as you know. But we do need to highlight a couple of things within it. It does clearly say that the retained staff are being recruited into wholetime posts without having to undergo the national firefighter selection test. That’s not always the case because there are a lot of brigades which do use the national firefighter selection test for all entrants. What this is asking for is a study on how it has impacted on the British FRS recruitment. So I am going to need some information from brigade officials and I would ask that we have a full response, because if we’re going to take this forward we need to have all the information.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thank you, Sean. I now put resolution 52 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That is *CARRIED*

I now call resolution 53 moved by LGBT with amendments from Merseyside. The executive council support the resolution and the amendments.

Resolution 53 – SOCIAL MEDIA, PROTECTING MEMBERS FREEDOM OF POLITICAL BELIEF

LGBT members are disturbed by the activities of many Fire Services in their intrusive activities around monitoring employee’s use of social media, particularly when not at work. LGBT members believe that such intrusive activities may compromise the privacy of some members who may not choose to be out and open about their sexual orientation. LGBT members are also concerned by some disciplinary actions taken against our members in relation to activities on

social media being justified by the tenuous excuse of it not being conducive to the values of their employers’ organisation.

The journey to achieving LGBT equality has not been easy and many of the advances are relatively recent. Campaigning around issue such as age of consent, gays serving in the armed forces, protection from discrimination in employment based on being LGBT were not at the time conducive to the values of our employers. These were issues that required legislative change and if we were to be campaigning for those issues now using tools such as social media we have little doubt our employers would act against us.

We call on Conference that our union has a clear position to defend all our members who face attack from their employer for expression of political beliefs on social media that fit within the framework of the aims and objectives of our Union.

LGBT

- Amendments**
- 1. Delete 2nd paragraph and insert:**
“LGBT members are also concerned that disciplinary actions are being taken against FBU members in relation to activities on social media. These disciplinary actions are being justified by the tenuous excuse of it not being conducive to the values of their employers’ organisation.”
- MERSEYSIDE**
- 2. Final paragraph, 1st line delete “We call on” and “that our union”. Delete “our” and insert “FBU”. 3rd line delete “that” and insert “if those beliefs”.**
- MERSEYSIDE**

BRO PAT CARBERRY (LGBT):
Conference, president, first of all, I’d like to thank Merseyside for their amendments which help to tidy up the content of what we’ve submitted.

Resolution 53 speaks for itself. Our members are having their private lives scrutinised like no other time before by our employers. The great danger with social media is the manner in which every comment you make is recorded. It is more or less a verbatim report, or a verbatim record of what’s being said. This makes it incredibly easy for our employers to have a record of exactly what we are saying whenever we are using social media. The tenuous and odious justification of our employers in looking at such comments, of such comments potentially not always upholding the values of the service, is completely unjust. Despite legislation such as the Human Rights Act and basic rights such as freedom of expression, those rights are at the heart of this attack.

When I look at many of my friends and colleagues (and I consider many of you amongst them) and the comments that we make on Facebook or Twitter, many of our comments relate to the political values that we hold, the values of this union. Those values don’t always fit with our employers, they don’t always fit with what they term their values. I look at you and my friends and I look at my employers, and I have to say that we have much higher values than those people. So when they start to seek to oppress our members for promoting the very things that this union promotes and what we stand for, it is completely unfair, and it is times like that when we must step forward.

The resolution is clear in that it isn’t going to defend people who have those bigoted or whatever views. These views that are being expressed are specific to those that are shared with us, and which are within the scope of the objectives and the aims of our union. I call on you to support this resolution. We need to send a message out to the employers that we find their intrusive monitoring of our Facebook accounts and Twitter accounts and various social media completely unjust. If they are going to choose to use such comments as a means to attack our members, we will be behind them and we will be supporting them. Conference, I call for you to support. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Is that seconded?

BRO DAREN SCOTCHFORD (Hertfordshire):
President, conference, respect for privacy, freedom of thought, freedom of expression and freedom of assembly are all rights enshrined in law – at least at the moment anyway. Orwellian employers ride roughshod over these rights, in particular, monitoring employees’ social media accounts, trawling for any excuse to discipline individuals, and in some cases dismiss them. We must defend these rights, we must defend our members facing attack for expressing their beliefs. Please support the resolution. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
I now call upon Merseyside to move, if they can, both amendments. The executive council support. *Formally*

Both formally moved, Merseyside? Thank you. Are they formally seconded? *Formally*

Thank you. That’s open for debate. No. I now put amendment 1 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 amendment 2 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 53 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 54 Equality Strategy, Engagement at All Levels, LGBT. The executive council support.

Resolution 54 – EQUALITY STRATEGY, ENGAGEMENT AT ALL LEVELS
LGBT members recognise the representations that have been made to DCLG and the English Fire Minister in relation to the need to have a strategy for equality and diversity and engagement with the necessary stakeholders. LGBT members are disappointed by the dismissive responses from previous English Fire Ministers yet note the letter sent to Chief Fire Officers from Fire Minister Penny Mordaunt titled ‘Upholding the values of the Fire and Rescue Service’, in which she raises concerns about the issue of bullying and harassment and the need to uphold and reinforce the values of the service.

Our Union has a proud history of our commitment to equality and promotion of fairness at work and our equality sections have been at the forefront of this issue. We applaud the efforts of our officials to challenge the lack of commitment from DCLG but believe it would be harder for them to dismiss a discussion on failures by the service to address LGBT inequality if they were speaking directly to an official who is LGBT and elected by LGBT members to represent them. We further note that the Fire Minister Penny Mordaunt met with officials from our Women’s Committee and that she did take note of the input they gave. However post that meeting further discussions mentioned by the Fire Minister would be taking place with Networking Women in the Fire Service. We also have identified that the English Fire Ministers have been having regular meetings with the Asian Fire Service Association. At present there is also discussion of the establishment by CFOA of an LGBT Network.

LGBT members are concerned that the democratically established and accountable equality structures of the Union are being bypassed by government for consultation purposes around issues of equality. With the General Election being imminent we believe there may be opportunity to get our sections back leading on issues of equality. For this to occur our equality section reps, in conjunction with head office, need the ability to directly challenge DCLG and the Fire Minister on issues affecting the members they represent. LGBT members call on Conference to endorse a position that equality officials should be utilised directly in the challenging of DCLG and the English Fire Ministers failure with regards equality in the English Fire Service.

LGBT

BRO PAT CARBERRY (LGBT):
A very quick return there! Conference, I’m not going to go into this in any great detail. What I would say is sometimes when it comes to fighting for equality the people who are at the forefront and who really know the issues are the people who have to suffer that. Our officials do a first rate job whenever they go in and they meet with the employers and they meet with the politicians. However, there’s a whole raft of things to discuss and sometimes equality can be very low down and very difficult to push forward into the face of the employers. Sometimes it takes the voice of the people who are actually suffering as a consequence of that failure. What our resolution is calling for is to enable us to assist the national officials and local officials to pursue that agenda.

We saw the coalition government come to power and the very first thing that the fire minister did was to scrap the equality agenda. We then had Lynne Featherstone appointed as the equality minister and I feel uncomfortable doing it but I have to still be honest about it. Cameron was progressive in moving forward the whole issue of same sex marriage against a backlash from his own party. Same sex marriage came into effect and we won the day on that one and we won the vote, merely due to the support of Labour. We now have a Tory government, an outright Tory government, and we’ve just had a new equality minister appointed who is Caroline Dineage, the daughter of Fred Dineage (if you remember the programme How!) She is now a politician. Her background, whenever I look at how she voted, she voted against same

sex marriage. She said it wasn't for government to redefine the institution of marriage. I must say that doesn't exactly fill me with confidence when it comes to an individual holding the primary seat when it comes to promoting equality.

As I've said from the outset, we want to assist our national officials when it comes to pushing this agenda, and this resolution I think is the way forward on that. So I call on you to support. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

Thank you, Pat. Does that have a seconder? *Formally*

That's open for debate. No debate. John.

BRO JOHN MCGHEE (National officer):

Conference, I just want to make a quick comment. The executive council absolutely welcome and support this resolution. If we can get any government that's around at the moment in Westminster to listen to us, I can assure you that our equality section will be fully involved in those conversations. But as I said earlier, their attitude quite simply at the moment is "It's nothing to do with us." I would just say, it doesn't surprise me in terms of where the new minister was in terms of same sex marriage. I don't believe for a minute that Cameron was progressive. Cameron happened to have a small band of Liberals with the support of Labour. That was the coalition which drove through same sex marriage, and it certainly wasn't the Tories, and it certainly wasn't Cameron.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thank you, John. I now put resolution 54 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That is *CARRIED*

I now call resolution 55 moved by the national women's committee with amendments from Merseyside. The EC give qualified support to the resolution and support to both of the amendments.

Resolution 55 – DISCRIMINATION AND WOMEN IN THE UK FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

This National Women's Committee is disgusted at the treatment some of our women members in the UK Fire and Rescue Services (FRS) have experienced and continue to experience.

Since the coalition Government came to power and abolished equality targets, we have seen an increase in discrimination and unwanted behaviour towards our women members.

Our women members have been forced to raise grievances or pursue complaints over pregnancy discrimination, bullying and harassment, sexual harassment and sexual discrimination.

With no national FRS recognition or cohesive strategy to support women in the menopause, and little or no opportunity for support such as flexible working, to assist women at key times in their working lives, the only option for some women is to leave the FRS.

In order to highlight, challenge and provide evidence of such unacceptable practices, a database is required that has the ability to record and collate all the employment difficulties our women members may encounter.

We therefore request, with immediate effect, that the Executive Council with the assistance of head office set up a system for recording and collating discriminatory cases and practices across the UK Fire and Rescue Service. The results should be included in the FBU's report to Conference and be provided to the FBU National Women's Committee annually so that we have evidence based information to present to our employers to use as a lever for change in equality practice.

NATIONAL WOMEN'S COMMITTEE

Amendments

1. 1st paragraph, delete "This National Women's Committee" and insert "Conference".

MERSEYSIDE

2. Final paragraph, delete "request" insert "instruct".

MERSEYSIDE

SIS CLARE HUDSON (NWC):

President, conference, the national women's committee welcome the two Merseyside amendments. If this wasn't already an escalating issue

for our members, it surely is now, following last week's disastrous general election result. We acknowledge the EC concern that this recording of discrimination may end up including non-members, but it's no different from us negotiating a pay deal that those non-members would benefit from anyway. This is too important an issue to shy away from. This resolution is making sure that the equality agenda does not fall off that cliff, and that we as a union are at the forefront of that fight.

We have witnessed the alarming increase of discrimination of women members across the country and we need to record this to help with the fight on equality. We have to take factual based evidence to our employers to make them take immediate action and truly support women in the fire service. We have started to record incidents of discrimination ourselves as a committee, but we can only record what we've heard about, and this does not give a clear and concise picture. Although we do recognise that the picture is bleak for a lot of our members, women and other under-represented groups are often the first to feel the brunt of any cuts, leading to widespread discrimination. Therefore, we call upon the EC to set up a system to assists the collation and recording of information on employment difficulties that our women members may encounter. I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

Thank you. Is that seconded? *Formally*

That's amended by Merseyside twice. Can I ask Merseyside to move both their amendments, please. *Both formally*

Thank you, Merseyside. Are they seconded formally? *Formally*

Thank you. It's been a long day. Thank you very much. That's open for debate.

BRO RICCARDO LA TORRE (Essex):

President, conference, I apologise. This is going to be a bit rough around the edges. I have nothing prepared for this. We're speaking obviously in support of that resolution. I thought it would be remiss of us not to mention what our women members in control are going through currently in Essex. I will keep it short because I know we are all too aware of it. We have 21 members in the Essex control room. Twenty of them are women. We all know too well about the disproportionate effects of austerity on women, and nowhere has that been felt more than in the fire service at the moment than in the Essex control room. So many outcomes have meant that we have four of our women members being forced into job share. The reality of that is a 50% pay cut because they were given the choice: work full time, continue your professional career as an emergency control operator, or raise your children; you can't do both at the moment on this shift. We've had others having to get their children up as early as 5 am on a school day and that's forcing them into flexible working that they don't want, pay reductions that they don't want. It really is hitting our women members hard in the Essex control room, these vicious and ideologically driven cuts. We urge conference to support this. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

Thank you for that. No more speakers. I ask John McGhee to give the qualification. Sorry, I didn't see you. I do apologise.

BRO BRIAN AMOS (B&EMM):

We'd just like to support this resolution for the women because we also believe that we have witnessed or recorded over the years a number of incidents involving black women in the fire service. It's a long time coming, this report. So do it as soon as possible, please. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

John.

BRO JOHN MCGHEE (National officer):

Conference, the qualification really has been outlined by both Clare and Riccardo. The difficulty is going to be that we need you to give us the information. We're aware, anecdotally at times, of the discrimination cases that are taking place. We're not just looking at cases that finish up in the hands of solicitors. They are probably relatively easier for us to monitor and to get the statistics on. But actually we need to know when you as officials are assisting at an early stage, and perhaps preventing it getting any worse and resolving the problems. We need you to be giving the information. We'll work with the equality sections and other officials in order to build a system so that we can make sure that the information is coming in and coming in accurately. So the executive council support.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thank you, John. I now put amendment 1 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 amendment 2 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 55 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 56 moved by the national women’s committee with amendment from Merseyside. The EC give qualified support to the resolution and support the Merseyside amendment.

Resolution 56 – THE NEGATIVE IMPACT OF MAINSTREAMING EQUALITY <i>The National Women’s Committee is concerned that the mainstreaming of the equality agenda across the UK Fire and Rescue Service, appears to have reduced it’s priority. Whilst FRS’s still state that they remain committed to equality issues, the reality in the workplace for our members is quite different. The equality that is referred to by Brigade Managers is often not reflected in the workplace and it is evident that the appropriate commitment, education and experience, necessary to support equality outcomes are inadequate or absent.</i> <i>Discrimination cases for Women Members are increasing in numbers and promotion and retention rates have stalled.</i> <i>UK FRS’s talk about improvements in the recruitment and retention of women however there is no clear evidence of this.</i> <i>The NWC calls on the Executive Council to produce a proactive strategy to assist Brigade/Regional Officials to set up meetings with their FRSs to raise this important issue. These meetings should involve members of the National Women’s Committee. The meetings should include identifying current numbers of women, the activities FRSs are carrying out and what monitoring is taking place. The Executive Council should gather the information collected by Officials and provide a report to the NWC by the end of 2015.</i>	NATIONAL WOMEN’S COMMITTEE
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Amendment <i>1st paragraph delete “The National Women’s Committee” and insert “Conference”.</i>	MERSEYSIDE
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SIS CLARE HUDSON (NWC): President, conference, again the national women’s committee welcome Merseyside’s amendment. Austerity has put the equality agenda back decades. With the general election outcome last week we will see cuts like we’ve never seen before. The first thing we saw go when budgets were butchered five years was equality-led departments. The coalition government disbanded the equality strategy, favouring a local, ad hoc approach to equality. This equality strategy had been hard fought for for our members, with the FBU inputting at every step and supported by a government at the time that recognised the importance of equality. The cuts have resulted in little or no recruitment, so numbers of women have stagnated. This does not mean that equality should do too.

Often women are more likely to be detrimentally affected by the cuts, with no money for separate facilities, enhanced maternity policies, the list can go on. It must be our job to get fire and rescue services back on board with equality and stop paying lip service to it, and ticking a box to say job well done. This is why a proactive strategy is so important.

We need fire and rescue services who have put equalities to one side to instead be truly committed. We need to see what these services are doing to recruit, retain and support. If we have to be the educators, then that is what we must do. I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Do we have a seconder for that? *Formally*

I now call Merseyside to move their amendment. The executive council support. *Formally*

Thank you, Merseyside. Is that seconded? *Formally*

That’s open for debate. I cannot see you, sorry. I’m genuinely sorry. Blind old bloke!

BRO BRIAN AMOS (B&EMM): The negative impact of the equality agenda – the government, fire authority, management are happy to quote equality legislation as and when it suits, but they don’t live it. The key to seeing that is that discrimination is still happening and people aren’t comfortable reporting it. The drip, drip effect that discrimination has on our members is shocking. As John said, we need for you to report it. But people don’t want to raise their heads above the parapet. Trying to mainstream equality and trying to make people understand that raising equality issues just isn’t about

equality for black people or women and LGBT. It’s more than that: it’s for all of us. As soon as we learn that and start to embrace it, probably from fairness at work schools (that would help), we’ll get to understand it a little more and promote this properly. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Come to the rostrum, comrade.

BRO DAVE WILLIAMS (West Yorkshire): OK, I’ll make this quick, at the risk of repeating myself. In West Yorkshire we’ve had news yesterday that we’ve got two firefighters under the fitness policy that they are looking at dismissing. So to take us back to that, I believe that that has a massive impact on the retention rates of female firefighters. Many of the female firefighters in our brigade have left the pension scheme because they simply don’t believe that they’ll be able to pass that fitness test, which I believe is discriminatory. It does fit in with this.

After the Second World War auxiliary female firefighters, who’d been doing the job through the Second World War performing most duties of operational firefighters, were abandoned by a government who decided that the job was suddenly too tough for them. So I think we need to bear that in mind in all the equalities issues. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Any more speakers? No. John to give the qualification, please.

BRO JOHN MCGHEE (National officer): Thanks, president. Conference, and NWC in particular, the qualification is a relatively simple one and I’m sure it’s one that you will support. In the last paragraph where you’re talking about the meetings should involve members of the national women’s committee, when you’re talking about meetings within brigades and brigade management. We would hope that where you have a women’s representative, you’re on the brigade, that perhaps they would be the ones that would be involved as well. That’s the simple qualification.

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you, John. I now put the Merseyside 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 56 as amended 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 57 Best Practice Document Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence by the national women’s committee.

Resolution 57 – BEST PRACTICE DOCUMENT DOMESTIC ABUSE AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE <i>The impact of domestic abuse and sexual violence can have a damaging effect on the recipient’s mental and physical health, often resulting in poor performance and attendance at work. The cost to an organisation can also be considerable. It is therefore a major issue.</i> <i>The creation of the FBU Best Practice Document on Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence provides a foundation for the FBU to work with Fire and Rescue Services to provide guidance and support for the victims of Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence.</i> <i>We call upon the Executive Council to endorse this Best Practice Document to provide FBU officials with the necessary toolkit to work alongside Fire and Rescue Services to ensure its consideration when implementing/updating policies within individual Fire and Rescue Services.</i> <i>We ask for this to take effect upon publication and distribution of the document.</i>	NATIONAL WOMEN’S COMMITTEE
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SIS CLARE HUDSON (NWC): President, conference, this best practice document was born out of the alarming statistic on domestic abuse and sexual violence in our society and in our workplaces. This policy document was produced to give FBU reps the necessary information to negotiate the implementation of policies within their own fire and rescue services. It’s very important that we do what we can to put policies in place and get a conversation going about this issue in our workplaces. If we manage to get this in place it will help members affected by domestic abuse and provide managers with good guidance in dealing with issues in the workplace.

There are some really simple things to get in place. If you're the victim of domestic abuse work might be a safe place for you. It might be that all someone would need is a quiet space and access to a telephone or the internet to put together an exit strategy. Many women stay in abusive relationships because they don't have access to money. Work might be the place that they can get help to put together a plan to leave. Currently, many of us don't have policies in place which can lead to situations where unhelpful or dangerous advice is provided.

Some victims who have found the strength to ask for help have been forced on to sick leave or gardening leave, sending them straight back to the place where they are being abused. The tool kit that will support this document will give all the necessary guidance and support for our reps to help them implement this.

We know the statistics, that one woman a week will die from abuse and/or violence in a domestic situation. When austerity hits, it ramps up the pressure for some in abusive situations. The reporting of abuse and violence raise sharply.

We must be mindful that like so many of the resolutions this week we will be under even more pressure to support and protect our members and our service from the savage attacks that this government will now unleash. Please support this resolution and in doing so endorse this best practice document. I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

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

BRO RICHARD WILLIAMS (Staffordshire):

President, conference, we are seconding the national women's committee best practice document Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence. We all know experiences from within our brigades. As a brigade rep the role has changed massively. We are almost counsellors for a lot of people in the way we do our job. This document will assist us massively in assisting people in the workplace and helping members have access to support.

We have had specific cases of domestic violence within Staffordshire. This document will help in terms of not just female members, male members as well that may not come forward and tell of their domestic abuse they're suffering at home. So I wholeheartedly support this and thank the women's committee for their work. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

Any further debate? No. John McGhee.

BRO JOHN MCGHEE (National officer):

Thanks, president. It's not often that on behalf of the executive council you get, before a motion's even been passed, to be able to say it's been done! The executive council fully endorse the model domestic and sexual violence policy that was produced by the national women's committee and thank them for that work. It's been circulated, and for those of you, brigade secretaries, there should be a hard copy waiting for you when you get back if you didn't receive it before you got here at conference. That's just the start of the process, of course, because we want you to take this policy and raise it with your chiefs and your fire authorities to develop best practice in each and every single fire and rescue service. I remember the debate we had here two years ago when there were so many other officials keen to participate and express strong views about supporting the production of this policy. So please take it as part of that tool kit and get back there and let's try to do everything we can to protect all of our members, men and women, in the fire service. Thanks very much to the NWC. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

Thank you, John. I now put resolution 57 to the vote. The executive council support. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That is *CARRIED*

Section C TU and labour movement, paragraph C1. I now call resolution 40 moved by Buckinghamshire with the amendment from Merseyside. The executive council support.

Resolution 40 – VICTIMISATION OF BROTHER MATTHEWS

This Conference condemns the current management regime in Buckinghamshire where the employer has summarily dismissed Brother Matthews for undertaking lawful strike action.

There was:

- ***NO disciplinary investigation***
- ***NO disciplinary hearing***
- ***NO opportunity for Bro. Matthews to state his case, and;***
- ***NO opportunity to appeal the decision.***

These are fundamental, basic employment rights which should be provided to all employees. It is an absolute disgrace that a tax payer funded, public sector organisation can act in such a draconian and dictatorial manner.

This Conference demands that the FBU continues to provide unyielding support to Bro. Matthews until such time as he has been re-instated by Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service.

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

Amendment

***1. Insert after final paragraph a new paragraph:
“Conference further demands that if an Employment Tribunal or higher authority orders the re-instatement of Brother Matthews and Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Authority refuse to comply with that order that an immediate emergency meeting of the Executive Council will be convened to discuss our response which should include discussion over National Industrial action.”***

MERSEYSIDE

BRO GREG O'NEILL (Buckinghamshire):

President, conference, we are supporting the amendment by Merseyside. This resolution does not need much in the way of clarification, but underpinning it is the principle that it's crucial to the strength, solidarity and effectiveness of the FBU in the UK. There has been an unprecedented level of attacks on our union within Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service. Over the past two years all our FBU officials have been subject to spurious, petty-minded and malicious discipline charges. Some officials have had more than one case to defend. It has led to four of our members being sacked, three of which were brigade officials. The president brought to the attention of conference yesterday the fantastic news about Tim and Keiron being offered their jobs back. It is no coincidence that this has happened after a change of chief fire officer, who now has the opportunity to put right another two disgraceful injustices that were perpetrated by the ex-chief: reinstate Ricky and reinstate Andy Ball, RDS rep. We are working hard to rebuild industrial relations with the fire authority and senior management teams. Progress has been made, but it is small steps, and will be a long process.

The demonstration that was staged in Aylesbury earlier this year, albeit convened under the pensions dispute banner, was a show of support for Ricky and for the others. It was also a massive boost to a group of members who felt very isolated and alone. It was a tremendous show of support to members who were really under underhand and draconian attacks by senior managers under the direction of Jones, who at the time sensed an opportunity to break the FBU in Buckinghamshire. The brutal underhand tactics showed a tangible sense of fear amongst rank and file membership. The coming together and show of strength and support during the demonstration reassured the Bucks members that they were not alone in their struggle. The demonstration showed Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service, the fire authority, the residents of Aylesbury what being in a union is all about. FBU members came from all parts of the UK to stand shoulder to shoulder and show unity.

We heard at this conference about the tremendous victory for the union with the reinstatement of Tim and Keiron, two victims of a trumped up discipline issue that would not have merited disciplinary action in any other brigade. This gives the call to reinstate Ricky a great boost. Surely any right thinking fire authority or chief fire officer would decide not to waste thousands of pounds of public money chasing a lost cause. Surely any right thinking fire authority or chief fire officer would not waste hundreds of management hours allowing the issue to get to tribunal. Surely any right thinking fire authority or chief fire officer would do the right thing for their service and the residents of Buckinghamshire that they are there to serve.

Unfortunately, there is a legacy, a hangover from the previous regime under ex-chief fire officer Mark Jones. In reality history will show the real legacy that Mark Jones left: one of his hatred of the FBU. His personal crusade tainted the entire organisation and influenced the fire authority. Ultimately, it put the residents of Buckinghamshire at risk, as we heard from previous resolutions that I moved on partial performance.

The attack on the rights of trade unions and individuals goes on. This union must send a clear message to all fire authority members and chief fire officers in the UK that the sacking of members who are undertaking lawful action will not be tolerated. *Applause*

We all have a slightly different approaches how we deal with the pension dispute, but these sackings strike at the very heart of trade union beliefs and principles, and we must respond as a single entity, in unity. Trade unions were formed to protect individuals within a collective. Together we are strong. Cut one of us and we all bleed. The message should be absolutely clear. The support that this conference and union will show for Ricky needs to be loud and clear and unanimous. This is an issue of the deepest principle. It is not just an attack on an individual FBU member; it is an attack on a senior official; it is an attack on every one of us and strikes at the very core of this organisation.

Conference, we in Buckinghamshire recognise that due legal processes need to be followed in order to reach the right and proper

conclusion. However, as a national union we need to show clearly that the disgraceful treatment of Ricky Matthews is an example that should not be followed by another employer. We need to show that it is a waste of public time and money. We need to be clear that the punitive and spiteful actions such as this will be exposed and those responsible for the decision will be brought to account. This resolution sets the precedent that nails our intentions to the wall, loudly and clearly. We will protect and look after our own. Ricky was acting on behalf of the membership of the union when he was sacked. We are morally bound, we have a duty, we have a debt of honour to ensure that he and his young family do not suffer as a result of work carried out on our behalf. Thank you. I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

Is that seconded? Merseyside seconding? Thank you.

BRO KEVIN HUGHES (Merseyside):

If you don't mind, president, I'll move the amendment while I'm here as well. I'm seconding resolution 40 Victimisation of Brother Matthews. Conference, the amendment is purely to assist Buckinghamshire in getting Ricky back to work. I won't take up too much of your time on it either. This should be about them, and it should be about Ricky, not us. This is not a chest out, this is just simply to assist Buckinghamshire. In 2008 I was suspended and subsequently summarily dismissed by Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service. Humbly for me, my colleagues, my brothers and sisters took industrial action to get me back to work. That industrial action resulted in an agreement that stated that if an employment tribunal or a higher authority ordered reinstatement, the service and the authority would honour it. You'll see that reflected in the amendment. All we're doing here is just lending our experience to Buckinghamshire, and hopefully you'll recognise the spirit and intent behind that. I hope you support the amendment. Certainly support the resolution and let's get Ricky back to work. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

Thank you very much, comrade, thank you for that. Is the amendment seconded? *Formally*

That's now open for debate. John.

BRO JOHN McGHEE (National officer):

President, thanks very much. Conference, I just want to start really by saying something about the acting brigade secretary that just came up there. If that was acting, and his behaviour has been acting in the last five or six months since he stepped up to the plate to take that position, then he deserves an Oscar! *Applause*

Following the demonstration we held up in Aylesbury after Ricky was sacked we called an emergency brigade committee meeting upstairs in a pub somewhere off that square where many of you were. We looked around the room and the brigade chair was suspended on discipline charges, the regional secretary was suspended on discipline charges, the retained rep was suspended on discipline charges, the executive council member had already been sacked. The situation was pretty desperate. We looked around the room and said: OK, you've got a number of you here as the brigade committee, but we have no brigade officials. Greg O'Neill and Damon Robertson said: I'll do it, I'll take on the role. I tell you, comrades, I think it was one of the bravest things that I've ever seen from one of our officials. That was at a time when they knew that the threat was going to be that they would be next.

I was attending branch meetings at that time, and the branch reps were saying to me: I've asked the brigade to start sending any mail to me to my fire station because I don't want a letter landing on my doorstep for my family to say that I've been sacked as well, or I'm on a discipline charge. Greg and Damon stood up to the plate. So Greg, pass on my best wishes to Damon as well. I know he couldn't be here at conference. I think he's doing a splendid job. If your brigades don't make you permanent officers – and canvassing is allowed now apparently! I would put on record that if I was up there, I'd vote for you. *Applause*

I want to also thank another official that stepped in to give great assistance: Danni Armstrong, who's the regional secretary for neighbouring region. These disciplinary cases were pretty serious and we expected both Andy Ball, Keith and James Wolfenden, we expected all three of them to be dismissed. There was nobody really holding out much hope that that wouldn't be the consequences of the discipline hearings. Danni went up there and represented Wolfie and Andy Ball. Unfortunately, Andy Ball, the retained rep, was dismissed. Despite the best efforts of Danni, I think that it certainly wasn't down to the lack of effort or any mishandling of the case. I think it was purely, in my view, a case that we couldn't win. However, James Wolfenden, the regional secretary, was not dismissed. We saw at the time as a step forward and a signal that perhaps the extreme use of discipline was softening just a bit. But we still faced the task of trying to get Ricky reinstated, and as well, we'll be dealing with Andy Ball in the same way.

So the first part of that was then to address the issue of Tim and Keiron. As you know, the brigade had appealed the decision of the employment tribunal, and when we got to that employment tribunal, whilst the tribunal accepted there was some partial contributory elements to the situation by both Keiron and Tim, they certainly felt that they had both been unfairly dismissed. They ordered reinstatement. The significance of ordering reinstatement is that sadly it doesn't mean that you get your job back. It just simply means that because they've

ordered reinstatement that if they don't give you your job back there's an opportunity to gain a wee bit more in compensation. I have to tell you conference, it's a wee bit more. Don't think that when you win an employment tribunal, an unfair dismissal, that you can rub your hands and think that's fine, the compensation will see me OK and I'll retire. It is absolutely abysmal. The last government made sure that they cut what the compensation figures could be, and they will probably get worse under this Tory government.

Keiron decided that he'd moved on with his life and after us being able to persuade the fire authority and the new chief that he should in fact re-engage both Keiron and Tim, Keiron decided that he had moved on with his life. I wish him all the best in his new, chosen career. Tim was here for a couple of nights. He's gone. Many of you, I hope, had a chance to speak to him. Tim will be starting back at work. I'm sure, as Alan pointed out, we'll not recognise him the next time because he'll be clean shaven and probably have a haircut as well! Tim will start back his work in the next couple of weeks and I'm absolutely delighted for him. He's someone who has supported the FBU throughout his 20 years in the fire service, and being a firefighter is all he had ever wanted to be. He really wanted his career back. He is starting back, technically uninterrupted, so again I wish him all the very best as well.

Kevin said that he moved this amendment to be helpful for Bucks. It is helpful for Bucks and I'm sure for Greg, when he said he accepted that amendment. I just want to say, conference, don't underestimate the strength of the Bucks members. I think we heard earlier in the week in terms of the lockout and the loss of pay during the pensions dispute. The members in Buckinghamshire were losing a lot more money than anybody else in the country, and stood solid, and when they were locked out they stayed out and they stayed together. They were absolutely solid. They gave back into the brigade committee throughout this process, that had we not got the re-engagement of Keiron and Tim, then we would have been balloting for industrial action. So don't think that the Bucks members are in any way beaten or downtrodden. They've got two new brigade officials; they're building their brigade committee and they're moving forward. Sometimes there's more than one way to skin a cat. I hope that by the time we get here to conference next year, we will be still sitting here with Ricky Matthews as executive council member, but much more importantly, we'll be able to report to you that he was reinstated before then.

Conference, support the motion from Buckinghamshire. Again, Greg, well done, mate. *Applause*

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. That is *CARRIED*

I now put resolution 40 as amended to the vote. The executive council support. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That is *CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY*

I'm going to let the general secretary say something, but I will first and I'll take a little bit of licence here. We witnessed the sacking of a leader of your union, somebody who sits on the executive council of your union, somebody who sits on the National Joint Council where we negotiate with the leaders of the fire service and the politicians who purport to lead the fire service. We saw him sacked for taking legal strike action. I think that it's right and proper for me to say that Ricky was invited to the executive council to sit here during this debate and Ricky, in my opinion quite rightly, said he didn't want to sit through it. The reason for that is because Ricky Matthews has got more dignity and decency in his little finger than they've got in the whole of the fire authority in Buckinghamshire. He's a decent, hardworking trade unionist and he's cut from the right cloth. *Applause*

I'll tell you something else as well. Sometimes I have to be careful, but I was in a room when Tim and Keiron were offered the reinstatement. I was in a room with them and John McGhee, and the person who was leading the help for both of them was Ricky Matthews. We cannot let Ricky Matthews be forgotten, we must keep this up until Ricky Matthews is indeed reinstated to his job. Thank you, conference. Now I will call upon the general secretary to make comment.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

President, have you taken the vote?

THE PRESIDENT:

I did. We won!

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

We won! President, conference, we've been discussing our own campaigns on victimisation. As I mentioned at the fringe meeting last night on blacklisting, we've got a fantastic tradition in the Fire Brigades Union of standing up against victimisation. Most people in the room were in the dispute in 2002/2003, at the end of which Brother Steve Godward was dismissed. This union supported Steve Godward for years financially. It went through a whole host of processes. In that case we couldn't deliver industrial action, but nevertheless this union supported Steve financially, and we eventually won that case completely, including back pay and pension rights. It was a remarkable victory. I have to

say, there's not many unions who would stick by someone in that way for seven years I believe it was in the end before we won that case. Then Kevin has outlined the battle we had in relation to Kevin Hughes, and we're now going through this one in relation to Buckinghamshire. We have to take account of all those different aspects – the legal and the industrial tactics that we need to pursue. I can assure you we are in full discussion with all those involved, including Ricky, about the tactics that we pursue. There is work underway to deliver the best possible outcome, including discussions about all options, the legal options, the industrial options, that we will need to follow in relation to supporting Ricky. I know that that campaign will have the full support of the entire union.

But we're also asking conference today to take account of another case of victimisation which many of you will be aware of. That's in relation to Candy Udwin, who is a member of PCS, who is a longstanding trade union activist. She's currently a PCS member at the National Gallery where there is strike action taking place against the privatisation of the staffing there. As a result of her role as a PCS official, whereby she advised full-time officials about how to ask questions about the costs of the replacement privatised company that had been brought in, she has been suspended from work and is facing disciplinary action. You'll be aware there is a campaign to defend Candy, and we've been asked if we can show our support here at the FBU conference by raising the flyers that you've got. Stefano will take a photograph, so I think we're going to ask if everyone apart from the front row will stand up.

A photograph was taken

THE PRESIDENT:
We normally have to speak to Matt's agent before he will take that many photos! Right, thank you very much for the work today, conference. You've been absolutely brilliant. So I'm going to adjourn and you can come back tomorrow. Thank you, conference. *Applause*

Conference adjourned

MORNING SESSION

THE PRESIDENT:
Conference come to order. Thank you. I call upon Steve Shelton, chair of standing orders to give the standing orders committee report.

THE CHAIR OF STANDING ORDERS (Bro Steve Shelton):
Thank you, president. Good morning, conference. Will you please turn to your list of delegates. Region 8 Mid and West Wales delete. Region 8 North Wales delete Sandra Williams, delete Shane Price. Region 9 Norfolk delete Jamie Wyatt insert Kevin Game. Region 9 Essex delete Gary Critch. Region 10 London delete David Young, insert Adam Placey. At the moment, Dave Chappell holds the record for the biggest cheer, but you never know. Region 10 London delete Gordon Fielden (Cheers) – I reckon you've got that one, Gordon. Insert Anthony Richmond. Region 13 Wiltshire delete Brent Thorley, insert Hamish Dayer. Region 4 North Yorkshire delete Simon Wall, insert Alistair Biggs. Region 12 Oxfordshire delete Mark Ames, insert Steve Allen. Thanks very much, president.

THE PRESIDENT:
Any speakers? No. Is the standing orders report agreed? *AGREED*

Thank you very much. Conference, before we start our business, it falls upon me to give you fraternal greetings from a former delegate to conference, Brother Joe McVeigh. For those of you who don't know him, Joe McVeigh has spoken at conference on a number of occasions. He has undergone a very serious operation and he asked me to pass on his regards to you and wishing you well. What I will say about Joe is he's the only person that's caused constant problems between myself and the general secretary and the former president, Mick Shaw. Both of them assumed that I knew what he was talking about because he was from my neck of the woods, and I assumed that because he was from their region they knew! Joe, believe it or not, will quite like what I've just said. *Applause*

Can I now ask conference to turn to page 11 of the programme of business, please. I'm on paragraph C2. I now call resolution 32 moved by Scotland with amendments from Merseyside and Shropshire. The EC give qualified support to the resolution and total support to the amendments.

Resolution 32 – LIVING WAGE CAMPAIGN
Conference applauds the Living Wage Campaign and supports the work of the TUC, STUC, Trade unions, campaigners and The Living Wage Foundation in persuading employers to implement the Living Wage currently set at £7.85 per hour and £9.15 per hour in London.

Conference recognises that the Living Wage is the bare minimum needed by workers to meet their living costs and is the first step to ending the scandal of poverty pay that is currently suffered by millions of workers in the UK. Conference therefore also recognizes and supports the related campaign to ultimately achieve a minimum wage of £10 per hour for a full working week to properly reward workers and help enable them to have a sustainable standard of living. Outsourcing, zero hours contracts, contracting out and privatisation of public services have suppressed the pay of many low paid workers in recent years making millions of workers dependent on state benefits for survival. This also effectively provides unscrupulous employers with taxpayer funded subsidies to support their policy of poverty pay that then allows them to win and retain contracts by undercutting responsible employers. Workers welfare benefits are also being constantly cut as part of the Tory led Government's destructive and divisive austerity agenda.

Conference therefore demands the Executive Council lobby the NJC and that Brigade Committees lobby Fire and Rescue Authorities to ensure all employees of Fire and Rescue Authorities are paid at least the living wage. Consequentially, all contracts awarded by Fire and Rescue Authorities should go to accredited companies and businesses that are committed to paying the Living Wage and have been awarded the license to use the Living Wage employer mark.

Conference further demands that the TUC and STUC lobby the UK and

<i>devolved Governments to commit to paying at least the Living Wage and further demands that all Government and public sector contracts are awarded only to employers committed to paying at least the Living Wage and that have been awarded the license to use the Living Wage employer mark.</i>	SCOTLAND
Amendments	
<i>1. 2nd paragraph, 2nd sentence delete the word “also”.</i>	MERSEYSIDE
<i>2. 2nd paragraph, 5th line, delete the words “for a full working week”.</i>	SHROPSHIRE

SIS DENISE CHRISTIE (Scotland):
Thanks, president. Comrades, we are accepting the amendments from Merseyside and Shropshire. Conference, just before I move this resolution I'd like to put on record on behalf of Scotland two of our comrades here, Brother David Bennett and Brother John McFadden. It's their last conference and I'd just like to thank them on behalf of the region for all the work they've done on behalf of the members. *Applause*

There are almost five million people in Britain who aren't earning the living wage. People who got up early this morning, spent hours getting to work, who are putting in all the effort they can, but who often don't get paid enough to look after their families, to heat their homes, feed their kids, care for their elderly relatives, and plan for the future. The idea behind the living wage is very simple. That a person should be paid enough to live decently and to adequately provide for their family, and at its heart is an ethical argument for preventing in work poverty and ensuring workers are not exploited through low wages.

The national minimum wage is too low. The adult rate for the statutory national minimum wage is £6.50 an hour. This has been proven to be too little for a person to make ends meet for themselves and their families. The voluntary national living wage is currently £7.85 an hour, and £9.15 inside London.

Low pay remains a very real problem for millions of workers across the UK. In response to the problem of low pay a number of living wage campaigns have developed. Rather than demanding further legislative change these campaigns have brought demands for a wage directly to employers both in the public and the private sectors. These campaigns have won real changes, particularly in London, and have drawn strength from the involvement of grass roots anti-poverty activists, trade unionists, faith based groups, voluntary organisations, students and low paid workers themselves.

As a trade union, conference, we need to play an active part in campaigns for social and economic justice. And more important than ever now that the Tories are back in to continue their onslaught of attacks on the working class and most vulnerable in our society. Conference, this is our fight, and it's our duty to lobby employers to implement the living wage needed by workers to meet their living costs, which is the first step to ending the scandal of poverty pay that is currently suffered by millions of UK workers. We need to persuade them that it makes sense and saves them money by reducing turnover of staff and lower sickness absence.

This motion does cover the EC's qualification. It states that the living wage is the bare minimum needed by workers to meet their living costs, so the motion allows for further support to increase that amount. It also supports the related campaign to achieve a minimum wage of £10 per hour to properly reward workers and help enable them to have a sustainable standard of living. Outsourcing, zero hours contracts, contracting out and privatisation of public services have suppressed the pay of many low paid workers in recent years, making millions of workers dependent on state benefits for survival. Workers in work have had benefits constantly cut as part of the Tory government's destructive and divisive austerity agenda, meaning many workers are using food banks to survive. The fact that such poverty pay exists in one of the world's wealthiest economies is absolutely scandalous.

The need for a living wage is more pressing than ever as the spiralling cost of living has led to falls in the real value of wages over the past five years. We need to support the campaign for the living wage within the fire and rescue service. There is a need for a united approach between all unions to extend its coverage. We need to campaign for increased awareness and public support for the living wage, promote the living wage to employers through collective bargaining processes, lobby the UK and devolved governments to put policies in place which promote the living wage, including through public procurement, and recognise that through trade union pressure the UK and devolved governments need to extend the living wage to all contractor staff.

Comrades, last week's election means that we're about to be involved in the biggest class war our movement has ever seen. This motion won't affect our members so much, but it will affect our sisters and brothers who will bear the brunt of these attacks. We need to stand united with other unions, coordinate our campaigns, support each other through what will be a continuous onslaught of capitalist greed. I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Does resolution 32 have a seconder? Come to the rostrum, thank you.

BRO TONY SMITH (Hertfordshire):
Good morning, conference. President, conference, no surprise that I'm up here seconding this in light of what I've said to you about the zero hours contract reservist issue that we're facing in Hertfordshire. I thank Scotland for bringing this to conference. We need to ramp this up as one of our major campaigns, because we're staring down the barrel of poverty for our own members in the future if these brigade managers get away with what they want to get away with. So we second that resolution very strongly. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
I call upon Merseyside to move their amendment. The executive council support. *Formally*

Is that seconded? *Formally*

I call upon Shropshire to move their amendment.

BRO MATT LAMB (Shropshire):
President, conference, I will be brief. On appearance our amendment does seem like it's a tidying up exercise in that the resolution says a living wage for a full week's work. I suppose you could get the impression that if you don't work full time then that doesn't apply. But it's not quite as frivolous as that. It's not surprising to me that those same corporations and multinational companies that sidestep their fair burden of taxes are the same multinationals and corporations that exploit the most vulnerable workers in our society. There's been plenty of coverage about zero hour contracts, but there's even more people being exploited through under-employment. There's a growing trend among employers to limit working hours to 19 hours per week. This isn't an arbitrary figure; this is round about the wage at which employers would have to start paying national insurance.

The average wage of a part-time worker is £5 less per hour than an average full-time worker. To gain parity with full-time workers a part-time worker would need to have a 59% increase in pay. The fact that people on zero hour contracts are mostly young amongst our society, and three-quarters of all part-time workers are women, belies a pernicious discrimination. When we're campaigning for living wages and these types of things, we need to make sure that we keep our focus and support the most vulnerable in our society. Support the resolution. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Does the Shropshire amendment have a seconder? *Formally*

That's open for debate, conference. Anybody wish to speak? I will ask the general secretary to give the EC's qualification.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:
Thanks, president. Conference, the executive council's qualification is related to the second paragraph. It relates, I suppose, to what demands we place around these issues, and also how we envisage such campaigns being launched. The resolution refers to the campaigns on the living wage, and it then says "Conference therefore also recognizes and supports the related campaign to ultimately achieve a minimum wage of £10 per hour for a full working week" (which is proposed to be amended).

What I would draw conference's attention to is there is a very significant campaign developing among low paid workers, and in the UK for example among fast food workers. A key focus of that campaign is the demand for a £10 an hour minimum wage. One of the unions involved in that is a close ally of ours: the Bakers, Food and Allied Workers Union. Clearly in terms of making our demands, I think we need to be associating ourselves with those groups of workers and those organisations who are launching the most determined and militant campaigns to achieve that. We certainly wouldn't want to be suggesting otherwise.

So I'm sure many delegates have followed some of these movements. It is infamous that fast food workers, for example, are notoriously difficult to organise because of the approaches of those employers. But there has been a developing campaign here in the UK but also across the world. There is fantastic work being undertaken in the United States. On 15 April this year there was a global day of action about fast food justice, where workers organised protested, and indeed thousands took strike action in the United States to demand trade union rights and decent wages for those working in the fast food industry. That's the sort of campaign which we need to see developing. We need to be supporting, we need to be bringing people involved in that into our fire stations and into our brigade committees to say that actually we stand shoulder to shoulder with those workers in that campaign.

So the demands that I think we need to be making need to be led by those leading those sort of campaigns. The primary focus for a lot of

those campaigns is around the demand for a £10 an hour minimum wage. With that qualification, comrades, the EC supports the resolution.
Applause

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks very much. I now put the Merseyside amendment to the vote. The EC support. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That is *CARRIED*

I now put the Shropshire amendment to the vote. The EC 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*

I now call resolution 33 moved by Northumberland with amendments from Merseyside, and the executive council support the lot.

Resolution 33 – JOINT TRADE UNION ACTION

Conference notes that since 2008, the banks have been bailed out with £850 billion of public money plunging the UK into financial strife while the government has aimed to recoup that money by cutting back on public spending right across the public sector.

Despite government claims that Britain is emerging from the crisis, the reality is that cuts and austerity for the vast majority of people are continuing unabated and will not subside for years to come. That, as a result of this, FBU members and others throughout the public sector have, in recent years suffered attacks on our pensions, assaults on our conditions and a pay cut in real terms. Conference believes that the pay, conditions and pensions of our Members and other public sector employees are being slashed as part of a devious and sustained wider right wing attack on the public sector in the UK.

Conference further believes that the severity of these attacks against our members requires sustained and radical action to be built on by the trade union movement if we are to defeat austerity which is being imposed on us by Tory ideology. That these attacks against FBU Members cannot be separated from similar attacks against teachers, nurses, the unemployed, the disabled, the welfare state, other emergency services and other publicly funded institutions.

Conference resolves to re-affirm our support for our comrades across the wider trade union movement in their own fights against austerity and to collaborate with other trade unions representing public sector employees to further the fight against cuts to the public sector and attacks on pay, conditions and pensions by and when necessary, organising mass simultaneous industrial action to seek an end to austerity measures being inflicted on public sector employees.

NORTHUMBERLAND

Amendments

1. 2nd paragraph, 2nd sentence delete “That, as” insert “As”.

MERSEYSIDE

2. 3rd paragraph, 2nd sentence delete “That these” insert “These”.

MERSEYSIDE

BRO STEVE WALKER (Northumberland):

President, conference, I’m a long time campaigner, first time speaker. *Applause*

We are accepting Merseyside’s amendments. Conference, we’ve been mandated by our brigade committee to request that we as a union work with our comrades from across the whole trade union movement to fight and resist the inevitable attacks to come of this vindictive, right-wing Tory government. We must do all we can in what I can assure you is a great and strong trade union to encourage and reinvigorate trade unionists from across the labour movement. Comrades, I fear for the future of our trade union movement if we allow this government to ride roughshod over us without fighting. In our brigade secretary’s constituency, whilst he was at the hustings, he asked his own MP what his views were on privatisation. What he said was that he couldn’t see no problem with the private sector running any public sector service. He even praised Sodexo, a large multinational catering company now running HMP Northumberland. They’re a company doing such a fantastic job that on many nights there are no prison officers on duty, prisoners basically running the prison, and officers being viciously assaulted while the managers attempt to keep all of this quiet. This was ironically very spooky this morning when we came down to see this (I had already written it, by the way; I haven’t just done it now). This results in officers from the public sector prisons have to come in and quell the obvious disturbances taking place on a regular basis. Indeed, the sat nav on our appliance now recognises the prison as a favourite destination. Unfortunately for our brigade secretary, his MP is a Tory. Fortunately for me, Ian Lavery is mine, so it’s a better result.

This is just an example of the utter disaster of a vital public service sold off to the highest bidder. I dread to think what would happen to us if we are fed to these vultures. Matt, can you please reassure conference that you will do everything in your power as part of the TUC to urge all fellow trade unionists to come together and resist what I fear will be the biggest fight we will possibly ever face in the trade union movement.

Comrades, we must prepare, organise and unite to fight the fight of our lives. Remember, we will still be here long after the Tories have gone and sailed off into the sunset with Captain Cameron and First Mate Osborne steering the ship named MV Murdoch. Every day I’ve come in here and I’ve looked at that banner which says 1918. I think the president thinks I was looking at him, but I wasn’t! Comrades, let’s support this motion so that in 2018 we can all be having a cup of tea out of our centenary mugs. I move. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

Does that have a seconder? *Formally*

I call Merseyside to move both their amendments. *Formally*

Both formally, thank you Merseyside. Are they seconded? Both formally? *Formally*

Thank you. Matt, give some reassurance.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Actually, conference, I think it is an extremely serious discussion to have. The question of coordinated action has been a theme of TUC conferences throughout the past five years. There is a logic, of course, that if we are facing similar attacks, if we’re facing the same government taking away our pensions, attacking our pay, destroying our services, that we should stand together to fight against it. If you talk to anyone in any workplace it all makes sense. Unfortunately, it’s a lot harder to deliver on the ground. What we need in our movement is a discussion about how you actually achieve that. That’s our formal position, that’s the formal position of the TUC and the STUC. But the actual extent of coordinated action over the past five years has been extremely limited.

The scale of the attacks that we are likely to face now, I think do indeed suggest that the trade union movement needs to discuss properly how it stands together, how it organises, and how it fights back. I can assure conference that that is the position that we will put in the TUC. But the danger, of course, is if you take the 30 November 2011 strikes (and we didn’t participate in that although we did subsequently participate in coordinated action) the difficulty in relation to the pensions dispute is – to be frank – that very rapidly following that a whole number of pension deals were actually signed up to. That creates some of the difficulty in terms of coordinating that action.

I suppose what I would flag up to people is to think about this. Can we imagine if the TUC as a whole undertook a campaign on the scale of the campaign that the Fire Brigades Union launched in the run up to our pensions campaign, ie that in every town and city the TUC general council, national leaders, went to workplaces, organised rallies and began to build a movement on that basis and followed that by calls for action? I think the potential there is obviously immense. The potential of six million workers organised in the TUC has the potential to fundamentally challenge the power of any government because once that scale of action was undertaken then clearly I think millions more would be drawn in to support such a campaign. So that’s the possibilities, if you like, of coordinated action and where that might head up.

The reality, however, is somewhat different on the ground. I think what we need is a serious discussion. That’s not just a discussion for me at the TUC general council; that’s a discussion for all of you with our members on fire stations, but through trades councils, through regional TUCs and so on. Indeed, the resolution is absolutely correct to draw attention of conference to the scale of the attacks that we face, and the scale of the response that we’re going to need. So yes, we are happy to give the assurance that Northumberland have asked for, and urge you to support the resolution. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

I now put amendment 1 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 amendment 2 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 33 as amended to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That is *CARRIED*

I now call resolution 34 moved by Tyne and Wear with an amendment from Merseyside. The executive council support both the resolution and the amendment from Merseyside.

Resolution 34 – FAR RIGHT EXTREMIST GROUPS ON SOCIAL MEDIA <i>This Conference notes with extreme concern the rise of far right extremist groups such as the English Defence League and Britain First to name a few on social media. It also recognises that the FBU have in the past embraced a program of education for Officials and Members to combat these groups. However these groups have moved away from their traditional methods of hatred and embraced social media to promote their hatred and generate funds for their cause. We call upon the Executive Council to revisit the education provided on the far right given to Officials and members with a view to combat this hatred and educate our members on the dangers of right wing groups on social media.</i>	TYNE & WEAR
Amendment <i>4th sentence delete “We call upon” and insert “Conference calls on”.</i>	MERSEYSIDE

BRO RUSS KING (Tyne and Wear):
Conference, president, morning. Quite a quick one, but it's extremely important this one. The FBU have had a long, long tradition of opposing any group or any organisation that preaches hatred with an attempt to divide the communities that we live in. As a movement we have been very effective. We have had counter marches, we have stood up at all times to these people. I'm talking about the BNP, the EDL, all the other ones that we can think of. We've had the debates, really positive, really frank debates. We had one Monday night – it was so long ago. I think we had one on Monday night for president Mick Shaw.

Our education in terms of the FBU, I believe, has been second to none; it's been fantastic. Region 3 were the first ones to have the education event in Poland. We went to Auschwitz. I've got to say, conference, it was really moving and really disturbing to see what a fascist movement can do to a bunch of people. It was horrendous. Also the pictures of the people on the wall, the hair, the bags, the little shoes, the children's toys. It was horrendous.

Picture a typical fascist: jackboots, shaven head (like you Tony, sorry), preaching E-E-EDL. But they've moved on, conference. They've become very social media savvy. I'm on Facebook and every day I see pictures on Facebook. People in my workplace, in Tyne and Wear, and in the FBU, FBU members are liking and sharing these pictures. It's quite clear to me what they are, but our membership don't know what they are. One example of that, they had a picture of a dog which was horrendously beaten and it was mangled, this dog. The banner was "Like and share if you are against cruelty to animals". OK. Now these pages have got up to 800,000 people liking and sharing it. That is the same number jointly from the Tories and the Labour Party Facebook pages. A lot of that is our members. If you like and share these pictures, what happens is that generates money for Britain First because of the revenue from the advertising. That is where they are running their campaigns.

All we are asking for is a renewal of the training that we have already had for both us as officials and also for our members, even put something in the Firefighter just to inform our members. Check before you like and check before you share. Conference, I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Does that resolution have a seconder? *Formally*

Merseyside to move their amendment. Executive council support. *Formally*

Thank you for that, Merseyside. Does that have a seconder? *Formally*

That's open for debate. No. I now put the Merseyside 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 34 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 35 National Shop Stewards Network to be moved by West Yorkshire. The executive council support.

Resolution 35 – NATIONAL SHOP STEWARDS NETWORK <i>This Conference acknowledges that the only way to achieve a socialist society is to campaign hard to achieve it. This Conference would like to applaud and repeat the wording of the foreword in the Rule Book, especially;</i> <i>THE FIRE BRIGADES UNION recognises that workers, however employed, can only improve their lot by their own endeavours and organisation. A richer and fuller life can be achieved only by similar means.</i>	
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<i>TO THIS END the Fire Brigades Union is part of the working-class movement and, linking itself with the international trade union and labour movement, has as its ultimate aim the bringing about of the Socialist system of society.</i>	
<i>Conference notes however, that in order to achieve a socialist system of society it will be easier if the FBU are affiliated to as many organisations as possible with the same aims.</i>	
<i>Therefore this Conference calls upon the Executive Council to affiliate The Fire Brigades Union to the National Shop Stewards Network at the close of Conference 2015.</i>	WEST YORKSHIRE

BRO DAVE WILLIAMS (West Yorkshire):
President, conference. Hopefully, conference, I'm preaching to the converted so I'll be as quick as I can rather than going into too much detail which you'll find out for yourselves. The National Shop Stewards Network was set up in 2006 by the RMT and the late great Bob Crow. There are currently eight unions affiliated and Matt touched on some of our sister unions who share a lot of our aims – the bakers' union, NUM, RMT etc. They are at the forefront. Many of those members who are affiliated to that association are at the forefront of campaigns. Without them in West Yorkshire we wouldn't have saved four stations from closing, there's no two ways about it. They campaigned, they were out in rain, sleet and snow, gathering petitions, lobbying, doing collections, absolutely fantastic. They've been by our side from the start of this dispute as well over pensions. They also supported Ricky and battles he's faced and is continuing to face. Actually, they were at the West Norwood fire station as well, helping to blockade Penny Mordaunt from entering. So they are very active and we need to be part of that campaigning group, comrades.

The secretary of the National Shop Stewards Network has been here all week too and has been campaigning on various issues, including the blacklisted worker Dave Smith. So they are very widespread and very active. They don't support any political candidates in the general election, although they do stand on a platform of anti-cuts and everything that the TUSC stands for as well in that. But as affiliated to any political party, they don't do that either, so if you have any concerns about that, I hope that alleviates them.

I'm secretary at the trades council in Leeds as well and Matt has touched on that as well, about trades councils and the work they do. The National Shop Stewards Network don't step on the toes of any trades councils. In fact, they work quite closely with them and complement them. They certainly have done in Leeds, and been involved in our May Day march and other campaigns. As you know, I'm sort of winging this, conference! I don't think you've noticed. I think I might be just getting away with it, president. *Laughter*

THE PRESIDENT:
You wing it exactly the same as you do in life!

BRO DAVE WILLIAMS (West Yorkshire):
Thanks for that! But I will share with you one final quote. This week we've been talking about fighting privatisation. Bob Crow had said that if we are to roll back the tide of privatisation and war, rebuilding the grassroots of our movement is essential. Conference, I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
We have a seconder for resolution 35, yes? Thank you.

BRO DAVID PITT (West Midlands):
President, conference, we are formally seconding this resolution and urging conference to support the resolution for the solidarity and support the National Shop Stewards Network has given to trade unions, including the FBU, when taking action against employers' attacks and victimisation. The threat of new Tory anti-trade union measures needs a coordinated response from the unions which the National Shop Stewards Network has campaigned and argued for consistently over the last five years. These attacks could be set out as early as the Queen's Speech on 28 May. It's no coincidence that these attacks on the right to strike could be announced at the same time as even deeper spending cuts of up to £30 billion are announced, including £12 billion in welfare cuts on the most vulnerable in our society. The Tories do recognise the potential power the trade union movement can harness in resisting austerity, particularly by our own union. This union needs to approach other unions to discuss building a resistance across the union movement against these attacks. Please support the resolution. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you. Speakers? No speakers. 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*

Paragraph C3, C4, C5, C6, C7, C8, C9. I now call resolution 39 No More Page 3 Campaign to be moved by South Wales. The executive council support.

Resolution 39 – NO MORE PAGE 3 CAMPAIGN
Conference condemns the continued use of glamour models on Page 3 of the Sun newspaper (and other dubious tabloid publications), and is outraged that women are still being depicted in this way in the 21st century.

Conference fully supports the “No More Page Three Campaign” which is striving to reduce sexism in the UK media.

Many unions and other organisations support and lobby on behalf of this campaign including the NUT, ATL, Unison, RCN, Rape Crisis and End Violence against Women. Conference therefore urges the Executive Council to publicly support the “No More Page Three” campaign by:

- writing a letter of support to the Campaign organisers***
- educating and encouraging members to boycott the Sun newspaper***
- advertising the campaigns petition in Firefighter magazine and social media***
- affiliating and contributing financial support to the campaign by purchasing a quantity of “No More Page Three” t-shirts.***

SOUTH WALES

BRO ALEX PSAILA (South Wales):
President, conference, I didn’t actually realise how powerful the Welsh were because since this resolution has been written there hasn’t been any Page 3. So we’ll take a bit of credit for that, but we don’t want it all. After years of unrelenting campaigning from the No More Page 3 HQ, the page no longer features a topless woman. But that’s not to say it won’t come back. South Wales brigade committee had a long debate about this and even though it’s a male predominant committee it was agreed to try to move this resolution and to try to educate everyone on why Page 3 shouldn’t be used in the way it was.

We live in the 21st century where sexism should be frowned upon, not encouraged in the way the Sun portrays women. Obviously, the Sun should be boycotted, not only because of this campaign but because of the other crap that they put in. *Applause*

We need to recognise that this kind of rubbish does influence the attitudes of those around us and the power of the media needs to be challenged. But above all, we have a duty of care to our brothers, sisters, parents and grandparents. I urge you all to play a part in challenging everyday sexism and please start by supporting this resolution. I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Comrade, I’m sure you had a problem reading your notes and meant “carp”! Is that seconded? Please come to the rostrum. Thank you.

BRO PHIL DASHWOOD (Durham):
Conference, president, we are seconding motion 39. Comrades, we are seconding this motion today because we believe we need to challenge and ultimately stop the Sun’s blatant disregard for and negative contributions towards the problem of sexism in the UK today. When a household newspaper frivolously portrays women in such a negative and degrading manner, yet is still one of the biggest selling tabloids in this country, we feel there is still a long way to go and we need to continue to educate our members surrounding this issue.

Some of you might have followed the Page 3 campaign and will be aware that the images of Page 3 have been taken down. But, comrades, don’t be fooled. The Sun removed Page 3 for several days, only to replace them as some kind of pathetic attempt at making a point. For now they have not returned, but with no press release of its removal how can we be sure it’s left our midst once and for all? The Sun may play games, but remember that depicting women in this way is unacceptable and has no place in modern society. Objectifying people in a national newspaper sends out the wrong message to all and makes true equality impossible.

Mr. Murdoch and his right-wing flunkys need to start acknowledging women more for the things they do, the things they stand for and the things they achieve, rather than the way they look. By portraying women in this way he undermines every other story about female success that his newspapers publish. The UK will be a better place without Page 3. Conference, please support this resolution. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Conference, that’s open for debate. Any speakers? No? General secretary.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:
Just a comment from the executive council, conference. Clearly the resolution attempts to challenge the sexism that lies behind Page 3 that has become something of an institution and there is a major debate and a major campaign emerged around the No More Page 3 campaign. But I think we also have to remember, as Alex touched on, some of the other aspects of the Sun newspaper. I have to say, I know the argument wasn’t made, but if the argument is “If the Sun got rid of Page 3 it would be OK”, then I have to say the EC would have an issue

with that, because the Sun is a deeply reactionary newspaper that has had an appalling record in terms of its treatment and coverage of trade union issues, its treatment of the great miners’ strikes in 1984/5, its treatment of football fans in relation to Hillsborough, its racist coverage of regular events in British society, and of course the Fire Brigades Union itself, particularly in our 2002/2003 dispute. After that dispute many firefighters would refuse to allow the Sun on our fire stations, and would indeed burn the Sun if it turned up on fire stations. That’s the sort of action we want to see in terms of dealing with the Sun. We then have Murdoch, a global media empire, trying to influence politicians. I have to say, whatever criticisms we have of Ed Miliband, one of the things that did strike an echo with people in Britain was when he did attempt to stand up to Murdoch at various times. The Murdoch empire was also involved in phone hacking.

We have an institution that is clearly sexist, racist, anti-trade union, anti-working class. I think our slogan should be No More Page 3, No More Sun, No More Murdoch. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you for that, Matt. I now put resolution 39 to the vote. The executive council support. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That is *CARRIED*

Paragraph C10, C11, C12. I now call resolution 29 Israeli Invasion of Gaza to be moved by Scotland. The executive council support.

Resolution 29 – ISRAELI INVASION OF GAZA
According to the UN Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 2,256 people were killed during the 51 day illegal invasion of the Gaza Strip, 1,568 of whom are believed to be civilians, including 538 children and 306 women. More than 11,000 Palestinians were injured, many of them permanently, by the time of the ceasefire on 26 August 2014. During this time there were approximately 110,000 internally displaced persons living in emergency shelter and with host families.

Conference supports the call from Amnesty International, the Palestine Solidarity Campaign and others in calling on the UK Government and the EU to end immediately arms trading with Israel including all military and industrial collaboration. The TUC should, working with the relevant unions, press those companies involved in supporting Israel’s military to cease to do so. It is a scandal that despite the killing of so many Palestinians during the illegal invasion of Gaza, that the UK continues to supply the oppressive apartheid state of Israel with weapons of death.

Conference supports the TUC call for the suspension of the EU-Israel Association Agreement until the rights of the Palestinians are established and calls on the Israeli state to pay for humanitarian assistance and rebuilding Gaza.

Conference also supports the demands from the International Community for the fact-finding commission set up by the United Nations and tasked with investigating Israeli violations of international and human rights law in the Palestinian territories, with a focus on the Gaza Strip, to be allowed to conduct its investigation unhindered into the offensive and calls on the Israeli authorities to lift their block on Amnesty International and other human rights organizations entering Gaza.

Conference further welcomes the approval of the application by the Palestinian authority to join the International criminal court to permit the court to exercise jurisdiction over war crimes committed on land governed by the Palestinian Authority and condemns the punitive action taken by the Israeli government to withhold taxes due to the Palestinian authority and the US Government’s threats to withhold agreed funding. Conference condemns this attempt to bully and intimidate the Palestinian people from joining recognized International Institutions and the use of US Government’s veto to prevent the UN from formally recognising Palestinian statehood. These actions must not be allowed to succeed and are clearly designed to undermine attempts to achieve a just and lasting peace by maintaining the Palestinians as unequal partners in any future negotiations.

SCOTLAND

BRO JOHN McFADDEN (Scotland):
Conference, president, it seems every time we gather here that we have to recount the latest tragedy to befall the Palestinian people at the hands of an increasingly brutal and oppressive Israeli state. It’s fitting that we reflect upon the latest dark chapter today on Nakba Day, because during that 51-day Israeli invasion of Gaza in the summer of 2014 this represented the greatest loss of life, severe injury, and destruction of Palestinian communities of any Israeli action since that ethnic cleansing of 1948 that drove 800,000 Palestinians from their homes, razed their villages and created the state of Israel.

In the latest war in Gaza the casualty toll was absolutely horrific – 2,256 people were killed, 11,000 wounded, many of them children, including a thousand who are now permanently disabled. Over 80% of those killed were innocent civilians. It is, by any measure, a human

catastrophe and demands that those responsible are held to account. Yet we still have the United States voting against the UN inquiry which has now taken place thankfully. Israel has continued to block access to human rights groups to investigate, including Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. When the Palestinian Authority applied, thankfully successfully, to join the International Criminal Court to allow them jurisdiction to investigate war crimes committed in Gaza by all sides, Israel withheld all their taxes and punished the Palestinian Authority financially.

It's clear Israel wants to avoid having the actions of those Israeli occupation forces during the invasion objectively scrutinised. It's little wonder because during those 51 days Israeli forces from land, sea and air fired 34,000 unguided shells into Gaza and over 20,000 tonnes of explosives were dropped – the equivalent of two tactical nuclear weapons. All this on a strip that's just 25 miles long and between 4 and 7.5 miles wide. It is also one of the most densely occupied areas in the world, with 1.8 million residents. It is also well established by Amnesty International that the Israeli forces bombed Gaza's only power plant and waged an economic war on Gaza's infrastructure and industry – an act of collective punishment. UN designated shelters were shelled. These shelters were housing more than a quarter of a million Palestinians who'd been forced from their homes by the Israeli invasion. Hospitals were also shelled, and ambulances were repeatedly attacked.

Inevitably, due to these actions, and a deliberate policy of destroying with bulldozers homes and neighbourhoods close to the border with Israel, over 19,000 homes were completely destroyed and 89,000 homes badly damaged. The recent Breaking the Silence report, that was based on over 60 testimonies from Israeli forces that took part in the invasion – a quarter of them were officers – uncovered irrefutable evidence of systematic policies from the top that led to massive and unprecedented harm to the population and civilian infrastructure of Gaza. This was a plan by the Israeli government to punish and weaken the authorities in Gaza and humiliate Hamas.

The rocket attacks from Gaza on Israeli settlements that were used as the main pretext for the invasion of course are wrong and are terrifying to those residents, and very occasionally they are lethal. However, Israel, in defiance of the ceasefire agreement agreed after the 2012 invasion of Gaza, has continued with its total blockade of land, sea and air of Gaza and encircled Gaza with a barrier and a buffer zone of a mile with watch towers and command posts all along its length. They also control the only crossings that allow Gazans to work in Israel and allow goods and services in and out of Gaza. Israeli closes the borders arbitrarily and often seizes work permits from Gazans without explanation. Building materials are forbidden, meaning that not one of those 19,000 homes destroyed in the invasion has been rebuilt. The rockets fired across by Hamas may have been a crude attempt to get Israel to lift the blockade and negotiate. However, it's clear that that has proved to be counterproductive.

The deeper roots of the conflict also need to be addressed urgently. The international community must do all in its power to restrain the Israeli government and convince it to negotiate a just and lasting peace. Of course that's going to be hugely difficult. We've just had a very right-wing Netanyahu government come into power, and it was clear that part of the reason for the invasion was to gain support for that right-wing movement in those Israeli elections, and to a degree unfortunately they succeeded. It's been well recorded by Israeli institutions about the rise in racism towards Arabs and the hatred of Palestinians that's been caused by that invasion of Gaza.

The United States are continuing to replenish the Israeli military arsenal. They're giving them £2 billion in military aid this year alone. UK companies have also been complicit in this. Some of the weapons systems for the M51s, for example, that were used to bomb Gaza were supplied by UK companies. The TUC and trade unions who represent workers in those organisations have got a huge responsibility to prevent the rearming of Israel, given the unprecedented disproportionate attacks on civilians. We would urge them to do so. Some of that work has already been started but it must continue. The international community pledged aid to Gaza, with three-quarters of it still to be delivered. And the construction of new homes has still to be done.

It's clear that Palestinian statehood has to be recognised. It's a process that started and is becoming increasingly successful. Until we have got a recognised Palestinian state with the ability properly to organise and negotiate with Israel to ensure that a just and lasting peace based on the 1967 ceasefire line and in accordance with the 1993 Oslo Accords is in place we're never going to have an end to the humiliation, the invasions, the land grabs that are still taking place and humiliating Palestinians and destroying any hope of a viable Palestinian state. Conference, I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

Thank you very much, John. Is that seconded? Anybody to second? *Formally*

The executive council support. Speakers? Any speakers? I now put resolution 29 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That's *CARRIED*

I now call resolution 30 Palestine to be moved by Cumbria. The executive council support.

Resolution 30 – PALESTINE
Conference reiterates its condemnation of the Israeli oppression of the Palestinian people and their right to self-determination, and calls on the Executive Council to maintain its support of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign.
CUMBRIA

BRO GRAEME HIGGINS (Cumbria):
President, conference, I'd like to start by endorsing resolution 29 by Scotland and say that it's been only two short years since Sister Denise Christie last spoke to conference on the plight of the Palestinian people. In that short time we now see 100,000 Palestinians homeless as a direct result of Israeli ground and air attacks, also, 450,000 Palestinians without access to running water.

As described earlier in resolution 29, 2014 turned out to be a truly appalling year for the Palestinian people. The month of July 2014 epitomised the international contradictions we observe via global media on a daily basis. On 13 July 2014 the world watched the World Cup final held in the Maracan Stadium, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil where we saw millionaire footballers' tears of joy and sorrow throughout the two-week footballing festival. Only three days later on the beaches of Gaza tears of a very different kind were shed, also following a game of football.

Comrades, on Wednesday 16 July 2014 four Palestinian boys – Ismail, Zakaria, Ahed, and Muhammad Baker – were playing football on the Gaza beach, perhaps emulating their heroes from three days earlier, when an artillery shell fired from an Israeli gunship ended their game of football and also their short lives. Ishmael was the youngest, aged 9. All four boys were cousins, all four were the sons of fishermen.

Comrades, the Israeli oppression of the Palestinian people has to stop. There will be, no doubt, thousands of examples of suffering and despair in Gaza, but the Palestinian fight for self-determination goes on. Grahame Morris, who I'm pleased to say is still the Labour member of parliament for Easington and member of the FBU parliamentary group, presented a motion in the House of Commons on 13 October 2014 calling on the coalition government to recognise the Palestinian state. The debate took place, and on this occasion the House of Commons did the right thing, with 274 votes in favour of the motion and 12 against. Also in October 2014 Sweden became the first long-term EU member country to officially recognise the state of Palestine.

So conference, we have done and can do more to effect change and therefore urge the executive council to work with our parliamentary group and support the Palestine Solidarity Campaign to ensure that the government uphold democracy and that the United Kingdom becomes one of the 130 countries worldwide who have recognised the state of Palestine. Comrades, as long as we have the Palestine Solidarity Campaign, the Fire Brigades Union, the trade union movement, the international committee, Amnesty International, the Grahame Morrisises, the Denise Christies, the Palestinian people themselves and many others, and the will to do the right thing, the Palestinian people still have hope. Conference, I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

I call for a seconder? Please come to the rostrum.

BRO STEVE HARMAN (Lancashire):
President, conference, just very briefly, it's been an absolute honour and a privilege to represent Lancashire and represent the FBU and be part of the FBU. But what I would say is one of the greatest privileges I've ever had is to get across to Palestine and the West Bank to meet up with the firefighters over at Nablus fire station. We've got some great contacts over there, from the fire station itself, from the PGFTU. I'd just recommend everybody should go over at least once, get over as often as you can. What they want is solidarity, they want friendship. It's not just money, it's not just fire kits, it's not just appliances, it's us. Firefighters in Nablus are exactly the same as firefighters in Preston or in London or anywhere else. They have the same sense of humour, they have the same mentality, they have the same solidarity. So just get over there.

On a personal note, I've had some very kind words said to me this conference, probably some not very kind words behind my back, but to my face very kind words! I've had fantastic support from within Lancashire which has allowed me to do what I've done. I can't take this accolade. It's up to the membership; you're only as strong as your membership. I'd also like to thank conference as well, the top table etc etc. I'd like to also thank you for the kind retirement gift I got – hip flask which I picked up the other day from the shop. In appreciation I donated £9.50 myself to the shop. It was fantastic! *Laughter/applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

Comrade, you're one of the few people I know who will not have unkind words said about them behind their back, I assure you of that. I thank you for your kind words. That's open for speakers, conference. All right, I will put resolution 30 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 31 moved by Devon and Somerset with the amendment from Merseyside. The EC give qualified support to the resolution and support the amendment from Merseyside.

Resolution 31 – SUPPORT FOR GAZA FIREFIGHTERS AND PARAMEDICS
This Conference abhors and condemns Israel's attacks on Gaza in July and August 2014, which killed over 2,000, damaged or destroyed thousands of buildings, and further compounded misery in an area already suffering badly from Israel's continued illegal siege and collective punishment.

In the light of the attacks, ongoing siege and repression by Israel, this Conference expresses its solidarity with the Palestinians of Gaza, and in particular the firefighters and ambulance workers of the Palestinian Civil Defence Force in Gaza, who faced death and injury from Israeli forces during the 2014 attacks while trying to perform their duties, hazards no emergency service workers should have to endure.

This Conference agrees to pursue, as a matter of priority, ways of establishing direct and meaningful links with the firefighters of the Civil Defence in Gaza, if possible in association with unions representing UK ambulance workers, and to investigate and promote practical ways to better publicise and support the needs of civil defence workers in Gaza.

DEVON AND SOMERSET

Amendment
1st paragraph, 1st sentence after “which killed over 2,000,” delete the comma and insert “people,”.

MERSEYSIDE

BRO BOB WALKER (Devon and Somerset):
Conference, president, you heard Dave Chappell left, but his speeches didn't I'm afraid! Moving resolution 31 and accepting the amendment from Merseyside. Just bear with me because Dave has written this. The Palestinians living in Israel, the West Bank, Jerusalem, face daily Israeli violence and oppression as an occupied people or discriminated minority. However, Palestinians in Gaza have it even worse because apart from its now eight-year illegal siege Israel determines, every couple of years or so – four times in the last nine years – to flatten Gaza, thinking cruelly that this will deter resistance. The death and destruction inflicted by Israeli military forces in July and August last year on the Palestinians of Gaza was savage and the cruelty chilling, as further evidenced by the recent testimony from Israeli soldiers themselves, reportedly through the Israeli group Breaking the Silence. They were ordered to shoot anything or anyone they encountered.

Article 12 of the first Geneva Convention says that the sick and wounded are to be respected and protected in all circumstances and this includes those assisting them, yet such was Israeli forces' disregard for life and limb that emergency service vehicles and personnel were also deliberately targeted in 2014, killing or wounding numerous ambulance paramedics. In 2009 a dossier was produced by Palestinian Civil Defence showing all the fire and ambulance stations and equipment that had been deliberately destroyed by Israel.

Every time Israel commits war crimes in the occupied Palestinian territories the lie is regurgitated that it is merely defending itself, that its actions are never a primary source of the ongoing conflict. We are told by Israel's apologists that the violence continues simply because Hamas has a pathological hatred towards Israel's Jews, or even that it is Palestinians trying to seize land from its legal owners. A propaganda claim is usually made by Israel that it is only responding to terror rockets, as in the 2014 attacks, that it has to destroy terror tunnels. It is surely no surprise that in a place like Gaza, which is enclosed, controlled and monitored by land, sea and air, that tunnels are dug in order to move people, goods, and yes at times arms, around. Israel has known about the tunnels dug in Israel from Gaza since at least 2006 yet not a single terrorist attack was launched on Israeli civilians through these tunnels between then and 2014. The Palestinian firefighters used the tunnels to attack Israeli forces during the 2014 conflict. In at least one case actually videoed, the firefighters waited several hours before attacking their target, a military outpost, when they could instead have gone and slaughtered Israeli civilians in nearby communities.

The FBU has a proud record of supporting Palestinian call for justice, being the movers of the landmark TUC congress proposal for a boycott of Israel in 2009 – that speech given by our sadly departed president, Mick Shaw, while also providing practical assistance and training through the fantastic work of the Scottish FBU and also assisted by Region 5 to the firefighters in the West Bank municipality of Nablus.

This proposal aims to build on that work in a pragmatic way. The proposal calls for us to pursue and to investigate possibilities because the practical difficulties are well known. Furthermore, since the Palestinian Civil Defence provides both ambulance and fire services, it makes sense that we should look at the possibilities of joint working with UK unions representing the ambulance workers.

Conference, Gaza is too often left out of attempts at solidarity for the Palestinian cause because it always seems to be in the “too difficult” pile. Their suffering and resilience desperately needs our recognition and support. Please support. I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you, Bob. Is that seconded? *Formally*

I call upon Merseyside to move their amendment. The executive council support. *Formally*

Is that seconded? *Formally*

Thank you. That's open for debate. General secretary, please give the qualification.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:
Thanks, president. I suppose it's quite a minor qualification. It was something that Bob touched on in any case. It's the reference to as a priority and the viability. Bob referred to some of the difficulties in terms of building direct links with Gaza for very practical reasons. There was a discussion at the TUC general council, for example, regarding sending a delegation to Gaza, and for various reasons the original plans had to be altered, simply because of the practicalities of organising it. So there are issues for us. The executive council is supportive of the aims of the resolution, but there are issues for us in terms of cost, viability, and indeed of safety of delegates attending delegations. Those are the qualifications.

If I can, conference, I would like to comment on what Steve has told you about his own retirement and received the warm applause of conference. Some of this work of international solidarity is clearly down to the key role played by a number of people. Steve has been consistent in his work and his arguments brought here to conference on the question of solidarity with the Palestinian people over many years. He deserves the thanks of conference for that, as do a number of other people who are also in the process or have retired. People will have seen the film the other day, hopefully, produced by Region 1. In that regard Jim Malone played a key role in that work, a very practical project of solidarity of saying “Here are firefighters doing the same job as us in very difficult circumstances, what can we do to support them?” I'm sure on every mess table around the country there are occasionally questions about why the Fire Brigades Union does international solidarity. I think when you have initiatives like the Region 1 initiative around training, you can give a very practical answer to some of those issues. I'd like to pay tribute to Jim for his role in that work as well.

If I can just finish on this point, president. Some people will also remember a very powerful speech given at this conference by Linda Smith, who made a trip to Palestine and met Palestinian firefighters. She gave a very powerful, moving and inspiring report back to this conference about her visit. Linda has just retired, as has (I'm going to stray off the subject a little bit) another one of our longstanding members, Sian Griffiths. So we have two women members, London members, who have played a key role in this union over very many years, a key role in arguing for the rights of women firefighters, and a key role in arguing for the rights of the Fire Brigades Union. I think if we're paying tribute to people who are retiring or have retired, I think we should send our best wishes to all those officials. I would particularly like to mention Linda and Sian for the pioneering, challenging work that they've done over the past three decades that has really helped to change our service and our union for the better. They deserve our thanks. *Applause*

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. That is *CARRIED*

I now put resolution 31 as amended to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That is *CARRIED*

I now call resolution 37 the Odessa Massacre to be moved by Merseyside. The executive council oppose.

Resolution 37 – ODESSA MASSACRE
Conference strongly condemns the massacre of 46 unarmed Ukrainians on Friday 2nd May 2014 when reactionary armed fascist groups purposefully set fire to the locked Trade Union building in Odessa. Protesters seeking protection inside the building, when trying to escape from the fire by jumping from the windows, were beaten to death or shot by the fascists outside. The US and EU assisted in the ousting of Ukraine's democratically-elected president, Viktor Yanukovich, with the help of ultra-right, paramilitary, neo-Nazi gangs who seized and burned government offices, killed riot police and spread mayhem and terror across the country.

This should serve as a stark warning to all trade unionists worldwide as to how quickly remote powerful countries using internal intervention techniques, CIA operatives and agent provocateurs can quickly destabilise a country and manipulate its population for their own corporate greed. The fact that these fascist groups that they let loose quickly turned their murderous attention to the pursuit of trade unionists must alarm us all.

The Kiev interim regime, which seized power by a Coup d'état and by the open imperialist intervention of the USA and the EU, clearly favours and supports such actions and armed groups. Hypocrisy and double standards reached their highest levels after the Coup d'état when the US and EU referred to, in relation to the Ukraine situation, the 'rule of law and respect for the constitution'. This was after they idly observed and openly endorsed the armed coup. Conference denounces the authoritarian harassment of political parties and leaders who oppose the regime. Harassment that led to the exclusion of the Communist Party of Ukraine from Parliament sessions, after earlier attempts to physically attack its leaders.

The EU and its respective Governments, hand in hand with the US administration bear heavy responsibilities for the developments in the Ukraine, pushing the country into an internal armed conflict for their own geostrategic interests driven by corporate competition with Russia in the region. The open support to fascist forces and policies is aggravating the situation which is provoking and drawing upon the historical sentiments of the Ukrainian people, and the whole region, which in turn is stimulating ultra-nationalist feelings amongst many people.

Conference views with great concern the military preparations of NATO in several neighbour countries, while many US and European military agents are already in the country triggering tensions in support of the Kiev regime. Conference expresses its solidarity with the Ukrainian people, to the peace loving and anti-imperialist forces who oppose the affiliation of their country to NATO and their inalienable right to decide freely and democratically the future of Ukraine free from any foreign political or military intervention.

MERSEYSIDE

BRO MARK ROWE (Merseyside):

President, conference, we just heard the EC are opposing this resolution and Matt will clearly tell you why shortly. I ask, though, that you look very carefully at this resolution and what it is actually calling for. The language within this resolution is very important. This resolution is titled Odessa Massacre and that refers very specifically to a single event that happened within Ukraine on 2 May 2014. The resolution calls for conference to denounce the authoritarian harassment of political parties who oppose the fascists within the current regime. It calls for conference to express our solidarity with the Ukrainian people and that, conference, is an important point.

The Ukrainian people is not a certain faction or political party. The resolution calls for support from this conference for the peace loving anti-Imperialists who oppose the affiliation of their country to Nato and their inalienable right to decide freely and democratically the future of Ukraine, free from any foreign, political or military intervention.

The events of 2 May 2014 were truly horrific. As firefighters we must surely recognise the horror of locking 46 unarmed people in a building, a building that was then set on fire. As humanitarians we must be appalled that the people jumping from windows to escape the flames were beaten to death or shot by the fascists outside. As trade unionists we must be terrified that these events took place in a trade union building, and that many of the dead were trade unionists. Conference, we must simply condemn this.

The crisis in Ukraine has deep roots. The resolution does not seek to take sides on the underlying issues, but we cannot be indifferent to the deaths of civilians in Ukraine. Nor can we turn a blind eye to the rising fascist far right in positions of power in Ukraine. These fascists were responsible for the massacre of the 46 unarmed civilians in the trade union building in Odessa without a word of protest from government.

We have to stand up for the democratic rights and trade union rights to be respected, and state that these fascists have no place in Ukrainian government. Conference, whatever the problems in Ukraine, the expansion of Nato and the European Union will not form any part of the solution. It will be a provocative act and will risk lives in the war with Russia. Comrades, let me read to you the words of Alexey Albu, Odessa massacre survivor and the regional council deputy and member of a Ukrainian union called Borotba The literal translation of Borotba means struggle. Alexey is now too scared of the fascists to return to Odessa and lives in exile. Alexey issued a general message to trade unionists. Alexey says this:

"I greet you with thanks from all honest people of Odessa, especially those with relatives and friends who were killed by the neo-Nazis on May 2 2014. Up to now the government has not punished a single killer. Parliamentary deputies who wanted to understand the situation did not get any response from the security services of Ukraine and the Interior Ministry. This is a violation of the laws of Ukraine. The powers that be are sabotaging the investigation process. In the House of Trade Unions people were not just burned by fire; people were shot, cut and finished off with sticks. I still do not know what kind of gas was used in the House of Trade Unions, who used it or how. [Alexey continues] Odessa citizens have not accepted the new regime of the oligarchs and the nationalists. All spring we wanted to peacefully resolve this issue and demanded a referendum on the empowerment of local communities for federalisation. But the authorities responded to us with bullets, arrests and fire. I was lucky, I survived. But many of my friends were killed. [Alexey finishes by saying] We see that the new government has the support of less than 30% of Odessa residents. The rest boycotted the elections or

voted against the regime, showing that they do not support the policies of the ruling elite. We must never forgive the murder of our brothers and sisters. Odessa will never be fascist."

Conference, moving words from a survivor of the Odessa Massacre. Please support the resolution. I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

Do we have a seconder, please? *Formally*

That's open for debate. I ask the general secretary to give the executive council opposition.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

President, conference, this is an important issue, and the executive council is asking either Merseyside to withdraw the resolution, even at this stage, or for conference to oppose it. We do so because the executive council has discussed the issue of the Ukraine on a number of occasions. The executive council delegation to the TUC last year discussed the question of Ukraine and actually opposed a resolution. We were in a minority of opposing a resolution at the TUC because we felt that it put the British trade union movement in a difficult and incorrect position in relation to events in Ukraine.

Clearly, as Mark has said, the resolution is titled Odessa Massacre and that is clearly a key theme of the resolution, but the resolution is about far more than the Odessa Massacre; it's about the events in Ukraine. In the view of the executive council it is utterly one-sided. I have to warn conference this is, in our view, potentially damaging to the reputation of the Fire Brigades Union in terms of our international work if the resolution were to be passed. I will come on to the Odessa Massacre itself in a moment. The resolution utterly ignores the role of Russia, which is an imperialist role in the region, and the role of Russia in the background to the conflict that has emerged in Ukraine. It incorrectly characterises the overthrow of President Yanukovych. The Maidan protests were in reality a mass movement involving at times 800,000 people, and to describe it as some sort of US/EU coup is incorrect. It was a mass movement that involved a whole range of Ukrainian people protesting about the policies of their then government. We support the right of people to protest.

Within that movement there were clearly people on the far right and there were fascists. There were also elements of the Ukrainian left, and there were also trade unions involved in that overthrow. So any assessment of these events has to be balanced and take account of all aspects. The suggestion in the resolution that this was some sort of coup, like the 1973 coup in Chile against the elected Allende government is simply factually incorrect. It was not what happened.

In terms of the Odessa Massacre, and we've researched it and I've spent a great deal of time trying to find out what happened, the truth is nobody knows the full facts of what happened. In fact, the resolution itself is probably incorrect in terms of the number of people killed on that day on 2 May in Odessa. Clearly, it was horrific. Significantly, the first person to be killed during the events of 2 May in Odessa was not one of those who ended up in the trade union building but was indeed a far-right Ukrainian nationalist activist, who was shot during the protests. The fact is that there were people with guns on both sides of the demonstrations on that day, and there was shooting and violence taking place on both sides. I suppose the key issue here that the resolution completely ignores is that there are fascists on both sides of this conflict. There are Ukrainian fascists, and there are also Russian fascists. We as a trade union take no side in which particular group of fascists we condemn. We condemn all fascists and all ultra-nationalists on both sides.

It also is misleading to some degree about the events that unfolded around the Trade Union House. If you spend some time, you can see footage of this. There are groups of Odessa citizens, Odessa independent journalists, who have been campaigning to expose the full facts, and yes, to demand an investigation. Mark was correct that this has not been properly investigated by the authorities in Ukraine or in Odessa. That is something that we would support. I think this union needs to call for a proper inquiry into what happened, and if necessary, a proper trade union international inquiry into what happened.

But if you look at the footage, the portrayal that you get from the resolution is simply that there was a horde of fascists outside a building who, as people left, shot or killed them. That again is slightly misleading. If you look at the footage there are thousands of people outside that building, protesters, and as the fire emerges (and it is not clear who started the fire) people tried to construct makeshift ladders and scaffolding to rescue people from the building. That's the fact of what happened on that day. Clearly, people were also killed, but the account that is given in the resolution is misleading.

The resolution makes no mention of the role of Russia whatsoever, which is absolutely staggering in any resolution discussing the events in Ukraine. If you look at the background to this, if you look at what happened in the Crimea, Russian forces were involved in the removal of the Crimea from Ukraine, and its incorporation into Russia. Russian forces. So if we're going to condemn Nato and the EU, we have to equally condemn the role of Russia in interfering in Ukrainian affairs, and that is clearly what happened in relation to the events around the separation of Crimea.

If you look at Eastern Ukraine, and the separatist movement that has emerged there, you see this so-called people's republic, so-called people's mayors that have emerged. It's bizarre, isn't it, that you can suddenly become the mayor of a city when you've never lived there and where you hold the passport of a foreign country. That's what happened on a number of occasions in the so-called liberated areas of Eastern Ukraine. Russian citizens were involved in that. It's widely known and widely acknowledged that Russian armed forces are involved in the movement in Eastern Ukraine.

So you have a nasty, bitter, nationalist conflict taking place; you have nasty, vicious, ultra-right wing nationalists and fascists on both sides; you have other massacres; you have other trade unionists who hold different points of view from those who were killed there who have also been massacred in Ukraine during the course of this conflict. Comrades, others of our colleagues in this movement have taken a different approach from the one set out here, including the National Union of Mineworkers. There are lots of miners organising trade unions in Ukraine. They hold various views on the conflict in Ukraine. But our good comrade Ian Lavery has held meetings, including with the Ukrainian miners' trade unions, who have expressed concern about what is happening to their country. John McDonnell has supported the Ukraine Solidarity Campaign. The executive council would criticise some of the positions adopted by the Ukraine Solidarity Campaign. But the point I'm making is that this is far more complex and difficult than Mark has set out and is set out in the resolution.

This trade union cannot afford to become patsies for the Putin regime, and that is unfortunately what is happening in relation to some of the so-called solidarity work that is taking place around these issues in the British trade union movement today. We stand instead for working class unity here, for working class unity in Ukraine and in Russia. We oppose the intervention of all sides, whether it is the EU, the US, or indeed Russia (but we would have to make clear we also include Russia in that condemnation). We support the unity of the working class, we support all national rights and the rights of national minorities in Ukraine and in Russia.

So, comrades, I urge you to think very carefully about this. We're happy to discuss with the Merseyside brigade committee, if they so wish, or through the executive council, the issue of how this union takes forward solidarity with workers in Ukraine, but I would still at this stage urge Mark strongly to withdraw the resolution. Otherwise, conference, I urge conference to oppose the resolution. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

Right of reply Merseyside.

BRO MARK ROWE (Merseyside):

Thanks, Matt, for your extensive response. A few facts. You said that the resolution is not factually correct, but it's been through standing orders. So surely standing orders would have ruled it out if it had not been factually correct. I believe the opposition from the EC is flawed by stating that it doesn't mention the role of Russia in Ukraine in the crisis there. I don't believe that it has to, because this, although it gives a commentary, is in reference to a single issue. The resolution isn't called A Political Analysis of Ukraine with Attributable Blame; it's called the Odessa Massacre. There's no doubt there's carnage and suffering on both sides of the conflict. That's something that we can all agree about. One million people have been displaced and more than 5,400 people have died since the conflict began. We do still believe it's because of the interests of Western powers and the interference of capitalism. Naturally, we call for peace on all sides. Of course we condemn violence by all parties, of course we condemn the shooting down of the civilian plane, MH17. Incidentally, the culprits still haven't been clearly identified. Of course we should condemn the brutal murders being carried out by the neo-Nazis.

The condemnation of violence and the call for an end to fighting should go without saying. This resolution is about solidarity with other trade unionists. We are not making excuses for Russian troops in Ukraine. We are not making excuses for Putin. We condemn everybody who is involved in conflict. All we want to do is restore peace and let our fellow trade unionists in Ukraine know we stand with them.

I would ask you to consider very carefully the EC position on this resolution because to take the EC opposition to its natural conclusion means that in future when we formulate international resolutions, for instance around Cuba, do we have to make reference to Cuba's role in the Cuban missile crisis? When we pass resolutions about Palestine do we have to continually mention the role of Hamas? I'm concerned that if conference doesn't support this resolution we might be viewed as out of kilter with the rest of the trade union movement because, as Matt said, the RMT had a not dissimilar resolution carried last year at TUC annual conference. As Matt said, it was opposed by the FBU delegation at that time.

Conference, I ask you to condemn the murder and fascism in Ukraine. Conference, support fellow trade unionists. Please support the resolution. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

I now put resolution 37 to the vote. The executive council oppose. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *FALLS*

Conference, you've made rapid progress so far this morning. So much so that the booty butterers haven't even got your packed lunches yet. So what I'm going to be doing now is I'm going to take a tea break for half an hour. It's a gift and popularity can be bought! So please come back in half an hour and be ready to debate. Thank you.

Break for tea

THE PRESIDENT:

Come to order. I now call upon Steve Shelton, chair of standing orders to give his final standing orders report.

THE CHAIR OF STANDING ORDERS (Bro Steve Shelton):

Thank you. Could you please turn to your programme of business? Page 13 resolution 27 Labour Party Reaffiliation, Durham, has been withdrawn. Could you please turn to your list of delegates? Region 12 Isle of Wight, delete both delegates.

On behalf of the standing orders committee I would firstly like to thank Sharon, Lorna, Alan, William, Daniel and Paul, our head office staff, for their efforts this week. Thank you. *Applause*

Thanks to our conference stewards for their hard work this week. Thank you. *Applause*

Thanks to Steve Cole and Mascol team for their hard work and efforts in setting up our conference, thank you. *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. A very special thank you. *Applause*

Personally, I would like to thank all members of the standing orders committee for their hard work and efforts, not only this week but having a recall conference in the same season has been a little bit hectic. So thank you to you all. *Applause*

Conference, 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:

Any speakers or challenges? No? Is that report agreed? *AGREED*

Thank you, conference. OK, I'm on paragraph C13. I now call resolution 38 Political Engagement to be moved by the West Midlands. The executive council support.

Resolution 38 – POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT
Conference notes with regret that despite our efforts, all the main political parties have agreed upon significant cuts to public services.

Conference recognises that an urgent debate is now required within the Union as to how we can best politically challenge parties promoting austerity and privatisation.

Conference instructs the Executive Council to;

- 1. Approach other trade unions for exploratory talks, with a view to working together on addressing the lack of adequate political representation for trade unions at local and national level.***
- 2. Form a strategy for effective political engagement at local and national level. This strategy must be formulated and communicated to the FBU membership by December 2015.***
- 3. Report back to Conference on results of these discussions, including proposals for any recommended rule changes that have arisen from them which would require the agreement of Conference.***

WEST MIDLANDS

BRO STEVEN PRICE-HUNT (West Midlands):

President, conference, I've come to move this motion. It's going to be quite short and sweet because we want to get up to the Labour debate and go home. This motion was obviously scripted before the general election where we hoped we'd be discussing how we would deliver this under a Labour government. Unfortunately, we're not there now. It has been covered quite conclusively with emergency resolution 3 from the executive council. So this is broadly supporting that. The reason why we're going to continue with this motion is because it sets the timescale which I will go on to now.

George Osborne's latest austerity charter saw 515 MPs vote for a further £30 billion of spending cuts to the public sector. God knows where that's going to come from. The Institute For Fiscal Studies state this will take the public spending levels back to the 1930s and unbelievably only 18 MPs have voted against this. Some Labour Party! With a disappointing turnout of resistance to austerity within the House of Commons, the time has come to approach other trade unions and community groups for talks about implementing a political strategy to challenge these savage cuts, and the privatisation that we all face.

This cannot be achieved alone by the FBU and needs joint collaboration with the wider trade union movement. We urge the EC, regional committees and brigade committees to form this effective political strategy at local and national level, and report this back to the membership by December 2015. Conference, I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Do we have a seconder for that? *Formally*

That's open for debate. I now put resolution 38 Political Engagement 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 28 Re-affiliation to the Labour Party to be moved by Lincolnshire. The executive council oppose.

Resolution 28 – RE-AFFILIATION TO THE LABOUR PARTY
Conference welcomes the support shown by the Labour Party and moving the debate in the House of Commons in support of our pensions campaign. In addition to this the speech made by the Shadow Fire Minister Lynn Brown MP, to the Fire Sector Summit rejected privatisation and also confirmed that a Labour Government will make it a priority to introduce a statutory duty for the Fire and Rescue Service to respond to flood incidents.

To help build on the political campaigning with the Labour Party, Conference instructs the Executive Council to re-affiliate with the Labour Party.

LINCOLNSHIRE

BRO BEN SELBY (Lincolnshire):
President, conference, I will not keep you long this morning, comrades, but I feel it necessary to stand up here and share what we see in Lincolnshire happening. The political scenery is changing and particularly in light of the support we as a union have received from the Labour Party's leadership over pensions. We see discussions on our branches around whether we should or shouldn't reaffiliate to the Labour Party. Our brigade committee felt it had changed enough to see a resolution put to conference.

The other day Ian Lavery addressed us all and encouraged us to join as one, reaffiliate, and challenge this abhorrent Tory government. We all stood then and applauded him on that message. The general secretary of our union said yesterday in a fringe meeting that reaffiliation would be disastrous. That was said without qualification, a view I oppose. This subject will not go away just because the EC want it to. Conference, we will decide who we affiliate to, and on that I urge you to go back to our branches speak to our members and discuss the positives of reaffiliation to the Labour Party. Lincolnshire, which is a Tory stronghold, do however recognise what's happened at the general election and that the Labour Party are subsequently now entering a leadership contest. We need to see the outcome of that leadership contest and the direction the party chooses. So in the interests of absolute unity here, this year at our conference and with a heavy heart, I withdraw, but we will be back next year. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you for that, Lincolnshire. Conference, it was remiss of me, I missed out paragraph C14, Affiliations. Conference, I now call resolution 36 moved by Lancashire with amendments from Merseyside. The executive council support the resolution and the amendments.

Resolution 36 – CLIMATE CHANGE
Conference notes with concern, the increasing evidence that man made climate change caused by global warming is already affecting the world's weather patterns, which in turn is pushing up the price of food and increasing the likelihood of extreme weather events.

We are especially concerned at statements by climate scientists and organisations like the International Energy Agency, that without urgent remedial action by governments, the world is on course for a rise in global temperatures of around six degrees centigrade before the end of the century. Such an increase would have a devastating effect on the stability of the planet for future generations.

Conference believes that tackling climate change, especially through the creation of climate jobs, is of immediate relevance for trade unionists and their families.

The FBU contribution to the booklet ‘One million climate jobs’ is noted, along with the reference to climate change in the FBU booklet ‘It’s time to take over the big energy firms’, and Conference calls on the Executive Council to continue FBU affiliation to the Campaign against Climate Change, to support its Trade Union Group, and to encourage greater member involvement.

LANCASHIRE

Amendments
1. 1st paragraph, 1st sentence delete “man made” and insert “human activity”.

MERSEYSIDE

2. 2nd paragraph, 1st sentence delete “We are” and insert “Conference is”.

MERSEYSIDE

BRO KEV DEACON (Lancashire):
We are accepting both of Merseyside's amendments. On the subject of the first amendment, amending “man made” to “human activity”, I have to confess that the resolution is actually a model resolution aimed at trade union conferences that we lifted from the Campaign Against Climate Change website. I think they probably stuck to the expression “man made” because historically the vast majority of contributory factors and political decisions that are causing climate change can be attributed to men. However, in the interests of equality I suppose women should take some of the blame! *Applause*

Although I'm not sure what the women's committee position is on this!

This resolution reinforces resolution 79 Climate Change and Environment Reps from the 2007 conference, and the EC policy statement The FBU and Climate Change from the 2009 conference.

As the threat of global warming is probably one of the most serious threats that the planet currently faces, this resolution is simply about keeping climate change on the agenda at national, regional, brigade and branch level. We all know that there is now a common consensus among the vast majority of leading scientists that climate change is happening and can be attributed to human activity, with one of the key factors being the amount of carbon dioxide that we are putting into the atmosphere causing the planet to warm and therefore affecting the climate. Since the industrial revolution the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere has increased dramatically and is continuing to increase. Among the many crises facing this country, and indeed the world, is an energy crisis. To address this our government seem determined to base its energy policies on policies that are harmful to our planet. One of these policies is fracking to release shale gas, which, when burnt, will release even more carbon dioxide into the atmosphere.

Locally in Lancashire there is much controversy regarding fracking. Not 10 miles from here a fracking test rig caused two minor earthquakes, as well as concerns surrounding the polluting of the water table and large lorries and tankers using unsuitable roads and routes. An alternative solution to fossil fuel and fracking is to invest in green technologies. Not only is this good for our planet, it will also help create employment. The United Kingdom should be embracing green technology and should have visions of leading the world in this.

These three booklets – One Million Climate Jobs; It's Time to Take Over the Big Energy Firms; Climate Change – Key Issues for the Fire and Rescue Service – contain all the information members need to show the perilous state of our planet. We know that members throughout the union are actively campaigning on this issue and many brigades and regions sit on TUC regional working groups and support local campaigns. We ask that the EC continues its good work and where possible further raises the profile of the various campaigns to increase member support. Conference, support this resolution. I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Does the resolution have a seconder? *Formally*

I call Merseyside to move both of their amendments. The executive council support. *Formally*

Thank you for that, Merseyside. Are they seconded formally, or are they seconded? *Formally*

Thank you. That's open for debate, conference. Yes, please come to the rostrum, Cameron.

BRO CAMERON MATTHEWS (Cambridgeshire):

We are speaking in support of the resolution. We thought it was important to speak on this resolution surrounding climate change, probably because we are due to receive change in our climate potentially, in our region, Region 9. So we've got some local experience of something that might be happening. Whilst it's not environmental climate change, it will be a climate change of how we run our union, so I thought it was related to this.

In a few months' time, unless my plan to camp out in his garden to lobby him to stay succeeds, we will be losing our EC member, Keith Handscomb, our brother and comrade as he retires. I thought it crucially important to acknowledge all the great work that he's done in our region. He's inspired many of us – definitely me myself to stand up here and speak in front of you all, and to be an active trade unionist and become part of the trade union movement. So I'd just like you to acknowledge the fantastic work he's done for our union as a long serving member and please give him a round of applause. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

His work isn't finished yet, comrade.

BRO CAMERON MATTHEWS (Cambridgeshire):

Yeah, yeah, yeah. But of course there is also environmental climate change too, and that is something that's crucially important to all of us. The environment is something which we need to protect and we need to be active in that discussion because it's about our future, our children's future, and there's nothing more important, is there? So I would strongly urge you to support the resolution. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

Any more debate? No? General secretary.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Thanks, president. I think this is an important resolution and we're pleased to see it on the order paper. I would urge brigade committees to engage in this discussion. It's an issue that directly affects our industry. You've seen the work we've done around floods; you've seen the research that we've done about the impact of climate change on the challenges facing the fire and rescue service. So we have a very clear issue as citizens, as workers, as trade unionists, and directly in terms of ourselves as firefighters. We've campaigned around floods, but we've also raised wider issues of climate change and the need for the fire and rescue service to plan for the implications of climate change for the future. That's again about developing and directing our profession as we move forward.

But I also highlight another issue. There is an emerging mass movement out there on the issues of climate change. It is predominantly a young persons' movement. It is precisely the sort of movement that we should be engaging in. I had the privilege of speaking at the climate change demonstration a couple of months ago. A number of our officials were there, but it would be great the next time to see FBU banners coming on such events. We would have a huge reception. So please consider that.

I'm going to now just stretch the rules of debate a little bit. I know the president is going to make reference to a number of retiring officials. Kevin mentioned the fault of women in creating climate change! I did want to just take a moment to mention another one of our officials who has left us over the past year and that's Kerry Baigent, who was secretary of our national women's committee. I have to say she was an outstanding official of this union – a Cambridgeshire firefighter and an outstanding official of this union who pioneered much of the work around the work of our NWC including some fantastic model policies that we were able to then take to present to employers locally. Kerry has moved on. I pleaded with her not to go at the time, but I'm sure conference will join me in thanking her for all her work and wishing her best in her new career. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:

I don't know how you did that on that resolution, by the way! Unbelievable! Thank you.

I now put Merseyside amendment 1 to the vote. The executive council support. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That is *CARRIED*

I now put Merseyside amendment 2 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 36 as amended to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That is *CARRIED*

I now seek endorsement of the executive council report. Is that agreed? *AGREED*

OK, thank you. Conference, it's down to me to read from a list I've just been given. I'm constantly being given lists and none of them are very nice lists. Isn't it terrible when you're doing a day's work and you're interrupted by people around the place!

It falls upon me to look at and talk about the list I've just been given. It's a list of people who won't be back at conference. To be honest with you, I've just had a quick glance over it, and I'm quite glad about some of them but some of them I'm going to miss terribly! *Laughter*

I'll read the list, but please, comrades, believe me I will miss all of them in different ways. Marty Pottinger from ONC. Marty "Spats" Pottinger. Andy Dennis, regional secretary Region 7; Gordon Fielden; John McFadden. I'll particularly miss John and all his contributions. This year I've noticed is the first time that John's ever made a contribution to conference where he has actually stayed within his time limit! Thank you for that, John. Dave Bennett from Region 1, health and safety rep; from Region 6 the executive council member, Dave "Shylock" Limer who is also our national treasurer (never trust a man who's got his hands on the till, conference); Region 5 Kevin Deacon, the Lancs chair, and the great Steve Harman, and you've already paid tribute to him. As far as Region 11 is concerned, we're losing the executive council member, Jim Parrott, and somebody who I don't want you including in this round of applause because you've already done it, Keith Handscomb who I will miss particularly for everything that Keith does.

This year between conferences we also saw the retirement of Kerry Baigent from the national women's committee who did a sterling job for this union. I think that should be acknowledged. Certainly a personal friend of mine and recently retired is Brother Roddy Robertson from the executive council, and the vice-president and amigo of mine who couldn't count to two-thirds during a challenge, Jim Barbour.

I thank all of them for the work that they've done. I thank you on behalf of them for the support that you've shown them over the years. I do know, conference, that their boots will be well and truly filled, but I will personally miss them. So thank you to all of those people.

I would also like to give thanks to the head office staff and the organisers for this week, particularly the head office staff who have come here and who have worked tirelessly on our behalf. Every single one of them puts a shift in, every single one of them can out-drink and out-fight all of you! Special thanks to standing orders chair Steve Shelton and his committee for making conference run with a bit of boom. I personally thought that this year's conference was fantastically well handled by everybody concerned, and standing orders clearly play a major part in that. Last, but by no means least as far as thanks go, my hero, Stewart "the real deal" Kinnon, who is the vice-chair of standing orders and also looks after me all week and feeds me all the information I need, writes me scripts sometimes and sometimes he gets it right and sometimes he gets it horribly wrong. But this year he hasn't got a thing wrong; it's all been down to me! Anybody who has met Stewart, if you meet Stewart, he's living proof of the Verve song that drugs really don't work!

Also, before I finish and go on to a more serious part of my address and my vote of thanks, I would like you to remember to please hand in your voting cards to standing orders. Take your voting cards into the standing orders committee as you leave.

Conference, in a time of turmoil for the movement and working people all over this country, you've met and you're the first ones to meet. Your message has been heard, and it's been noticed, believe me. This has been a historic week for our union and a historic week for everybody concerned with working class struggle.

You've debated some of the most contentious issues. I think that some of the debates that you've had have been informed and nothing short of a credit to you all on behalf of this union. You've carried them out in a comradely fashion, which is all anybody ever wants, but that fashion befits this union, and it is still and will remain a great union.

It's a union, however, that needs to face the coming onslaught, and it needs to face it with a cool head. There's no room to panic, there's no scope to blink. We must be resolute and in control of all of our actions. Inevitably, we will need to act, conference.

Check-off, the right to strike, the possibility of cataclysmic cuts to the service, it's all there. We face it all. We must be smart, we must organise. We must get through this and we must flourish as a union. I believe that we genuinely can with the people that we've got in this room and the membership that you represent.

This week has also been pivotal and very historic for our union. You've made momentous decisions and monumental decisions regarding our union's rules and you're to be credited by me for the way that you've acted in those debates as well.

I came here downhearted; I'm leaving upbeat. I'm leaving upbeat not because of anything other than you. I thank you for your contributions this week. I've tried desperately to be as upbeat as I possibly can. Go back to your membership and prepare them. Thank you, conference. Have a safe journey home. Conference is closed. *Applause*



Officers of the Fire Brigades Union and List of Delegates

May 2015

Officers of the Fire Brigades Union

President – Alan McLean
Vice-President – Ian Murray
National Treasurer – Dave Limer
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	Dave Limer
Region 7	Barry Downey
Region 8	Grant Mayos
Region 9	Keith Handscomb
Region 10	Ian Leahair
Region 11	Jim Parrott
Region 12	Ricky Matthews
Region 13	Tam McFarlane
CSNC	Jo Byrne
ONC	John Arnold
NRC	Tam Mitchell

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	Andy Dennis
Region 8	Vacant
Region 9	Jamie Wyatt
Region 10	Paul Embery
Region 11	Danni Armstrong
Region 12	James Wolfenden
Region 13	Trevor French
B&EMM	Micky Nicholas
CSNC	Sue Offland
LGBT	Pat Carberry
ONC	Martin Pottinger
NRC	Peter Preston
NWC	Samantha Rye

Regional Chairs

Region 1	Gordon McQuade
Region 2	Dermot Rooney
Region 3	David Howe
Region 4	Richard Walker
Region 5	Ian McGill
Region 6	Phil Coates
Region 7	Richard Williams
Region 8	Cerith Griffiths
Region 9	Brian Hooper
Region 10	Gordon Fielden
Region 11	Mark Simmons
Region 12	Steve Allen
Region 13	Kevin Herniman
B&EMM	Otis Graham
CSNC	Lynda Rowan O'Neill
LGBT	Yannick Dubois
ONC	Mick Higgins
NRC	Harry Cotter
NWC	Helen Harrison

Regional Treasurers

Region 1	Vacant
Region 2	David Nichol
Region 3	Tony Curry
Region 4	Graham Wilkinson
Region 5	Steve Shelton
Region 6	Chris Hides
Region 7	Peter Goulden
Region 8	Arwel Roberts
Region 9	Del Godfrey-Shaw
Region 10	Laurie Brightman
Region 11	Bill Woodfine
Region 12	Paul Watts
Region 13	Val Hampshire

Regional Officials

Region 1	John McFadden
Region 2	David Nichol
Region 8	Roger Curran
Region 10	Gareth Beeton

List of Delegates

Region 1	Scotland	Brian Cameron
		David Bennett
		Denise Christie
		Gary Lennie
		Ian Bryden
		John Malcolm
		John McFadden
		Marty Cooper
		Phil McDonald
		Stephen Reid
Region 2	Northern Ireland	Stephen Thomson
		Alan Cunningham
		Dermot McPoland
		Stephen Boyd
		Rod O'Hare
Region 3	Cleveland	Brian Gibson
		David Howe
	Durham	Paul Dawson
		Phillip Dashwood
	Northumberland	Guy Tiffin
Region 4	Tyne & Wear	Steve Walker
		Brian Harris
		Russell King
	Humberside	Rob Vaux
		Dave Collingwood
	North Yorkshire	Steve Howley
		Simon Wall
	South Yorkshire	Graham Wilkinson
		Neil Carbutt
Region 5	West Yorkshire	David Williams
		Maggie Meszaros
		Paul Drinkwater
	Cheshire	Dave Williams
		Stuart Hammond
	Cumbria	Graeme Higgins
		Dave Burn
	GMC	Gary Keary
		Simon Yaffa
Region 6	Isle of Man	Simon Hickman
	Lancashire	Steve Harman
		Kevin Deacon
	Merseyside	Mark Rowe
		Kevin Hughes

Region 6	Derbyshire	Marc Redford
		Chris Tapp
	Leicestershire	Graham Vaux
		Gavin Lynch
	Lincolnshire	Ben Selby
Region 7	Northamptonshire	Daniel Taylor
		Mark Jones
	Nottinghamshire	Sheldon Fenning
		Alan Coates
		Sean McCallum
Region 8	Hereford & Worcester	Julian Jenkins
		Steven Gould
	Staffordshire	Mark Tattum
		Richard Williams
	Shropshire	Stephen Morris
Region 9	Warwickshire	Matthew Lamb
		Marcus Giles
	West Midlands	Wayne Vaughan
		Mick McKay
		Steve Price-Hunt
Region 10	Mid & West Wales	David Pitt
	North Wales	Andrew Hearne
		Barrie Davies
	South Wales	Shane Price
Region 11	Bedfordshire	Sandra Williams
		Alex Psaila
	Cambridgeshire	Mark Robotham
		Steve Saunders
	Essex	Mark Woodworth
Region 12	Hertfordshire	Jason Hollamby
		Cameron Matthews
	Norfolk	Martin Harding
		Riccardo Ia Torre
	Suffolk	Gary Critch
Region 13	London	Daren Scotchford
		Tony Smith
		Peter Greeves
		Kevin Game
		Adrian Mayhew

Region 11	Kent	Jenny Impey
		Tim Green
	Surrey	Andrew Strand
		Richard Jones
	East Sussex	Lee Belsten
Region 12	West Sussex	Mark Brown
		Mick Cambers
		Francis Bishop
	Berkshire	Eddie Cardoso
		Tregear Thomas
Region 13	Buckinghamshire	Greg O'Neill
		Damon Robertson
	Hampshire	Gary Jackson
		Nigel McCullen
	Isle of Wight	Pete Mawhood
Region 14	Oxfordshire	Spence Cave
		Mark Ames
		Josie Fullerton
	Avon	Chris Taylor
Region 15	Cornwall	Gary Spindler
		Richard Simpson
	Dorset	Stuart Pully
		David Gale
	Devon & Somerset	Karen Adams
Region 16	Gloucestershire	Dave Chappell
		James Leslie
	Wiltshire	Michael Tully
		Scott Turner
		Brent Thorley
Region 17		Tony Littler
	B&EMM	Dalton Powell
	CSNC	Amelia Diallo
		Richard Stevens
Region 18	LGBT	Carina Peel
		Lorraine Lowe
	NRC	John Catherwood
		Lyndon Jones
	NWC	Clare Hudson
Region 19		Diane Critchlow
	ONC	Chris McGlone
		Simon Amos

List of Delegates



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